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NEW RIVER, A RIVER OF ANTIQUITY

New River does not live up to its name! It is said to be the second oldest river in the world, second to the Nile. It may not be the second oldest but geologists have concluded the portion of the river in Virginia may well be as old as the Nile. One geology professor has dated New River as being 100 million years old!

One hundred million years ago---What was western Virginia like? Dinosaurs? Probably not, but large mammals may have roamed the Valley. What about the land? The Appalachians were formed and were fairly well covered with land plants much like those today. But, the Appalachians did not happen overnight!

The Appalachians, the 'old' mountains were formed slowly, first by sedimentary, then by volcanic and metamorphic actions. (New River is said to flow through some of the oldest metamorphic rock formations in the U.S.) First the land was covered by a salt sea which caused sedimentation. Geologists studying rock strata say sedimentation apparently continued in the Appalachians for 500 million years depositing rock to a composite thickness of nearly 40,000 ft. in western Virginia---more than 7 times the thickness of the rock sequence between the bottom and the top of the Grand Canyon!

Sedimentation was interrupted at times with volcanic action, deep-seated crumpling and vertical uplift, which is why volcanic rocks in this area are often found imbedded with coarse-grained sediments. Fossils clue geologists in dating strata of rock. Searching for fossils can be a challenging hobby. One life-long 'rock hound', a native of Southwest Virginia, has stated that Big Stony Creek in Giles County proved for him very rich in fossils.

New River was incredibly old when Indians first made their way here. The American Indian is thought to have crossed a bridge of land 20,000 years ago from Asia to North America. Time passed. Around 7,000 B.C. primitive Paleo-Indian peoples are said to have lived and traveled through the Valley. There is not sufficient evidence at this time to know who these early Indian peoples were and tie the prehistoric Indian culture in the Valley to known historic Indians.

A shelter cave on the west side of New River at the base of Castle Rock and just across the river from Pembroke 9,000 years ago was used by Indians. This has been established by an archaeological 'dig' in 1970 when early types of projectile points (Kirk and Charleston corner-notched) were found in the (See Page 2)

WILLIAM HENRY SNIDOW (1796-1866)

William H. Snidow (1796-Oct. 7, 1866), son of Col. Christian and Mary Burk Snidow, married Mar. 17, 1836 Adeline Chapman (1812-Oct. 27, 1872), daughter of John and Ann Freel Chapman and granddaughter of Issac and Elian Johnston Chapman. Her father, John Chapman, served for a number of years in the VA General Assembly.

William H. Snidow resided on Horseshoe Farm in a house which must have been a mansion in its day. (The farm is no longer owned by the family and as the house has not been lived in for many years has now fallen in disrepair.) The well proportioned columns on the double porches of the large square house, the delicate pilasters framing the front door, the wide inviting front porch gave an air of wealth and gracious living. One can imagine the hospitality enjoyed by guests in this house whose setting was New River with its grey limestone cliffs across the water topped by luxuriant green trees.

The fireplace used for heating the drawing room had a beautifully designed Adam-type mantel. Although the stairway railing is gone, one can imagine a graceful one, possibly of a local hardwood, highly polished, rising to the second floor. The inventory of his estate (Will Bk 4, p. 317-319) which was extremely long and which showed a man of wealth for his day, listed the most interesting furnishings including secretary desk, Oriental rugs, etc. and a library of books.

He was a lawyer and quite active in the affairs of his county, and he represented Giles County several terms in the VA General Assembly as did his son, Major John Chapman Snidow. William H. Snidow also must have been actively engaged as a farmer. His inventory included a large herd of cattle, also 24 negro servants; his estate was valued at upwards of \$100,000. He became a colonel in the War Between the States. He and his wife are buried in Horseshoe Cemetery.

His children were:

- (1) John Chapman Snidow married Annie Hoge
- (2) James Piper Snidow married Fannie Hale
- (3) Annie Snidow married Dr. Harvey Green Johnston

(More descendants of W.H. Snidow will be given in a later Snidow Newsletter.)

NEW RIVER (Cont.)

lowest level of the cave, indicating earliest occupation. This was in the Early Archaic (pre-pottery) times. Beginning about the time pottery came into use in the area (500 B.C.) the cave was used almost continuously for hundreds of years. New River Valley was probably a migration route as well as home to these peoples who preceded the known historic Indian.

It is known that prior to the settling of Jamestown the New River Valley contained many Indian villages. During the Late Woodland Period (about 1400 A.D.-1600 A.D.) there was a growth of Indian village complexes. Fish, being a staple in the diet of red men as well as white, Indian and early white settlers used fish dams as an easy way to catch fish. They piled stones in a shallow part of the river in the shape of a 'V' with the apex downstream. Fish directed by the stones went into a basket or net. Generally a village site is found near a fish trap. Prior to the coming of the white man to New River the Indians had abandoned their villages. Village sites that have been examined show no European contact. Explorers in the 1600's made no mention of Indian contact. White settlers in the 18th century found no Indians living in the Valley. Their only contact with Indians was with raiding parties. From early historic times a branch of the major north-south Indian trail, sometimes called the Warpath Trail, was known to traverse the Valley. Coming from the south down Walkers Creek to the mouth of the creek on New River, it turned down-river and descended to the Kanawha River and on to the Ohio.

Probably the first white man to visit New River was Col. Abraham Wood of Henrico County in 1654, sent out by the VA General Assembly. In 1671 Thomas Batte and Robert Fallam came looking for the 'western waters'. They probably named it Wood's River, the name found on very early maps and land patents. How the river came to be named New River is a matter of conjecture among Virginia historians!

It would be almost a hundred years before the white man came in any great numbers to settle New River. Their records would appear in county courthouses as an 'entry' for land or a recorded survey, later to be made more permanent with a land grant from the governor. Ferries were built across the river by the white man--this valley being a gateway to other western lands. Families who would become influential in the affairs of the area with the names of Snidow, Johnston, Lybrook, Cloyd, Peck, Lucas, Chapman, French, Burk, Williams, etc. came to make their homes. After the beginning of the American Revolution, when men were called to defend the frontier or man the border forts, these names are found on the militia rolls. They took the Oath of Allegiance

to the new government, they furnished soldiers when the call came to march south. The Middle New River area furnished its share of help in fighting the King's Men.

New River would furnish help to the Confederate cause in the 1860's when salt petre was mined from its caves for ammunition during the War Between the States.

Rising in North Carolina New River, the river that flows north which 'no self respecting river should do', is a scenic river and a wild river in places. It has sink-holes, uncertain currents and bad undertows. But its a river of people and activity. Today the rich bottom land stretching along it for miles, alternating with worn rock palisades, nurtures a farm population which often has handed down its land from generation to generation. "The names on the mail-boxes match those on the tombstones." New River, with its rich fields, its grazing cattle, its greyed barns, its frame farm-houses, an occasional log building all bespeak a way of life that has an air of peace, of freedom, of tranquility and of faith in the future which in essence is the American way. And that, after all, is what its all about!

(Mary French Boswell)

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SNIDOW TRAIL ??

Do you know the location of the Snidow Trail? Mrs. Ruth Guthrie Blevins will tell us at the Third Snidow Family Reunion in September.

THE SNIDOWS: CONTACT WITH THE INDIANS

The Snidows did not get their land directly from the Indians. By 1600 or shortly thereafter, a corridor of territory along New River had been abandoned by its Indian inhabitants and was unoccupied when first explored by white man. The exodus of the Indians was not related in any way to the settlement of Jamestown or to white man's activity.

The land that the Snidows farmed was land previously used and farmed by the Indians. Snidow land contains Indian village sites that were abandoned before Jamestown. One village was located on Horseshoe Farm, now designated by the Archeological Society of VA, as the Snidow Site (about 3/4 mile from Castle Rock Recreation Club, the location of the 1979 Snidow Reunion). Several years ago an exploratory excavation was conducted on this village site. It was found to be circular in shape, 300 feet in diameter and was occupied sometime between 1330 A.D. and 1600 A.D. The village was surrounded by a stockade wall for protection from other groups. While part of their food was obtained by hunting, fishing and gathering, much of it was raised in the fertile bottomland of what is today Horseshoe Farm.

In addition to the information obtained, artifacts and 14 burials were recovered. Some of these artifacts will be on display at the Snidow Reunion in September.

L. Dale Collins
Pembroke, VA

NOTE: Mr. Dale Collins has been actively involved in Indian site excavations through the Archeological Society of VA. In 1964 he did the first archeological 'dig' on an Indian village site in Giles County on New River at Lurich. He has lectured and conducted field trips in archeology, geology and early history. Mr. Collins led the exploratory excavation of the Snidow Site on Horseshoe Farm and made a formal report, with slides, to the Archeological Soc. of VA Annual Meeting in Oct., 1972. He is married to the former Roma Snidow, daughter of Grover Snidow. (M.F.B.)

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It is a well known fact that the Snidows and other settlers suffered from Indian depredations. For approximately 38 years, from the beginning of the French and Indian War until long after the Revolution, Indian raiding parties from the Ohio River vicinity attempted to wipe out the New River settlements. The Indians were supplied and agitated first by the French, then by the English during the Revolution. After the Revolution the English continued to encourage the Indians in their activities. With such encouragement and the probable knowledge that the whites would continue to move down New River and drive them from their land, the Indians raided diligently.

On Sunday, August 7, 1774 an Indian raid took place against the Snidow, Lybrook and McGriff families on the banks of New River not far from the Snidow fort and near the upper end of Horseshoe Farm, just across the hill from the 1979 Snidow Reunion site.

Col. William Preston, at the time of this attack was commandant of the military district of Fincastle (Montgomery and Washington Co.) and was living at Drapers Meadows Fort (Smithfield) at Blacksburg. He wrote a letter on Aug. 13 to the VA Governor and General Assembly describing this attack which letter appeared in the VA Gazette (Sept. 8, 1774), published at Williamsburg. It read:

"On Sunday the 7th instant a Party attacked three Families at the House of one Laybrook, about fifteen miles from this Place. Old Laybrook was wounded in the arm; three of his children (one of them a suckling infant), a young woman, the daughter of one Scott, and a child of one Widow Snyder, were killed. They scalped the children, all but one, and mangled them in a most cruel Manner. Three boys were made Prisoners, two of whom made their escape the Wed. following, and were found in the Woods by the Scouts. The Indians were immediately pursued by several Parties of Scouts but they took such Precaution in travelling that it was impossible to find their Tracks."

According to Johnston and other historians of Western VA the events of the attack were as follows: Philip Lybrook and MR. McGriff had built their cabins on bottomland below the mouth of Sinking Creek, just above Horseshoe Farm and were cultivating corn on the land; Mr. Lybrook had built a small mill on a spring branch. The children of Elizabeth Snidow and a Miss Scott came to visit on Sunday. At the time the young people and children were in or near the river, Mr. McGriff was in his house and Mr. Lybrook was at the mill, an Indian was discovered on the high bank overlooking the river. Two young men, a Snidow boy and Baltzer Lybrook, swimming in the river, made their escape to the opposite shore. There were 3 or 4 little boys playing in the water at the river's edge. Miss Lybrook, in a canoe with several small children, tried to bring it to shore when an Indian, hidden in the weeds, ran out, pulled the canoe to the shore and began clubbing and scalping the children. Miss Lybrook made her escape to her house, but other Indians having gone to the house and mill shot Mr. Lybrook in the arm. Mr. McGriff mortally wounded one Indian whose remains were found years afterward under a cliff of rocks not far away from the scene of the tragedy. Three boys were captured, Jacob Snidow, Thomas McGriff and Theophilus Snidow. Two days later Jacob and Thomas were able to make their escape and were found on Wed. following the capture by scouts from the New River settlements. Theophilus Snidow remained in captivity in the Ohio towns of the Indians until a young man. He then returned to his people and his name appears on the Militia Roll of Montgomery Co. of 1782. However, it is said he was in 'delicate' health and did not live long after returning to his family.

All of this horror happened in a few minutes. Six Indians in this marauding party attacked about 15 people including very small children. Several were wounded, about 4 died including two young daughters of Elizabeth Snidow who were scalped and murdered, 3 boys captured. What a sad day at the Snidow fort! (M.F.B.)

HORSESHOE FARM

!! THIRD SNIDOW FAMILY REUNION !!

Horseshoe Farm is so named because of a wide bend in New River carving out land in the shape of a horse-shoe, lying on the east side of the river. Bordering the river a wide area of very fertile bottomland makes it one of the richest farms in Giles County. The low land finally gives away to hilly, rolling land stretching toward the town of Pembroke. On this bottomland stood an Indian village, abandoned by 1600 A.D., as described by Mr. Dale Collins.

The Third Snidow Family Reunion will be held on September 23, 1979 (Sunday) at 12:30 P.M. at Castle Rock Recreation Club, Pembroke, VA. Due to high costs of copying and postage this is the only announcement that will be mailed out. PLEASE NOTE TIME AND PLACE!

The first reference to white ownership is a land patent to James Wood. (Johnston: Hist. of Middle New River Settlements). However, the Horseshoe soon came into the hands of Thomas Burk. On March 21, 1769 Thomas Burk of Augusta (later Rockingham) County, son of William Burk who had immigrated from Ireland to Long Meadow, Augusta County, VA, bought land on Crab's Creek, a branch of New River. He apparently removed to New River from Augusta County at that time and began acquiring other parcels of land which made up Horseshoe Farm. In 1769 he acquired 200 A., in 1787 he had increased his land holdings to 953 acres. His land adjoined that of Elizabeth Snidow's land patent which she received on Sept. 1, 1785. Thomas Burk's log cabin, which was standing until a few years ago, sat on a knoll facing the Snidow land and was probably in sight of Elizabeth Snidow's log cabin. Two of the Snidow sons married daughters of Thomas Burk--Christian married Mary Burk, Jacob married as his first wife Clara Burk (d/1792). When Thomas Burk died in 1808 he willed 600 acres of Horseshoe Farm (Giles Co. Will Book A, p. 33) to his sons, John and William, and stated he had already given land to Mary Snidow (wife of Christian).

Directions: Follow Route 460 to Pembroke. From Snidow St. turn south on Castle Ave., follow two-lane winding road for 1.3 mi., following signs of CASTLE ROCK RECREATION CLUB to building near top of hill.

Please bring food, drinks, plates, cups, knives, forks, spoons, napkins for your own group. Lunch will be served buffet style.

Plan to attend this Reunion held on original Snidow land !!!

CASTLE ROCK

Castle Rock is a spectacular, dolomite limestone rock formation possibly 200 or 300 feet high, located on the west side of New River opposite the town of Pembroke and opposite the original Elizabeth Snidow land grant. It was formed when New River cut through a ridge around which it originally circled.

Castle Rock is said to have been named by George Snidow (1816-1884), known as "River George", son of Christian and Sarah Turner Snidow. His home stood on the bluff, on the east side of New River, on the lower end of Horseshoe Farm, opposite Castle Rock. Castle Rock Recreation Club derived its name from the rock which stands within sight!

NECROLOGY

On June 8th 1820 John Burk deeded to Christian Snidow, Sr. two tracts of land, one of 200 A., the other 100 A., known as Little Horseshoe "which said tracts of land includes all the lands willed to John Burk by Thomas Burk, dec'd", etc. etc. (Giles Co. Deed Book B, p. 194). The land is described as bounded by Jacob Snidow's land on the west at the bank of New River, on north by Jacob Snidow and on east by John Lybrook's land (this was probably the John Lybrook, who at the time of the Snidow Indian attack as a young boy escaped by jumping the gullies at water's edge and making it to his home before being overtaken by Indians).

William Henry Snidow, son of Col. Christian Snidow, Sr., acquired his part of Horseshoe Farm from his father. *****

- John Walter Boswell, husband of Mary French Boswell, Feb.27,1979, Roanoke
- Conley Trigg Snidow, Sr., Feb.15,1979 Princeton, W. VA
- Henley French Snidow, Jr., March 11,1979 Pembroke, VA
- Lyle Christian Snidow, Sr., Dec.11,1978 Richmond, VA
- Theodat Moser Walk, Dec. 2,1978, Muncie, Indiana

HORSESHOE CEMETERY

It was William H. Snidow, grandson of Thomas Burk, who preserved for posterity the data on the tombstones which he placed in Horseshoe Cemetery. This cemetery located on Horseshoe Farm on a rise overlooking the large bend in New River and just above the home of William H. Snidow is the resting place of Thomas Burk, his wife and some of his children, including his daughter Rebecca Davidson who was held captive by the Indians for several years. Col. Christian Snidow and his wife Mary Burk and some of their descendants are buried there. Also, the family and descendants of George and Martha Walker Snidow who owned part of Horseshoe Farm from 1845. The cemetery today is maintained by Snidow descendants.