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RICHARD G. SLATTERY AND THE HISTORY OF ARCHEOLOGY IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Jim Glanville

Abstract

This article revolves around the story of a single engraved marine shell gorget with a rattlesnake design in the Citico style: the "Slattery Gorget." The article thereby recounts the story of archeology and relic collecting in Southwest Virginia from their beginnings up to 1970. After reviewing the pre-1940 history of archeology in Southwest Virginia, the article describes the gorget's 1945 excavation near the North Fork of the Holston River in Washington County, Virginia, and concludes with it reaching a permanent resting place in a New York state museum 52 years later. In between, the article describes the beginning of professional archeology in Southwest Virginia, how Richard Gates (Dick) Slattery excavated the gorget and his role in bringing professional archeology to the region, particularly in the person of Waldo Wedel. The roles played in relic collecting and relic dealing by the Maiden brothers are also described. The views of C. G. Holland on the subjects of relic hunting and relic selling in Southwest Virginia are summarized. After many years, a rough manuscript that Slattery long ago drafted (but never finalized or submitted for publication) describing his gorget has been edited, put into publishable form, and finally reaches the literature as a brief appendix to the present article. Reconstruction of the gorget's story and Slattery's role in that story has required combining the skills of a historian, journalist, and detective: an approach the author calls improper archeology. This article illustrates the methods employed by improper archeology, and explains and exemplifies why such an investigative approach is necessary if we are ever to understand, even if only imperfectly, the culture of the important people who lived in Southwest Virginia during the Late Woodland Period. Information in this article derives from several chapters in the author's forthcoming book (Glanville n.d.).

Introduction

Narrowly, this article tells the story of a single engraved marine shell gorget with a rattlesnake design in the Citico style called the "Slattery Gorget." It is pictured in Figure 1 and, in close up, in the appendix to this paper.

Broadly, however, the story told here ranges far beyond that of just a single gorget. In telling the Slattery Gorget's story we simultaneously tell about the local people in Southwest Virginia who dug and looted many graves and describe the slow and belated development of professional archeology in the region.

The article also illustrates the unusual, or improper, methods that must inevitably be used in any effort to reconstruct Southwest Virginia life before the arrival of Europeans. By means of a specific, concrete example, the methods of improper archeology are illustrated and hence illuminate what improper archeology is capable of doing and not doing.

The author has for the past three years been engaged in a program to locate, photograph, and document cultural materials from the region – primarily artifacts currently held in private collections and old photographs of formerly held artifacts.

The purpose of this program is to develop an artifact data base for use to understand, if only dimly and incompletely, the "unknown Holstonians." That is the appellation the author uses for those Native Americans who had established a complex society, with abundant material goods and well-developed trade networks, in the Holston River valleys (Holstonia) in the centuries before the Europeans arrived at Saltville in 1567 (Beck 1997; Moore, Beck, and Rodning 2006).

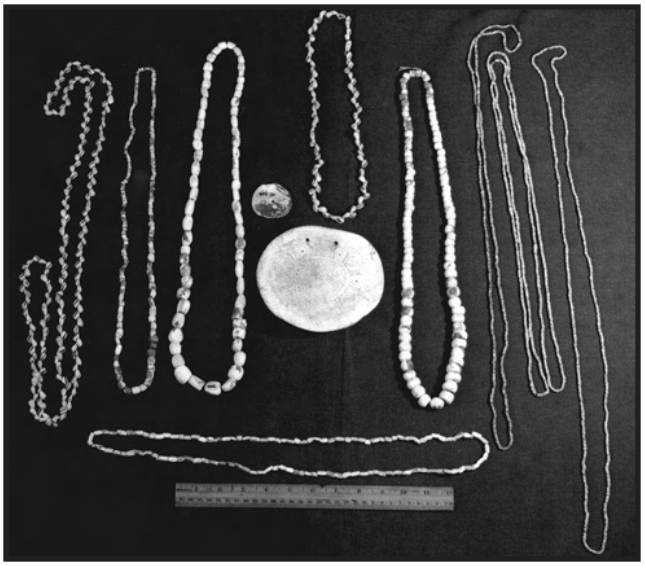

Figure 1. The Slattery Gorget Seen Among Nine Strands of Beads. As described in this article, the gorget came from Washington County, Virginia, and is now in a museum. The back of the photograph shown above is annotated in Dick Slattery's handwriting: "Gorget & larger beads donated to museum." Photograph courtesy of Dick Slattery in the author's files.

The Wealth of Artifacts in Southwest Virginia

An enormous amount of Late Woodland Period cultural material (gorgets, beads, pipes, copper artifacts, etc.) has come from Southwest Virginia. Almost all of it has eluded the professional archeological community and disappeared into private collections. Only occasional pieces have found their way to collections in public museums.

The two significant open-to-the-public collections are: (1) the Space Farms Museum collection in New Jersey (Glanville 2007a) and (2) the Pat Bass Collection, curated at the Museum of the Middle Appalachians (MoMA) in Saltville.

Engraved marine shell gorgets are the most important single class of artifacts for understanding the Late Woodland Period culture of Southwest Virginia. Because of their elaborate and distinctive designs, they carry significant cultural information despite typically having been long divorced from their precise archeological context and lacking provenience information. Furthermore, engraved marine shell gorgets are less susceptible to reproduction or counterfeiting than objects in other artifact classes, such as pipes (Hart 1978).

A recent article by this author pictured the 16 engraved marine shell gorgets from Southwest Virginia permanently displayed in a New Jersey museum (Glanville 2007a). Images of nine of those gorgets had not been previously published. The other seven gorgets were photographed by Jon Muller (1966) and later included in the only published archeological book devoted solely to the description and cataloging of marine shell gorgets (Brain and Phillips 1996).

Engraved marine shell gorgets from Southwest Virginia are abundant. While fewer than 20 are on public display, the author has seen and photographed many more in private collections, and yet others in private photographs, most

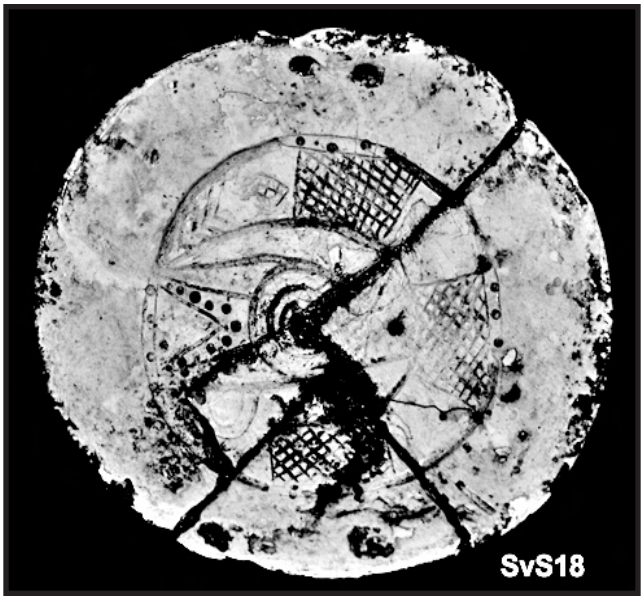

Figure 2. A 4" Diameter Saltville Style Marine Shell Gorget. It was excavated by the amateur archeologist Pat Bass in March 1970 near the North Fork of the Holston River at Broadford. Broadford lies six miles northeast of Saltville and is a multicomponent site. This gorget is on permanent display in the Pat Bass Collection at the Museum of the Middle Appalachians in Saltville. Despite have been on public display for a number of years, it has never before been pictured in the archival Virginia archeological literature. All photographs in this article, unless otherwise noted, are by the author.

Figure 3. The Broadford Site Looking from Near the Homes of Its Owners, the Brickey Family, Toward the Southwest. The North Fork of the Holston River flows to the right along the tree line in the distance. Large, flat areas near the river with first class soils were the favored locations for Late Woodland Period Holstonian settlements. Three engraved marine shell gorgets can be documented as having come from this vicinity.

of which he has been allowed to copy. Additional specimens of Southwest Virginia gorgets are pictured in publications emanating from the relic collecting community (Orr 1968; Sharpe 1972; Burnette 1972; Cushman 1988; Maus 1995; Maus and Knight 1996; Manuel 1996) and in books displaying Native American art (Fundaburk and Foreman 1957).

In addition to the 16 engraved gorgets on public display in New Jersey, three more are displayed at the Museum of the Middle Appalachians in Saltville, a town which lies at the heart of Southwest Virginia. Figure 2 shows the "Saltville, Saltville-style gorget" found at the Broadford site, which is itself pictured in Figure 3. This gorget's image has been previously published "anonymously," when its image was shown but not accompanied by either a statement of attribution or provenience (Hranricky 2002:104).

Improper Archeology

Improper archeology[2] is a study of any and all activities of the grave robbers, relic hunters, and amateurs. It studies the activities of relic collectors and the content of their collections. It also studies the relic collecting literature and the catalogs and relic show offerings of dealers in Native American relics. At its broadest, improper archeology covers any aspect of archeology that falls outside strict professional purview (Glanville 2005).

Improper archeology asks many inquisitive questions, but its fundamental questions are who were the Late Woodland Period people of Holstonia and how did they live? At its best, improper archeology can suggest answers about the cultural connections among Late Woodland peoples in the Southeast, and even provide the basis for speculation about the movements of those people (Glanville 2007c).

In practice, a principal activity of improper archeology is the tracking down, locating, photographing, and documenting of cultural artifacts. The procedure combines the methods of the historian, journalist, and detective. Of course to reach conclusions about vanished cultures, one also uses all the available ethnohistoric evidence and the published record of professional archeology

(proper archeology). For the reasons adumbrated in this article, in Southwest Virginia the primary source material is the cultural evidence of the artifacts themselves.

The methods of improper archeology bear some resemblance to the increasingly common practice in professional archeology by which old artifact collections are reexamined, reanalyzed, and used to evaluate the cultural context of particular region at a particular time. Examples of this sort of investigation are a study of collections of Fort Ancient materials recovered near Cincinnati in the years 1879-1911 (Drooker 1997) and a study of Southwest Virginia faunal materials collected in the 1970s at the Hoge (Tazewell County), Trigg (Montgomery County), and Crab Orchard (Tazewell County) sites (Lapham 2005).

Paralleling improper archeology, efforts to reconstruct lost cultures can also be made using an essentially historical approach – as recently demonstrated in an important work that (relying in significant measure on Drooker's Fort Ancient material analysis) reconstructs the lost culture of the Monyton people of southern West Virginia (Emrick 2005).

In order to succeed, the methods of improper archeology are typically value neutral and do not involve making judgments about the ownership of cultural property. However, the author is well aware of the exceedingly difficult, complicated, often controversial, and always troubling, ethical issues that are inextricably bound up with individual or museum ownership of such property (Fagan 1989; Early 1989; Bieder 1990; Hicks 1997; Atwood 2004; Browner 2005; Hensher 2006).

In connection with the ethical issues, it also is worth bearing in mind that behaviors and practices of people in the past cannot be judged and measured by the different standards of the present.

The Literature

Overall, the archeological literature of Southwest Virginia is extremely slight when compared with that of not-so-distant regions, such as the North Carolina Piedmont, the Appalachian summit, the Tennessee River Valley, and eastern Virginia.

The present article covers principally the years from 1940 to 1970, and the relevant publications from that period are discussed within the body of this article. Older references to the archeology of Southwest Virginia, going back as far as the eighteenth century, are discussed and summarized in the following section.

The formal archeological literature of Southwest Virginia, almost all of which dates from roughly 1970 to the present time, was surveyed in the recent article by this author (Glanville 2007a). References to that literature are generally not repeated here.

The Pre-1940 Literature

The handful of references to the archeology of Southwest Virginia that can be found the pre-1940 literature are briefly described in roughly chronological order in this section.

As is well known, recorded Saltville archeology began in 1782 when Arthur Campbell sent Thomas Jefferson fossil mastodon teeth found at the salt works and described the finds in two separate letters to him (Campbell 1782a, 1782b). Interestingly, these finds from "Nord-Holstein" were known, via Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia,* to the founder of paleontology, Parisian scientist Georges Cuvier, when he gave the mastodon its name in 1806 (Glanville 2007b).

Published nineteenth-century references to Southwest Virginia archeology are rare. The periwinkle shells (probably mostly *Io fluvialis*) that appear in the overturned soil during plowing, and that are highly characteristic of Late Woodland Period sites along the Holston River forks, were noted as early as 1846 (Preston 1900:42-43). Human skeletal remains were found in either 1848 or 1850 in a cave in Saltville (Preston 1900:48-50). Following this first recorded cave entry, a long history ensued of the ill-use and looting of Southwest Virginia caves. The considerable extent of cave abuse in Southwest Virginia has only begun to be professionally documented in recent years (Barber and Hubbard 1997a, 1997b; Boyd et al.

2001).

Evidence of the former presence of Native Americans exploiting Saltville's salt was reported by Southwest Virginia businessman and one-time Virginia governor Wyndham Thomas. He wrote of:

> …the debris of an Indian village, or encampment immediately contiguous to that part of the [Saltville] valley where the soil is most sensibly impregnated with salt. These consisted of broken pottery, arrowheads, and other rude implements of stone, which then [in earlier decades] abounded and are yet frequently turned up by the plow [Roberston 1882].

The finding of a shell midden in Saltville was reported in a little known paper read before the American Philosophical Society in 1880. Its author concluded that the Indians ate mollusks and used mollusk shells to temper their pottery (Lewis 1880).

Holstonia has only small and insignificant mounds (Meyers 2002). So in the 1880s the region did not attract the attention of the professionals concerned with correcting the earlier myth of a mound building people in Eastern America (Silverberg 1968:166-221; Milner 2002:7-10). Because of the region's absence of large mounds, the abundant artifacts buried there were also unknown in the 1880s.

In fact, we have almost no knowledge of Southwest Virginia archeology dating from closing decades of the nineteenth century. In stark contrast, at this very time, books were being published showing pictures of rich suites of artifacts from the mound building cultures of the Tennessee River valley just 200-odd miles to the southwest of Holstonia and directly river-linked to it (Thruston 2005[1890]).

The opening of the Mathieson Alkali Works in Saltville in 1895 and the subsequent extensive development of the brine well fields[3] there led to land subsidence and the consequent exposure of fossil bearing strata. In the wake of one such cave-in, the Mathieson Works Superintendent, William Dye Mount, sent Pleistocene fossil specimens to the Carnegie Institution in Pittsburgh, whose scientists then visited the site and cataloged its fossil remains. Mastodon remains were found to be by far the most common type in the Saltville deposit. (Peterson 1917).

Prior to the work of Nathan Brisco published in 1933 (and described below), no documentary evidence is known that confirms local people were unearthing Indian burials and collecting relics. The anecdotal, oral history of the region suggests that such activities began in the 1920s. Clarence Maiden was almost certainly hunting for Indian relics by 1920, but probably not yet digging (Harry Haynes 2006, personal communication). One written account tells cryptically of "mass digging…in the 1930's on the Carl Brickey place at Broadford" (Stephenson 1957).

In 1933 the Marion resident Ellen Copenhaver prepared a handwritten essay about the life and culture of the Indians of Southwestern Virginia as part of her program of study for a Master's degree at Columbia University in New York. She wrote:

> So far as is known to the author there has been no attempt to inter-relate the voluminous amount of information concerning the many groups and tribes, who at one time lived in this section. In fact at the Natural History Museum in New York City I have been told that less is known about the aborigines of this section and that along the coast of north and south Carolina, than any other in the United States [Copenhaver 1933:1-2].

As far as Southwest Virginia is concerned, the situation with regard to our having little knowledge of its aborigines remains much the same 75 years after Copenhaver remarked on it.

Although he is a shadowy and today an almost unknown figure, the pioneer of modern archeology in Southwest Virginia was Nathan Brisco (Glanville 2005). Brisco was a school teacher who later worked in the insurance business, and he was a serious and dedicated amateur arche-

ologist. He described his work in a series of six newspaper articles in the *Marion Democrat* (Brisco 1933) and prepared an undated, formal report overlapping his newspaper reports (Brisco n.d.). Perhaps, Brisco's single most significant archeological contribution was to document the existence of stone box graves in the region. Copies of most of Brisco's work are difficult to obtain, but it is planned that they will be republished shortly (Glanville n.d.).

Less than a decade before Brisco began his work in Smyth County, archeology was making its dramatic entrance on the world stage with Howard Carter's opening of the tomb of Tutankhmen. Carter wrote:

> Too many people – unfortunately there are so-called archaeologists among them – are apparently under the impression that the object bought from a dealer's shop is just as valuable as one which has been found in actual excavation…. Fieldwork is all-important, and it is sure and certain that if every excavation had been properly, systematically, and conscientiously carried out, our knowledge of Egyptian archaeology would be at least 50 per cent greater than it is [Carter and Mace 1977(1923):125].

Nathan Brisco undoubtedly would have agreed with the sentiments expressed by Carter and Mace above and said as much when he wrote that graves should be "investigated only by those persons filled with the scientific spirit whose sole aim is the advancement of knowledge" (Brisco 1933: June 6).

Dick Slattery Goes to Saltville

So much for the early years. Now, in 1935, Dick Slattery enters the archeological story of Southwest Virginia.[4]

Richard Gates Slattery[5] was born in 1918 in Portsmouth, Ohio, and moved to Washington, D.C., when he was six years old. Seven years later, an accidental find pointed him in his life's direction. Here's the story in his own words:

> It was an early summer's day when three boys were fishing on the Maryland side of the Potomac River some 30 miles above Washington, D.C. The fish weren't biting and we were thirsty and decided to get into the canoe and paddle across the river to a spring we knew not far from the Virginia shore. To reach the spring we crossed a corn field and I suddenly stopped and there at my feet lay a perfect arrowhead! I held it in my hand and soon noticed broken pieces of pottery on the ground. I was only thirteen, but the next day I was on the street car headed to the Smithsonian to find out about this exciting find. My interest expanded after talking with Mr. Neal Judd and I wanted to learn more. I found a second-hand bookstore [Dick Slattery, 2006, personal communication].

In that secondhand bookstore on Pennsylvania Avenue he bought a Smithsonian-discarded book that pictured and located Indian sites in Eastern America. The arrowhead and the book led to his lifelong involvement in archeology, which began in earnest four years later in the summer of 1935.

That summer he and his friend Hugh Stabler persuaded Stabler's father to take them on a several-week automobile tour to visit many of those archeological sites. Traveling in Stabler's father's 1932 Chevrolet (Figure 4), the trio went to the Marietta mounds in Ohio. They drove on to Maysville, Kentucky, where they actually participated in an excavation – giving Slattery his first ever digging experience. They continued to the famous Indian mounds at Etowah in Georgia, where they saw phenomenal amounts of pottery lying on the surface and examined the site's owner's personal collection of relics and artifacts. From Etowah, they returned to Washington via the Smoky Mountains, stopping in Saltville on the way, where a local family showed them great hospitality and put them up for the night.

Slattery has never forgotten Saltville; and even today, as he approaches his ninth decade, you can hear his voice sparkle when he tells of his Saltville visits and of time spent digging with the

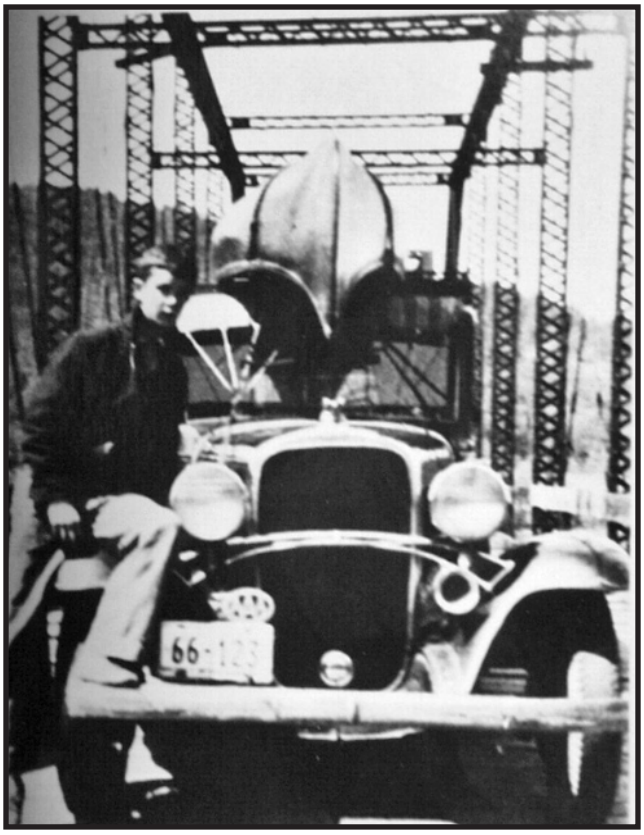

Figure 4. Hugh Stabler Beside the 1932 Chevrolet with the Canoe Lashed to Its Roof at the Point of Rocks Bridge Over the Potomac River in 1935. The picture was taken during one of many archeological scouting trips Stabler and Slattery made as teenagers. Here, both were 17 years old. This was the car that took them the same year on their grand tour of important Indian sites, including a visit to Saltville. The bridge structure seen in the picture was washed away in the 1936 Potomac River flood. Picture by Dick Slattery.

Maiden brothers: Clarence and Robey.

It seems entirely appropriate that these two lifelong friends in archeology should have Southwest Virginia artifacts associated with their names. While Slattery has his gorget, described in this article, Stabler has his pipe (MacCord 2003)

Following his introduction to archeology, Slattery began to hang around the laboratories of Smithsonian Institution in Washington. At first he had no official position, but as an enthusiastic teenager and a frequent visitor, he quickly gained an unofficial status. It was during this time that Slattery told Dr. Waldo Wedel of the Smithsonian of his Saltville visit in 1935. Hearing about Saltville prompted Wedel himself to visit, as described in the following section. Thus, it may be said that modern professional archeology in Saltville begins with Dick Slattery, who blazed the later trail for Waldo Wedel.

Meanwhile, in 1937, Wedel asked Slattery (and also Hugh Stabler) to work for him as members of his field staff. They accepted and eventually Slattery worked in Kansas for Wedel for four summers (1937-1940). Stabler worked for just one digging season. Slattery's annual trips to work in Plains archeology were ended by the approach of World War II. Slattery has published his story of those summers[6] (Slattery 1995) and wrote in an email message to the author, "In spite of the dust those were the days for archeology!" (Slattery 2005, personal communication).

With World War II looming, Slattery was hired to work at the Glenn L. Martin Company in Baltimore. There, he spent the war years running final quality control checks on B-26 bomber aircraft. We'll return to Slattery's postwar archeological activities in Saltville later, but next we turn to Waldo Wedel and his trip to Saltville.

Waldo Wedel Visits Saltville and Meets Robey Maiden

Dr. Waldo Rudolph Wedel (1908-1996) was a native of Kansas and a first-rank, professional archeologist who has been called the "Dean of Plains Archeology" (Gradwohl 1996). After obtaining his Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, Wedel moved to the Smithsonian Institution in 1936. There, he was either directly responsible for or closely associated with U.S. Plains archeology from the 1930s to the 1980s. He retired in 1976 and served until his death as Archeologist Emeritus in the Smithsonian's U.S. National Museum. He was President of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) in 1948-1949, and in 1965 was elected to the National Academy of Sciences. A guide to the papers and documents of the Wedel's has been published on line (National Anthropological Archives n.d.). This guide tells that Wedel reconnoitered the

Holston River drainage area near Saltville, Virginia during the winter of 1938-1939.

Following Slattery's lead and Wedel's own visit, the modern, professional record of Late Woodland Period archeology in Saltville began with Wedel's writing in 1940 of an internal Smithsonian Institution report. This report was published in the *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archeological Society of Virginia* in September 1951, in an issue that quickly went out of print and became unavailable (Wedel 1990[1951]). To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Society in 1990, the article was reprinted as one of four articles from the early years of the *Quarterly Bulletin* described as "significant" and which transcended Virginia archeology and represented "contributions to American archeology" (Reinhart 1990).

The article stands as the first professional paper to tell anything about Saltville's Woodland Period archeology, and is the formal account of Wedel's trip. Slattery, on the other hand, gives an informal account of Wedel's trip – which is described shortly. Wedel wrote in 1940:

> Reports reaching the U.S. National Museum during September and October, 1940, directed attention to the recent discovery of archeological remains in the vicinity of Saltville, Virginia. These reports stated that quantities of pottery, stone, bone, horn, and shell artifacts, and numerous human skeletons had been excavated by non-professionals from village sites and burial caves. Largely through the efforts of Mr. R. G. Slattery of Washington, D.C., correspondence was initiated between the Museum staff and Mr. Robey Maiden, one of the active collectors in the Saltville district. As a result of this correspondence, the writer was detailed to make a preliminary examination of the remains with a view to formulation of plans for future excavation if conditions warranted. This examination was made during the first week in December. No digging was attempted at the time, but with Mr. Robey Maiden and his brother [presumably Clarence] as guides, I visited a number of local village sites and caves. One day was devoted to a study of the Maiden collection, and the better specimens were photographed [Wedel 1990].

Wedel's article pictured the following items from Robey Maiden's collection: pottery vessels from sites at Broadford and Saltville and two engraved shell gorgets (both in the Citico style [Muller 1966]) found with burials at Broadford. From an unnamed collection Wedel pictured a copper plaque, copper tubes, and shell beads from a Broadford burial, and an alate steatite pipe from cave near Saltville. When interviewed a decade later for a newspaper article, Robey Maiden said that

> Professor Wedel of the Smithsonian Institute once remarked that his [Robey Maiden's] was the most representative private collection he had ever seen [Diggs 1949].

Regarding the extent of digging by local people in the vicinity, Wedel quoted Robey Maiden as follows:

> According to Mr. Maiden, several hundred graves were opened at one site near Broadford before 1940; a second site about 200 yards east had not then been touched. At Saltville, where the Indians' site has been largely obliterated or covered over by modern dwellings, well over 100 graves are said to have been excavated [Wedel 1990].

Slattery's recollections of what Wedel told him after returning from Saltville to Washington provide a more personal account than the one Wedel published. Having stressed that Wedel was not given to exaggeration, Slattery recalled that Wedel described how Robey Maiden let him down 30 feet on a rope into a cave where Wedel landed on a pile of human bones. This same cave had a flue that went up at a 45° angle to daylight and there were human bones all the way up. Wedel told Slattery he figured that the Indians had filled that cave, and there were "wagon loads" of bones

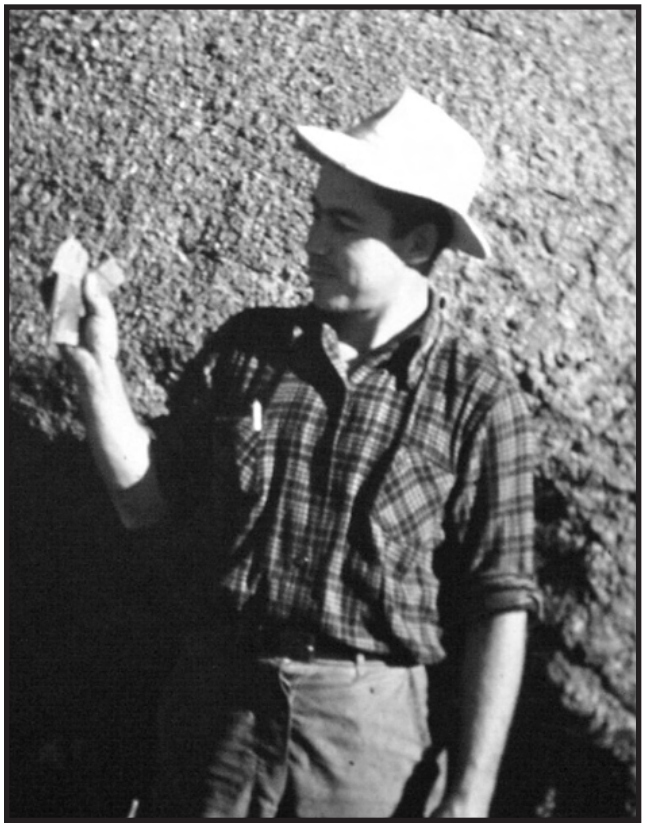

Figure 5. Dick Slattery at the Pipestone Quarry in Minnesota in September 1945. A month after this picure was taken Slattery was again in Saltville, this time excavating with Clarence and Robey Maiden. Picture courtesy of Dick Slattery.

down there (Dick Slattery 2005, personal communication).

Slattery Returns to Saltville

With World War II drawing to a close, Slattery quit the Glenn L. Martin company in the summer of 1945 and made plans to enlist in the army. A few months later, he joined an infantry unit, was transferred to the Army Corps of Engineers, and worked in maintenance and repair of P-51 and C-46 planes. He left service in 1950 as an Air Corps sergeant, having served for a time in occupied Japan. In the time between quitting Martin in summer 1945 and enlisting in the army a few months later, Slattery once again traveled doing archeology, as pictured in Figure 5.

During his 1945 travels, Slattery returned to Saltville and in October excavated with Clarence and Robey Maiden in the North Holston River Valley downstream from Saltville in Washington County, Virginia, at the Sproles site,[7] seen in Figure 6.

The brief, original notes and photographs made at the time of these excavations of human burials are now in the author's files. The black and white photographs and color slides that Slattery took at the time are the only known such record of a burial excavation in Southwest Virginia dating from the era of the relic collectors. Both the black and white pictures and color slides taken during his 1945 excavation show the Slattery Gorget *in situ* near the left shoulder of the skeleton. The author will provide copies of these images to any responsible person who wishes to see them for research purposes.

At the Sproles site Slattery dug and personally excavated the Slattery Gorget. Despite their demands, Slattery did not allow the Maiden brothers to have the gorget. Neither did he give it to the Smithsonian, although he did allow the

Figure 6. The Sproles Site Photographed in June 2005. The Sproles' house is hidden in the woods in the distance adjacent to the right side of the road. The sites of the burials that Slattery excavated in 1945 are in the immediate foreground, less than 50 yards from the camera. After seeing this picture, Slattery wrote: "Many thanks for the photos of the Sproles site. After so many years the site looks much the same. I can almost mark the spot where the burial with the gorget was located. Beautiful spot there."

Smithsonian to photograph the gorget when he soon after visited Washington with the gorget in his possession.

Like Wedel before him, Slattery took pictures of Maiden's relic collection. Some of Maiden's marine shell gorgets and marine shell pins are shown in Figure 7, while some of the pipes in Maiden's collection are shown in Figure 8.

Although Slattery chose not to donate his gorget to the Smithsonian, he did in 1957 give the institution a large collection of his archeological finds. That gift was acknowledged with the words, "Mention should also be made of a large, well-documented collection from 23 States and the District of Columbia presented by Richard Gates Slattery" (U.S. National Museum 1958).

Slattery's 1957 donation included many artifacts from Southwest Virginia, including some from the Broadford site near Saltville, such as a restored pot, a copper projectile point, celts, and a tooth from a dog or bear. Other artifacts came from Washington County, such as shell beads, steatite bowl fragments, a partial pottery pipe, and from the Sproles site, human skeletal elements.

The Maidens

In this section, the relic collecting and dealing activities of the Maiden brothers, particularly Robey (1911-1975) and Clarence (1906-1995), are described. They are pictured in Figure 9. Waldo Wedel's interaction with Robey Maiden was described in a previous section.

The activities of the Maiden brothers belong to an earlier time. Today, archeologists adhere to strict codes of professional conduct and do not own or collect relics. Indeed, in the author's experience, contemporary professional archeologists generally eschew any interaction with pot hunters and relic collectors. For the author, not being an archeologist is actually helpful in this connection, and as a prominent Virginia archeologist recently remarked to him, "You can go places we can't go." True enough.

Figure 7. Marine Shell and Gorgets and pins in the Robey Maiden Collection in the Fall of 1945. The two gorgets in the center appear to be the same Citico style specimens that Waldo Wedel saw and photographed five years earlier and published in his own paper about Saltville (Wedel 1990). Photograph by Dick Slattery in the author's files.

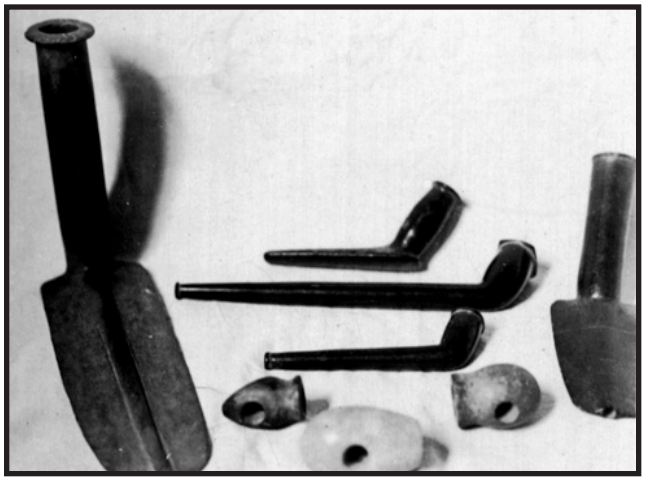

Figure 8. Pipes in the Robey Maiden Collection in the Fall of 1945. Photograph by Dick Slattery in the author's files.

Sixty years ago, the interaction between professionals and relic hunters was different – as this article illustrates. In addition to the previously described collaborations between Slattery, Wedel, and the Maidens, in September 1947 Hugh Stabler led a group of members of the National Speleological Society (NSS) on an exploration of caves in the Saltville area in the hope that previously unexplored caves would yield finds of Indian relics "equal in importance to those already discovered [in the region]" (National Speleological Society 1947a, 1947b). The party of 21 persons that Stabler led included Howard MacCord and "two Maiden brothers of Saltville, Va." (National Speleological Society 1947c). Both Clarence Maiden and Rufus Pickle (Glanville 2007a) were listed on the NSS membership roster in 1950.

Artifacts obtained during the cave investigations lead by Stabler, along with some of the artifacts recovered at the Sproles site by Slattery, were studied soon after their recovery in 1948 by anthropologists of the Division of Archeology at the U.S. National Museum. Although not originally planned for publication, the internal National Museum reports were published three years later in the fifth volume of this *Quarterly Bulletin* (Caldwell 1951; Newman 1951), along with a brief speculation about the culture of the Native people who used caves in the regions as mortuaries (Robertson 1951). According to Boyd et al. (2001), destruction of the natural and archeological resources contained within these caves (in Southwest Virginia} has continued unabated, in spite of state laws meant to curtail such damage.

Robey Maiden remained a focus of attention for visitors to Saltville, and a few years after Slattery dug with Maiden another prominent Virginia archeologist was meeting with him and publishing pictures of items in Maiden's collection (McCary 1955). McCary, who needs little introduction to readers of this journal (Egloff and McAvoy 1998), showed images of a typical Holstonian suite of artifacts: olivella and marginella shell beads and ornaments, a large pendant made from a conch shell, a large plain shell gorget, discoidal shell beads, tubular bone beads, bone awls, stone discoidals, etc. All of these specimens, McCary reported, were grave goods recovered by Robey Maiden.

Fifteen years after McCary's visit to Maiden, C. G. Holland published his masterly archeological survey of Southwest Virginia and again wrote about Robey Maiden – but without naming names. In the preface to that survey he said:

> In contrast to the professionals, the local collectors are a potent group in southwest Virginia archeology and I am indebted to

Figure 9. The Seven Maiden Brothers Circa 1953. Robey stands in the middle of the back row. Clarence is on the far right. Picture courtesy of the Museum of the Middle Appalachians.

some of them for much help. On the other hand, they have been a most destructive force. About 40 years ago one of a family of several brothers began to dig at night in open sites and to enter caves for artifacts. Through the following years this man with single-minded determination dug in nearly all the open, pottery-bearing sites and caves within a large radius of Saltville. The artifacts sought were mainly pipes, ear ornaments, shell pendants and similar objects that were highly prized and sold well. Others of the family took up this activity and the pattern spread to embrace many people in their town and surrounding community. It is estimated that 40 to 50 people are now engaged in this destructive digging between Tazewell and Washington Counties.

The economic aspect of this digging is shown by the following prices of artifacts: pot – $35; string of conch columella – $40; "ear plugs" – $25 to $35 per set of two; tube beads – $15 for a string 24 inches long; Marginella beads – 50¢ for a string of 24 inches; gorgets – $50 to $75; polished disks – $5 to $l0; arrowheads –6¢, but if colored red $1.00. One collector related to me how he made $176 after two days digging at a single site by selling the artifacts. When an artifact changes hands, and it frequently does, the problems of determining its provenience and authenticity arise. Fakes are also manufactured here. High prices have also fostered the establishment of "trading posts" that keep suppliers busy. Some of the individuals already mentioned and local farmers who have areas of Indian occupation on their lands or nearby are among the suppliers. Other suppliers come from Arkansas. The demand has also brought collectors from more distant parts of the state to spend a few days or a week of their vacation putting holes in productive sites [Holland 1970:viii].

Notwithstanding Holland's condemnation, Robey Maiden had a contemplative and curious mind, and while his older brother Clarence was engaged in selling and trading relics, Robey seems to have had a genuine interest in the culture that produced the artifacts he gathered so efficiently and prolifically. Robey actually wrote a series of six newspaper articles in cooperation with local historian and Olin chemical plant engineer Mack Backwell, Jr. (Maiden with Mack Blackwell, Jr. 1965). The articles are presently impossible to obtain, but are scheduled to be republished shortly (Glanville n.d.).

Clarence Maiden remained active as a relic dealer into the 1980s. In 1984 he wrote a handwritten letter to Dick Slattery in which, after having told sadly of the recent deaths of four of his six brothers, he wrote in part:

> At one time I had the finest prize collection in Va. I would like to buy or trade you out of the pieces we found on the Nordyke site. I was 77 years old on June 24. I wish you would come by some time it would be a treat to see and talk to you [Clarence Maiden 1984].

Incidentally, there is a certain irony in the fact that the Archeological Society of Virginia of Virginia was founded at a meeting at the Valentine Museum in Richmond on January 8, 1940, when 17 Virginians "organized as [the] Virginia Indian Relic Collector's Club" (Archeological Society of Virginia 1990:109). It was later that very same year Maiden and Wedel met in Saltville.

Slattery's Later Career

We now return to Dick Slattery and his later career.

After his discharge from the Army, Slattery enrolled at George Washington University on the GI Bill, graduating in 1950 with a BA degree. Following graduation, he worked first for 13 years for the Army as a civilian employee in Washington and then, until his retirement in 1973, for 10 years at a weapons command center in Illinois, across the Mississippi River from his Iowa home.

Figure 10. "Dick Slattery with Some of His Tools and Artifacts" Reads the Caption of This Newspaper Picture Published in the *Quad City Times*, July 11, 1983. Photograph by Ron Bath. Used with permission.

With retirement, he could return to his first love: an archeological career. For 20 years (from 1975-1995) Slattery was active in contract archeology, working as a Project Archeologist for the Office of the State Archeologist of Iowa. For 12 of those 20 years he also served as the elected president of the Iowa Archeological Society. As a Project Archeologist he conducted 27 cultural resource surveys in Iowa, concluding each with the submission and publication by the Office of the State Archeologist of a Contract Completion Report. Figure 10 shows him during his years of active archeology in Iowa, when "Digging out ancient artifacts and forgotten bits of history in the Quad-Cities and surrounding areas has become less a hobby than a full time avocation for him since he retired from the Rock Island Arsenal 10 years ago" (Arpy 1983).

Over the years he published a number of articles about his work as an amateur archeologist in various state archeological journals, such as his 1995 article describing his Kansas years mentioned earlier. His magnum opus was a 184-page co-authored work describing the archeological resources of the upper Potomac River valley (Slattery and Woodward 1992). Even today, Slattery has an article in print planned for November 2007 publication in special issue of the *Plains Archaeologist*.

Until now, Slattery has never published about his 1945 excavation near the North Fork of the Holston River. That is finally done in the appendix to this article where he describes the gorget he unearthed at the Sproles site.

Summary History of the Slattery Gorget

The Slattery Gorget is one of very few of the many Holstonian gorgets that can be assigned an established provenience. Soon after its excavation in October 1945, Slattery allowed the gorget to be photographed by the U.S. National Museum, although he retained possession of it. His notes record that the picture is Smithsonian negative 37176. Asked why he declined to give the Smithsonian the gorget, he explained: "I knew if I gave it to the Smithsonian they would never display it. It would just wind up in the basement."

Fundaburk and Foreman in *Sun Circles and Human Hands* (1957:Plate 46) were the first authors to publish a picture of the Slattery Gorget designated as USNM (U.S. National Museum) 37-146. Their popular and frequently reprinted book brought the gorget to the attention of a wide audience.

Jon Muller when writing his dissertation on gorgets and their styles used the same image of the Slattery Gorget and gave it the notation Va-Ws-X2 (Muller 1966:230) and designated it as belonging to the Citico style. It was later pictured by Brain and Phillips (1996:501) in their well known gorget catalog and compendium .

After keeping the gorget for 52 years, Slat-

tery donated it to the New York State Historical Association, along with the shell beads he found on the same burial. Today the Slattery Gorget remains in the collection of the New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, New York, and is on display at the Fenimore Art Museum (Eva Fognell 2007, personal communication).

Conclusions

Archeology in Southwest Virginia has checkered history. Compared with surrounding regions, professional archeology in the region started late and remained at permanently modest levels.

Salt and gypsum had been mined industrially for over 100 years in Smyth and Washington counties. Beginning in the late 1910s or early 1920s relic hunters and dealers began to mine Indian burials in caves and sites along the rivers in the region. Holstonia thereby became the focus of a third extraction industry. By 1940 the region had developed a well-defined community of relic hunters, diggers, collectors, and dealers. This community was active in the 1960s when C. G. Holland visited, though it is little in evidence today.

An absence of mounds in the region is likely one of the reasons that its archeological treasures were long overlooked. The construction of multiple dams – that so stimulated Tennessee archeology down river (Lyon 1996) – did not reach Virginia.

No synthesis of the Late Woodland Period in the region has ever taken account of the enormous amount of cultural material in public and private collections that the region has produced.

Marine shell gorgets are abundant in Southwest Virginia. Generally little is known about an individual gorget other than that it exists and there might be an oral tradition telling where it came from. Even less is known about gorgets seen only in old pictures taken by an unknown person at a time and place unknown. The Slattery Gorget is thus very unusual because we know both its archeological context and its entire history.

Improper archeology is a hopelessly inadequate substitute for the many years of professional study and excavation that have produced a rich archeological heritage and profound cultural insight at sites within a couple of hundred miles, such as (for example) Toqua (Polhemus 1987) or the Town Creek Mound (Coe 1995). Sadly, improper archeology is often the best that can be done in Southwest Virginia. Nevertheless, improper archeology with all its defects offers us a chance to glimpse the lives of those long gone but important Late Woodland Holstonians.

Slattery's Article

In the appendix that follows, the author has edited and slightly revised Slattery's draft and added two amplifying endnotes. The strange manner in which this article finally comes to be published is in itself an interesting illustration of improper archeology at work.

APPENDIX

THE SLATTERY GORGET: AN ENGRAVED SHELL OBJECT WITH A RATTLESNAKE MOTIF

Richard G. Slattery
Davenport, Iowa

Introduction

During late prehistoric times (A.D. l000-1700), in the southeastern part of what is now the United States, there developed an artistic florescence described as the "Southeastern Ceremonial Cult." This belief system, centered in eastern Tennessee, spread to surrounding areas as distant as several hundred miles. Among surviving artifacts and mound structures identified as characteristic of the Southeastern Ceremonial Cult are artistically engraved shell gorgets fashioned from large, excised portions of the conch shell wall (*Busycon perversum*).

These gorgets represent an art excelling in technical competence and revealing a true appreciation by the artist of the involved aesthetic qualities. The engravings were carefully executed

on the inner, concave, smooth side of the shell wall using nothing more than a sharpened flint. The designs were frequently highly stylized, as is the case with the rattlesnake (herpetomorphic) theme used for the gorget described here. This rattlesnake motif developed during the latter part of the Dallas Period of the Southeastern Ceremonial Cult.[8]

Discussion

Engraved shell gorgets are seldom found in any archeological context except accompanying human burials. The specimen described here was no exception. It was excavated on October 5, 1945 from site 44WG11, located near the Nordyke Bridge on the left (southeast) bank of the North Fork of the Holston River in Washington County, Virginia. Original notes[9] made at the time of the excavation tell that the gorget (Figure 11) was found on the extended burial of a female and that 1-1/2 quarts of shell beads were found accompanying the same burial.

A Description of the Slattery Gorget

The physical properties of the Slattery gorget are summarized in Table 1. It is in the Citico style. We note here some additional features: the principal partitions of the rattlesnake body shown as crosshatched lines; diamonds on the snake are represented as squares with inner inscribed circles; a total of 11 rattles are depicted; there are 30 dots inscribed around the anterior of the snake; the central dot of the design is surrounded by six circles; angled lines to right of center might represent stylized open jaws of the reptile or something entirely different. Any particular interpretation of this highly stylized rendition of the ceremonial rattlesnake is beyond translation from a culture lost in time and understanding from our own.

Slattery Acknowledgements

Davis, Daniel B., University of Kentucky, Lexington, for his informative letter of September 24, 1997 (to R. G. Slattery) and for excerpts from the

Figure 11. The Slattery Gorget. Photograph courtesy of Dick Slattery.

Table 1. The Physical Properties of the Slattery Gorget.

Height	145 mm
Edge-to-edge straight line width	122 mm
Concavity width	130.2
Thickness (average)	9.6 mm
Placement of both suspension holes	10.7 from top edge
Space between suspension holes	33.5 mm
Suspension hole wear	Vertical on basal side of both holes
Diameter of suspension holes	3.5 mm (left), 4.0 mm (right)
Weight	13 oz (370 g)

following:

Hanson, Lee H., Jr. The Hardin Village Site. *Studies in Anthropology* 4. University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 1966.

Kneberg, Madeline. Engraved Shell Gorgets and Their Associations. *Tennessee Archaeologist* 15(1):1-39, 1959.

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Notes

[1]Gordon Hart and his son Steven are prominent collectors of (and writers about) Native American pipes. In his 1978 book Hart tells he was once asked to examine a collection of 179 pipes of doubtful provenance and ascertained that 177 of them were counterfeit.

[2]Improper archeology began spontaneously and accidentally on the evening of Wednesday March 17, 2004. In Saltville that evening the author was invited to see the first of what subsequently became many, many private artifact collections. As he stood on the porch of a house in Saltville, just after dark, looking over the quiet, foggy valley that stretched below, stunned by what he had just seen he announced: "Dammit, we're never going to get a proper archeology of Saltville, but that shouldn't stop us from getting the best possible improper archeology." A number of people have chastised the author for the term, pointing out that it is not an improper activity. However, the suggested alternatives such as "collections archeology" or "reconstructive archeology" seem lame to the present author.

[3]Water was pumped down several hundred feet underground, dissolved the solid salt at the depth, and was raised to the surface as rich salt-bearing liquid called brine. The brine was an essential raw material for the operations of the chemical plant.

[4]The author discovered Slattery via improper archeology as follows: In spring 2005 various Internet sources and databases the author consulted brought up the names of Hugh Stabler and Dick Slattery in connection with Saltville's archeology. Stabler's phone number was finally obtained, but contact was stymied for a couple of months because at the time Stabler was hospitalized. Eventually when reached – during his 88th birthday party – and asked about Slattery, Stabler said, "I just hung up from speaking to him." Within a few

minutes the author was himself speaking to Slattery. Much of the information in this article comes from their ensuing series of phone calls, and exchanges of email messages and postal packages.

[5]Different people know Slattery by different first names. He is known as "Dick" to his later friends. Earlier he went by his middle name "Gates."

[6]Written many years later, but illustrated with many contemporary photographs, this memoir describes field archeology on the Plains in the 1930s. During the 1937 digging season Slattery met and excavated alongside Loren Eiseley, the Nebraska-born anthropologist who later went on to a career as a prominent author and essayist.

[7]There has been confusion about the name of this site. It was formerly called the Mitchell site (after the renters who lived in the house on the property prior to 1945). It has also been called the Nordyke site because of its proximity to Nordyke Creek which enters the North Fork of the Holston River near the site. Modern terminology, and the current Virginia State Department of Historic Resources designation, is as the Sproles site, named for the Betty and F. W. Sproles family. The Sproles purchased the house in 1945. Mr. Sproles is deceased, but Mrs. Betty Sproles continues to live in the house at the site – along with her daughter Ms. Linda Sproles. F. W. Sproles was friendly to relic hunters and grave diggers. He allowed many people to excavate on his property. Holland (1970:43) says "He [Sproles] has dug extensively on his site and permitted others to share this activity with him." Mrs. Betty Sproles has slowly changed her views about relic digging over the years. When the author spoke with her in the summer of 2005, she said "I wish a lot that we'd never let anyone dig here. It wasn't fair to the Indians. They found many a skeleton when they dug the road [that runs in front of her house]. That was their cemetery and it ought to have been left alone."

[8]The Dallas Culture of the Southeastern Ceremonial Cult was centered in Tennessee and the Dallas Period there is typically dated as ranging from A.D. 1300 to 1600.

[9]Slattery's handwritten notes made on October 4 and 5, 1945 are in the author's files.

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