

# **ASSESSMENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS OF THE JOHANNES KOLB ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT**

by  
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The following assessment is the result of personal observations and interviews, as well as a review of literature and visual displays provided for the public during the March 2007 dig at the Kolb Site in Darlington County, SC.

For the purposes of this assessment, I have categorized each of the educational components I found at the Kolb Site into one of the following, and will address each in turn:

- **Visual Displays and Literature**
- **Site Tours**
- **Demonstrators and Re-enactors**
- **Volunteer Work**
- **Professional Staff**

Having looked at each of the components in this way, I will, in my summary, posit the effectiveness and benefits of the program as a whole.

## **VISUAL DISPLAYS AND LITERATURE**

As one enters the Kolb Site from the road/parking area, immediately to the right are a number of easels fabricated from local materials which display maps and chronologies of the Kolb Site, and photographic and descriptive depictions of artifacts typically found in southeastern archaeology. Additionally, there are actual artifacts such as stone points and ceramic vessels recovered in previous years' work at the Kolb Site which have been archived and are on display. These are essentially stand alone displays for the visitor to peruse upon first reaching the site; however, there are always archaeologists (often including the site and field directors) there to answer questions. This area is where most visitors begin their tour of the site, whether their tour is self-guided or led by the site's educational specialist, Tariq Afar.

The text on the displays is perhaps better suited to adult visitors than young children, but the images and artifacts do a good job of engaging all and briefing the visitors on the general history as well as the archaeology being conducted at the site.

Handout pamphlets describing the history of the site, and the archaeology being done there, are also available in this display area for visitors to take with them and read as they go. The pamphlets are accessible, well-written and informative.



1) *The display area at the Kolb Site*

## **SITE TOURS**

One of the staff members at the Kolb Site, Tariq Ghaffar, is by training both an archaeologist and a teacher. As individuals or groups arrive, Mr. Ghaffar greets them and offers to take them on a guided tour of the site. Having worked at the Kolb Site since the project began, Mr. Ghaffar is well versed in all aspects of the dig, from the methods used to the analysis and interpretation of artifacts and features. As a teacher, he is adept at conveying information to the various groups, whether they be local students, boy scout troops, families and community members, or fellow professionals.

The tour usually begins in the area of the displays, and then works around the site to the various units being excavated, as well as the demonstrators and re-enactors. At each unit, Mr. Ghaffar introduces the archaeologists and asks them to explain what they are working on and explain the processes they are using to excavate, record data, and preserve artifacts. The archaeologists happily engage the visitors in conversation about their work, and answer questions and (often) dispel misconceptions about the nature of their work and/or the things they find.

The demonstrators and re-enactors, many of whom regularly perform their specialties for schools and other groups throughout the year, discuss the intricacies of recreating primitive technologies or show the tools and materials used by the inhabitants of the site from prehistoric times up to and including the colonial occupation of Mr. Kolb.

In addition to the guided tours, visitors to the Kolb Site are also welcomed to explore the site on their own and to ask questions of any and all of the archaeologists or demonstrators there. Rather than giving predetermined lectures, the Kolb Site staff talks with the visitors, answering questions, and offering insights into the history of the site, the archaeology, and the principals of understanding and preserving our cultural heritage.



2) *Educational Specialist Tariq Ghaffar (left) begins a tour of the Kolb Site for a local Boy Scout troop*

## **DEMONSTRATORS AND RE-ENACTORS**

As mentioned above, the demonstrators and re-enactors all regularly engage in educational displays of their knowledge and work. Three (Tom Mancke, Tom Ray, and Bobby Southerlin) specialize in primitive technologies. They show visitors the various items they have made, and explain to them about the materials, the processes involved, and their uses for prehistoric peoples.

Mr. Mancke displays and demonstrates a vast array of items representing much of the tool kits and personal items prehistoric peoples living at the Kolb Site would have known, while Mr. Ray specializes in prehistoric fishing tools and techniques. Mr. Southerlin brings an assortment of pottery he's made, representing various styles indicative of the several prehistoric periods represented at the site. As he explains about the pottery he's brought, he demonstrates the techniques and allows visitors to try their hands at it and work the clay as well, making and firing pots all the while.

A fourth in this group is Jason Smith, an 18<sup>th</sup> century period re-enactor, dressed as Mr. Kolb himself might have upon his arrival on the Carolina frontier. Mr. Smith has a variety of artifacts of the period to show, and demonstrate the use of, to the visitors. Among these is a smooth bore musket that would have been perhaps the most indispensable tool to a settler such as Mr. Kolb - used for both hunting and protection.



3) Demonstrator Tom Mancke displays a variety of primitive technologies for visitors



4) Tom Ray talks about prehistoric fishing in the region



5) *Jason Smith, 18<sup>th</sup> century re-enactor*

## **VOLUNTEERS**

The educational value of the volunteer system at the Kolb Site cannot be overestimated. Not only does it encourage young and old to participate in the dig, and to learn about archaeology and the history of the peoples who have inhabited the site over the last 10,000 years in a hands-on way, it has actually encouraged some to take up archaeology as a career. One such volunteer I spoke with, JaColeman Hutto was first introduced to archaeology by volunteering at the Kolb Site as a fourteen year-old. Now a college graduate, he has chosen archaeology as his career, and is employed as a field technician.

Volunteers range in age from about 12 to 70, and work under the watchful eyes of trained archaeologists who not only teach the processes of archaeological investigation, but the reasons behind each of those processes. All those I spoke with expressed volumes about what they had learned from the experience, and furthermore, how their appreciation of the work and it's importance had grown as a result.



6) *Don Rosick a Columbia Bookseller, volunteers for a week every year.*

## **PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

The professional staff at the Kolb Site see public education as a primary goal of the work they do here. Considerable time and effort is put into making the experience both accessible and educational to visitors. Though one particular day of the two week dig each year is set aside as “Public Day”, the staff welcomes visitors virtually every day, and always finds time to talk with them about their work. Often, even after the days work at the site has been completed, the archaeologists will go into the homes of local residents to discuss their progress and encourage more to come out and get involved.



7) *Week One 2007 crew, including volunteers and staff/*

## **SUMMARY**

The educational components of the Kolb Project are numerous and varied, and address all of the short and long term goals associated with any good public archaeology project. The program is designed and promoted to engage groups and individuals of all ages, from all backgrounds, and all levels of interest - casual to professional. It involves all the modalities of learning (auditory, visual, and tactile/kinesthetic), and is offered in such a way as to put visitors at ease with what might otherwise seem an overwhelming amount to absorb.

What visitors to the Kolb site come away with is impressive. They gain an understanding not only of how archaeology is conducted in the field, but why it is important to all of us as a means of gaining knowledge about, and ultimately preserving, our cultural heritage. As an example, a student from one of the local schools that came to visit the site told me he had learned about how important it was to do things the right way, how to take good measurements, how to keep good records, and how to tell artifacts from all the other stuff in the screen. He also said he learned how to make pottery, how prehistoric people made their tools, and how they fished and hunted. When asked what he thought of the Kolb Site, and all the things he learned, he said, "I think it's really cool". I quite agreed. When people of all ages, from all different backgrounds, drive miles into the heart of a swamp and come away learning so much, that's a really cool thing.