

Aboriginal and Remnant American Indians of Holstonia

by Jim Glanville

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Introduction

We think of America as a patchwork quilt of states. So our perceptions of geography are conditioned by those state boundaries – drawn mostly during the past couple of hundred years. The state of Tennessee was admitted to the union in 1796; the present limits of Virginia were established only in 1863, when the amputated West Virginia was admitted to the union. Being political, these boundaries only by accident, if at all, reflect the underlying cultural or ecological unity of a region.¹

Linked by the Holston and Clinch rivers, and sharing the mountain and ridge ecosystem of the Appalachian chain, Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia form a region of cultural, geographic, and ecological unity. They also share a common history. I have named that region "Holstonia."²

Because it was where my research started in 2003, I originally defined the core region of Holstonia quite precisely; it is shown and defined in Figure 1 (page 39). As my research developed, and especially as my catalog of archeological artifacts from the region expanded, the region of shared culture and history bridging the Tennessee-Virginia state line became apparent, though its boundary remains somewhat fuzzy. I call that bridging region Greater Holstonia; it is shown and described in Figure 2 (page 39). Readers of the *Redbone Chronicles* familiar with the

geographical distribution of the Melungeons know that distribution is a perfect example of Holstonian interstate Tennessee-Virginia bridging.

In this article, I will use the unqualified term "Holstonia" to mean Greater Holstonia.

To my knowledge, no Native American history of Holstonia has ever been written. The nearest thing to such a history has come only in the past twenty-five years. It came with the belated, but rather wonderful, development of full scale Melungeon studies. However, although by definition those studies include an examination of Melungeons' American Indian heritage, Indians are not the objective of those studies. Furthermore, Melungeon studies are overwhelmingly focussed on the years post 1850.

It is the purpose of this article to examine and survey our present knowledge of the American Indians of Holstonia across the eight centuries from 1200 AD to the present day. The specific objective is to describe what Indians lived in Holstonia and what life styles they had. The method of the examination will be primarily through a consideration of the scholarly literature, supplemented by the author's personal investigations, and with judicious use of the secondary, online literature. The approach adopted has been to review the relevant literature, describe some of the most useful references, and suggest lines of research. The

literature reviewed has been very broad. However, the reference list included here is selective rather than exhaustive.

The eight centuries from 1200 AD to the present day will be divided for convenience into four periods:

Period 1. 1200-1567 AD. Ancient Holstonia and the conquistadors.

Period 2. 1567-1740 AD. The forgotten centuries.

Period 3. 1740-1838 AD. The arrival of the English and Indian removal.

Period 4. 1839-2008 AD. Melungeons and modern Indians.

The orientation map shown below in Figure 3 (page 40) gives the approximate locations and some rivers and places mentioned in this article.

Holstonia is now, and has long been, a trading center and a cross roads. Prehistoric American Indians were a highly mobile people and routinely traveled vast distances on foot. The importance of Indian trails in the Southeast has long been recognized and Holstonia is crossed by many of them.³

The prehistoric American Indians conducted continent-wide trade or exchange. Copper, their only significant metallic resource, came from the upper Great Lakes; the shells of marine mollusks such as whelks and conchs came from the Florida and Gulf coasts.⁴ Everywhere in Indian America, copper and shell were among the most valued prestige materials. Salt, another important trade item, was available in abundance at Saltville in Holstonia. The Long Island of the Holston at modern day Kingsport was a traditional trading center for Indians, even into the historic period.

The Long Island was also the first site of Virginia trading posts in the interior. To

compete with the South Carolinians for the Cherokee deer skin trade, Richard Pearis began operating on Long Island as early as 1750.⁵ By a little more than a century later, Holstonia had become the busiest route in America as the pioneers flooded west via Daniel Boone's Wilderness Trail through the Cumberland Gap. Today, the role of trade in Holstonia is readily apparent to anyone who travels the busy and congested Interstate 81 corridor.

One of the themes developed in this article is that the historic mobility of people through the region makes it difficult to discern its permanent residents.

Period 1. From 1200-1567 AD: Ancient Holstonia and the Conquistadors

The principal evidence describing this period comes from archeology. The period ends abruptly with the arrival of conquistadors who left brief and cryptic written accounts.

Virginia professional archeologists place the interval 1200-1567 AD in the "Late Woodland Period." Tennessee professional archeologists and most others who specialize in the US Southeast place the interval 1200-1567 AD in the "Mississippian Period." The distinction is confusing for the lay person, but there it is.

The archeology of American Indians in Holstonia has been poorly studied and even more poorly described. In broad-coverage books about Native American life in the pre-contact Southeast, Holstonia is a step child. It is either simply left unlabeled on regional maps, or, if labeled, is misinterpreted.

For example, Volume 15 of the authoritative *Handbook of North American Indians*⁶ devoted to Native Americans of the

Northeast shows a map (page ix) that locates Holstonia at the edge of a region labeled "Poorly known tribes of the Ohio Valley and interior." The more recently published Volume 14 of the same *Handbook of North American Indians*,⁷ devoted to Native Americans of the Northeast shows a map (page ix) that leaves Holstonia unlabeled.

Likewise, a superbly prepared regional map (page 13) in a recent, important "art" book⁸ about Native America shows Holstonia devoid of any culture, stranded in a gap between the Ohio Valley culture to the north and the Southern Appalachian culture to the south.

Particularly disappointing, from the point of view of Holstonia, is the ambitious attempt, in a work of regional archeological synthesis, to summarize cultural boundaries in the entire eastern half of the United States during this period.⁹ For Holstonia, the detailed shaded and annotated maps illustrating the cultural affiliations for three separate time frames (AD 1400-1450, AD 1500-1550, and AD 1600-1650) are ambiguous and confusing, and the underlying river system displayed bears little resemblance to the actual watersheds of the region.

So where does a non-specialist, interested in the peoples of Holstonia before the Europeans arrived, turn? To two works of fiction.

The first work of fiction is a little book called *Kentuckians Before Boone*.¹⁰ It describes Indian life in the year 1585, in a place perhaps 150 miles northwest of Holstonia, as imagined by a skilled professional archeologist writing for a popular audience. Extrapolating to Holstonia, people there lived in settled villages along the river bottoms. The rivers provided fish and shellfish. They used bows and

arrows and blowguns. They hunted deer, bear, and many smaller animals, and they grew crops such as corn, beans, and squash. Animal skins served for clothing and sinew; gourds and turtle shells became containers. They fashioned tools and weapons out of stone and bone, and made pottery from clay. Baskets and other utilitarian items were made from the abundant cane that grew in giant brakes along the rivers. Trees were killed by girdling (cutting off large rings of their lower bark) to provide wood for fuel and clearings for planting. Tobacco was an important part of their ritual life; they made smoking pipes from stone and pottery for both utilitarian and ceremonial use. They had contacts with other Indian cultures across a wide region, and engaged in the trade or exchange of salt, marine shell and copper.

The second work of fiction is called *Conversations with the High Priest of Coosa*.¹¹ It tells about the intellectual, cultural, and religious life in 1560 of Indians in a place about 200 miles southeast of Holstonia. Its author, the now-retired, prominent southern anthropologist Charles Hudson, was a lifelong student of the Native Americans of the Southeast. In this book, published after his long career at the University of Georgia, he wrote with great respect for the known facts, and produced a vivid account of the Indians' social, athletic, and ceremonial life. He also recounted their cosmology and told their stories of the natural world. Events such as Hudson described surely occurred along the banks of the Holston, and stories similar to the ones he recounts were surely told there.

The professional archeological literature of Holstonia, with a single, significant exception, divides between Holstonia in Tennessee and Holstonia in Virginia. That exception is a relatively recent paper by Richard W. Jefferies which centers on the

Cumberland Gap and was published as part of a collection of essays prepared as a first-ever effort to treat the archeology of the Appalachian highlands as a geographic unit, that is a work deliberately ignoring state boundaries. Down stream from Holstonia, immense archeological knowledge has been gathered along the Tennessee River between Knoxville and Chattanooga in consequence of Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) dambuilding activities.¹² In contrast, as Jefferies says of upriver regions such as Holstonia:

"...we know much less about the Mississippian groups that inhabited the rugged upland parts of the northern Southeast, where river valleys are often narrow, areas of level arable soil are limited and widely scattered, and wet areas needed to support large populations of fish and waterfowl are minimal or nonexistent."¹³

Unfortunately, even in this article, Holstonia gets little coverage. Of the thirty-nine sites Jefferies discusses (see his map on page 207), only three lie along the Holston River – with farthest upriver of those being Cobb Island, which is about fifty miles northeast of Knoxville, near the most southwesterly edge of Holstonia.

The Archeology of Holstonia in Tennessee

Holstonia in Tennessee was called the Upper Valley in the earlier archeological literature. Older studies that touch on the Upper Valley include the articles by Kneberg¹⁴ and Whiteford.¹⁵ Older studies of the archeology of the Norris basin in the upper Clinch river (excluding the Holston drainage) are described in the edited, 1995 reissue¹⁶ of a collection of many separate reports prepared 50 years earlier but never published. Many of these reports are by analogy relevant to studies of Holstonia. The Norris basin was

flooded when the upper Clinch became the site of the first TVA dam (constructed in the 1930s). *Tribes that Slumber: Indians of the Tennessee Region* is an extremely popular and readable book about Tennessee archeology that has been in print for fifty years.¹⁷ It was written by the authors of many of the professional reports cited in this paragraph. However, in common with those same authors' professional writings, the book says little about Holstonia.

More recent general works about eastern Tennessee archeology that describe the Dallas culture people who lived 100-200 miles down river from Holstonia include two related books by Jefferson Chapman. One is a book published in connection with a 1982 exhibition mounted at the McClung Museum in Knoxville.¹⁸ The other summarizes the archeology of sites in the Little Tennessee River Valley, salvage excavated before their inundation by Tellico Lake around 1980.¹⁹ Also worth examining is a book published in 2000 which describes the Mississippian Period archeology from Knoxville southwest to Alabama and Georgia and discusses the kingdom of Coosa which was contiguous with much of the homeland of people of the Dallas culture.²⁰ At its northeastern end, the kingdom of Coosa abutted Holstonia.

The books mentioned in the preceding paragraph were selected because they describe the Mississippian Period Dallas culture of the lower Tennessee Valley in eastern Tennessee. Although the connection has not yet been made in the professional literature, it turns out that artifacts of the Dallas culture (particularly the marine shell ornaments called gorgets) are abundant in Holstonia, and occur in substantially the same Dallas art styles, see Figures 4 and 5. From the technical, professional archeological literature of Dallas culture we note

the fine work of synthesis describing specifically the excavation of the Toqua site on the Little Tennessee River before the site was flooded, but describing much more generally the nature of the Dallas culture.²¹ The map of east Tennessee Dallas culture sites in this work (Figure 13.5 on page 1249 of volume 2) speaks eloquently to the fact that Tennessee archeology essentially stops fifty miles northeast of Knoxville, before it reaches Holstonia.

To conclude this subsection on a positive and optimistic note, we record that within the past year preliminary results have become available from an unprecedented professional investigation²² at the Holliston Mills site along the Holston River in Hawkins County, Tennessee, a few miles west of Kingsport and only a few miles south of the Virginia line. This site is a fortified town that has been radiocarbon dated to the period 1400-1600 AD. Preliminary studies of pottery and over 660 burials at the site raise the distinct possibility that the occupants of the site were an as-yet-unidentified ethnic group not ancestral to the Cherokee. Preliminary analysis of the archeological evidence suggests that these prehistoric people were possibly Yuchi. A small marine shell gorget with a rattlesnake design was excavated at this Holliston Mills site.

The Archeology of Holstonia in Virginia

There is only one book dedicated to the archeology of Southwest Virginia, and that is the excellent survey carried out by C. G. Holland in the 1960s on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution and published in 1970.²³ Unfortunately, as its name implies, it is just a survey, and it is now almost forty years old. Notwithstanding, Holland tells of many sites along the three forks of the Holston River (Figures 1 and 3) in Virginia that are even today mentioned nowhere else in the archeological literature. A

state-sponsored book about Virginia Indians provides a brief description of Holstonia in Virginia. Concerning the time period here considered, the authors' remarked:

The Late Woodland people achieved a richness of culture that was unmatched to date. They created a wide range of pottery forms and ceremonial and symbolic objects of stone, copper, and shell. Symbolic designs reflected an extensive mythology and belief system that included natural and supernatural figures. Sophisticated burial customs reflected the people's view of the world as a timeless cycle, as a continuous, unchanging procession of death and rebirth.²⁴

Two now somewhat dated surveys of the archeology of Holstonia in Virginia in the professional literature are the paper from 1989 by Howard MacCord synthesizing the then known cultural aspects of the region,²⁵ and a complementary survey by Keith Egloff from 1992 which reported some additional sites.²⁶ Together, these two papers cover essentially all the Late Woodland Period sites that have been described in the literature. Unfortunately, most of the Virginia Holstonia sites from this period, and all of the most significant ones – many of which lie along the Holston North Fork, have never been professionally studied or reported, including up to the present day.

The link between Holstonia in Virginia and the well-known Mississippian mound culture centers to the south and southeast (Etowah, Moundville, Ocmulgee, Hiwassee Island, etc.) was described in a 2002 paper by Maureen Meyers.²⁷ She takes the position that there were mound building cultures present in Holstonia. However, her position has not received much professional support, and at least one archeologist remains politely skeptical.²⁸ Leaving the matter of mounds aside, there is plenty of other evidence, such as the evidence from the similarities of the artistic styles of gorgets and other recovered

artifacts, that strong cultural links to the south and southeast do indeed exist.

During the past year, I have begun to publish the results of my investigations into cultural artifacts from Holstonia. The exceedingly rich cultural heritage of the region has now been unequivocally demonstrated. Many of the artifacts are in New Jersey.²⁹ I have also begun to write about and document the modern-day culture of archeological site looting that has been so characteristic of the region.³⁰ Many more artifacts remain hidden in the private collections of relic enthusiasts. However, I have seen, photographed, and documented a significant fraction of them. They will all be reported and recorded in future publications. I presented a progress report on my studies to a group of professional archeologists in June 2007.³¹

Two examples of shell gorgets from Holstonia are pictured below. Even in the absence of formal excavations, the mere existence of these objects is sufficient to establish the presence of an important culture there. Saltville style gorgets (Figure 5) are probably the most important single category of artifacts that define the Mississippian culture of Holstonia. With the exception of some specimens that were found at and near Saratown, NC, the geographic range of Saltville style gorgets is restricted to Holstonia.

The Arrival of the Conquistadors

Holstonian Indian culture was abruptly and brutally changed in the mid sixteenth century by the arrival of two separate parties of Spanish conquistadors.

The written history of Holstonia begins when the de Soto *entrada*³² arrived in the region in 1540 and passed along its southern edge. The documents that tell the story are in the Spanish archives, which further record that twenty-seven years later, in 1567, a

detachment from the Juan Pardo *entrada* entered Holstonia and burned Indian towns there.

In the standard scholarly work on the Spanish documents of the de Soto *entrada*, fewer than ten of its almost eight hundred pages of translations say anything related to Holstonia.³³ Less than a hundred miles southeast of Holstonia, de Soto and his party of 800 men rested at Chiaha for most of June, 1540.³⁴ Chiaha was a large and prosperous Indian town at the northern end of Zimmerman's Island in Jefferson County. It now lies under Lake Douglas in Jefferson County. Although it is hard to believe, no archeological studies were carried out on Zimmerman's Island before its inundation. There is, however, perhaps one archeological remnant of de Soto's presence. A hundred years ago, a rusty steel sword-blade, found at the side of a human skeleton, was excavated, at the Brakebill Indian mound at the junction of the Holston and French Broad Rivers.³⁵ The mound is five miles east of present day Knoxville and about ten miles west of the Douglas Lake Dam.

In 1567, a detachment from the Pardo *entrada* under the command of Hernando Moyano traversed Holstonia in a quest for gold. The party left death and mayhem in its wake. Moyano attacked two Indian towns, probably at Elizabethton, Tennessee, and Saltville Virginia. The standard scholarly work on the Spanish documents of the Pardo *entrada* is that of Charles Hudson, with translations provided by Paul Hoffman.³⁶

Partly as a result of the pre-1990 research for that book, archeological field work was undertaken in western North Carolina to seek sites where the Pardo *entrada* had encamped. That field work revealed that the Berry site near Morganton, NC, had been occupied by Spaniards for about a year. It was from this base at Morganton that

Moyano marched into Holstonia. The base was called Fort San Juan by the Spanish and the nearby Indian village was Joara.

The Berry site has yielded unequivocal proof of a sixteenth century Spanish occupancy of the region. The finding of the Berry site was first reported in the professional archaeological literature in 1997.³⁷

Convincing insight into Moyano's violent breach of Holstonia is achieved when the archaeological conclusions reached at the Berry site are combined with the documentary evidence of the Pardo *entrada*. This writer summarized that combination of evidence in an article written from a Holstonian perspective in 2004.³⁸

Archeologists excavated at Berry for over a decade and the team issued a comprehensive, professional report of their work in late 2006.³⁹ The team also published a retrospective analysis of their work's significance as an afterword to the unrevised, reprinted edition of Hudson's pioneering book on the Pardo *entrada*.⁴⁰

Incidentally, the accounts of sixteenth century Spanish activities in the region are naturally of considerable interest to Melungeon writers.⁴¹ Among them, Manual Mira in particular has written extensively about a possible Portuguese connection.⁴²

After 1567 the curtain descended on Holstonia.

Period 2. From 1567-1740 AD: The Forgotten Centuries

This period has been well named the "forgotten centuries."⁴³ Neither archeology nor history offer much illumination of the period. No Europeans were present to write a historical record and the archeological record⁴⁴ is a rather blunt instrument for probing the massive social upheavals that

occurred. Our lack of detailed knowledge notwithstanding, this period irrevocably transformed the Southeast.

The Spanish *entradas* were brutal events and in their wake terrible changes occurred in southeastern American Indian societies. The disintegrating cultures that resulted have been aptly called "societies in eclipse."⁴⁵ In Holstonia, as elsewhere, the story of the forgotten centuries was disease,⁴⁶ displacement, and change. After the Spanish went away, native societies underwent population collapse, population relocation, and tribal consolidation. Some estimates tell that more than 95% of all American Indians in the Southeast died within a few years of the Spanish leaving.⁴⁷ Alfred Crosby wrote "The annals of early Spanish empire are filled with complaints about the catastrophic decline in the number of native people."⁴⁸ Amy Turner Bushnell said bluntly "Southern history begins with an act of ethnic cleansing."⁴⁹

The faintest historical glimpse of Holstonia from this period comes from a single brief account (it's about five transcribed pages) of the exploits in the region of a party of two Englishmen (James Needham and Gabriel Arthur), eight "Appomattock" Indians, and four horses. The party was sent out from Petersburg, Virginia, in May 1673 by the trader Abraham Wood on a mission principally intended to explore possible trade with Indians.⁵⁰ Wood reported in a letter to England that Needham was killed, while Gabriel set out on wide ranging, long distance excursions with Indians.⁵¹ Gabriel almost certainly traveled to the South Carolina coast, perhaps even to New Orleans. During these perambulations he probably crossed Holstonian territory. Unfortunately, Woods' letter provides only a glimpse.

So what can we actually say about the Holstonian Indians during the forgotten

centuries? Not much, beyond the fact that most of them disappeared

Of course, it is eminently plausible that isolated, remnant Indian groups remained, especially in the high mountains of counties such as Hancock and Johnson in Tennessee or Scott and Washington in Virginia. A consistent element of the history of the region is the survival of isolated, upland groups of people. Unfortunately, it is quite unlikely that direct evidence, in these or other nearby counties, will ever be found to establish a cultural continuity between Indians of the sixteenth century and the earliest Melungeon arrivals that can be documented to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

Period 3. From 1740-1839 AD: The Arrival of the English to Indian Removal

In this section we will examine the role the Cherokee played in stimulating English activity in Holstonia.

The Cherokee were one of the strongest of the tribes at the beginning of this period and were broadly divided into three sub groups, depending on where they located their towns. The Lower Towns were in the northwest corner of South Carolina; the Middle and Valley Towns were in western North Carolina; and the Overhill Towns lay in Tennessee along the Hiwassee and Little Tennessee rivers. It took only a few decades after the 1670 English settling at Charleston, SC, to establish substantial, and highly profitable (for the English), trade between the mountains and the coastal plain. Deer skins came out, in exchange for metal goods, cloth, guns and gunpowder, etc., that went in. Between 1700 and 1760 an average of 75,000 skins reached Charleston every year. Meanwhile, the Cherokee population

plummeted: from an estimated 38,000 in 1685 to only 7,000 in 1765 following three small pox epidemics, and two "scorched earth" military campaigns. By then, the traditional Cherokee independent lifestyle had been replaced by a largely dependent one, and the Cherokees had become a small, deer-hunting cog in a big European economic system.⁵²

Because of its remoteness, until about 1740 Holstonia remained cut off from the life of colonial, tidewater Virginia. Long hunters, adventurers of the forest such as Charles Sinclair and Stephen Holston, and Indian traders such as "Vaughn" of Amelia County were definitely there by 1740 – possibly a decade earlier.⁵³ After 1740, prospective profits from land sales and Indian trading lured ever increasing numbers of English speakers to Holstonia.

Holstonia in 1740 was French territory. However, when war broke out between the French and the British in 1744,⁵⁴ Virginia authorities ceased to be squeamish about claiming and staking out French territory. On October 10, 1746, the Virginia Council made James Patton a "Great Grant" of 100,000 acres of land to be taken up piecemeal in the territory stretching from modern day Montgomery County, Virginia, to Hawkins County, Tennessee – along today's I-81 corridor.⁵⁵ With this grant, Holstonia was open for legal English settlement.

In April 1748, seventeen months after obtaining his grant, Patton and others explored the Holston Valleys. They went perhaps as far as the future state of Tennessee and the Cumberland Gap and surveyed and selected a number of tracts of land in Holstonia. The first well-documented account of a visit to the region came two years later. In 1750 Dr. Thomas Walker kept

a journal while he and others inspected and selected land.⁵⁶

Walker frequently mentions Indians in his journal. They are the first descriptions of Holstonian Indians since those of the Spanish documents, written 180 years earlier. Here are some quotations from Walker: "We ... discover'd the tracks of about 20 Indians" (March 30th). "In the Fork between the Holstons and the North River, are five Indian Houses built with loggs and covered with bark, and there were abundance of Bones, some whole Pots and pans some broken, and many pieces of mats and Cloth. On the west side of the North River, is four Indian Houses ... four miles below [on the opposite bank is] a large Indian Fort" (March 18th). "...we came on a fresh track of 7 or 8 Indians but could not overtake them" (April 24th). "[Here] are the remains of several Indian Cabbins amongst them a round Hill made by Art about 20 feet high and 60 over the Top" (April 27th). "...Indians have lived about this Ford some years ago" (April 18th). "[Here] an Indian Camp, that had been built this Spring" (May 3rd). "There is a great sign of Indians on this Creek" (June 6th). "This Creek took its name from an Indian, called John Anthony, that frequently hunts in these Woods. There are some inhabitants of the Branches of Green Bryer, but we missed their Plantations" (July 6th). "The [settlers] here are very Hospitable and would be better able to support Travellers was it not for the great number of Indian Warriors that frequently take what they want from them, much to their prejudice" (July 8th).

In summary, Walker's journal tells that Indians were assuredly present in Holstonia in 1750 and possibly resident there.

Indian trade between Virginians the Cherokees began soon after Patton's land grant. The route through Holstonia from Virginia to the Overhills Cherokee Towns offered a back door to the deer skin trade.

The Cherokee wanted competitors for the South Carolinians and the better prices competition would bring. The Virginians wanted a piece of the deer skin action

Perhaps the earliest Virginia Cherokee trader in Holstonia was Richard Pearis, who been born in Ireland in 1725. His trading post on the Long Island may have opened as early as 1750,⁵⁷ and its presence led to a "vicious rivalry between the Carolina and Virginia traders" for Cherokee business.⁵⁸ It is certain that in 1754 Pearis petitioned Virginia Governor Dinwiddie for a grant of land on Long Island.⁵⁹ Dinwiddie was very interested in recruiting Cherokees warriors to join the ongoing British incursions into the Ohio country,⁶⁰ and Pearis served (ineffectively) as a recruiting agent for the Overhill Cherokees who lived 150-odd miles downstream from the Long Island. Apparently, few if any Indian warriors lived at this time near the Long Island.

Transits through Holstonia by English speakers accelerated when Governor Dinwiddie, ordered Virginia frontiersman Major Andrew Lewis to build the "Virginia Fort" at Chota, an important Overhill Cherokee town. Dinwiddie's principal purpose was to ingratiate the Cherokees with trading goods and "presents" and bring their warriors to the British cause. However, through incompetence, once built the fort was never named or manned.⁶¹ In contrast, Fort Loudoun, built nearby soon after by the South Carolinians was manned, and briefly served to promote the Carolina trade.

Relations between colonial Americans and the Cherokee American Indians collapsed in 1759. The collapse lead directly to the outbreak of the Cherokee War of 1760.⁶²

This war irreversibly opened Holstonia to settlement. To fight the war, the British planned a two-pronged strategy, with the Middle and Lower Cherokee Towns to be

attacked from South Carolina and the Overhill Cherokee Towns to be attacked via the back door down the Holston River route by Virginia forces. The Cherokee weathered the first summer of the war in 1760, and even captured Fort Loudoun. However, in summer 1761, the Middle Towns were devastated by British regulars under Colonel James Grant. Meanwhile, that same summer, Major Andrew Lewis and 200 men hacked out a road through the wilderness from Fort Chiswell in Wythe County, Virginia, past Chilhowie, to the Long Island. Grant's success forced a peace treaty on the Carolina front and peace on the Virginia front quickly followed. On November 20, 1761, the Treaty of Long Island was signed there by Colonel Adam Stephen and Cherokee leaders.⁶³ Though it involved no actual fighting, the Virginians' campaign had significantly opened a military road into Holstonia. That road was shortly to become the great American highway to the West, to be traveled by tens of thousands of English speaking pioneers headed for Kentucky and far beyond.

At the conclusion of the French and Indian War the British and the defeated French settled the immediate fate of North America at the Treaty of Paris in 1763. There immediately followed a brief moment when it seemed that by proclamation of King George III, Holstonia and all the land west of the eastern continental divide might be reserved for the Indians.⁶⁴ However, the forces driving American westward expansion were far too strong to be resisted, and anyway the coming Revolution was already in the air. King George was ignored and the land was up for grabs.

We now enter the time of well-documented history. Events in East Tennessee moved swiftly and the Indians we read about being there are the Cherokee, who at the time laid claim and hunting rights to a huge land area

west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. In 1770, in the treaty of Lochaber, SC, the Cherokee nation ceded a triangle of land bounded roughly by modern day Kingsport, TN, Huntington, WV, and Rocky Mount, VA. In 1775 came the Henderson Purchase, in which the Cherokee ceded large tracts of land in central and western Kentucky, Southwest Virginia, and north and northeastern Tennessee.⁶⁵ With the ink scarcely dry on the Henderson Purchase, Daniel Boone and his axmen chopped out the wilderness trail from the Long Island into Kentucky territory.⁶⁶ A second Cherokee war was fought at Long Island in 1776, while the Wataugan settlers at the same time hung on to their wilderness foothold near Sycamore Shoals.⁶⁷ In 1781 the "overmountain" men, the settlers of Holstonia, marched back over the mountains and won the Battle of King's Mountain, a pivotal fight in the Revolutionary War. After the Revolution in 1796 the state of Tennessee entered the union. By 1810 the route down the Holston Valley, and thence west to the Cumberland Gap, had become the most traveled highway in America as settlers streamed through Smyth County, across Holstonia and onward to populate western Tennessee and Kentucky. That rush of well-documented history records little or nothing of resident Holstonian Indians.

Strife between the Indians and settlers continued. In Holstonia, the Cherokee, and far-ranging Indians such as the Shawnee from the Ohio country and Creeks and Choctaws from the deep south, pressed attacks on the settlers who streamed into and through the region.⁶⁸ Between 1775 and 1795 over 30 defensive forts were built and manned by the Holston Militia.⁶⁹ During all of this time, and on into the early decades of the nineteenth century, resident Holstonian Indians are invisible.

In the early nineteenth century relationships on the frontier stabilized and to many whites

the tribes became increasingly "civilized." Nonetheless, the demand for land was insatiable, and in 1830 the US Congress passed the Indian Removal Act: the Indians of the Southeast were to go to Oklahoma territory, removed there by force if necessary. With removal, the few Holstonian Indians who remained withdrew farther into their mountain refuges.

The Melungeons entered the historical record about this time, with the first written use of a form of the word Melungeon appearing in the minutes of the Stony Creek Baptist Church.⁷⁰

In summary, at the beginning of the period 1740-1839 it is likely that there was a small population of resident Indians in Holstonia. However, for much of the period it was the Cherokee who were prominent through their warfare and treaty making. The period closed with the Indians mostly gone after walking the so-called "Trail of Tears" or death march to Oklahoma.

Period 4. 1839-2008 AD. Melungeons and Modern Indians

"Finding much record of Indians in Tennessee post 1830s will be very daunting as the politics of that era required one to hide it or be deported to Oklahoma." That was a recent remark made to the writer by an American Indian historian of Tennessee.⁷¹ Just so. Indeed, finding documentary records of Indian residents in either Holstonia in Tennessee or Holstonia in Virginia for this period has proved almost impossible.

This section begins with a description of the traditional academic books and articles that have been examined. They have failed to yield any information of value. An information source I once thought would offer good prospects is the now extensive

Melungeon literature, which has exploded in the past 20-30 years. However, it too has yielded little of value. The one productive area of investigation has been the very recent on line documentation of the resurgent, modern Indian tribes of Tennessee, about whom very little has appeared in the traditional literature. The appearance of their on line and physical presence, also over the past 20-30 years, has been a fascinating and significant development.

Sources That Fail to Provide Evidence for Holstonian Indians

This subsection reports that an examination of the diverse, formal literature that one might expect to produce information about American Indian groups in northeastern Tennessee or southwestern Virginia yields none.

What is much to be desired, but what will be very difficult to achieve, is a book such as the two written respectively about the twentieth century history of American Indians in eastern Virginia and in eastern North Carolina. Both of these books cover the topics of interest in the relevant period of interest, but not our region of interest. In *Pocahontas's People*,⁷² Helen Rountree tells the remarkable story of the remnant Powhatan tribes of the Virginia Tidewater and their revival from almost total annihilation. Her narrative concludes with the years 1980-1990, a noteworthy decade that saw the formation of a state-sanctioned Virginia Council on Indians and the unprecedented formal recognition by the state of no fewer than eight Indian tribes, two of which (the Mattaponi and the Pamunkey) have minuscule reservations on the banks of their eponymous rivers. Unfortunately, Rountree's excellent book barely mentions even the Monacans of central Virginia, who while closer to Holstonia than the Indians of Tidewater, are

still over 200 miles away. A parallel situation exists with Christopher Arris Oakley's also excellent book *Keeping the Circle*⁷³ about the Indians of eastern North Carolina. His map of North Carolina tribes (page 11) shows the locations of the one federally recognized tribe, the Eastern Cherokee of Swain and Jackson Counties near the Little Tennessee River (Figure 3), and the seven North Carolina State recognized tribes in the north central, northeast, and southeast regions of the state. The two closest of these tribes are situated about 150 miles from Holstonia.

Discussion of Indians in Holstonia is also absent from the two published collections of scholarly essays that describe southeastern Indians during the period we are considering in this section. The first of these, the 1979 volume *Southeastern Indians Since the Removal Era*,⁷⁴ edited by Walter L. Williams, contains twelve essays including ones about such tribes as the Lumbees, Tunica, Houma, Catawba, Alabama Creek, Choctaws, Seminoles, etc. Almost no mention is made of Tennessee, except tangentially in an essay on the Eastern Cherokee. The second essay collection, the 1992 volume *Indians of the Southeastern United States in the Late 20th Century*,⁷⁵ edited by J. Anthony Paredes, contains nine essays including ones about North and South Carolina and Louisiana tribes, the Waccamaw Sioux, Miccosukees, and Poarch Creek Indians. Again, in these essays, no mention is made of the Indians in whom we are interested.

Discussion of Indians in Holstonia is also absent from the literature of the people called variously "remnant Indian groups," "Racial Islands," "tri-racial isolates," or "ethnically complex populations."⁷⁶

Serious study of such groups did not begin until after World War II, and the results of those studies attracted very little attention until the past 20-30 years, when they became

widely quoted in the rising tide of Melungeons studies. In 1947, William Gilbert published a survey of the larger mixed-blood racial islands of the Eastern United States.⁷⁷ He followed with wider-ranging, ground breaking report for the Federal Government.⁷⁸ Also ground breaking was the 1950 Ph.D. Thesis of Edward Price,⁷⁹ which devoted sixty-one pages to the "Melungeons of Eastern Tennessee" and touched elsewhere on topics such as the classification of mixed blood groups and the genetics of racial mixture. Calvin Beale, contributed a 1957 analysis of triracial isolates using census data and examined genetically transmitted diseases.⁸⁰ Beale returned fifteen years later to provide an overview mixed racial isolates in the US.⁸¹ The first published book on about these groups, written by Brewton Berry, appeared in 1963.⁸² A very recent review of this field was published here in the *Redbone Chronicles* by Wayne Winkler.⁸³

An extensive, pre-1979 bibliography of mixed racial isolates in the formal academic literature is one essay in Williams' edited collection.⁸⁴ This bibliography includes a long section titled "Sources about Indians Remaining in the Southeast since 1840." However, while that section provides many references to Cherokee Indians, and a handful to the Indians of Eastern Virginia, it is sadly devoid of references to Tennessee Indians or the Indians of western Virginia.

Are there then no formal references to Indians in this period in Holstonia? Probably none. However, there is one statement by the prominent Indian student John Swanton published in 1922 that unambiguously places Yuchi Indians in Tennessee at that time.⁸⁵ According to his footnote, Swanton's informant was the prominent ethnologist Truman Michelson. Efforts to follow up Michelson and locate the source of his

information have been unsuccessful. The precise location these Yuchi in Tennessee remains unknown – but no doubt in the eastern part of the state. All that remains to be said in this section is that absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. Holstonia is full of mountain refuges.

The Melungeon Literature

The Melungeon literature tells a good deal about American Indians but not much about those Indians indigenous to, or resident in, Holstonia – precisely those who we are interested in. It does tell that the American Indian component of the Melungeon triracial mix seems to have been brought into Holstonia by immigrants.

Rather than list all the sources unproductively examined in this study, a brief description of available Melungeon bibliographies will be provided. So doing is not to say that every one of the cited references in each of the bibliographies has been examined. They have not. Nonetheless, significant numbers of them have been seen and reviewed. Five such bibliographies are: An anthropologically oriented bibliography for Tennessee with Melungeon coverage prepared by an archeologist was published in 1977.⁸⁶ Three readily available on line bibliographies are the one in Melungeons and Other Mestee Groups,⁸⁷ the one published in connection with Melungeon health issues,⁸⁸ and the one published at the Melungeon web site,⁸⁹ which very helpfully includes on line, full-text, searchable versions of many of the key Melungeon papers. A recent, comprehensive bibliography can be found in Wayne Winkler's book about the Melungeons.⁹⁰

Winkler suggests in the "conclusions and speculations" section of his just-cited book (page 245) that the Melungeons arrived in Holstonia at the end of the eighteenth century

accompanied by remnant members of the Monacan and Powhatan tribes, and initially settled around Fort Blackmore in Scott County, Virginia, near the junction of Stony Creek of the Clinch River a dozen or so miles north of Kingsport, Tennessee. Winkler writes: "The family groups of the Melungeons who settled in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee may not have been merely affiliated with these tribal groups, but instead were all that remained of those groups."

My working hypothesis, based on the foregoing, is that the Indian-ness of the Melungeons derives from eastern Virginia, and not from long-term, locally resident Holstonian Indians.

A Digression About How and Why

A brief digression is appropriate here to address the questions of how and why the situation being described, so inimical to Indians, came to be.

In 1839 the US Army was hunting down Indians in North Carolina, Tennessee, and the other southeastern states, for transportation to Oklahoma. In northeastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia, as elsewhere, white Americans in general had grown intolerant of even the mere presence of Indians. The situation so remained for a long time. Indeed, many years later, in Virginia, that intolerance was institutionalized in the form of the so-named Racial Integrity Law.

Out west on the Plains, from 1836-1890, there was intermittent warfare between the US army, usually the cavalry, and many different Indian tribes: the Commanche campaigns, the Colorado War, the Black Hills War, the Red River War, the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the Cheyenne War, the Wounded Knee Massacre, and many others. The popular white American view of Indians at this time was that they were ruthless

savages. That view is exemplified by the title of a popular 1899 book *Indian Horrors or Massacres by the Red Men: Being a thrilling narrative of bloody wars with merciless and revengeful savages*.⁹¹

Today, reasonable people perhaps wonder exactly who was perpetrating the "Horrors or Massacres." However, at the time, Indians everywhere were getting little sympathy from most white Americans.

In Virginia in the 1920s, in the name of a bastardized and corrupt notion of eugenics deeply flavored with racism, Indians were erased in Virginia by the legislative expedient of requiring racial identity identifications on birth certificates be either black or white. That was Virginia's 1924 Racial Integrity Law.⁹² The law's requirements denied and bureaucratically assassinated Virginia Indians.

The immediate perpetrator of this policy was the Virginia Registrar of Births, Walter Plecker,⁹³ but of course the responsibility belonged to Virginia government authority and the dominant culture in general. To understand the depth of the attack on Indian heritage in Virginia, Plecker's own words are worth reading in a 1925 article published in the *American Journal of Public Health* that can be read on line.⁹⁴ Only very recently have Virginia authorities recanted. It was 2002 when Governor Mark Warner announced: "Today, I offer the Commonwealth's sincere apology for Virginia's participation in eugenics."⁹⁵

The only direct reference to possible Holstonian Indians in the 1920s seems to be in a book written in the anti-Indian spirit of Plecker called *Mongrel Virginians*, which comments obliquely on the Indians of southwestern Virginia as Melungeons. Thankfully, even at the time of its publication, this work was called by a

reviewer "A really absurd and useless book."⁹⁶

In this ongoing hostile environment is it any wonder that for 120 years the remnant Indians of Holstonia hid, and if they didn't hide they assimilated?

In the 1920s, assimilation of Indians everywhere was the official policy of the United States federal government. Today, that policy and the spirit of arrogant paternalism behind it are difficult to recapture, except perhaps by direct quotation. Here's the Commissioner of Indian Affairs writing in 1923 in the forward to a book published by the Institute of Social and Religious Research:

This volume ... is refreshingly free from the pessimistic, dramatic, sentimental, and satirical sketchings of Indian life.... The present policy of assimilating the Indian with the general population and citizenship of the country is treated thoughtfully and ... the chief requisites to that end are education, sympathetic understanding, patience, and fellowship. ... It is this policy of sympathy, patience, and humanity, which for thirty years has encountered no hostile Indian uprisings such as marked every previous decade for three centuries, that is preserving and reconstructing the Red Race. It is this process of spiritual understanding and fellowship to which the virtues of a dependent but valorous people ... can effectively cooperate. ... Government ... efforts ... have ... taught [Indian] men the dignity of hard work and self-reliance, brought sympathy and understanding to Indian mothers and health to their babies, put hygiene into housekeeping, encouraged practical and sanitary clothing, purified marriage rites, revealed the principles of Christian living, and steadily increased the Indian population.

The Indian's spirituality is nourished by traditions as ancient as his racial infancy. Many of these are as beautiful and as worthy of historic preservation as the finest fancies of classic mythology. Many may be retained and cherished in the Indian's

cultural progress, but many are benighted and sometimes degrading, and to lead the Indian away from debasing conceptions which the loom of time has interwoven with his sacred aspirations is a labor of faith, of patience, of philanthropy that knows no discouragement although the ends aimed at may seem far away.

Out of this humane regard for the mind, the body, the character of the American Indian, has developed the most sympathetic and the profoundest service of the Indian Bureau, a service which cannot be done hurriedly or harshly but must grow out of kindly and persuasive methods, and must not be deterred by short-sighted criticism.⁹⁷

Enough said.

Modern Holstonian Indians: From 1975 to 2008

After all of the preceding discussion about the unhappy period from 1839-1975, and of the dearth of information sources for the period, it is a relief to finally turn to recent events and to new kinds of sources. Incidentally, the year 1975 in the heading above is the year in which the Virginia General Assembly repealed the remaining portion of the Racial Integrity Act not previously held unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.⁹⁸ Even so, it was twenty-two more years, until 1997, before Virginia Governor George Allen signed a bill that included appropriate bureaucratic procedures to enable Virginia Indians to correct their birth records.⁹⁹

In this section much of our information comes from the World Wide Web. The picture we will develop will lack the traditional scholarly and academic underpinning of the preceding sections. However, what the section lacks in formality is more than balanced by its sources' freshness, vitality, and even boisterousness.

In the modern era, US census data has included enumeration by racial category.

While this set of data is self-selected, and of doubtful reliability, it does provide estimated counts of American Indians in Holstonia. Counts from the 1990 census are summarized for the relevant counties¹⁰⁰ in Table 1. The 1990 total American Indian census count in Tennessee was 10,191; the 996 persons in the Tennessee counties shown in Table 1 thus amount to 9.8% of the Tennessee total. The 1990 total American Indian census count in Virginia was 15,792; the 143 persons in the Virginia counties shown in Table 1 thus amount to 0.9% of the Virginia total.

Table 1
1990 American Indian Census
Counts in Holstonia¹⁰¹

Tennessee Counties in Holstonia	Count	Virginia Counties in Holstonia	Count
Carter	92	Russell	14
Cocke	78	Scott	17
Greene	89	Smyth	34
Hamblen	85	Tazewell	48
Hancock	18	Washington	30
Hawkins	78		
Johnson	14		
Sullivan	374		
Unicoi	11		
Washington	157		
Total TN	996	Total VA	143

As has been previously recounted, in Virginia the year 1980 initiated a decade of political progress for Virginia Indians; in Tennessee, similar progress began at about the same time. A sign of the changing times in Tennessee came when an anthropologist writing about Melungeons remarked it had become "... somewhat fashionable in Tennessee these days to have a Cherokee in one's family tree...".¹⁰²

In 1977, Tennessee's constitutional barrier to interracial marriage was repealed.¹⁰³ In 1978, Governor Ray Blanton proclaimed state

recognition of the Etowah Cherokee Nation, the first time any Indian tribe in Tennessee had been so recognized.¹⁰⁴ However, a few years later, the then Attorney General concluded that the Governor lacked the statutory authority to make such recognition, thereby effectively rescinding the Governor's decision.¹⁰⁵ The current Tennessee Attorney General's office has recently issued an opinion that tribal recognition is legal, if properly legislated.¹⁰⁶ Proposed legislation to do exactly that may shortly be introduced to the Tennessee legislature.¹⁰⁷

In 1983 the Native American Indian Association of Tennessee (NAIA) was formed and that same year the state created the Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs (TCIA), with Governor Lamar Alexander signing the enabling legislation on May 26th.¹⁰⁸ In 1990, the TCIA initiated a program to officially and legally recognize American Indians, and began to issue recognition certificates to individuals. Indian groups located relatively near Holstonia who came to the attention of the Commission around that time were the East Tennessee Indian League, based in Knoxville, and the United Eastern Lenape Nation of Winfield, in Scott County, Tennessee.¹⁰⁹ In 1994, Tennessee adopted a law requiring the fourth Monday in September to be observed in Tennessee as "American Indian Day," and the following year it required "Native American Indian" as a designation of racial or ethnic origin on any official document requesting such information to be divulged.¹¹⁰

One measure of the rebirth of Indian awareness and culture in Tennessee is an on line list of "Tennessee Native American Indian & Related Organizations."¹¹¹ A recent check of this list showed 173 organizations ostensibly functioning in Tennessee, although further checking suggests that many of the listed groups are inactive or were of fleeting existence. In Holstonia, an important

and active American Indian group with which the writer is personally familiar is the Remnant Yuchi Tribe. This tribe is based in Kingsport, however, as noted previously, Holstonia is a cultural not political concept, and Remnant Yuchis live in both Virginia and Tennessee.

Today, Indian affairs in both Tennessee and Virginia, and hence those in Holstonia, are highly politicized.

In Virginia, the Virginia Council of Indians operates under the aegis of the Governor's office and is very much part of the Virginia establishment, as demonstrated by its prominent role in planning the events of the Jamestown 2007 celebrations, and its publication and sponsorship of documents such as the "Virginia Indian Heritage Trail."¹¹² Unfortunately, the Virginia Council of Indians has never had a member from the western part of the state. Viewed from Holstonia the Council is irrelevant.

In Tennessee, in contrast to the staid situation in Virginia, modern day Indian politics are a rough and tumble business. Elections for seats on the Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs are hotly contested and the very existence of the Commission is in question.¹¹³ Unlike Virginia, there are no Tennessee state recognized tribes, a situation which galls many members of the Tennessee Indian community because at its inception one of the objectives of the Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs was to establish state tribal recognition criteria that would lead in due time to tribal recognition itself. Sparing the details, suffice to say that there are various Tennessee Indian groups, including the Remnant Yuchi of Holstonia, who are heatedly contending to shape the future of Indian affairs in the state.

In summary, for the reasons that have been made clear in the preceding sections, for

Holstonia it is a challenging, and perhaps impossible, task to link pre-contact and historic Indians to modern Indians by the methods of conventional scholarship.

Other Possible Lines of Inquiry

While archeology, ethnology, and written history, have shed some light on the Holstonian Indians, the evidence they bring leaves much to be desired. So what other lines of inquiry are available? The two prime candidates as alternative lines of inquiry are oral history and DNA studies.

Traditional scholarship is extremely reluctant to include the work of the oral historian or folklorist into its research and speculations. Certainly, such material is less reliable than documented history. However, it nonetheless contains genuine historical information and it is the traditional medium of history among indigenous peoples. Oral Indian tradition has much to say about the past, sometimes even about the very deep past.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, documented oral evidence is extremely difficult to find. However, on the rare occasions it can be found, it raises fascinating possibilities. Here's one public example: an American Indian oral history of East Tennessee posted anonymously to an Internet discussion group:

When I was a child and sick in my chest, my father painted his face and arms, danced around my bed singing insults to the nothing sickness, broke an arrow and made a washing movement with his hands. Then my mother took me to the hospital. I survived. ... I am of two voices, family and American education. From family stories I will answer first. [About the gorget] The cross in the center of the sun represents the four directions and winds. ... If the shell gorget is worn on the chest, blue is north, dangerous, cold winds and much trouble; black is west and black winds bring death; red is east, and red winds bring success; white is south, as in our home, where there is good wind and always peace. The sun is always worn on

the chest, whether it is a gorget, copper, silver, or tattoo. ... I do not know anyone who remembers the original clans. I was told there were four. Then the king in Coosa, who was related to the sun but allowed us to live as before under his protection as her relation.

Then the Spanish came, I think DeSoto. Everything was disrupted and changed, but we remained on what is now Clinch River. The Yuchi (?) separated from Coosa, I think they were Ah-ni-ku-ta-ni or anikutani and greatly feared for their magic. Then the Cherokee came, and lived by rule of Yuchi magic, and friendly to us, the Koasati, until the Cherokee and Yuchi fought and the Cherokee won. I think the Cherokee borrowed the four colors from us, and of course we were influenced by Coosa and later by the Yuchi. There was a great fear of the Cherokee for a long time because so many Yuchi had intermarried with the Koasati in Tali, but none of those practiced kutani magic. These were difficult times. We were always a white town, or peace town, but we were in between those who fought. We had caves and underground tunnels as well as our mounds. Then the Cherokee pushed the Shawnee back, and at this time more Europeans came. There were many wars, the most important being the French and English, and the English and American. There were numerous alliances, most notably the Creek Confederacy. ... Many of our village removed to Alabama with the Creek, some to Florida with the Seminole, and later Georgia Texas, and Oklahoma. Some followed the river to Kentucky. St. Augustine, Florida is where some great-uncles were imprisoned and died. It all depended on who one married, and clan rules as well as imposed rules by Americans. My other lines are through my father's father and my mother. They are Blue or Panther clan, Long Hair Clan (or twister), and Deer Clan. I remember once that Mamaw talked about the bird clan, but I do not think she meant Cherokee bird clan.

In my other voice, the educated voice, I am looking for evidence to support the stories I grew up with about my Collins family. I do get confused, since my father

and his father were Cherokee and had their own stories and ways.¹¹⁵

The above narrative is fascinating and thought provoking. It is especially so because many American Indians today decline to share their intimate cultural heritage and object even to its discussion, let alone publication. That aversion means that oral history also carries limitations to what it can reveal.

DNA evidence is widely recognized as a modern, powerful investigative technique to assess the relations among living people and probe their origins. DNA studies have been increasingly applied to Melungeons.¹¹⁶ A recent, amusing, informal discussion of DNA and the author's Melungeon heritage can be found in the concluding chapter of Lisa Alther's book.¹¹⁷

To apply DNA studies to the question "who were and are the Holstonians?" requires a subject group. The obvious subject group is the Yuchi people. Under the name Chiscas, the Yuchi were the people encountered by the de Soto *entrada* in Holstonia. The Yuchis were there in the early historic period.¹¹⁸ After much traveling, and suffering removal, a substantial population of Yuchi lives today in Oklahoma as part of the Creek Nation. The Oklahoma Yuchi are deeply suspicious of "white man's science" and have refused to participate in it. They do not want their DNA analyzed. Yuchi scholar Richard Grounds (Yuchi) says reasons for their refusal include issues such as the ownership of data and the potential for "extremely lucrative profiteering."¹¹⁹ For the present, Yuchi DNA studies will definitely not take place, and so the DNA line of inquiry is unavailable.

Conclusions

The principal overall conclusion of this article is that it is hard to say much about the

permanent Indian inhabitants of Holstonia during most of the past eight centuries. It has been demonstrated here that the potentially relevant academic literature is more notable for what it does not say than for what it does. A partial explanation for this situation is that the historic mobility of people through the region across all periods has obscured the permanent residents.

For the period 1200-1567 AD the available evidence up until the moment of European contact comes entirely from archeology. This archeological evidence convincingly shows the presence of large pre-contact populations of Indians who had achieved a well-developed culture. Spanish documents provide brief written accounts of Holstonia in 1540 (the de Soto *entrada*) and 1567 (the Pardo *entrada*).

For the period 1567-1740 AD the available evidence comes entirely by analogy with generalized archeological and historical interpretations that have been made about regions to the south and east. A single written record from 1673 tells of a fleeting visit by a pioneering English expedition. During this period, in common with Indians throughout the Southeast, natives in the region suffered disease, death, and departure. We will never know exactly what happened.

For the period 1740-1838 AD there is much available evidence from the historical record. The principal Indians described in that record are the Cherokee from down the Holston River, to the southwest. The Cherokee during this time claimed northeastern Tennessee and southwestern Virginia as part of their hunting territory. Unfortunately, the available evidence says almost nothing about the Indian residents of Holstonia. This obscurity is no doubt a consequence of the many high-visibility epochal events that occurred in the region during this time: Cherokee wars, the French and Indian War,

the Revolution, the formation of the state of Tennessee, the opening of pioneer trails through the region, and finally Indian removal.

For the period 1839-2008 AD the evidence available is abundant with respect to the Melungeons. However, the Indian heritage described by Melungeon history seems not to have been local to the region. Cherokee history is also abundant. However, Cherokee history tells little about the people of Holstonia. Reliable information about Indians in Holstonia in the period from 1839-1975 is extremely scarce and formal studies are absent. Holstonian Indian history was reborn after 1975 and its story comes principally from Internet sources.

Much further research is needed. Oral history and the implementation of DNA studies offer potential alternative avenues of research.

Acknowledgments

The many people in Holstonia who have encouraged and supported the author's studies of their region and culture. The many professional archeologists who have assisted, several of who have traveled with the author in Holstonia; the author, not they, is responsible for any errors here. The relic dealers and collectors who have assisted in the hunt for Holstonian cultural artifacts and allowed them to be photographed and documented. Chief Lee Vest and the members of the Remnant Yuchi Tribe. The Interlibrary loan office (ILLIAD) staff at Newman library at Virginia Tech. Don Marler for encouragement. For helpful discussions and conversations: David Hackett, Jay Vest, and Wayne Winkler. As always, Deena Flinchum for support, discussions, and editorial advice.

Figures

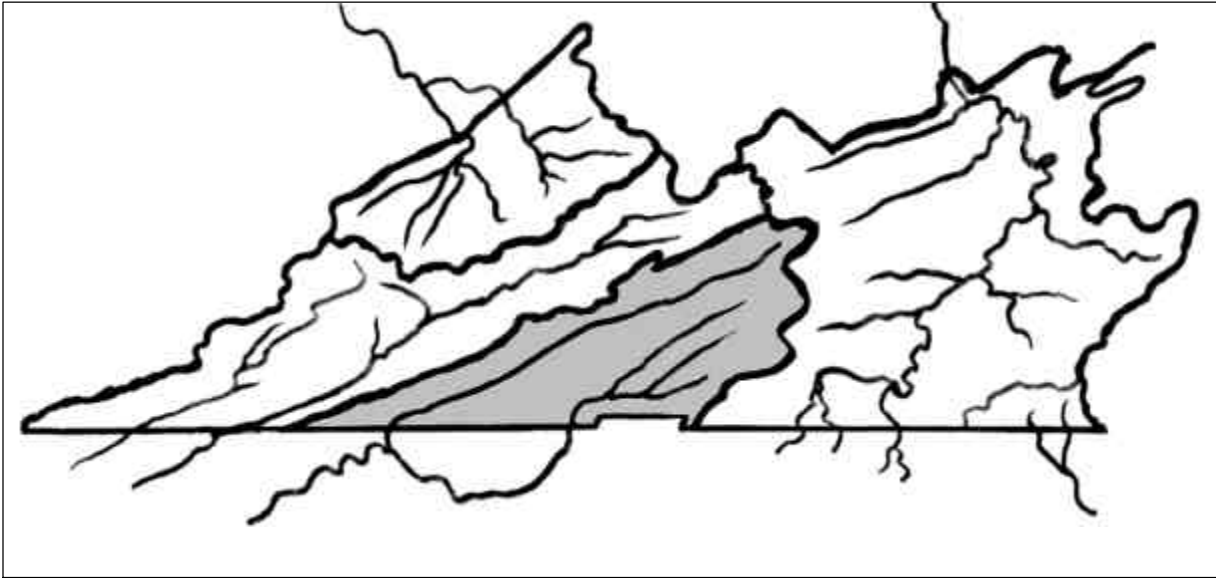


Figure 1. Core Holstonia (shown shaded) is the watersheds of the three forks of the Holston River in Virginia. They lie principally in Smyth, Washington, and Scott Counties, and edge into Bland and Wythe Counties at their headwaters.

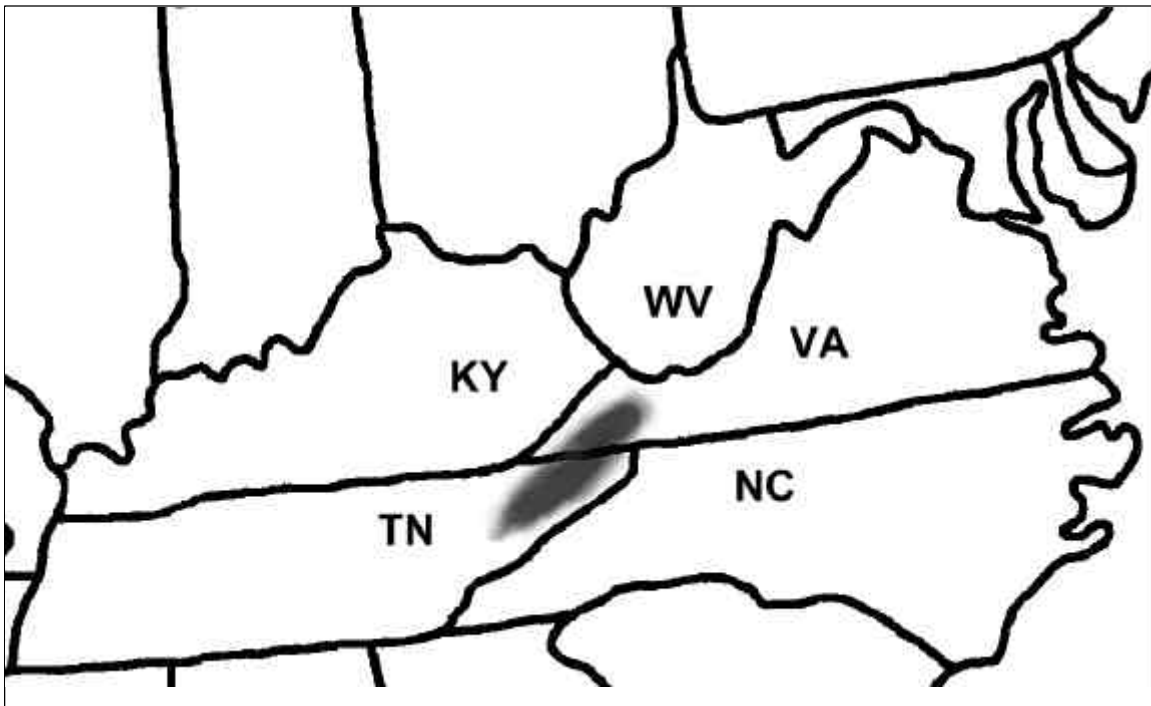


Figure 2. Greater Holstonia, shown shaded, is a loosely bounded region encompassing about 15 counties along the border of Tennessee and Virginia. It lies principally, but not exclusively, in the Holston River watershed.

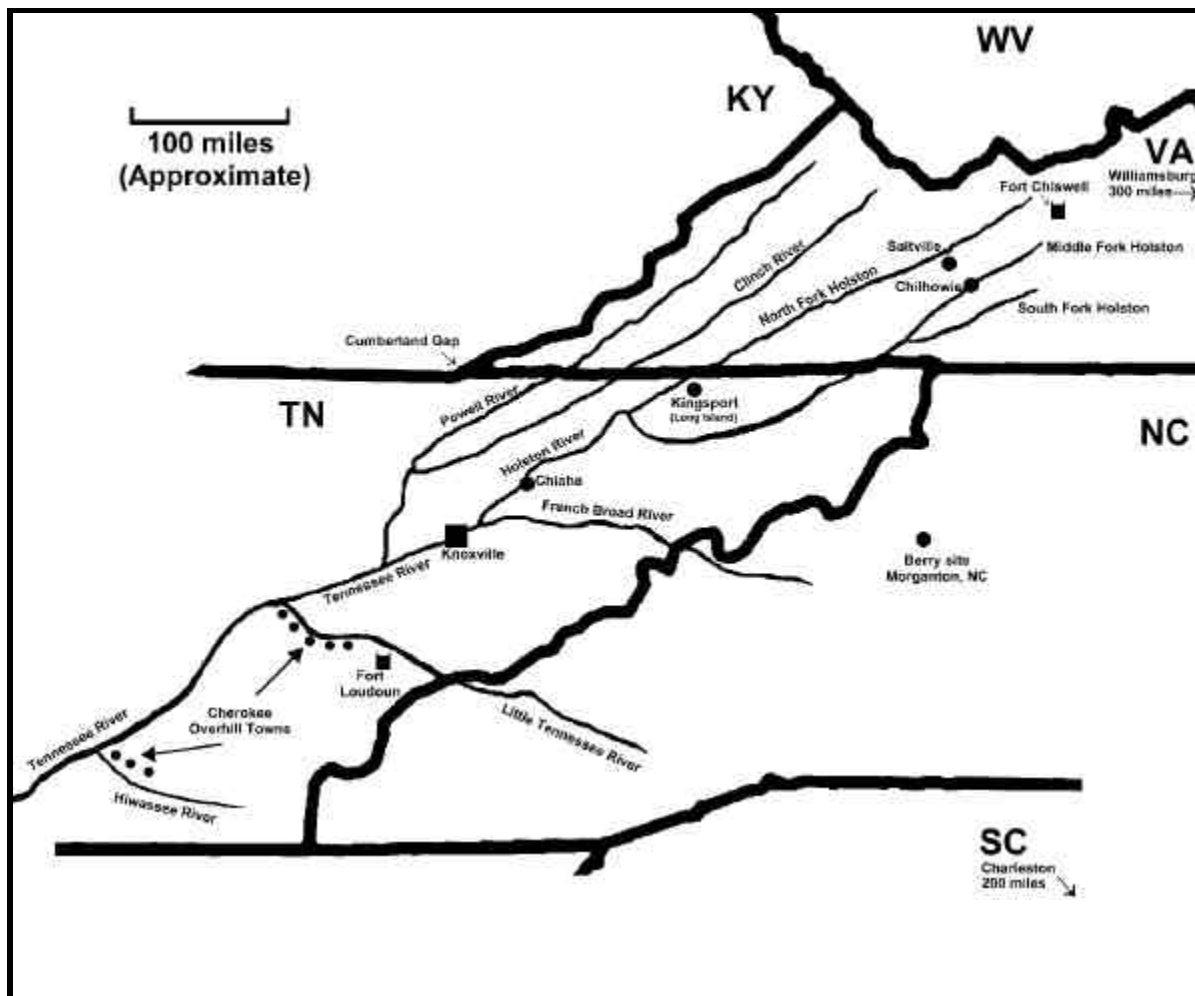


Figure 3. An orientation map showing some rivers and places mentioned in this article.

In the northeast, Holstonia begins at the head waters of the forks of the Holston River in Virginia. Holstonia ends in the vicinity of Chiaha (modern day Lake Douglas).

American Indian sites along the Clinch River often show strong cultural affinity to those in Holstonia.

Note: This map is not drawn to a strict scale and the twentieth century dams, and the lakes they created, are omitted.



Figure 4: A marine shell gorget in the Citico style. It represents a highly stylized rattlesnake. Such gorgets have long been considered diagnostic for the Dallas culture. Many have come from sites along the Hiwassee river. Recent studies, place thirty-six examples in Holstonia, with twelve of those alone coming from the Chilhowie High School site in Smyth County, Virginia. This 5" diameter specimen is on display at the Space Farms Zoo and Museum in New Jersey.



Figure 5. A marine shell gorget in the Saltville style. Like the one in Figure 4, it too represents a highly stylized rattlesnake. Saltville style gorgets are found in Holstonia but not in the traditional homeland of the Dallas culture. At the time of this writing, forty-three specimens in this style have been documented – most from Holstonia in Virginia, some from North Carolina and Tennessee. This 2½" diameter specimen is in a private collection.

Endnotes

1. Writing of the title ("The Tennessee Area") of her 1952 essay for an important collective work of archeology (see citation below), Madeline Kneberg, professor of anthropology at the University of Tennessee, said "The political, economic, and academic imperialism of states' rights is responsible for this utterly incongruous title, as if culture could be discussed in terms of state areas rather than natural provinces. Like the dachshund that is a dog and a half long and half a dog high, the state of Tennessee has peculiar proportions."
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