



ROY SELMAN DICKENS, JR.
1938–1986

Roy Selman Dickens, Jr. was born in Decatur, Georgia on March 16, 1938. His untimely death occurred in Chapel Hill, North Carolina on May 25, 1986. He received his B.A. degree from Georgia State College (now Georgia State University) in 1963, his M.A. from the University of Alabama in 1966, and his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina in 1970.

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Roy's interest in archaeology began early in his life. While still a teenager, he joined the field crew of William Sears and participated in excavations at the Etowah Indian Mounds in northern Georgia. His dedication to southeastern archaeology was unwavering from this point on, and this initial exposure, coupled with an early professional maturity, put him one step ahead of most of his contemporaries.

As an undergraduate student studying under Lewis Larson at Georgia State, Roy supervised his first archaeological field project in 1962 at Stone Mountain State Park near Atlanta. As part of the project, he conducted excavations at an Old Quartz Industry site. Today, this research stands as a pioneering effort in the retrieval of data from small, shallow sites.

At the time Roy attended Georgia State, a major in anthropology was not offered, although Larson taught a wide variety of courses ranging from Siberian Ethnography to Mesoamerican Archaeology. Unable to formally major in anthropology, Roy chose history. This exposure to the written past served him well later in his career when his research interests turned to the late prehistoric and historic tribes of the Southeast. He often spoke fondly of his days at Georgia State. The anthropology classes were small, intense, and enlightening; he learned about White, Service, and Sahlins, and developed a strong theoretical interest in explaining the past.

After graduating from Georgia State in 1963, Roy went to work at Town Creek Indian Mound State Park in North Carolina. Working under Joffre L. Coe, he began to develop and refine his excavation skills, a process that would continue throughout his career. Although Town Creek provided valuable experience in understanding the intricacies of field interpretation, there were few opportunities to fuel the anthropological fires that had been kindled at Georgia State.

After a year at Town Creek, Roy decided to continue his academic pursuits and enrolled in graduate school at the University of Alabama where he studied under David DeJarnette. While at Alabama, he became interested in paleoecology, and his master's thesis reporting on survey and excavations in the Jones Bluff Reservoir represents one of the first attempts in the Southeast to reconstruct subsistence patterns.

Roy returned to North Carolina in 1966 to complete his graduate studies at UNC-Chapel Hill. Coe had just begun the Cherokee Project at this time, and Roy soon became one of the project's key participants, along with Bennie Keel, Brian Egloff, and Jefferson Reid. His innovative excavations at the Warren Wilson site laid the foundation for one of the most extensive, long-term, and carefully controlled field projects in the country. While studying at UNC, Roy not only continued to hone his field instincts but also gained an in-depth knowledge of Cherokee archaeology and the development of late prehistoric cultures throughout the Southeast. His dissertation research resulted in the publication of *Cherokee Prehistory* (1976), recognized today as a classic contribution to our knowledge of southeastern archaeology.

After completing his Ph.D. in 1970, Roy joined the faculty at California State College, San Bernardino for a one-year appointment as an assistant professor of anthropology. In September 1971, he moved back east to take a position as assistant professor of anthropology and director of the Laboratory of Archaeology at Georgia State University. Here he was to spend the major part of a short but very productive career.

At Georgia State he soon was promoted to associate professor, served a term as acting chair of the Anthropology Department, and was appointed director of the Center for Applied Research in Anthropology. During this time, while continuing his Cherokee studies, he also was pioneering research in urban archaeology, and was exploring and attempting to preserve the massive Soapstone Ridge Archaic complex. His early background in history merged with his anthropological training to promote an avid interest in colonial-Indian interaction and acculturation. This interest led to the excavation of two important historic Creek villages at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park in east-central Alabama and would remain a focal point of his research until his death.

One of the accomplishments Roy was most proud of was the publication of *Frontiers in the Soil: the Archaeology of Georgia* (1979), a textbook illustrated in cartoon format to introduce elementary school students to archaeology and anthropology. He wanted to share his knowledge not only with professional colleagues but also with the general public and, particularly, with young people. He had been given an early opportunity to learn about the past and felt a strong obligation to help

others do the same. This concern with public awareness is also reflected in his developing the first major exhibition of southeastern Indian art which was displayed at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta in 1982.

Although Roy was happy at Georgia State, he felt the opportunities for expanding the archaeology program and developing a graduate curriculum were limited. In 1982 he returned to his alma mater in Chapel Hill to become the director of the Research Laboratories of Anthropology, a position held by his old teacher, Joffre Coe, for over three decades.

During his short tenure at UNC, the Research Laboratories of Anthropology pulsed with creativity. There was constant interaction between students and staff, and research was pursued vigorously in an open intellectual atmosphere. Roy's contagious exuberance made him an excellent teacher, one who always had time for students and the patience to listen to their ideas. He was responsible for developing the Siouan Project, a research program designed to study culture change among the Piedmont Siouan tribes of the Carolinas and Virginia. The early phases of the project resulted in the discovery and complete excavation of the historic village of Occaneechi Town. A report on this research was recently published as the first volume of the Research Laboratories' new monograph series begun by Roy.

Although Roy's research focused on the aboriginal cultures of the Southeast, this was by no means his only area of interest. In 1970, he participated, as a visiting archaeologist, in excavations under the direction of the late Louis Leakey at the Calico Hills site in southern California. He also was keenly interested in mesoamerican archaeology and traveled extensively throughout southern Mexico visiting museums and archaeological sites. He developed considerable expertise in this area and frequently taught courses on mesoamerican archaeology. He also had a long-standing interest in American folk pottery and, after returning to Chapel Hill, devoted much of his free time to studying and researching the rich pottery traditions of the central North Carolina Piedmont.

Roy was not an armchair scholar. He believed it was necessary to experience archaeology—to work in the field, to know firsthand what it's like to dig up the past. And he was a gifted fieldworker with an almost uncanny eye for seeing order and meaning within the seemingly chaotic forces that form and shape the archaeological record in the ground.

Whether in the field, lab, or classroom, archaeology was serious business to Roy, and he had little patience for those who lacked respect for the past or trivialized the pursuits of archaeology. Yet, his demeanor was never grave or solemn. He was quick to laugh and retained a fresh, almost boyish enthusiasm, that made all of us who knew him feel a genuine sense of excitement in discovering and learning about the past. With Roy's death, southeastern archaeology lost one of its most creative and productive scholars. More importantly, many southeastern archaeologists have lost a dear and valued friend.

H. TRAWICK WARD
R. P. STEPHEN DAVIS, JR.

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