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Exploring Joara Foundation breaks ground on museum

By Reynolds Hutchins



With one great heave, the beginnings of a traditional 16th-century Native American palisade was constructed Saturday afternoon as members and friends of the Exploring Joara Foundation broke ground on the site of a new living museum.

The groundbreaking ceremony is the start a two-year, \$150,000 project to develop a model Joara Native American village at Catawba Meadows Park.

Long before European settlers ever arrived in Burke County, Joara was settled by Mississippian Indians as early as 1000 A.D.

By the time the Spanish arrived in the area, Joara had become the largest Mississippian settlement in all of North Carolina. But European arrival brought disease, conquest and assimilation for the Joara people who all but abandoned the settlement by the 17th century.

Saturday's ceremony included expositions on primitive technology, models of Joara structures, as well as refreshments for guests and visitors.

Executive archaeologist David Moore explained that the village would be constructed entirely with traditional methods and tools.

"We have a story here about Native Americans that can be richly told by these archaeological sites," said Moore.

Funding for the village will be raised throughout the region, relying heavily on board members and friends of the foundation.

Moore and his associates hope that by interpreting Native American and archaeological culture, the living museum will be able to educate the community about the significance of the Joara people to the region.

In coming years, the Exploring Joara Foundation also plans to construct a museum dedicated to the Joara just yards away at Catawba Meadows Park.

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