

the Powhatan, as shown on a late 1600s map of the region (Figure 2.1). The relationship of the Monacan with other neighboring groups however is believed to have been more nuanced. According to the Powhatan, the Monacan supplied them with copper, a highly valued symbol of power and authority.¹⁵ European drawn or painted images of regional indigenous people and their settlements appear in this era (Figures 2.2 and 2.3).

Archaeology of Late Woodland sites in the central Virginia Piedmont has documented the presence of domesticated corn and squash. Likewise, studies have also revealed a strong reliance on a corn-based diet, suggesting a stable agricultural economy within Monacan society.¹⁶

Although Virginia's first English colonists had been told about the dominance of the Monacans and the location of their villages in the beginning of the seventeenth century, by the 1720s when European and African American settlements began to permanently penetrate the region that was to become Albemarle County, the Monacans appeared to have largely disappeared from the landscape.

In the mid-eighteenth century, according to Thomas Jefferson, a small party of Native Americans visited a burial mound on the Rivanna River north of Charlottesville while passing through Albemarle County.¹⁷ Population loss through epidemic disease, warfare, enslavement, and out-migration may well have played a role, although Native peoples may also have deliberately concealed themselves in out-of-the-way places and/or among other socially marginal groups along the advancing colonial frontier.

The Toteropoles are believed to have been present within what is now Albemarle and other central Piedmont counties during the early seventeenth century. However due to pressure from the Iroquois, the Toteropoles fled central Virginia to settle in the vicinity of the Roanoke River on what is now the Virginia – North Carolina border next to their allies the Occaneechis.¹⁸ The site of a former 'Toteropole Town,' in Albemarle County, is mentioned in a 1728 land grant for property on the James River near Scottsville.¹⁹

C6. Early Colonial Period Land Use in the Virginia Piedmont, 1607 to 1735

While European colonists began settling the Virginia Tidewater region in earnest following the establishment of Jamestown in 1607, the push of settlement westward did not reach the eastern Piedmont until the late seventeenth century. A 1620 image of an uncultivated tobacco field records swidden-like agriculture practices of the period in which farmers would clear and burn brush within a heavily wooded area to create a field (Figure 2.4). The first permanent, non-native settlements within the region that was to become Albemarle County did not occur until the late 1720s.

The development of counties can be employed as a guide for settlement as the first counties were formed for settled areas, and subsequent counties divided up the land mass into ever smaller units as settlement became denser. By an Act of the General Assembly, Goochland County was carved from Henrico County in 1728 and is technically the first County to administer land in what is now Albemarle County. 'Big' Albemarle County, incorporating all of what are now Amherst, Buckingham, Fluvanna and Nelson counties and parts of Appomattox, Bedford and Campbell counties, was created from Goochland County in 1744. Albemarle County was significantly reduced in size in 1761 and as a result the courthouse was moved from near Scottsville on the James River, to Charlottesville. The current Albemarle County configuration was achieved by 1777.

Although Native Americans may well have remained in the region in less visible locations, most historians believe that the central Piedmont landscape was largely deserted when the first colonial