

"People would dump the bones and sell the arrowheads at Trade Day," Holstein said. "Some of [the group] are nice, but some have become violent and demanding. One knocked down a fence, and some have gotten in the face of these college students claiming they have a right to be there when it's actually private property."

"The rhetoric is also getting very emotional, claiming the people buried there 'died a terrible death' and such. The bodies were there centuries ago."

Blackbear said JSU's team has allowed them to come onto the dig site to conduct the prayer services, but he wasn't aware of any belligerent exchanges. Fort Payne acting Police Chief David Walker said he was not aware of any related incident reports.

"JSU has to do things within the law, and we believe they have flawed," Blackbear said. "To say they 'died a terrible death' could've been dying of disease or famine."

Holstein said the state does not have to contact state-recognized tribes.

"It would be impossible - a nightmare - to contact every Native American within 500 miles, but the highway department has made a good faith effort," he said. "Still, it has gotten really political. People have been calling claiming to be Indians when they aren't, and the remains we've found are a thousand years removed from the historical tribes. There are no direct ancestors to these people buried there."

Blackbear, who says is Southern Cheyenne based out west, said the remains could be ancestral because nomads roamed the whole continent. He has lived in DeKalb County for a decade.

"We're waiting for the Cherokees to tell us what to do, and we still have no definitive answer," Holstein said.

The two men do agree on the educational merits of the JSU dig.

Blackbear said he was disappointed to see little information in the library about Native Americans. Holstein said the project will provide great insight into prehistoric human activity in Fort Payne, all of it to be released to libraries and schools.

"We're not trying to be mysterious, and we don't care if they want to pray," Holstein said. "Just give us the courtesy of not stepping all over our excavation and ruining our data."

#### Update: 2002 Feb Native American artifacts could be significant local discovery

By Steven Stiefel  
sstiefel@times-journal.com

The official state archaeologist believes the Fort Payne dig site near "Dead Man's Curve" may be significant to getting an accurate picture of the inhabitants of this area over thousands of years.

The Alabama Department of Transportation has paid a group from Jacksonville State University to find artifacts so they are not destroyed when bulldozers begin moving dirt. The plan is to make the dangerous curve more gradual by cutting across what is now pasture. The dig site is along the bank of Wills Creek.

The excavation has been under way since June, when it was only expected to last about three months.

State Archaeologist Thomas Maher of the Alabama Historical Commission said the site is a significant finding in two ways.

"That would be the fact that the artifacts are so old and indicate an intense occupation