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The 2011 Field Seasons at Robertson Farm Site 2 (38PN35)

By Tom Charles and Terry Ferguson



Fig. 1: December 2011 Excavation Unit at 38PN35 showing palisade line to the left and possible line of structural posts to right. (PAST photo by Terry A. Ferguson)

Excavations were conducted at Robertson Farm Site 2 (38PN35) from May 22–June 11, and December 12–29, 2011. The investigations in 2011 had two research objectives. One objective was to further examine the Mississippian (Pisgah) and Middle Woodland (Connestee) components of 38PN35. A number of new prehistoric features were exposed and mapped. The majority of these features were postholes. A few pit features were also exposed, including two large Connestee storage pits and an earth oven. Investigations to delineate within-site settlement patterning of structures and storage features are on going. An

attempt was also made to more clearly define and date a previously identified palisade. Artifacts larger than one square-inch were piece plotted, and flotation and carbon samples, when present, were obtained from all excavated features. Pisgah features radiocarbon dated this year include a palisade post with an age of 2 Sigma Cal AD 1,320 to 1,430 (Cal BP 630 to 520) and pit feature with an age of 2 Sigma Cal AD 1,160 to 1,220 (Cal BP 790 to 690). Charcoal from a small pit feature, originally thought to be a post but containing two small ground and polished gaming stones, excavated in 2009, was dated at 2 Sigma Cal AD 880 to

1,000 (Cal BP 1,070 to 950). Charcoal from the Connestee Earth Oven was dated at 2 Sigma Cal BC 30 to Cal AD 90 (Cal 1,980 to 1,860 BP).

The second objective was to begin excavating an area of sufficient size, such that the more deeply buried Late, Middle, Early Archaic and Paleoindian components of 38PN35, over two and a half meters below surface, could be safely exposed and investigated. This year's investigations succeeded in reaching the transition between the Late and Middle Archaic components. As with the Mississippian and Middle Woodland components, artifacts greater than one square-inch were piece plotted, and flotation and carbon samples, when present, were obtained from all excavated features. Geoarchaeological investigations involving particle size analysis and magnetic susceptibility continued to focus on determining site formation processes and past climatic. A 2 Sigma Cal AD 640 to 680 (Cal BP 1,310 to 1,270) date was obtained from over a meter down in the current T0 terrace indicating development of this landform was well underway by the Middle Woodland. We would like to acknowledge Andrew Ivester's on-going geoarchaeological efforts directed toward understanding the sedimentary context of the site.

During the spring-summer field season in 2011, the number of visitors to the site increased dramatically, so we arranged to have archaeologist on-site



Fig. 2: 38PN35—Feature 310—large stratified Middle Woodland storage pit with NE quadrant excavated. (PAST photo by Terry A. Ferguson)

to give an overview of the sites history and to guide visitors on a tour of the site to explain what is being done and why. Instruction in excavation techniques was also given to those who wished to take part. A Field Day for visitors was also held for the first time this year. We would like to thank the South Carolina Archaeology Public Outreach Division, Inc. (SCAPOD) for conducting these efforts, and in particular Helena Ferguson's leadership in making outreach activities a great success (See page 14).

We would like to acknowledge the supervisory efforts of Fran Knight and Cameron Howell during the May and July 2011 investigations as well as the professional archaeologists and volunteers who worked on the site during the unseasonably warm conditions.

We would especially like to thank Poll Knowland, Manager of Table Rock State Park for providing bunkrooms for volunteers and Deborah Little who provided staff housing. Diachronic Research Foundation conducted the December 2011 investigations, focusing on the deep excavations. We would particularly like to thank Carl Steen and Chris Judge who directed and supervised

a crew of graduate students and other professional archaeologists during these investigations. We also want to thank Chris Moore and Mark Brooks at SRARP for collection Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) samples. We would also like to thank the Archaeological Research Trust (ART) for providing funds for ongoing botanical and radiocarbon

analyses. Finally, we would like to thank all of those who have donated funds to these and other on-going investigations into Piedmont Archaeology; in particular we would like to acknowledge the continued support of Tony Harper, without whom these investigations would not have been possible.



Fig. 4: 38PN35—Features 294—earth oven with south half excavated and Feature 295—posthole. (PAST photo by Terry A. Ferguson)



Fig.3: 38PN35—Feature 626—large stratified Middle Woodland storage pit with NW quadrant excavated (Note: distinct sand lens). (PAST photo by Terry A. Ferguson)