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Recent Analysis from the Woodland Period G. S. Lewis-West Site Along the Middle Savannah River

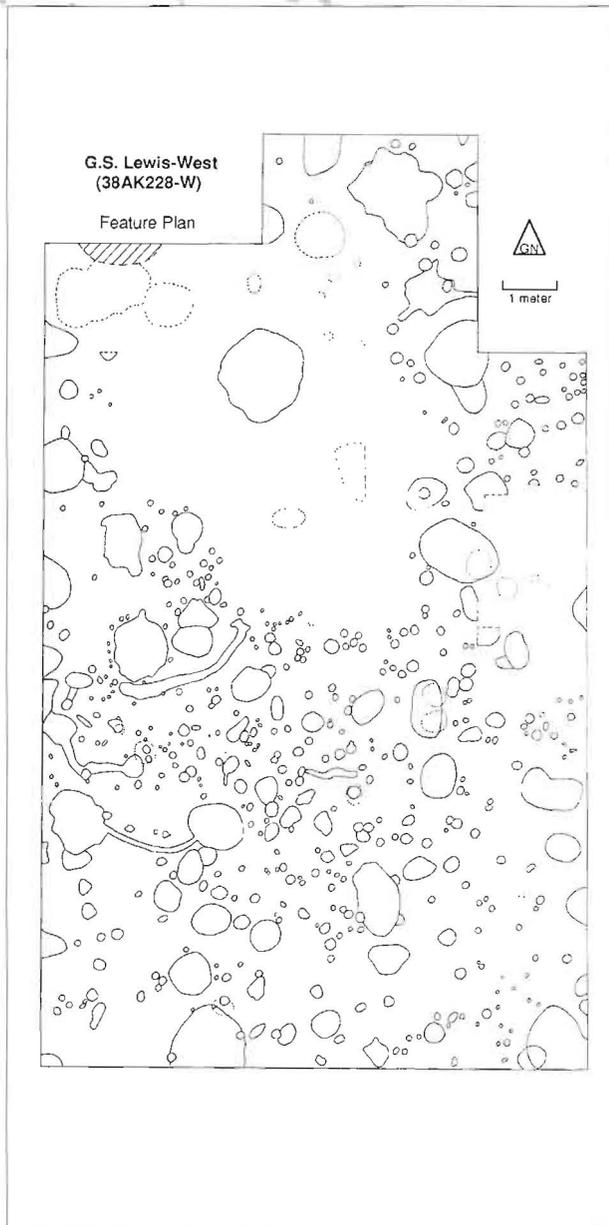
By Keith Stephenson and Jamie Civitello

One of the most well excavated Woodland period sites in the interior Coastal Plain is the G.S. Lewis-West site. Situated along a swamp terrace at the confluence of Upper Three Runs and the Savannah River floodplain on the Savannah River Site, the Lewis-West site was excavated by staff and volunteers of the Savannah River Archaeological

Research Program-SCIAA in the 1980s. As a portion of the site lies beneath several feet of modern overburden from the 1950s dredging of a nearby canal, site configuration could



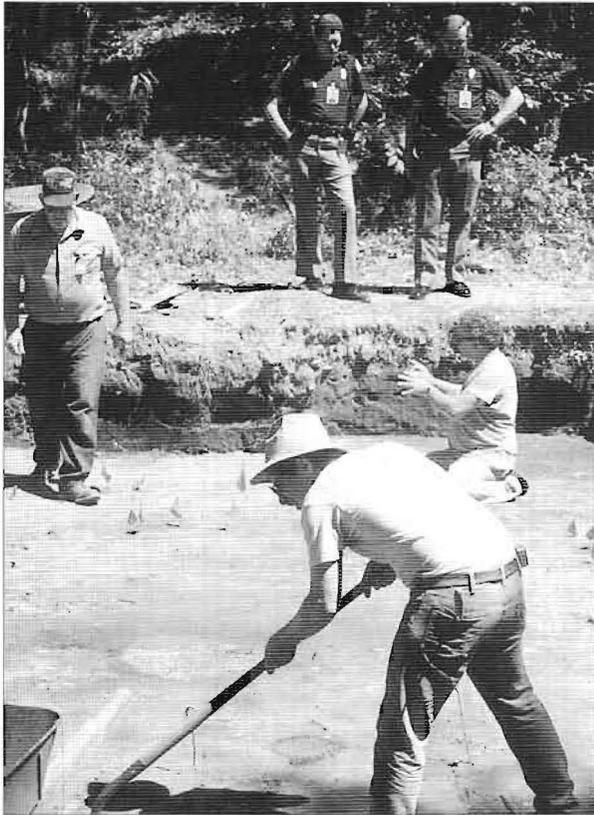
The late George S. Lewis excavating at the site named in his honor. (SRARP/SCIAA photo)



Plan view of cultural features at G. S. Lewis-West site (SRARP/SCIAA drawing)

not accurately be determined. Removal of a 25-centimeter-thick midden in a 154-square-meter block exposed more than 500 cultural features including large river mussel shell-filled pits and postmolds indicative of intensive human occupation. Postmold patterns revealed the presence of several house structures. Several of the

larger features produced sherd assemblages with the potential for ceramic seriation, as well as carbonized wood material for obtaining radiocarbon dates. Altogether, just over 50,000 sherds representing a range of decorative styles were recovered during excavation of the site. The most prevalent types were Middle Woodland Deptford Linear Check Stamped and Late Woodland Savannah Cord Marked. An associated minority ware included red-painted zoned Check Stamped sherds resembling the Deptford type known as Brewton Hill Zoned Punctated. Formal lithic tools included Yadkin Triangular bifaces, found with the Deptford ceramics, and small triangular points associ-



David Anderson leading volunteers during excavation of the G. S. Lewis-West site. (SRARP/SCI AA photo)

ated with the Cord Marked pottery.

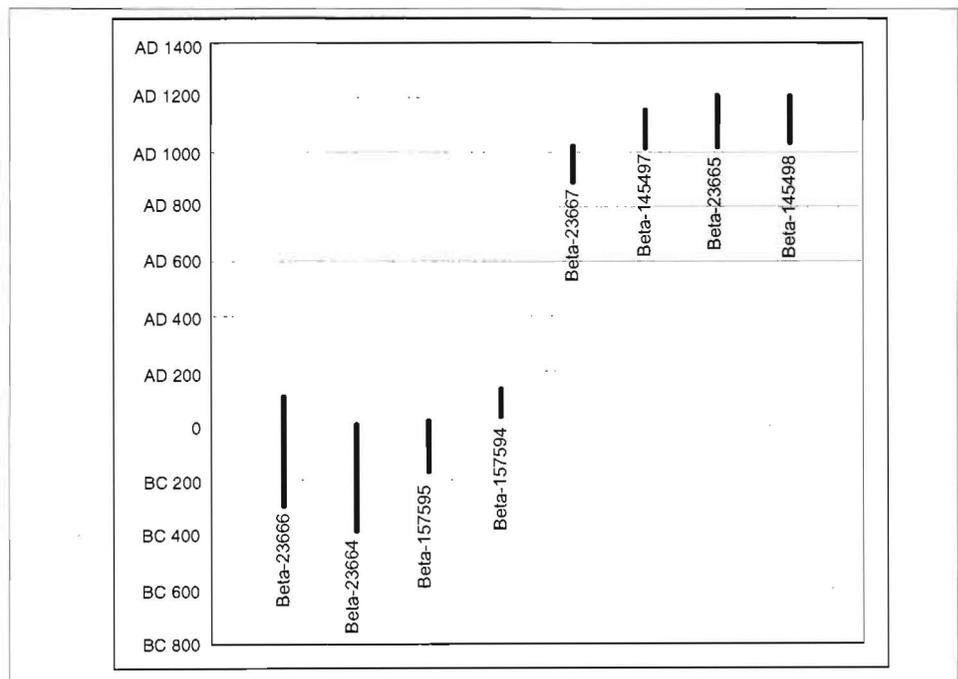
A recent series of radiocarbon dates from the site has helped to clarify our understanding of the range of site occupation. A total of eight conventional and AMS dates have been obtained on charcoal samples and sooted sherds from several of the features. Interestingly, the calibrated radiocarbon results show a bimodal distribution. The earliest date range spans the time from ca. 390 B.C. to A.D. 130. This time frame falls within the Middle Woodland Deptford I and II phases [ca. 600 B.C. to A.D. 500] for the middle Savannah River valley. The later dates range between A.D. 890 and 1,200, falling within the Late Woodland Savannah I phase [ca. A.D. 800 to 1,100] for the

Middle Savannah River valley. We expect additional assays from undated features to adhere to this emerging temporal pattern of site occupation. These efforts will enhance seriation of site features, as well as their ceramic and lithic tool contents, ultimately enabling us to comment on site function and broader relational aspects to Middle and Late Woodland sites in the interior of the Savannah River Site.

Additionally, archaeobotanical

analysis for the site includes six samples from five features totaling 80.25 liters of soil processed through flotation. Overall, the botanical assemblage stands out when com-

pared to other Middle Woodland assemblages analyzed in the state, mostly because all others are from Lower Coastal Plain sites, with the exception of one Middle Woodland assemblage from the Piedmont. Wood charcoal differs most from other Middle Woodland sites, with southern pine dominating and comprising the largest percentage (96%) of total weight of all wood identified, whereas in other parts of the state hickory and oak are better represented. The nutshell from the Lewis-West site compares more closely with other Middle Woodland sites in that hickory dominates (93%) with some occurrences of acorn and hazelnut. Seed densities appear to be similar to other assemblages as well, indicating a woods/marsh habitat. One maygrass seed, *Phalaris caroliniana*, has been identified. More samples remain to be analyzed, with exciting possibilities for understanding the dynamics of Middle Woodland human-plant interrelationships, especially those concerning mast resources, maygrass, and wood-fuel consumption.



Radiocarbon and AMS dates for the G. S. Lewis-West site. (SRARP/SCI AA drawing by Farrah Brown)