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Archeological Survey Along the Broad River Near Leeds, South Carolina

Thomas M. Ryan

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ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY ALONG THE BROAD RIVER
NEAR LEEDS, SOUTH CAROLINA

by

Thomas M. Ryan

Prepared by the
INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
August 1971
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INTRODUCTION

From April 12 to April 15, 1971, the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, conducted a survey of prehistoric and historic archeological sites along a two mile section of the Broad River in Chester County, South Carolina. The property, under option by the Atlantic Richfield Company, is scheduled for development in the near future.

The survey was primarily concerned with locating sites of possible archeological interest and recommending a future course of action for the recovery of scientific information. A secondary objective of the project was to examine local collections in order to gain an overall knowledge of cultural development along the middle Broad River. Special attention was given to those areas which would be either disturbed or destroyed by plant construction or related activities.

During the course of the survey, two Archaic sites, one fish weir, a Revolutionary War battlefield, and three late nineteenth or early twentieth century house sites were located. In addition to the archeological sites, traces of an eighteenth-nineteenth century road and ferry crossing were recorded. While very few sites were recorded, it is postulated that the prehistoric settlement pattern along the middle Broad River closely parallels Hemmings' (1970) settlement-subsistence model for the Savannah River.

SURVEY AREA AND NATURAL SETTING

The tract under option by the Atlantic Richfield Company, encompasses several square miles extending from the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad on the north to S. C. Route 72 on the south. The Broad River marks the western...
boundary while the eastern boundary parallels S. C. Route 25 (Figure 1). Within this area three geomorphic zones are found. Paralleling the river for a distance of two miles is a narrow alluvial flood plain ranging in width from 300 to 400 feet. This surface was formed during periods of maximum discharge by the river and is composed of bedded sand and silt. On the Carolina Piedmont the occurrence and distribution of flood plain deposits is a function of the underlying bedrock. The swiftly flowing streams have produced narrow valleys that generally prevent the formation of flood plains except where the river has eroded the less resistant rocks. Consequently, alluvial flood plain deposits on the Piedmont rivers are usually limited in extent and occurrence. The rivers are confined to a relatively broad but shallow bed that is interspersed with outcropping rocks and small islands (Coe 1964:11).

The valley slope, facing the river valley, is composed of weathered deposits of quartz and residual clays. Mechanical weathering by numerous streams and creeks has produced a highly dissected surface characterized by local relief of 100 feet or more. The tributary streams which flow into the Broad River have formed steep finger-like ridges between their valleys. The higher elevations overlooking both the tributary streams and the flood plain offer ideal habitation sites free from flooding.

The rolling topography of the upland surfaces lies at a slightly higher elevation than the valley slopes. As a rule this surface is less dissected than the valley slopes with local relief usually not exceeding 50 feet or more.

Of the three surfaces, (1) alluvial flood plain and natural levee, (2) valley slope, and (3) the uplands, only the alluvial flood plain has
Archeological sites located in the Atlantic Richfield survey area near Leeds, Chester County, South Carolina
been active since man first occupied the valley. The valley slope and uplands have remained geologically stable throughout this period. Although the upland surfaces directly reflects man's use of them, the archeological remains are frequently on or near the surface. Consequently, one will find the remains of several thousand years of occupation within one foot or less of the surface. Frequently the cultural remains from various occupations are so thoroughly mixed that it is often impossible to distinguish individual components. Since the sites are so shallow, plowing, logging, tree roots, and animal burrows will often disturb them. Nevertheless, these sites provide valuable data on prehistoric settlement and subsistence systems, but the difficulty in separating the individual components often makes archeological excavations very difficult and time consuming. The flora and fauna associated with these zones were undoubtedly systematically exploited by the prehistoric inhabitants of the valley. The sites were not randomly selected by the Indians but reflect an integrated system involving seasonal hunting, fishing, gathering, and other exploitive activities. A number of authors (Hemmings 1970; Wilmsen 1968; Campbell 1968; Morse 1970) have demonstrated that site location, size, and artifact content directly reflect man's use of the site.

In contrast to the upland surfaces, which are subject to constant degradation, the alluvial flood plains are the products of numerous floods that have taken place since the valley was formed. An understanding of the processes involved in levee building and flood plain accumulation is essential if we are to examine man's use of the valley.

Flood plains and natural levees are formed during periods of maximum discharge by the river. As the flood water tops the channel banks, its
velocity is reduced, thus causing the river to deposit its sediment load. The coarser and heavier sediments are deposited first nearest the river bank forming natural levees. As the velocity continues to decrease as the water spreads out, the finer suspended sediments are deposited farther from the river. Sedimentation rates are much more rapid during the earlier stages of building as floods continually top the levees. These rates are gradually reduced as the levees are constructed to the height of the average flood. Once this is achieved the sedimentation decreased drastically until additional sedimentation will only be deposited during periods of extreme floods.

In summary, levee building is an active process that gradually builds up the adjacent surfaces. Land surfaces are continually being built and then covered by more recent deposits. As the old land surfaces build up, any archeological sites that were once on them are also being covered. On multi-component sites occupied over long periods of time, the individual components will frequently be separated by sterile layers of water-deposited sand. The alluviation of a site usually protects it from subsequent erosion and other destructive forces of nature, but it also obliterates all surface remains. Frequently power lines, ditches, canals, and roads that cross a flood plain will expose buried archeological remains. The necessity to meet construction deadlines often prevents scientific examination of the sites before they are destroyed.
ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

Undoubtedly, many more archeological sites exist in the survey area than were recorded. The natural processes that erode or bury a site have already been described in the previous section. The fields that were once cultivated are now covered with dense second-growth vegetation. The identification of archeological sites under such conditions is exceedingly difficult. As earth moving operations commence, new sites will certainly be uncovered.

In an attempt to locate possible buried archeological remains a five foot square test pit was excavated into the top of the natural levee approximately three-fourths of a mile north of the bridge. The test pit indicated that the first .4 foot had been disturbed by plowing. Below the plow zone water deposited zones of sand and silt continued for 1.6 feet. Two feet below the present ground surface a thin humus zone .2 feet thick was located. Roots originating in this zone indicated that this surface had remained stable for a period of time sufficient for the growth of vegetation. Below this zone there is evidence of a poorly developed soil profile. While no artifacts were found associated with the humus, conditions for human occupation were undoubtedly suitable at this time. Below the humus, sterile sand continued for another four feet until the bottom of the test pit was reached.

Sedimentation rates are unknown for the Broad River and are impossible to accurately predict. Nevertheless, the village midden associated with the McCollum Mound (38CS2), 15 miles upstream from Fishdam Ford, is now covered by 1.5 feet of alluvium. The terminal date for this midden is
estimated to be around A.D. 1600, possibly later. It is estimated that
the humus zone uncovered near Fishdam Ford pre-dates A.D. 1600.

Fish Traps

Site 38CS49 is a V-shaped fish trap or weir located on the Broad River
300 feet upstream from the Route 72 bridge (Figure 2,3). Historically this
location is known as Fishdam Ford, deriving its name from the adjacent
Indian fish trap. Shoals, created when the river flows over more resistant
bed rock, were ideally suited for the construction of traps. The traps were
constructed by aligning sloping rows of stone to form a wide V with the
mouth facing upstream. A long tapering cane basket or a brush trap was
usually placed across a small opening in the apex of the V. The current,
flowing into the mouth of the trap, would channel fish into a position from
which they could not escape.

When the first Europeans arrived in this country, weirs were still
used by the Indians. Consequently, we have several reliable ethnographic
accounts describing their use and construction. In 1705 Robert Beverley
wrote the following account of a fish trap in Virginia:

"At the Falls of the Rivers, where the Water is shallow
and the Current strong, the Indians use another kind of
Weir, thus made: They make a Dam of loose Stone, whereof
there is Plenty at hand, quite a-cross the River, leaving
one, two, or more Spaces or Trunnels, for the Water to
pass thr'o; at the Mouth of which they set a Pot of Reeds,
wove in Form of a Cone, whose Base is about three Foot,
and perpendicular ten, into which the Swiftness of the
Current carries the Fish, and there lodges them" (Beverley
1705).

Over seventy years later James Adair described a similar trap still
in use:
Archeological sites near Fishdam Ford, Chester County, South Carolina
FIGURE 3

Aerial photograph showing the Fishdam Ford fish trap, 38CS49, Chester County, South Carolina
"The Indians have the art of catching fish in long creels, made with canes and hickory splinters, tapering to a point. They lay these at a fall of water, where stones are placed in two sloping lines from each bank, till they meet together in the middle of the rapid stream, where the entangled fish are soon drowned. Above such a place, I have known them to fasten a wreath of long grape vines together, to reach across the river, with stones fastened at proper distance to rake the bottom; they will swim a mile with it whooping and plunging all the way, diving driving the fish before them into their large cane pots" (Adair 1775).

Similar features have been reported on many of the major streams along the eastern seaboard from Georgia to New York (Strandberg and Tomlinson 1969:312). In South Carolina, Hemmings located three fish traps on the upper Savannah River in the vicinity of Trotters Shoals (Hemmings 1970:48).* Unfortunately, we are unable to date the earliest use of fish traps along the eastern coast. Archeological evidence in the form of a Morrow Mountain Archaic point, 5050-4050 B.C., found in a fish trap on the Potomac River suggests that some of the structures may be very old (Strandberg and Tomlinson 1969:312). On the other hand, weirs were still being constructed by both Colonials and Indians during the eighteenth century. Traps of Indian origin were sometimes repaired by the Colonists and put back in service. In 1765 John Calhoun states that the settlers repaired the Indian fish dam across Little River in South Carolina (Meriwether 1940:169). The size and irregularity of the boulder alignment of the trap at Fishdam Ford would suggest that it is of Indian origin.

* Editor's note: Since this was written, two radiocarbon dates have been obtained from two logs that were firmly wedged into one of the fish traps at Trotter's Shoals. The log samples were collected by Dr. Hemmings and were firmly embedded among the rocks as integral parts of the trap. One date was 545 ± 100 years ago (A.D. 1405) indicating a prehistoric construction date. The other was 180 ± 80 (A.D. 1770). The latter could, in this editor's opinion, represent a repair to this fish trap by the eighteenth century colonists.
Although none were located during the survey, temporary fishing camps or villages probably existed near the traps. If such a camp existed on the east bank of the river, it is now covered by alluvium.

Fishdam Ford (38CS49) is of sufficient archeological and historical interest to warrant further investigation. It is recommended that the site be extensively tested prior to the start of construction. Backhoe trenches parallel to the natural levee in the vicinity of the trap should reveal any subsurface archeological remains. It is estimated that this project would require one backhoe and operator, one archeologist, and three field assistants. The testing could probably be accomplished in three or possibly four days.

Prehistoric Sites

Along the edge of the valley slope overlooking the river, two prehistoric sites (38CS50 and 38CS51) were located. Both sites had been exposed by erosion and consisted of a small scattering of stone debitage and projectile points (Figure 1).

38CS50

Site 38CS50 is located on the bluff 1800 feet from the river at an elevation of 420 feet above mean sea level. A small unnamed creek flows into the Broad River on the east side of the site.* The area of occupation consists of a scattering of argillite flakes exposed along a dirt road for a distance of 100 feet.

Locally this hill is known as Indian Knoll. When the top of this ridge was last cultivated more than 15 years ago, Mr. Wilbur Woods of

*This creek is unnamed on the county and project map. The local residents usually refer to it as the Middle Branch. This creek can be tentatively identified with Terrible Creek on Boyd's Map of 1818 (Mills 1825).
Leeds reports finding large projectile points made of Carolina slate (argillite). The site is now covered with pine and various hardwoods.

The artifact collection made along the side of the road consists of three argillite flakes and one broken projectile point. The artifacts collected, as well as Mr. Wood's description of the material that he observed indicates a late Archaic-Savannah River occupation. Based on this small collection, it is not possible to accurately determine the site's original function.

Any future construction will undoubtedly uncover additional material at this site. The Office of the State Archeologist should be informed at this time and the site reevaluated. Excavations are not recommended at this time.

38CS51

Site 38CS51 is located along the valley slope 100 feet north of Route 72. The site is exposed in the bed of an abandoned road. Quartz chips were observed along the road for a distance of 50 feet. The collections from this site include one Savannah River projectile point, and one broken tip of an unidentified quartz point. Occupation was probably brief and oriented toward a hunting and gathering economy. No further work is recommended at this site.

Historic Sites

The naturally occurring shoals have undoubtedly served as a focal point for crossing the Broad River since prehistoric times. The Indian fish trap testifies to the prehistoric use of the location. The trap extends across the river and would facilitate crossing by foot.

By the time of the American Revolution the ford had become well known.
General Sumter crossed the river at this point on November 9, 1780, and camped on the east bank. McCrady's description makes no mention of how Sumter crossed the river but he probably used boats in addition to the ford (McCrady 1902:819-821).

The earliest documentary evidence of a ferry crossing at this location in Charles Boyd's survey of Chester County made in 1818 (Mills 1825) Boyd shows "Moman's Ferry" on the east bank of the river one-fourth of a mile upstream from Fishdam Ford (Figure 4A). In R. Thompson's survey of Union County in 1820 (Mills 1825) the name had been changed to Fishdam Ferry (Figure 4B). The name Fishdam Ferry is used on Colton's Topographic Map of North and South Carolina (1861) and appears to be the preferred term for the ferry crossing. In connection with the ford, the deep water upstream from the Fishdam made this an ideal location for crossing the river. If a traveler didn't mind getting his feet wet, he could walk the river at the shoals and thus avoid paying the ferry toll. The site was used as a ferry crossing into the twentieth century.

While we have no documentary evidence of a structure associated with the crossing, a ferry keeper's house or inn may have existed on the site. If any architectural features existed, they no longer retain any surface expression. The 1818 name for the site, Moman's Ferry, could refer to an early settler who lived on the site and operated a ferry for travelers. Considering the importance of the site and its long history, we may expect that architectural features did once exist. Limited test excavations are recommended in order to determine the historic use of the site.

Traces of the old Chesterville (Chester-Charlotte) Road can still be seen in several places paralleling Route 72. The road crossed the river
FIGURE 4A
Boyd's map of 1818 showing the ferry across the Broad River at Fishdam Ford. (Mills 1825)

FIGURE 4B
Thompson's map of 1820 showing the ferry across the Broad River at Fishdam Ford. Note that the name of the ferry has been changed from "Woman's Ferry" on the 1818 map to "Fishdam Ferry" on Thompson's 1820 map. (Mills 1815)
at Woman's Ferry, ran across the flood plain, and entered the hills at a point 300 feet north of the modern highway. The deep roadbed is easily recognized in the hills, but the portion of the road that crossed the flood plain is barely discernable due to recent sedimentation.

As mentioned earlier, the road was in existence during the Battle of Fishdam Ford and was noted on Mills Atlas (1825) and Colton's Map (1861). Small segments of the road were used until a few years ago. Today it is mostly abandoned with deep gullies now eroding the old bed.

Since the road was a substantial feature of the landscape, its exact position can be easily located by trenching with power equipment. Examination of the ferry site and the roadbed could be carried on in conjunction with investigations at 38CS49.

Fishdam Ford Battlefield (38CS52)

Judging from McCrady's account, we can tentatively place the battlefield between the bluff and the river approximately 1200 feet northeast of Fishdam Ford. The Charlotte Road, which was a dominant feature during the battle, marks the approximate southern limit of the battlefield.

The historical documents do not mention earthworks or defensive fortifications. Since Sumter camped on the site for only two days and the battle itself was little more than a night skirmish lasting only 20 minutes, it is unlikely that any were built.

Until a few years ago the battlefield was cultivated, but it is now covered by small trees and a thick undergrowth. Mr. Clyde Wages reports that his father found a flintlock pistol while plowing on the site in the early 1900’s. Additional relics directly associated with the battlefield...
may be exposed during the course of construction. Judging from past experience, it is unlikely that there are any appreciable remains.

The available historical documents do not mention where the British casualties were buried. It was common practice during this period to bury the dead on or near the battlefield. It is possible that construction activities might uncover the graves of soldiers killed during the battle.

Due to the apparent scarcity of architectural remains associated with the battle, excavation of the battlefield is not recommended. The Institute of Archeology and Anthropology should be notified before any earth moving operation commences.

**Historic House Sites**

Along the bluff facing the river three historic house sites were located. All of the houses had ceramic material dating from the twentieth century and showed evidence of recent occupation. No archeological investigations are recommended.

**38CS53**

This site is located in a plowed field on the north side of the old road approximately 150 feet from the bluff. No architectural features are visible, but brick fragments, broken glass, and ceramics indicate that the site dates from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The area of occupation covers two acres.

**38CS54**

Site 38CS54 is an historic house and barn located along the edge of the Chesterville-Charlotte Road 400 feet from the bluff. Rotting saw-cut
timber and the remains of the chimney foundation mark the original location of the house. Only the foundation remains of the barn which was located 50 feet northwest of the house. In addition to the cut lumber, round machine-made nails and the ceramic collection suggests that the house dates from early to mid-twentieth century.

38CS55 228

This site is a relatively small house site located 200 feet north of Route 72 and 1000 feet east of the bluff. Rotting lumber and the remains of the chimney can still be seen. Fragments of plastic containers indicate that this house site was abandoned less than five years ago.

In addition to the three historic sites recorded, several abandoned homes were located along the dirt road leading from Route 72 to Route 25. These sites were of little architectural or scientific importance and were not recorded. Another possible house site was located on the ridge in the approximate center of the tract. While the exact location of the house and outbuilding could not be found, a line of planted cedar trees indicates that the site is nearby.
SUMMARY

While this survey did not locate any large stratified sites, it did allow us to examine in detail a previously unknown area. Based on the results of the survey and the material observed in private collections, we are able to outline the sequence of human occupation on the middle Broad River.

The earliest evidence of human occupation in the survey area is represented by Hardaway, Palmer, and Kirk projectile points in the collection of Mr. W. McCollum of the Leeds community. The points are assigned to the Early Archaic Period (ca. 6000 - 7000 B.C.). At the St. Alban's Site in West Virginia, Kirk points were found in association with a hearth that dates 6980 ± 160 years (Broyles 1966). The middle Broad River was probably first intensively populated at this time. Earlier fluted points may be eventually found in the area, but their presence was not detected in Mr. McCollum's collection.

The middle Archaic Period is well represented by Morrow Mountain and Guilford projectile points. Points of this type have a wide geographic distribution throughout the Piedmont and Coastal Plains. Radiocarbon dates from the Gaston Site suggest a minimum date of 4000 B.C. (Coe 1964:44). Morrow Mountain and Guilford points are particularly abundant in Chester and Fairfield Counties. While none were found during the survey, they were present in local collections.

After 3000 B.C. the preceramic occupation is well represented by Savannah River Stemmed projectile points. The two prehistoric sites located on the Atlantic Richfield property, 38CS50 and 38CS51, date from this
period. The terminal date for the late Archaic Period is generally considered to be around 500 B.C. The Archaic may have persisted longer in the Piedmont than in other areas.

Along most of the Piedmont streams Archaic sites are far more numerous than any of the later cultural phases. The Archaic sites usually consist of a small scattering of stone debitage and an occasional stone tool or projectile point. The sites are usually located on the higher elevations adjacent to the river valleys. The river bottoms were undoubtedly occupied, but the sites have either been destroyed by the later erosion of the rivers or are buried under many feet of silt. The settlement pattern and artifact collections indicate an economy based on nomadic hunting of small game, food processing, and gathering. The large number of small sites probably reflects the seasonal nature of the available resources.

Sites of the Woodland Period are assumed to be virtually absent on all of the Piedmont rivers in South Carolina (Hemmings 1970). Fabric impressed, cord-marked, and stamped sherds characteristic of the Woodland Period were not found during the course of the survey. The few Woodland sites found on the upper Savannah River were probably chiefly concerned with exploiting the game, fish, and wild plant resources of the valley, as were the earlier Archaic inhabitants (Hemmings 1970:65). Along the Coastal Plain, Woodland settlements are numerous and appear to be oriented toward a hunting and gathering economy supplemented by incipient agriculture. The sites are characteristically located on the easily worked natural levees. The apparent lack of Woodland sites on the Piedmont may be related to the scarcity of floodplain suitable for agriculture.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

The most promising area for the recovery of archeological remains on the Atlantic Richfield property is the flood plain adjacent to Fishdam Ford. This area was carefully examined on the ground, but the results were negative. A small test pit on top of the natural levees in this vicinity strengthened the belief that historic and prehistoric remains may lie buried beneath the surface.

In order to obtain as complete a picture as possible, it is recommended that test excavations be concentrated in this area. This can best be accomplished by the use of power equipment. Trenches parallel to the river should reveal any buried remains. It is estimated that the project would require one backhoe and operator, one archeologist, and three field assistants for three or four days. An additional month of laboratory analysis would follow the excavation. A final report, suitable for public relations purposes would be made available to the Atlantic Richfield Company.

Excluding the cost of the power equipment and operator, it is estimated that the cost of the excavation and laboratory analysis would be around $1,000.
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