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Leland G. Ferguson

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PINTAIL ISLAND PROJECT

by

Leland G. Ferguson
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Prepared by the
INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
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INTRODUCTION

The Pintail Island Project is a plan for residential development of an island formerly known as Butler's Island in Lake Marion. This 74 acre island is located immediately south of the western end of the Lake Marion-Lake Moultrie Diversion Canal. Planned development will include the construction of homes, a road system, recreation areas, a bridge to the mainland and dredging to facilitate boat traffic near the island.

Development plans for this island were brought to the attention of the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology of the University of South Carolina by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. On October 24, 1973 representing the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology I visited the island for the purpose of evaluating the archeological significance of the area. Two archeological sites were located (38BK67, 38BK68: see Fig. 1).

ENVIRONMENT

Today Pintail Island is part of the ecosystem of man-made Lake Marion. The topsoil is sandy with a clayey subsoil all of which is supported by limestone bedrock. The central portion of the island is in pine trees, and the ground is covered with a thick layer of pine needles. The island perimeter consists of a zone ranging up to 75 yards of thick marsh grass and trees including cypress, willow, and tupelo. This marshy ecotone seems to support a variety of wildlife. During our visit we saw ducks, herons, and egrets feeding in the marsh. Small

mammal tracks were found on the open ground on the northern end of the island.

Prehistorically the environment of Pintail Island was quite different from what we see today. From historical accounts we know that the Santee Swamp area was one of the richest environmental zones in the Southeast. Prior to the construction of the lake and diversion canal the area that is now Pintail Island was the high ground between two narrow swamps feeding the Santee River. Cherry Grove Swamp and Springwood Swamp joined at the northern end of this "island" to form Greenland Swamp (Fig. 1). The high point of ground that is now the island rose about twenty feet from the level of the swamp. During forest climax periods this area was probably covered with an oak-hickory hardwood forest. The swamp and the adjacent forest were part of an ecological system that included an abundance of wildlife including deer, turkeys, and waterfowl as major components.

The assorted Indian material from Pintail Island comes from the period between the time of Christ and European contact. On the basis of our knowledge of the natural riches of the environment, historical records and archeological material from other areas, we know that the schedule of Indian activities included about six months activity during the summer around villages that were usually located near the major water courses. The winter months were spent in hunting quarters away from the villages. During these winter excursions the Indians visited local hunting and collecting stations on a regular basis. These stations were often located in areas that provided maximum exposure to a diverse selection of plant and animal life. A forested area adjacent to swamplands such as Pintail Island was an ideal location. Thus, the

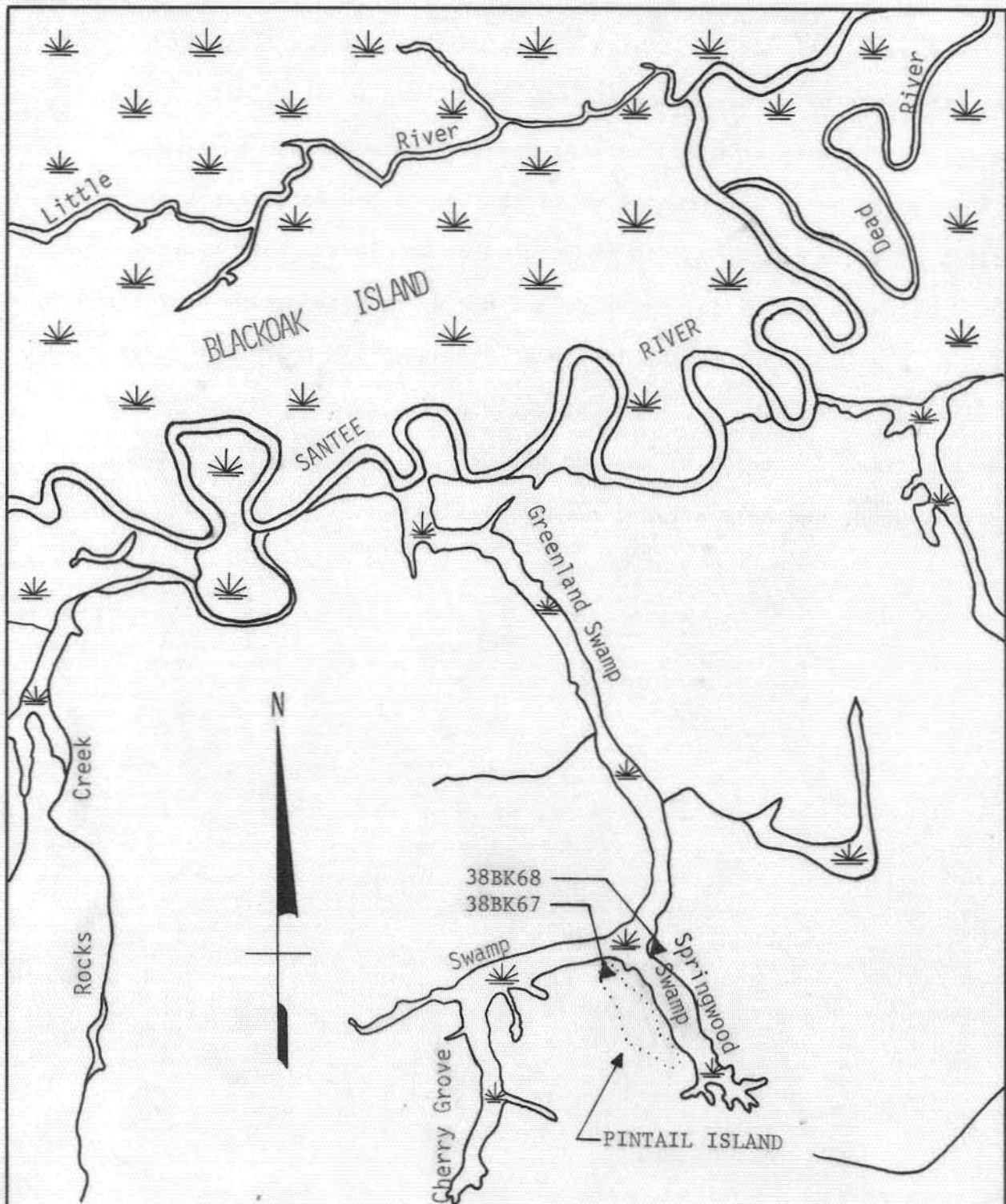


Figure 1. Pintail Island area prior to inundation by Lake Marion.

site recorded as well as any future sites found on or near Pintail Island will probably be seasonally occupied hunting and collecting stations.

SURVEY

Surface survey on Pintail Island is difficult because the main portion of the island has a thick cover of pine needles and the perimeter is covered with marsh grass. The only exposed portion of beach is on the northern end of the island where wave action from the lake keeps the shoreline clear.

In the shallow water and on the beach in this area we found several prehistoric artifacts. Also, on the spoil pile from the diversion canal opposite the island Indian artifacts were recovered. These artifacts were dredged from the bottom of the canal and may be related to the site found on the island.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This cursory survey conducted by the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology indicates that there is prehistoric Indian material on Pintail Island. Since there was no archeological survey made of Lake Marion prior to construction as there was on most other lakes in the Southeast (e.g. Clark Hill, Allatoona, Keowee-Toxaway, Hartwell, Lake Gaston, Kerr and the TVA lakes), we are required to extrapolate the prehistory of this important area from the perimeter of the lake and from sites that we are fortunate enough to find on the lake bottom. As a result, all of the undisturbed sites along the banks of Lake Marion are of particular importance.

The archeological sites on Pintail Island will probably not be very large, and once the ground is exposed they should not be difficult to record and excavate if necessary.

My immediate suggestions are:

1. Testing on the surface of the island to determine the extent of the site located in this survey. Estimated time: 64 man-hours.
2. Underwater survey to determine the underwater location of the remainder of sites so that they may not be disturbed by dredging operations. Estimated time: 100 man-hours.

Of course, any excavation will be contingent upon surface and underwater survey and testing as well as construction plans. Since the sites are probably quite small I would not suppose that excavation would require, at a maximum, more than three month's work by a crew of three or four people. I would also suggest that an archeologist visit the island, after initial land clearing operations, in order to record and make recommendations concerning sites that may have been missed during earlier survey.

The results of research work conducted by the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology is distributed by a variety of means. Scientific information is distributed in the form of bulletins and articles in scholarly journals. The Institute releases information to the general public in the form of press releases, magazine articles and museum displays. In general, we try to insure that the results of the work of the Institute receive a distribution that is as wide as possible.

The history and prehistory of South Carolina is important to the people of this state as well as to the sciences of history and anthropology. South Carolina is presently running out of the archeological record of the past because development is taking a serious toll of this non-

renewable resource. We at the Institute look forward to working with the Public Service Authority in an effort to preserve information concerning the past of the Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie area.