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Tommy Charles

University of South Carolina - Columbia

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Research

Prehistoric Stone Pipes and Update of the Petroglyph Survey

By Tommy Charles

The report of excavations at the Pumpkin site (38GR226) in Greenville County is ready for printing but is being held until a report is received from Dr. Dale C. Wingeleth, ChemaTox Laboratory, Inc., Boulder Colorado. A carbon sample obtained from the bowl of a prehistoric stone pipe excavated at the Pumpkin site was submitted to Dr. Wingeleth, who is attempting to identify the substance that was smoked. Dr. Wingeleth is attempting to identify the substance by gas chromatography/mass spectroscopy and his finding is expected in several weeks.

Little is known about the various substances smoked by Native Americans during prehistory, and identification of the substance smoked in this pipe, radiocarbon dated A. D. 480 +/- 70, if successful, may be the first, and earliest identification of materials utilized by Native Americans for smoking.

If identification of the carbon sample taken from the pipe is successful, funding will be sought to broaden the study by submitting carbon samples from other pipes

representative of different prehistoric cultural phases. The ultimate goal will be to determine the evolution, if any, of materials smoked by prehistoric Native Americans of South Carolina, and then I plan to publish a paper on the results of the analysis and research.

Recently, Eddie Reeps, an engineer from Simpsonville, contributed his skills and time to assist with mapping a series of stone walls located on a mountainside in Pickens County, South Carolina. These walls are constructed one above the other on a mountain slope and are made in

the manner of New England stone fences. They are irregular in height, length, direction and distance apart. The walls are constructed of stacked stones that range in size from those that would require several men to move, to others no larger than a softball. No mortar was used in the construction. Each wall has an opening near the center, which would seem to rule out construction for the purpose of erosion control, and the height of the walls themselves, three to five feet where they are not collapsed, would

not be needed for that purpose. The walls are in an extremely rocky environment that does not seem appropriate for agriculture. At this time, we have no hard data pertaining to construction of these walls but are seeking older persons knowledgeable of the area to see if anything can be learned of them.

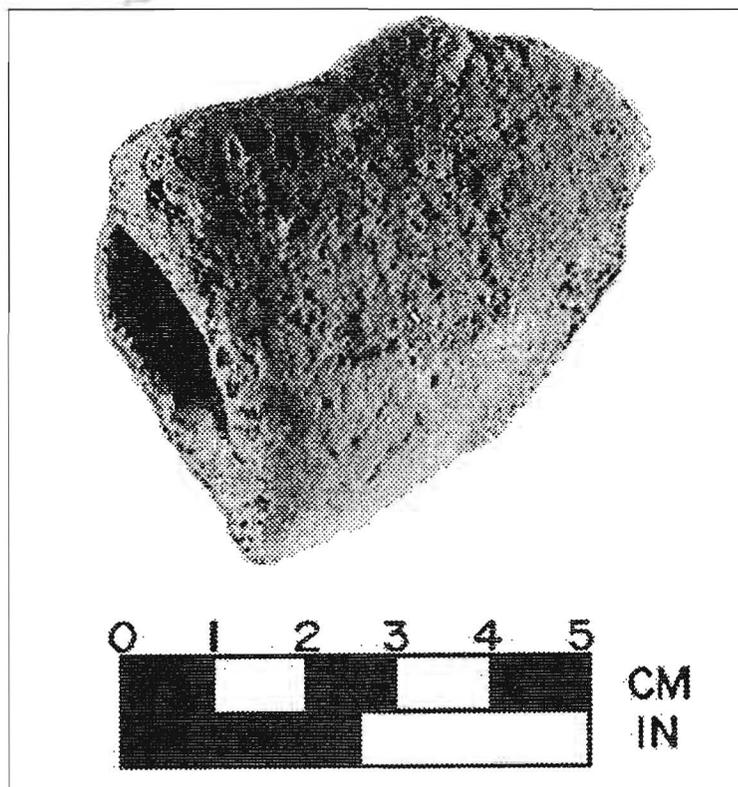


Photo of pipe found at the Pumpkin site. (SCIAA photo by Tommy Charles)

The Petroglyph Survey

The Petroglyph Survey has been largely inactive this winter and early spring due to other commitments. I am now getting back into the swing of things and will be mapping and recording sites during the summer.