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South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

Archaeology in the Upstate of South Carolina

By Tommy Charles and Terry A. Ferguson

Research in the South Carolina Upstate is continuing with much success. After preliminary testing at several sites in 2004, 38GR1 in Greenville County and 38PN35 in Pickens County were selected for more extensive investigations. These sites are located approximately one-half mile apart on opposite banks of the Saluda River.

We began investigations at a flood plain site 38GR1 in January of 2005 with a controlled surface collection. Based on this collection and informant information, approximately 50-centimeters of plow zone was removed with heavy equipment from a 169-square-meter block near the center of the site. It was determined that Early through Late Woodland/Mississippian Period components existed at the site with the majority of the surface and plow zone artifacts attributable to the Pisgah Phase (450-1,000 B.P., Dickens, 1970:21).

After removing the plow zone, it was determined that long-term intensive cultivation, erosion due to flooding, and land leveling had largely destroyed all Woodland Period middens or occupation surfaces that might have once

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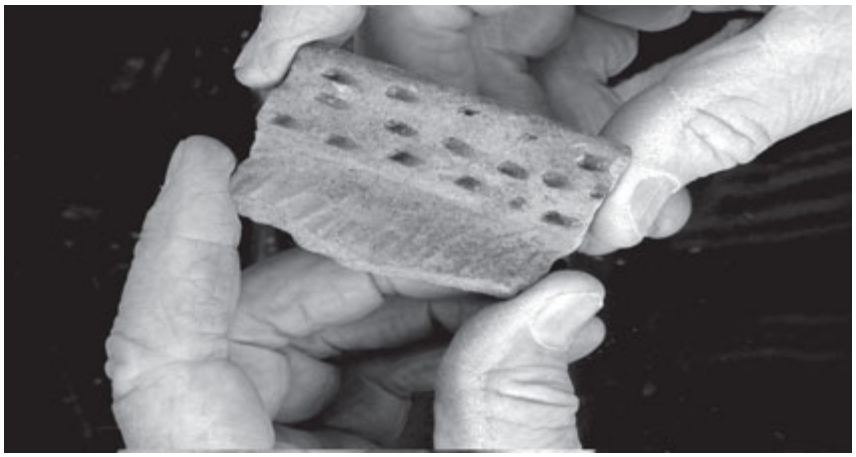

Fig. 1: Pisgah pottery rim sherd found at 38GR1. (*SCIAA photo by Terry A. Ferguson*)

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Research Division

Archaeology in the Upstate of South Carolina (Cont.)

Fig. 2: Removing the plow zone at site 38GR1. (*SCIAA photo by Lezlie Mills Barker*)

existed. What remained was a number of postholes, oval pits, two possible graves, and a rock-filled hearth that had been dug deep enough by the prehistoric inhabitants to have intruded into lighter colored sediment beneath the area disturbed by the plow zone. In general, the preservation of features at this site is consistent with that exhibited at the Warren Wilson site investigated by Dickens in 1976.

As the features were mapped and excavated, charcoal samples were collected for radiocarbon dating. The two possible graves, Features 7 and 53, produced conventional radiocarbon ages of 880 +/- 50 BP and 730 +/- 40 BP, respectively, whereas a burned post, Feature 143, returned a conventional radiocarbon age of 660 +/- BP. These dates confirmed that these were Pisgah features. In contrast, the rock-filled hearth returned a conventional radiocarbon age of 2950 +/- 40 BP. A charcoal sample taken from a backhoe trench excavated in 2004 from the level into which the Pisgah features intruded provided a conventional radiocarbon age of 3080 +/- 40 BP. These two ages establish that a Terminal Archaic/Early Woodland component is also present at 38GR1. Another conventional radiocarbon date of 5630 +/- 40 BP from an auger test made in the bottom of a 2004 backhoe trench at a depth of 240 cm below surface suggests the presence of a buried Archaic Period component.

An impressive array of postholes were defined and mapped at 38GR1. Analysis of the postholes indicates the presence of mainly partial patterns. One series of postholes forms an arc that extends into an unexcavated area; it appears to be part of a very large round structure. The projected diameter of the structure is between 12 to 15 meters. The excavated arc includes the burned post, Feature 143 (660 +/- 40 BP), which places the structure within the Pisgah Phase range. The two Pisgah Phase graves were inferred on the attributes of rectangular shape, general size, and length to width measurements, as the two features contained no skeletal remains or grave goods.

In the spring of 2005, investigations shifted across the South Saluda River to a terrace site 38PN35. Geoarcahaeological investigations, involving ground-penetrating radar and auger testing, were conducted to better understand the landforms on which the site is located and the site formation processes. Other geophysical

Fig. 3: Fran Knight mapping features at 38GR1. (*SCIAA photo by Tommy Charles*)

Fig. 4: Postholes of possible Pisgah structure at 38PN1. (*SCIAA photo by Lezlie Mills Barker*)

investigations conducted during the course of study at 38PN35 included magnetometry, and magnetic susceptibility, which were used to characterize the magnetic signatures of features and strata. Two small blocks, one begun in 2004, measuring 5 X 2 meters and 2 X 2 meters, were opened and hand excavated. The plow zone of approximately 20 centimeters at 38PN35 was shallower than at 38GR1. The average size of the pottery sherds recovered from the surface and plow zone at 38PN35 were also on average four times larger than at 38GR1, indicating less intensive cultivation. But as with 38GR1, Woodland Period components of 38PN35 appear to be confined mainly to the plow zone. Below the plow zone are relatively undisturbed deposits containing a stratified sequence of Archaic Period strata, with a Late Archaic component on top, and a well-defined Middle Archaic component beneath. The Archaic components have produced numerous diagnostic bifaces and features. Features include rock circles, arcs, and clusters, rock-filled, and dark-stained organic rich sediment-filled pits.

Eight charcoal samples recovered from the spring and summer 2005 excavations at 38PN35 were submitted for radiocarbon dating. Six samples returned conventional radiocarbon ages ranging between 4850 +/- 60 BP and 6190 +/- 50 BP. The six dates are among the few ever obtained from Middle and Late Archaic sites on South Carolina's

Fig. 5: Lamar Nelson, Jeff Catlin, and Roger Lindsay auger testing at site 38PN35. (*SCIAA photo by Tommy Charles*)

Fig. 6: Late Archaic rock features at site 38PN35. (*SCIAA photo by Tommy Charles*)

Piedmont and are a much needed addition to our radiocarbon database and understanding of the areas culture chronology. The two other samples returned conventional radiocarbon ages of 830 +/- 40 BP and 1020 +/- 50 BP, documenting the Late Woodland features, which intruded into the upper Archaic strata. The 1020 +/- 50 BP date derives from a feature containing several segments of carbonized sticks and other plant remains incompletely consumed as fuel.

Our research design calls for processing by water flotation. Flotation permits the capture of small-scale remains, especially plant and animal remains but also micro-debitage, that otherwise would be lost by screening through 1/4" mesh. Over 200 bags of fill from features and several proveniences of interest have been collected from 38GR1 and 38PN35 to date. Flotation of these samples is nearing completion. Carbonized plant remains are abundant and diverse. We recovered two carbonized maize cob fragments from 38PN35, feature 38. That feature returned a date of 1020 +/- 50 BP from wood charcoal. The remains will be analyzed by an ethnobotanist to examine prehistoric plant use, plant domestication, times and seasons of occupations, and aid in prehistoric environment reconstruction. Faunal remains are few, due to poor preservation in the sites acidic soils. The surviving faunal remains consist of fragments of calcined bone that may be too small for meaningful analysis.

Work will continue at 38GR1 and 38PN35 beginning in October of 2005 with the following goals. At 38GR1, an attempt will be made to expose the rest of the postholes for the large structure identified earlier this year. If it proves to be as large as expected, then the area interior to the posts will be opened and excavated in hopes that any internal features might yield clues as to the structure's function. A series of deep tests across the terraces and flood plain will also be excavated to

Fig. 7: Volunteers Lezlie Mills Barker, Ronald Rich, Mike Bramlett, and Terry Ferguson (to right). (*SCIAA photo by Tommy Charles*)

examine geoarchaeological attributes and document the locations and depths of any buried prehistoric cultural components. The test results should be invaluable in planning long-term research, not only at the two sites currently under investigation but also for developing models for site development and location across the Upstate. At 38PN35, excavations will be expanded in an attempt to find in context the elusive fiber-tempered pottery that was found in a surface collection at this site in 2004. Fiber-tempered ceramics have not been previously documented so far north or west and away from the Savannah River drainage in South Carolina.

As always, we welcome visitors, volunteer workers, and financial support. Should you wish to visit or participate in the excavations or to support this research you may contact the following persons: Tommy Charles, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1321 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC 29208, (803) 777-8170, charlest@sc.edu; Dr. Terry Ferguson, Wofford College, 429 N. Church St., Spartanburg, SC 29303-3663, (864) 597-4527, FergusonTA@Wofford.edu; Frances R. Knight, 22 Colgate Avenue, Greenville, SC 29617, farknight@earthlink.net; Dr. Brian Siegel, Furman University, Department of Sociology, 3300 Poinsett Highway, Greenville, SC 29613-0476, (864) 294-3304, bsiegel@furman.edu.

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Michael C. Murray Joins Maritime Research Division Staff as the New Manager of the Sport diver Archaeological Management Program (SCDAMP)

By Christopher Amer

The South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology has a new manager of the Sport Diver Archaeological Management Program (SDAMP). Michael Murray, most recently of Tallahassee, Florida, joined the Maritime Research Division in September of 2005.

Prior to coming to South Carolina, Michael spent six months as a Senior Archaeological Database Analyst for the Florida Master Site File and four months teaching onboard the traditional schooners *Spirit of Massachusetts* and *Westward*, as Second Mate and Marine Science Educator respectively.

Michael received a Bachelor of Science degree in Anthropology from the University of Idaho and a Master's degree in Maritime Archaeology from the University of Southampton in the U.K. While in Great Britain, he was actively involved with the Nautical Archaeology Society in Portsmouth on their Dive With a Purpose (DWAP) initiative to create a program that teaches recreational divers how to record submerged cultural resources for archaeological purposes.

He also served as an archaeological assistant on a variety of terrestrial and underwater archaeology projects in the late 1990s. Notably, these include the "Aucilla River Prehistory Project" in Florida and the excavation of a 17th century Dutch shipwreck known as the "Monti Christi Pipewreck" located off the northern coast of the Dominican Republic.

Michael brings to SCIAA a wide range of experience in the areas of technical diving, professional seamanship, GIS database work, shipwreck excavation, and experiential education onboard nautical school ships.

He seeks to continue with the successes that SDAMP has gained and expand the program into new and exciting areas. Michael will strive to forge new relationships that will give divers and others within South Carolina's maritime community a better understanding and appreciation of our state's maritime heritage.