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AN ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF JENKINS ISLAND
BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

by

Stanley South
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Prepared by the
INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
May, 1973

At the request of Mr. Fred Hack, Chairman of the Board of the Hilton Head Company, an archeological survey was undertaken on Jenkins Island, located west of Hilton Head Island in Beaufort County, South Carolina. The survey was conducted on April 30, 1973 by this writer assisted by Miss Susan Jackson, members of the staff of The Institute of Archeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina (Fig. 1).

The primary purpose of the survey was to locate any archeological sites that may be endangered by the dredging of a channel along the west side of the island, north of U.S. Highway 278, and the burial of low-lying, adjacent fields by spoil from the dredging operation. A secondary consideration was the location of any archeological sites of interest that may be found on the island that may be in danger of being destroyed in the years to come through development of the island for commercial or residential uses.

The area of the low fields on the northwest corner of the island was surveyed with no evidence being found indicating occupation by Indians in prehistoric times. Such evidence may lie beneath the plowed soil zone under most circumstances, but in the case of these fields the water table is so high that special plowing and raising of ridges for planting of crops is necessary, all of which points to an extreme likelihood that Indian occupation sites are located elsewhere than in this low ground.

The area on both sides of U.S. Highway 278 revealed oyster shell midden left by Indians as they consumed these shellfish. At the junction of U.S. Highway 278 with the road to Hilton Head Harbor Marina toward the north there is a concentration of oyster shell midden, as well as some scattering of shell along the south side of U.S. 278 for a hundred yards or so both east and west from the intersection. On the north side

of U.S. 278, toward the west the shell midden is scattered along the shoulder of the road for over two hundred yards, as well as toward the east to the junction of U.S. 278 with the old road to the marina (Fig. 2). This concentration of shell is also seen toward the north along the new road to the marina, with a particularly heavy concentration at the point where the road goes beneath the high voltage power lines extending east and west across the island (Fig. 2).

This large area of oyster shell midden along these roads has been designated as site 38BU64. In the area of the junction of these roads Alan Calmes conducted excavations into some Indian midden pits for Mr. Fred Hack, and found cordmarked pottery, and charcoal but no records of the location of these features were kept by Mr. Calmes, so we now have only the general site location. In our survey only a single sherd of sand-tempered cordmarked pottery was found on this site. Since this site lies along the highway, any widening of the highway would destroy portions of the site, so more salvage work should be done if any such widening is undertaken in the future.

To the east of 38BU64, between the junction of the old road to the marina with U.S. 278, and a low marshy area to the east, is the arbitrarily separated shell midden area we have called site 38BU99 (Fig. 2). This deposit extends along the high ground beside the road, and is characterized by the fact that the shell fragments are broken into many small pieces, an observation also made regarding the shell from site 38BU64. From this site four sherds with sherd-temper and cordmarked surface treatment were found, being the type known as Wilmington (Caldwell 1952: 316). A single sand-tempered cordmarked sherd was found, and a rim sherd with sand-temper and a carved paddle, simple stamped surface treatment.

Across the road in the woods directly south from the 38BU99 site is an area where oyster shell fragments are scattered around the west side of a basin filled with water (Fig. 2). Old fields were located here as indicated by cultivation rows beneath the trees. This site is 38BU98, and contained only two sand-tempered cordmarked sherds.

To the west of this site, on a ridge extending toward the south from U.S. 278, is a series of basin shaped depressions, similar to the many such depressions seen along the Carolina lowlands from Virginia to South Carolina, and known as "Carolina Bays". No archeological indications were seen here during our brief visit to this site in company of Mr. Fred Hack who showed us these depressions.

On the eastern edge of Jenkins Island, where the U.S. Highway 278 leaves the island and crosses the low marsh of Jarvis Creek, is a concentration of oyster shell on both sides of the road. This was designated as Site 38BU97. This concentration extends all along the east and south-east edge of Jenkins Island, and is arbitrarily terminated, as shown on the map in Figure 2, at the edge of a northward indentation in the shoreline forming a small bay (Fig. 2). Just south of the water-filled basin to the east of Site 38BU98, along the edge of the high bank near the center of the area of Site 38BU97, are several small "mounds", some thirty or more feet across, and from two to three feet high. These may be Indian burial mounds, but there is also a good chance that these are a natural phenomenon. The trees in the area today have small raised mounds around the base of each, and these larger mounds may represent areas where huge live oak trees once stood, producing a much larger raised mound, and after the trees were removed the mounds remained to look like small Wilmington Period burial mounds. Archeological examination of one of these is recommended before any development is undertaken in this area to

destroy these features. Also of interest in this portion of Site 38BU97, along the ridge at the south edge of the island, is the continuation of the shell midden, which is seen to be a foot deep in places. Exploratory work in these shell deposits should be done before development destroys these sites.

The artifacts from this site were two sherd-tempered cordmarked sherds known as Wilmington Cordmarked (Caldwell 1952: 316), and two sand-tempered cordmarked sherds (probably also would be called Wilmington Cordmarked by those not separating sherd types on the basis of attributes of temper). These sherds are like those seen in the Cape Fear area of North Carolina as Hanover Sherd-Tempered Cordmarked and Cape Fear Sand-Tempered Cordmarked (South 1960). Both types would fall within what is generally known as the Wilmington Phase (Milanich 1971).

About two hundred yards west of the intersection at Site 38BU64 is a road leading through the woods toward the southwest from U.S. 278. A short distance into the woods, on the left, is an oyster shell tabby trough, with a circular basin at one end. The tabby is of a twentieth century type, the trough is about three feet wide and about twenty feet long, and is standing full of water at the present time. Mr. Fred Hack immediately recognized the description as that of a cattle dip, popular in the 1910's and 1920's, and required by state law for cattlemen for treating their cattle for ticks, etc.

Along this woods road leading to the old ferry landing at the western tip of the island there were only a few small indications of shell, and no artifacts at all. When the point was reached, however, along the high bank facing Calibogue Sound, some oyster shell midden was seen. However, an examination along the beach here revealed no pottery or other clues to

to the period during which the midden was deposited. Since shell midden was found here, and also along the high ground along this south side of the island at the eastern edge at Site 38BU97, there is a likelihood that the shell midden will be found to extend all along this side of the island when a further survey is made. The remainder of the south shore of the island could be surveyed in conjunction with other work planned for Hilton Head Island later this year, or could be undertaken in conjunction with any exploratory excavation that may be undertaken at Site 38BU97 in the shell midden or into the possible burial mounds. Figure 1 illustrates the area of Jenkins Island that has been surveyed, and that area yet to be examined.

When additional archeological surveying is carried out along the south side of the island the surveyors should walk the shore line on the beach below the high ground so as to recover any pottery and other artifacts washing from the high ground. Survey personnel should also walk the high ground along the shore, where the oyster shell midden and mounds were seen in Site 38BU97. The examination of the low-lying marshy beach is important to recover not only the objects eroding from the higher ground by wave action, but to look for possible Archaic Period sites that are sometimes found in low marshy areas of present beaches, below the overlying peat deposit of the marsh.

During the examination of Site 38BU97, survey lines with stakes marked "Leake & Jones 73+00" were seen, extending from Highway 278 to the edge of the south side of the island. General Hyzer of the Hilton Head Company informed us that these lines were not for land development, but were probably for a highway bridge to Hilton Head Island at this point. Such a highway would destroy the mounds and a section of the oyster shell mid-

den along the south shore of the island (38BU97). Archeological work should most definitely be undertaken here before this construction is started. I have checked with the highway officials in Columbia, and they have plans for widening U.S. Highway 278 to the full extent of the right-of-way, but do not know of plans for the highway mentioned by General Hyzer. They said, however, that Mr. Paul E. Conrad, of Wilber Smith and Associates, was in charge of a project for the Hilton Head Company involving a road or bridge in this area. Before any work is undertaken on this bridge and highway, as indicated by the stakes in the area of Site 38BU97, archeology should be done to determine more about these sites, apparently dating from the Wilmington Phase, around 700 to 1000 A.D. (Milanich 1971: x, 149). When Alan Calmes did his work at an unknown specific location on Site 38BU64 (Fig. 2), a radiocarbon date range of from 480 to 680 A.D. was obtained for charcoal from one of his pits, apparently in association with cordmarked pottery (probably similar to the Wilmington sherd-tempered, and the sand-tempered cordmarked pottery recovered in this survey). This nebulous date is in keeping with the period suggested for the Wilmington Phase by Milanich.

While the one day survey was being conducted a visit was made to the Hilton Head Harbor Marina where Mr. Fred Hack showed us restored pottery vessel sections and fragments collected from Jenkins Island and nearby islands. The pottery in this collection has a temporal range of several thousand years, but none of the earliest pottery types were found during the present survey. A more extensive survey of Jenkins Island, with emphasis on the low-lying beaches and shell deposits may perhaps reveal earlier occupations than the Wilmington Phase, but from this survey this is the cultural phase suggested by the pottery associated with the shell deposits seen on the island.

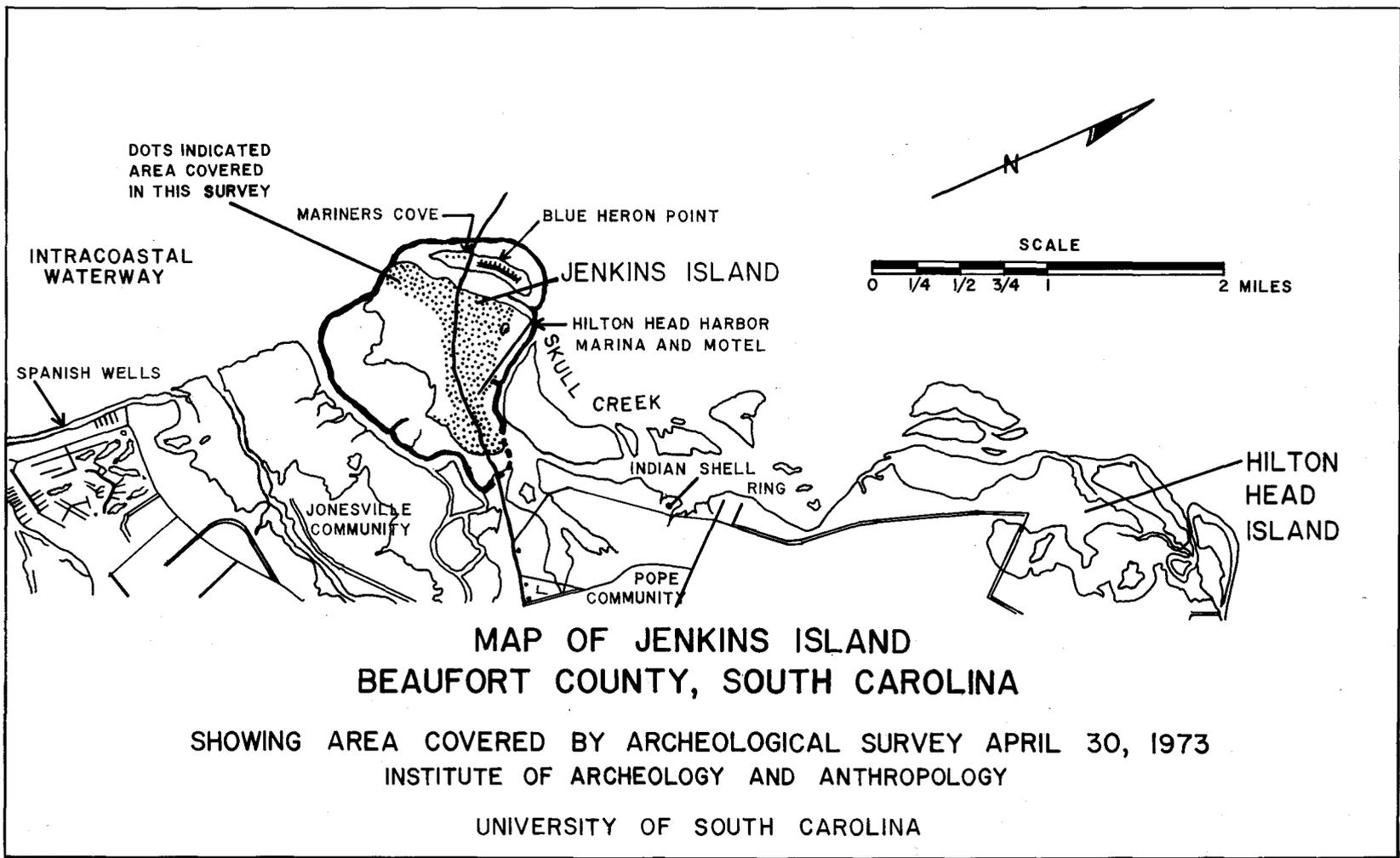


FIGURE 1

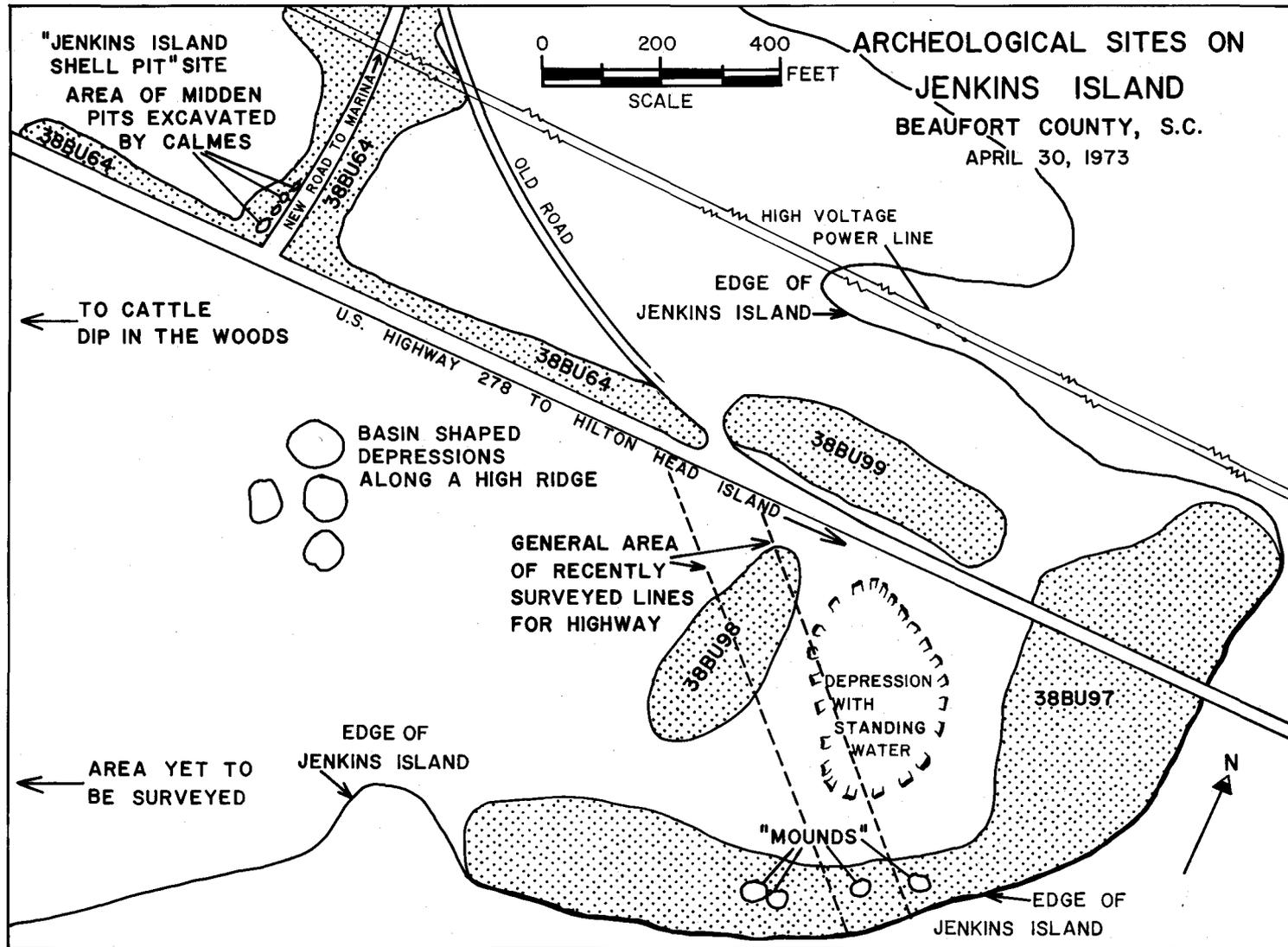


FIGURE 2

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