

**Investigating the Cultural Identity of a Pre-historic
Habitation Site at Ames Plantation**

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Table of Contents

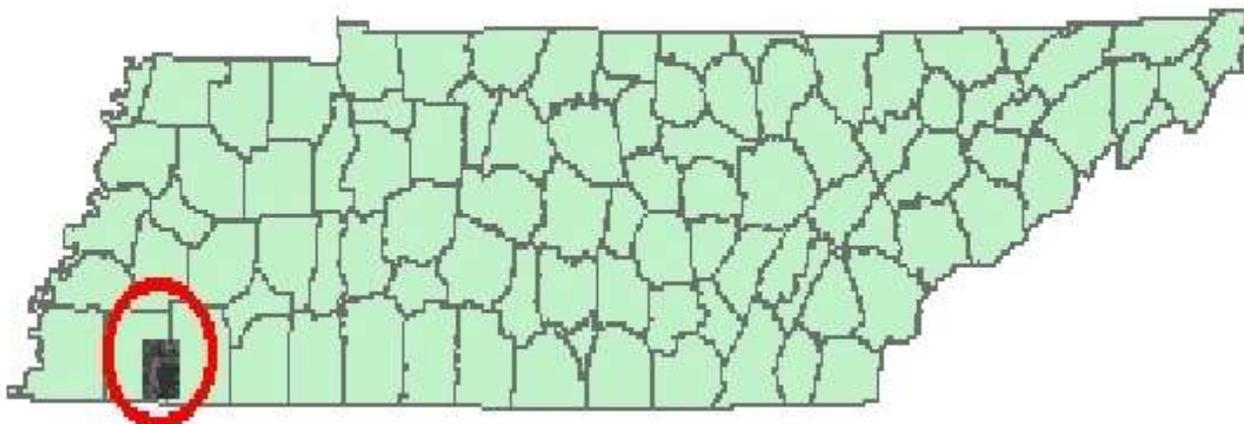
I.	Introduction	3
	a. Site location.....	4
II.	Environmental setting.....	5
	a. Physiography and Geology	5
	b. Climate.....	8
	c. Flora and Fauna	11
III.	Research Design and Methods.....	12
	a. Ceramic Analysis.....	12
	b. Lithic Analysis.....	17
IV.	Results of testing Holcombe II and Holcombe III.....	22
	a. Previous Archaeological Investigations.....	22
	b. Holcombe II.....	23
	a. Shovel Tests.....	23
	b. Formal Excavation.....	25
	c. Holcombe III.....	61
	a. Shovel Tests.....	61
	b. Formal Excavation.....	62
	d. Results.....	63
	a. Features.....	63
	b. Artifact Assemblage.....	64
	1. Ceramic Analysis.....	64
	a. Paste Characteristics.....	65
	b. Surface Decoration.....	67
	c. Discussion.....	71
	2. Lithic Analysis	72
V.	Conclusions.....	80
VI.	Future Excavations.....	81
VII.	References cited	82

I. Introduction

While a substantial amount of research has been conducted on the archaeological remains of prehistoric Native Americans, little information is known about the habitation areas they occupied. Most investigations by experts have been conducted on the ceremonial mounds that often characterize the time periods, but this was only one part of their lifestyle. Domestic activities, such as subsistence practices and trade, were also fundamental aspects of the history of Native Americans, and merit increased exploration by archaeologists.

This report offers an examination of a prehistoric Native American habitation area located at the Holcombe II and Holcombe III sites (40FY281) of Ames plantation in Fayette County of west Tennessee. Information is provided on the results from digs over the past three years. While current excavations of the sites are incomplete, the remains gathered so far offer valuable information on the lifestyle of some of the prehistoric occupants of west Tennessee.

Following the framework of a standard excavation report, this paper covers the numerous factors that would have influenced the lifestyle of the site's inhabitants as well as forces that may have affected the integrity of the archaeological remains. Some of these include: geological history of the Mississippi Alluvial valley and surrounding areas, flora and fauna of the region, topography, and previous archaeological investigations. All are crucial in better understanding the lifestyle and culture of the area's inhabitants.



Site Location

The Native American site is located on Ames plantation, an 18,400 acre land base.¹ Located in Fayette and Hardeman counties in west Tennessee, the area is located approximately 60 miles east of Memphis and about 10 miles north of the Tennessee-Mississippi line near Grand Junction, Tennessee.² Today, the plantation has approximately 12,000 acres of forest and 2000 acres of commodity row crops³. The excavation sites are located on an area believed to have been owned by the Holcombe family near the bluffs of the north fork of the Wolf River.⁴ Sitting on top of a ridge, the excavation area is in close proximity of the Ames mound complex, a group of four prehistoric mounds which date roughly between the early Woodland period and the emergent Mississippian period.⁵

II. Environmental Setting

¹ "Ames Plantation", n.d., < <http://www.amesplantation.org/>> (accessed on June 16, 2010)

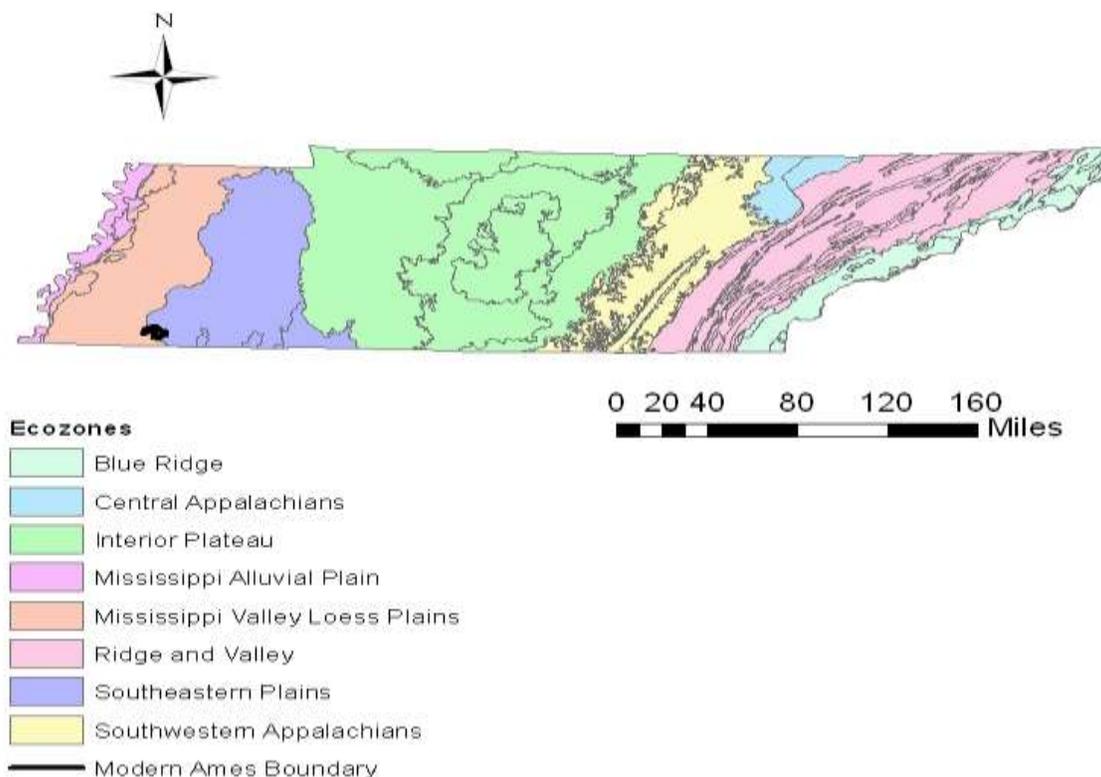
² "Ames Plantation", n.d., < <http://www.amesplantation.org/>> (accessed on June 16, 2010)

³ "Ames Plantation", n.d., < <http://www.amesplantation.org/>> (accessed on June 16, 2010)

⁴ Andrew Mickelson, "2008 Research", n.d., < <https://umdrive.memphis.edu/amicklsln/www/ames2008.html>> (accessed June 20, 2010)

⁵ Lecture by Andrew Mickelson

Ecozones of Tennessee



Physiography and Geology

According to the writings of Nevin Fenneman, west Tennessee is included in the gulf coastal plain physiographic province.⁶ It is situated on the northern part of the Mississippi embayment syncline, a geological trough whose axis roughly parallels the Mississippi river.⁷ The Cretaceous, Paleocene, Eocene, and Plio-Pleistocene found between the Tennessee and Mississippi rivers get progressively younger as one moves from east to west.⁸ In addition, the western boundary of the region, the bottomlands of the Mississippi river floodplain, is underlain

⁶ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr, Archaeological Investigations at Three sites Near Arlington, State Route 385 (Paul Barrett Parkway), Shelby County, Tennessee (Nashville: Tennessee Department of Transportation Environmental Planning office, 1999),p.4

⁷ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

⁸ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

by recent alluvium.⁹ The coastal plain sands and clays of west Tennessee were cropped with quaternary eolian loess deposits 20 to 90 ft thick near the Mississippi river. These deposits become thinner to the east of the river.¹⁰

Drainage into the area occurs through the stems of the main stream which flow from east to west. Material is also exposed by east to west drainages.¹¹ These cut the loess sheet and redeposit sediments in the local floodplains including mixed sand, silt, clay, and gravel.¹² The area is recognized for being composed largely of rolling hills and relatively narrow flat floodplains.¹³ Steep and severely eroded channel land is somewhat common in the loess hill zones.¹⁴

The pre-Cenozoic and post-Paleocene geological history of the Mississippi embayment area is of interest to archaeologists. Alluvial surfaces of the Mississippi river and its tributaries generally lack sediments coarser than sand.¹⁵ Instances of gravel deposition have transpired during at least two major intervals. One occurred during the uplift and subsequent long period of erosion of the Pascola arch during the Cretaceous period. This resulted in the exposure of Cambrian age Lamotte sandstone and later Paleozoic sandstones and chert bearing limestones to erosion.¹⁶ These substances were then transported by eastward flowing streams. This phenomenon resulted in the formation of a mixed terrestrial marine, sand, and gravel deposit known as the Tuscaloosa formation.¹⁷ Following gravel deposition, the Pascola arch subsided,

⁹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

¹⁰ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

¹¹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

¹² Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

¹³ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

¹⁴ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

¹⁵ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

¹⁶ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

¹⁷ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

resulting in the west Tennessee area becoming filled with tertiary marine sediment wedges.¹⁸ With the onset of the Pleistocene period came the lowering of sea levels, causing tertiary deposits to become exposed. This caused erosion to the Tuscaloosa gravel and the redeposit of some of this material on top of the eroded tertiary surfaces. Mixed sediments then formed on the undifferentiated sand and gravel substratum.¹⁹

This substratum was then reworked and more material deposited above it as a result of the formation of braided stream terraces. These terraces were the result of glacial outwash.²⁰ The later Pliocene gravel deposits, identified as Citronelle gravel, lie beneath the loess sheet and became exposed by erosion.²¹ Such gravel deposits were exploited for the making of stone tools during the prehistoric period.²²

Exposure and erosion also caused iron-bearing groundwater to move through the tertiary deposits of the coastal plain.²³ This resulted in the formation of ferruginous sandstones, siltstones, and conglomerates. These rocks are primarily concentrated in uplands near the headwaters of the Mississippi river tributaries.²⁴ There exists a large outcrop of ferruginous sandstone in Tipton County, an area adjacent to Fayette County to the northwest. In addition, a deposit of ferruginous sandstone in closer geographical proximity to Ames is located just north of Somerville within Fayette County.²⁵ As dense iron containing stones, they were relied on by prehistoric peoples for the manufacture of heavy grinding, pounding, and chopping tools.²⁶

Between the Mississippi river floodplain and the west Tennessee uplands is the west Tennessee

¹⁸ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

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²¹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

²² Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

²³ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 4

²⁴ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr.4

²⁵ Discussion with Guy Weaver

²⁶ Discussion with Guy Weaver

plain, an area of gently rolling terrain.²⁷ The topography of the plain is largely the result of sequential deposition and erosion of Pleistocene loess that formed at the end of the last glaciations.²⁸ The loess becomes increasingly thin towards the east and begins to disappear near Jackson, Tennessee.²⁹ The west Tennessee plain, to the west, becomes an area of hilly terrain known as the loess hills. The surface and near surface geological units below the loess consist of relatively unconsolidated deposits of sand, silt, clay, chalk, gravel, and lignite.³⁰ These belong to the upper cretaceous series of the cretaceous system and to Paleocene, Eocene, and possibly Pliocene of the tertiary system.³¹

Climate

Based on archaeological evidence recovered from Holcombe II and Holcombe III it appears that the area was occupied primarily during the Middle Woodland era, a time period roughly 2000 years ago.³² If so, the site's inhabitants lived during the latter Holocene period and therefore experienced climate conditions similar to those seen today.³³ Considering this, the national weather service and the soil conservation service can be relied on as tools to help researchers better understand the environment of the time(s) of interest.³⁴

When deciding where to settle, prehistoric Native Americans would consider a number of environmental factors. Temperature, moisture levels, precipitation, wind speed, and wind direction are just some of the climate conditions of importance to people living directly off the land as well as those with a basic agriculture system.³⁵ Archaeological evidence reinforces the significance of environmental conditions to prehistoric peoples in developing patterns of

²⁷ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 5

²⁸ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 5

²⁹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 5

³⁰ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 5

³¹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 5

³² Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

³³ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

³⁴ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

³⁵ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

subsistence and the organization of living species.³⁶

The climate of the area occupied by Ames plantation is typical of western Tennessee. For the most part the area is characterized by a warm and moist environment.³⁷ The winters are typically mild and the summers can reach relatively high temperatures.³⁸ Humidity in the area generally reaches a high of about 70%, and winds usually come from the south.³⁹ Due to the upper atmospheric flow of the jet stream large air masses typically move from west-northwest to the east.⁴⁰ Wind direction near the surface is greatly influenced by the internal counterclockwise motion of fronts. This phenomenon results in southerly winds which restructures the climate conditions of the area.⁴¹

The prevailing winds have an average speed of approximately 8.9 mph with slight seasonal variation.⁴² During the spring and fall gusting winds can influence the southern wind pattern, and the summer months can bring storms that move through the area. Research gathered by the national weather service suggests that the direction of high and gusting winds can range from 135 to 360 degrees.⁴³ For the most part, winds from the east or northeast are very rare.⁴⁴

Given the site's proximity to the Mississippi river, as well as its southern location, rainfall is highly profuse.⁴⁵ Between the years of 1931-1960 the area averaged 49.73 inches of rain a year. High rainfall is most likely to occur when a moisture-laden warm front approaches from the southwest.⁴⁶ Usually the driest season is fall and winter is the wettest. During the

³⁶ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

³⁷ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

³⁸ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

³⁹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴⁰ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴¹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴² Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴³ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴⁴ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴⁵ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴⁶ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

winter and early spring the moist air from the gulf collides with the dry continental air resulting in excessive rainfall.⁴⁷ Thunderstorms are expected to occur five days per year, and summer is a time of erratic rainfall. Studies show that severe thunderstorms are infrequent, with only six tornadoes having been reported between 1916 and 1964.⁴⁸ Hailstorms usually take place one or two times a year in any given location. As a source of precipitation, snowfall is very uncommon.⁴⁹

Climate data indicates that winter is a cold and relatively wet season in the region. Occasionally gusty high winds from the northwest come through the area.⁵⁰ Rainy weather followed by clear cold periods and then warmer weather with increased cloudiness and rain is a frequent short term weather pattern.⁵¹ With an average temperature of 50.6 degrees Fahrenheit and a daily low of 33.4 degrees Fahrenheit, January is the coldest month of the year.⁵²

The spring and summer months offer ample time to collect natural resources in the area. Spring for the most part is mild and brief. There is a large level of rainfall as well as gusty winds coming in from the north and west.⁵³ Summers on the other hand are long and dominated by a warm airflow from the south. There is a high level of humidity and a large amount of evapotranspiration.⁵⁴ July is the warmest month with a daily high of 92.1 degrees Fahrenheit and a daily low of 71.5 degrees Fahrenheit. These conditions make the growing season long, affording local peoples some 238 frost free days between March 20th and November 12th.⁵⁵

However, there do exist certain periods of time in which the landscape becomes less

⁴⁷ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴⁸ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁴⁹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁵⁰ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁵¹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 10

⁵² Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁵³ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁵⁴ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁵⁵ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

hospitable. Thunderstorms increase in frequency during the frost free times of the year.⁵⁶ Between September and October the area experiences a fall dry spell during which rainfall decreases.⁵⁷ In addition, local pests such as: mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks reach annual population peaks.⁵⁸ Wind speed and direction shift back to their winter pattern of northerly and westerly gusts along with increased precipitation during November and December.⁵⁹

Despite these somewhat negative seasonal changes, the area offers conditions that would have been beneficial to prehistoric peoples. Given the lengthy growing season the Native Americans of the region would have been able to form subsistence patterns in which they lived directly off the land in addition to the possibility of developing horticultural practices. In addition, with relatively predictable climate changes the inhabitants could more easily form extraction practices in accordance with seasonal variation.

Flora and Fauna

Despite appearing to be an untouched natural forest ecosystem, Ames Plantation has undergone significant changes over the past several hundred years. The construction of plantations during the 19th century, the clearing of land to make way for farmable space, and the extensive stream channelization has resulted in an area that would be largely unrecognizable to the prehistoric peoples that once inhabited the area.⁶⁰ Prior to these changes, much of the landscape was filled with hickory climax forests of stream terraces and loess hills.⁶¹ In addition, floodplain plant species such as: sweet gum, white oak, hickory, black gum, willow, bald cypress, cottonwood, and sycamore filled the area.⁶²

⁵⁶ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁵⁷ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁵⁸ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁵⁹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁶⁰ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁶¹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

⁶² Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 13

Nut bearing trees were a crucial part of prehistoric subsistence. Robert Mainfort, an archaeologist who has conducted extensive research on prehistoric Native American life in the Tennessee area, notes the presence of certain species in the eastern agricultural complex. Some of these plants include: lamb's quarters, knotweed, and wild bean.⁶³

In addition to plant life, animals would have been a significant component of subsistence patterns in the area. Some important species included: turkey, opossum, raccoon, squirrel, rabbit, and white tailed deer.⁶⁴ Migratory waterfowl moving up and down the Mississippi alluvial plain would also have fairly abundant. Given the presence of numerous bodies of water in the area, as well as others that no longer exist, fish could also have been a significant part of the prehistoric diet. Some species include: bass, catfish, and drum.⁶⁵

III. Research Design and Methods

Ceramic Analysis

The classification of Tchula and woodland ceramics from west Tennessee has proven to be a complicated problem for archaeologists in the region.⁶⁶ In the past there has been a lack of formal type descriptions of collections gathered from habitation sites. Currently, there are two published descriptions of ceramic typologies that are often referred to by archaeologists. The first was composed by Jeremy Smith in which he, with the exception of descriptions of ceramics found at Pinson mounds, identified three loosely defined ceramic paste groups.⁶⁷ These groups were crafted in his discussions of surface collections from sites in the west Tennessee area.⁶⁸

The second set of ceramic typologies was created by Robert Mainfort. Unlike Smith, Mainfort

⁶³ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 14

⁶⁴ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 14

⁶⁵ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 14

⁶⁶ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman, "West Tennessee Ceramic Typology, Part 1: Tchula and Middle Woodland Periods", *Tennessee Anthropologist* (1994),p. 148

⁶⁷ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 148

⁶⁸ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 148

defined four ceramic paste groups. While Mainfort's group definitions are considered by numerous archaeologists to increase the difficulty of identifying found ceramics, they will be relied on for recognizing the pottery fragments found at the Ames site. Following Mainfort's research, there are four paste types that are characteristic of the Tchula and Woodland periods in west Tennessee and its surrounding areas. Typology includes a mixture of terminology from the lower Mississippi valley and the Miller culture area.⁶⁹

One aspect of ceramic typology that has caused classificatory difficulties is the definition of temper. Mainfort relies on Rice's definition of the term which, when used as a noun, refers to a material added by potters to modify the properties of the clay.⁷⁰ These added materials can often prove difficult to distinguish from naturally occurring substances. Furthermore, some tempering agents, such as baked clay particles, can be incidentally created and worked into the clay during the construction of ceramic vessels.⁷¹ It is often unclear if their inclusion in the finished product was intentional or not. While crushed shell bits, a Mississippian period temper, were clearly added to the clay, the inclusion of sand and clay particles in Tchula and woodland ceramics may not constitute tempering agents in the strict sense of the term.⁷² Tchefunte ceramics apparently do not contain any tempering agents. Sherds that exhibit a contorted or laminated paste have not been worked, and could not have had tempering material added to them.⁷³

Forked Deer Series

The forked deer series is defined by the presence of unevenly distributed baked clay particles. The paste is often contorted and occasionally laminated with clay particles often appearing to be

⁶⁹ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 148

⁷⁰ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 148

⁷¹ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 149

⁷² Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 149

⁷³ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 149

very small.⁷⁴ The appearance of lamination is less extreme than the Tchefuncte material in the south. By touch, the paste often feels very soft and chalky, but denser sherds are known to occur.⁷⁵ This is likely the result of early prehistoric firing techniques being underdeveloped at the time. Most sherds made of this paste exhibit a whitewash color, but colors can range from reddish yellow and dark gray.⁷⁶ Vessel forms include both open and slightly restricted bowls. Typically, the lips are flattened and the rims are thickened. Some may be flat based beakers.⁷⁷ Interior notching of the rim with small cords is common on forked deer series ceramics. Similar decoration styles can be noted on the sauty cord impressed vessels from Guntersville Basin, Alabama.⁷⁸

Nearly all materials that have been classified as Tchefuncte by Smith fall within the forked deer series.⁷⁹ The paste used in the Tchefuncte type within the lower Mississippi valley is clearly related. In addition, the cormorant group, a ceramic paste defined as soft, very chalky, and lacking lamination, is very similar to the Tchefuncte.⁸⁰

The forked deer series is believed by numerous experts to have predated the Tishomingo and Baldwin series. The clay particles found within forked deer paste are usually larger than those found in the clay tempered vessels of the late woodland and emergent Mississippian wares of the central Mississippi valley.⁸¹ Clay particles in the latter sherds were more likely intentionally added by prehistoric peoples. In addition, the particle density in later pastes is significantly greater than that of known ceramics of the forked deer series.⁸² Mainfort contends

⁷⁴ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 150

⁷⁵ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 150

⁷⁶ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 150

⁷⁷ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 150

⁷⁸ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 150

⁷⁹ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 150

⁸⁰ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 150

⁸¹ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 151

⁸² Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 151

that clay particle number and size constitute sufficient criteria for classificatory purposes, and that they strengthen the validity of his claim that the forked deer series has a distinctive paste.⁸³

Madison Series

The Madison series is characterized by the presence of baked clay particles in the paste along with varying amounts of fine sand.⁸⁴ The sherds feel soft and slightly raspy with an often contorted to occasionally laminated paste. These characteristics lead Mainfort to recognize the Madison series as a sandy variant of the forked deer series.⁸⁵ Considering this, archaeologists do not ascribe temporal or cultural distinctions to the differences between the two series.⁸⁶ As within the forked deer series, the rims are generally thickened which suggest the vessels forms were of open and slightly restricted bowls. Flat based beakers are suggested by the presence of basal sherds within known collections. The lips are usually flattened, with rounded examples being a less common feature. In addition, interior notching of the rim is common.⁸⁷

However, some Madison series sherds do display characteristics that distinguish them from those of the forked deer series. Several Madison sherds exhibit a harder paste than the norm. In addition, many ceramic fragments appear to have fewer clay particles than those of the forked deer paste.⁸⁸

Tishomingo Series

The Tishomingo series is recognized for having varying amounts of sand and readily visible fired clay particles. These particles are often unevenly distributed in a medium hard paste.⁸⁹ In appearance, the sherds of the Tishomingo series are usually darker than those of either the forked

⁸³ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 151

⁸⁴ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 159

⁸⁵ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 159

⁸⁶ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 159

⁸⁷ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 159

⁸⁸ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 159

⁸⁹ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 163

deer or Madison series.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the surfaces of the Madison series ceramics lack the chalkiness of the forked deer and Madison series. Mica flakes are frequently present in Tishomingo ceramics.⁹¹ Mainfort's definition of the series extends to all darker colored non-chalky sherds that exhibit both sand and clay particles in the type.⁹² The Baldwin series, the fourth paste type, is reserved for sand tempered sherds lacking visible clay particles.⁹³

Despite these differences, no temporal significance is attributed to the Tishomingo series paste.⁹⁴ The duck's nest sector of Pinson mounds, a ritual activity area, contained evidence of the Tishomingo series being contemporary with the Baldwin series and certain Baytown series ceramics.⁹⁵ Also, researchers often find it difficult to distinguish Tishomingo series ceramics from those of the Madison series. Archaeologists will often rely on surface treatment to sort out the two types of sherds. Cordmarking, a process by which a cord is wrapped around a stick and pressed against wet clay, is thought to be more prominent in the Tishomingo series.⁹⁶

Vessel and rim forms should also be considered when approaching the Tishomingo series. The rims are generally everted and are typically as thick as or thinner than the vessel body. Exterior rim folds are not uncommon, and lip notching is a usual decorative treatment.⁹⁷

Baldwin Series

The Baldwin series is characterized by a sandy textured paste that, unlike the other three series, lacks visible clay particles.⁹⁸ The paste is medium to hard and may exhibit laminations is cross

⁹⁰ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 163

⁹¹ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 163

⁹² Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 163

⁹³ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 163

⁹⁴ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 164

⁹⁵ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 164

⁹⁶ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 164

⁹⁷ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 164

⁹⁸ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 168

section. For the most part, sand particles appear to be evenly distributed throughout the paste.⁹⁹ Like the Tishomingo series, the rims are generally everted and tend to be just as thick as or thinner than the walls of the body of the vessel. Exterior rim folds are expected and lip notching is recognized as a common decorative treatment applied to the vessels.¹⁰⁰ The ceramics of the series frequently exhibit pastes containing mica.¹⁰¹

The Baldwin series is believed to postdate the forked deer and Madison series. By AD 100 the ceramic assemblages at Pinson mounds are predominately sand tempered. However, Mainfort suggests that the series relates to the Alexander series of the Tchula period, an early Woodland period that occurred in the south.¹⁰²

Discussion

The research of Mainfort and Smith reflects the difficulty of relying on paste types as temporal and culturally diagnostic devices in west Tennessee.¹⁰³ It then becomes evident that decorative surface treatments, rather than minor differences in pastes, are more reliable chronological indicators. Currently, most researchers agree that the shift from fabric marking, a technique in which fabric was pressed against the surface of the wet clay, to cord marking is the hallmark of the transition from the early to late Marksville culture (Middle Woodland).¹⁰⁴ Prior to the popularization of cord marking, cord impression, a method in which a loose cord is pressed against wet clay, was a common decorative technique.¹⁰⁵

Lithic Analysis

According to archaeologist Robert Torrence, tools manufactured to help procure animal

⁹⁹ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 168

¹⁰⁰ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 168

¹⁰¹ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 168

¹⁰² Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 168

¹⁰³ Discussion with Guy Weaver

¹⁰⁴ Discussion with Guy Weaver

¹⁰⁵ Discussion with Guy Weaver

resources should be more complex than those used for plant resources. Torrence, like numerous other experts, believes there to be a relationship between the amount of time put into tool making and the function of the tool.¹⁰⁶ This concept is addressed in the scholarship of Bindford who explored the differences between “curated” and “expedient” technologies of prehistoric peoples.¹⁰⁷ Flake analysis, the process by which lithic remains are observed and documented, determines which lithic manufacturing activities were performed at the site. For Torrence, the limitations in the time available to complete a task are crucial in explaining the differences in the structure of tool kits.¹⁰⁸

Following Bindford, there exist key differences between the technology types he refers to as curated and expedient. Curated technologies were more complicated items that were created in anticipation of the task they were intended for.¹⁰⁹ These items were manufactured, stored, or carried along for future needs. In addition, they were maintained during use and repaired when damaged.¹¹⁰ These items reflect the quality considerations of the manufacturers. Much concern was placed on the type of raw material being used as well as the finer points of the tool’s design.¹¹¹ Expedient items, on the other hand, were created to fill the needs of a situation and were then discarded. The raw materials used to make expedient items were locally available substances that were immediately accessible. A minimal amount of time and attention was paid to both the materials and the manufacture.¹¹²

Bindford argues that the decision to make curated or expedient items was based on the expected task at hand. Curation was a response that maximizes the time invested in a particular

¹⁰⁶ Sherri Hilgeman, “Lithic Manufacture and Hunter-Gatherer Technology at a Woodland site in Tennessee, Tennessee Anthropologist (1985),p.55

¹⁰⁷ Sherri Hilgeman 55

¹⁰⁸ Sherri Hilgeman 55

¹⁰⁹ Sherri Hilgeman 55

¹¹⁰ Sherri Hilgeman 55

¹¹¹ Sherri Hilgeman 55

¹¹² Sherri Hilgeman 57

task.¹¹³ Expedient items were made in response to an unexpected situation or the need to replace items by groups who were unable to transport an adequate tool kit.¹¹⁴ In addition, the decision to produce high quality curated items was often made by mobile hunter/gatherer groups who were incapable of predicting the availability of raw materials or resources.¹¹⁵ As a result they elected to produce complex curated items in the hopes of more likely securing resources. More sedentary groups were inclined to rely on locally available materials despite many of them often being lower in quality.¹¹⁶

Torrence's second concern is the use of tool kits expressed as the structure of the tool assemblage. The more time one takes to make a tool, the more time they are expected to save when using it to perform a task. Therefore, complexity is inversely related to the time available to finish a task.¹¹⁷

One measure of reflective time available is the mobility of the resource the manufacturer was attempting to obtain. Because animals are mobile time must be taken to search for and pursue them before they can be acquired. Plants are an immobile resource. As such once they have been located they can be gathered without additional time investment. Following this logic, the tools used to procure animals are usually more complex than those used to obtain plants.¹¹⁸

In addition, the process of tool manufacture occurs in a series of stages, allowing researchers to deduce the amount of time invested in the making of a found lithic artifact.¹¹⁹ Different tools are often at different stages of development depending on several factors including: their function, the level of mobility of the people that manufactured it, and the

¹¹³ Sherri Hilgeman 57

¹¹⁴ Sherri Hilgeman 57

¹¹⁵ Sherri Hilgeman 57

¹¹⁶ Sherri Hilgeman 57

¹¹⁷ Sherri Hilgeman 57

¹¹⁸ Sherri Hilgeman 57

¹¹⁹ Sherri Hilgeman 59

availability of resources in the area.¹²⁰ Both chipped stone artifacts and flakes may be assigned to the stage of reduction at which they were finished or produced. Currently, researchers recognize five stages of development and identify them as: raw material acquisition, initial reduction, primary flaking, secondary flaking, and maintenance and modification.¹²¹

The first stage of reduction is referred to by archaeologists as raw material acquisition. This phase of development entails collecting suitable unmodified stones that can be manufactured into tools. The stones are acquired through: collecting, quarrying, or some form of importation. This stage can be recognized by the presence of non-local unmodified raw materials in an excavation area.¹²²

Once raw materials have been gathered, the initial reduction of the stone can begin. This is recognized as the first stage of transformation of the raw materials into a finished tool. This process can focus on the production of suitable flakes, initial shaping of a parent piece, or some combination of these. Initial reduction flakes tend to be larger than primary or secondary flakes. The exterior typically has a high percentage of cortex, the untouched surface of the rock used, and previous flake scars are usually few in number or not present. The striking platform on the tool, the area that was struck when producing the tool, is usually cortical or straight.¹²³

Once the stone has been shaped, the tool manufacturer can proceed to the primary flaking stage. It is during the primary stage that the approximate size, dimensions, weight, outline, and cross longitudinal sections are established. These tools are intermediate in size, and commonly overlap the size of the initial reduction and secondary flakes. Because of this, researchers

¹²⁰ Sherri Hilgeman 59

¹²¹ Sherri Hilgeman 59

¹²² Sherri Hilgeman 59

¹²³ Sherri Hilgeman 59

typically do not rely on their size as an important distinguishing criterion.¹²⁴ The flake cross sections are thinner and more angular than those of the initial reduction flakes. As a result of the additional work put into their manufacture, flake scars are more numerous on the exterior, resulting in a rarely present cortex. This also results in more angular margins.¹²⁵

The secondary flaking stage involves the final bifacial edge trimming stage. In addition, hafting modifications are performed at this stage as well as a refinement of the edges through the removal of small flakes. Secondary flakes are generally longer and narrower than primary flakes.¹²⁶ Typically, they are thin in appearance and have a slightly curved longitudinal cross section. In outline, they tend to be lenticular, and previous flake are numerous and small. Also, striking platforms are usually multifaceted and small. Secondary flakes are best described as curated artifacts, and are often not made on site, but instead brought in from elsewhere.¹²⁷

Despite the high level of input required to reach the secondary flaking phase, lithic tools often require maintenance and even modification over time. As tools become broken, worn, or slightly damaged prehistoric peoples would frequently have to reshape the edges or change the shape in order to maintain the utility of the artifact. During this procedure the manufacturer produces a number of tertiary flakes, flakes completely lacking a cortex, as a byproduct of the maintenance process.¹²⁸

Since additional time investments are necessary to proceed from one stage to the next, artifact morphology might imply structural complexity.¹²⁹ Experts often consider the stage of reduction to be an indirect measure of the time put into the tool's manufacture. This could be noted on a secondary flaking hafted biface. Such an artifact would imply that the tool had at

¹²⁴ Sherri Hilgeman 59

¹²⁵ Sherri Hilgeman 59

¹²⁶ Sherri Hilgeman 59

¹²⁷ Sherri Hilgeman 59

¹²⁸ Sherri Hilgeman 59

¹²⁹ Sherri Hilgeman 62

least one more element than an initial reduction or primary flaking biface. Stage reduction can also suggest which elements tend to represent a curated technology and which represent an expedient one. Curated items were likely at the advanced stages of reduction, such as secondary flaking and the maintenance/modification stages.¹³⁰ Expedient artifacts were likely made up to the initial reduction or primary flaking stages.¹³¹

IV. Results of Testing at Holcombe II and Holcombe III

Previous Archaeological Investigations

Over the past four years Ames Plantation has been excavated by Rhodes college faculty, students, and local archaeologists through the Rhodes archaeology field school program. The program, designed to teach students some of the fundamentals of archaeology, lasts three weeks and places emphasis on the principles of excavation and artifact analysis. During each session the students, led by a group of specialists, conduct an excavation of a specific area of Ames, the location of which sometimes varies from year to year.

Site selection is typically selected on the basis of archival evidence. Because Ames contains a large number of 19th century historic sites, professors and other experts are able to deduce the location of historic sites with reasonable accuracy. Excavations of prehistoric Native American sites have been conducted, most notably a four mound complex, but given the absence of documents concerning settlements there is no way of knowing the location of additional sites.

In the past many excavations have focused on the location of possible slave cabins and other forms of housing. Over the years students uncovered the remains of a cellar at the Holcombe I site as well as a fallen chimney. The site yielded a large amount of historic ceramics as well as: nails, bone, marbles, and even a small collection of prehistoric projectile points likely

¹³⁰ Sherri Hilgeman 62

¹³¹ Sherri Hilgeman 62

assembled by a resident of the house. In addition, excavation of a Mississippian mound complex, led by university of Memphis professor Andrew Mickelson, has been a regular component of the program over the past few years. The mounds, which take up about 4.5 acres, are located on the bluffs of the north fork of the Wolf River. Excavations have revealed the presence of post-molds in mound C, the remains of a burned structure. Mickelson has reported the presence of early to late woodland archaeological deposits in the sediments mined to create mound D, and through the use of a magnetometer has uncovered the remains of a village site around the mound complex.

One site that has been subjected to excavation over the past few years is the Holcombe II and Holcombe III sites. According to archival research the site once contained the home of Lucy Holcombe, a prominent 19th century socialite who was recognized as the queen of the confederacy. Given her historical significance, much effort has been made to excavate the area and analyze the artifacts recovered from it. Excavations in 2008 were focused on the Holcombe II site and eventually spread to the Holcombe III site. Since then archaeological investigations have focused primarily on Holcombe II.

Although efforts made by field school instructors have been focused on potential historical occupation areas, the Holcombe II and III sites have yielded a substantial number of prehistoric artifacts. While Holcombe I also contained a few Native American relics, a number of them were collected by the historical occupant of the area, thus making unclear if they were from the area. Therefore, artifact analysis will focus on those recovered from the Holcombe II and III sites.

Holcombe II

Shovel Tests

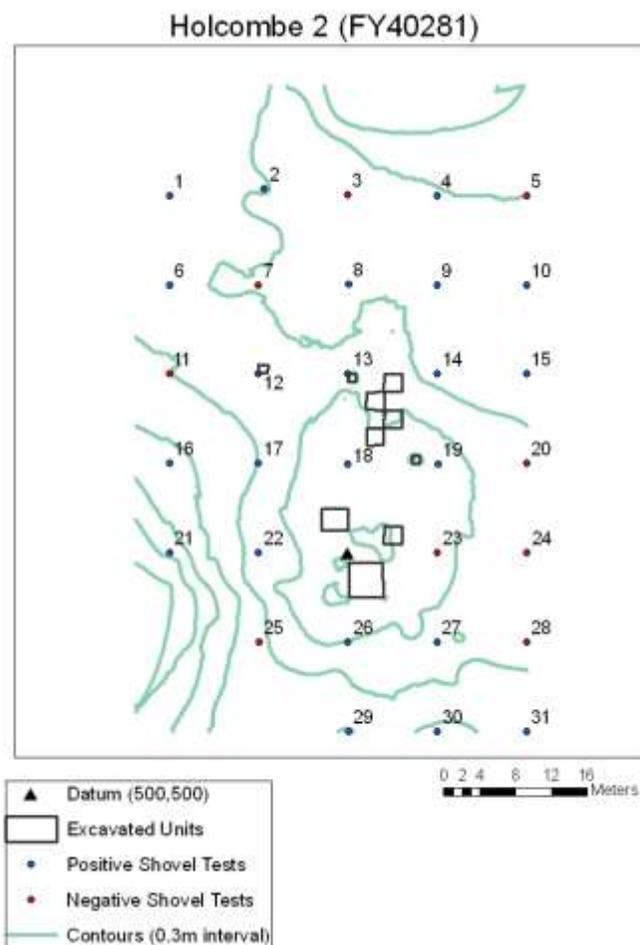
Testing of the Holcombe II site began in 2008 with a series of 31 shovel tests on a 10 x 10 meter grid. Most of the tests contained cultural artifacts. Of the 31 tests performed only nine were sterile while ten held one. Six of the tests held two artifacts and five contained three. The remaining tests contained four artifacts.

The shovel tests at the most northern component of the grid, 1-5, yielded the fewest number of artifacts. To the south, there appeared to be a concentration of artifacts in the northeast component of the grid, as observed from the results of shovel tests 8-10, and 13-15. In

addition, the concentration appeared to extend south to shovel tests 18 and 19 as well as west to test 12. The results of these tests marked the largest artifact concentration at Holcombe II. Another concentration was noted in a west to southwest area, shovel tests 16-17 and 21-22, along a ridge. Given its location, it is likely that the artifacts recovered from this second concentration were pooled together over time as gravity pushed them down the hillside. A small artifact concentration can be noted in the southernmost component of the grid as seen from the results of shovel tests 29-31. Most of the artifacts recovered from the shovel tests were historic in origin, although several contained prehistoric objects.¹³²

Shovel Test 27

Shovel test 27 contained two prehistoric fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds.



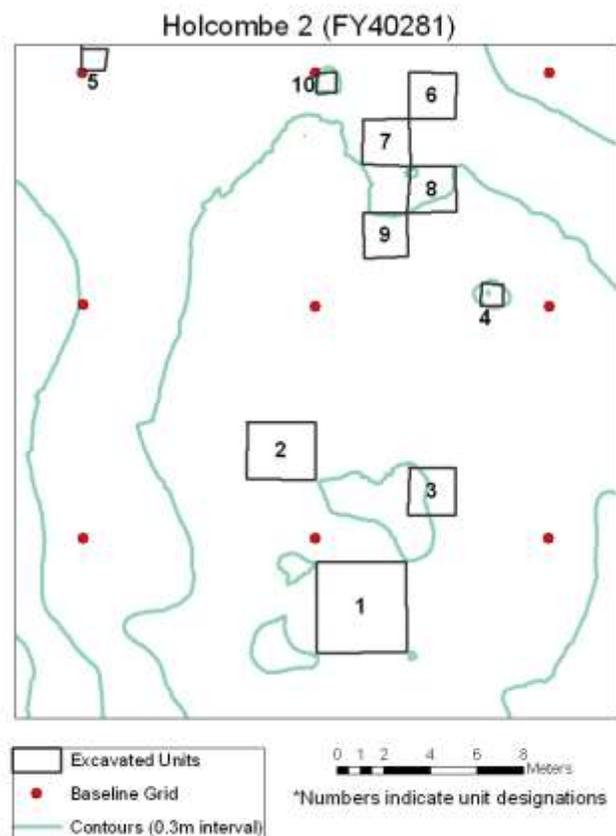
¹³² 2008-2010 Level forms

Shovel Test 31

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include one fine sand and clay tempered plain sherd, and one fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherd.

Formal Excavations

2008



In 2008 a total of ten units which took up approximately 47 square meters were formally excavated. Unit 1, a 4 x 4 meter unit was placed in the southern area of the grid on top of an elevated area. While likely the unit was not within an artifact concentration, as evidenced by the shovel tests, the location was on the highest point within the area and would have served as an attractive building location. As such, unit 2, a 2.5 x 3 meter unit was established just to the north of unit 1, and unit 3, a 2 x 4 meter unit, was set up just to

the northwest of it. Four additional 2 x 2 units, 6-9, were excavated approximately ten meters to the north of unit 3 in a checker pattern formation. Their location was selected on the basis of their location on the elevated land mass as well as their proximity to potential artifact concentrations. The locations of the remaining three units, all 1 x 1 meters, were established based on their nearness to several shovel tests that yielded significant quantities of cultural artifacts.

Unit 1

Level 1

Unit 1, as a 4 x 4 meter unit, was the largest unit excavated during the 2008 field school session at Holcombe II. The first level, stratum one, contained primarily very dark gray brown loamy silt (Humus). The sediments uncovered in the next level, stratum two, were described as a dark yellowish brown silt loam. Excavators document that the unit was placed where auguring suggested a thicker A horizon.

A very large quantity of prehistoric cultural artifacts was recovered. The artifacts include: 149 fine sand and clay tempered residuals, 22 unaltered ferruginous siltstones, four pieces of chipping shatter, one ferruginous siltstone primary flake, three large fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherds, eight decortification flakes, one complete secondary flake, one drill fragment, 66 fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, two fine sand and clay tempered fabric impressed sherds, five pieces of ferruginous sandstone shatter, two fine sand and clay tempered incised sherds, one projectile point, seven complete tertiary decortification flakes, four baked clay objects, and one core.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

Level 2 of unit 1, stratum two, was built up of dark yellowish brown soil with a silt loam texture. While initial reports indicated the presence of two possible features on the western wall of the unit, they proved to be natural soil discoloration.

A decent number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 2. They include: 33 fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, one ferruginous sandstone, two baked clay objects, one

ferruginous sandstone, one tertiary flake fragment, and five complete ferruginous siltstone flakes.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 2

Level 1

The first level of unit 2 contained soil with a dark brown coloration and a silty loam texture. Initial reports indicate a lack of features. Several historic artifacts were recovered from level 1 including: brick, glass, and nails. Several brick fragments were observed at the top of level 2.

A very large number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 1. They include: three complete siltstone tertiary flakes, two ferruginous siltstones, one projectile point, five ferruginous sandstones, 24 fine sand and clay tempered sherds, four pieces of chipping shatter, one fine sand and clay tempered punctated residual, one fine sand and clay tempered cord impressed sherd, four baked clay objects, five tertiary flake fragments, and 29 fine sand and clay tempered residuals.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

Stratum two was built up of a dark yellowish brown silt loam that was mottled with dark yellow silty clay loam. A description of the surface of stratum 3 subsoil states that level 3 was made up of a clay loam. As with level 1, there were no apparent features within the unit. Because of this, no profile drawing of the unit was necessary.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a

screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 3

Level 1

Level 1 of unit 3 was composed largely of roots that needed to be cleared prior to excavation of the soil. Stratum 1 was described as being composed of a dark gray brown loam with lighter colored brown silt loams beneath them. No features were observed in level 1. Excavators reported a high level of mud, and a large root that was removed from the southern portion of the unit.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

Level 2 was made up of silt loam that was comparable to the soil observed from the top of the next level. No features were recorded, and as such a profile drawing was unnecessary.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include three ceramic residuals and three baked clay objects.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 3

The soil of level 3 matched that of level 2 in terms of both color and composition. However, the top of the next level was described as being a silty clay. No features were observed.

Given the depth of the level, only trowels were used during the formal excavation.

Unit 4

Level 1

The soil of level 1 was described as very dark grayish brown and composed of loam humus. The sediments observed in the next level were described as being brown silt loam mottled with brick dust. A possible post mold, very dark brown soil, was noted in the center of the unit.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

Stratum 2 was composed of brown silt loam mottled with brick dust. As excavation proceeded the sediments became increasingly brown clay loam with less brick. The feature(s), 1 and 2, observed during the excavation of stratum 1 persisted into stratum 2.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one secondary flake fragment, four fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, two unaltered siltstones, one fine sand and clay tempered sherds, two unaltered sandstones, three ceramic residuals, and two baked clay objects.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 5**Level 1**

The sediments removed from stratum 1 were described as dark yellowish brown humus. The top of the next level was more a brown silt loam. Two dark circular stain features, dark brown silt loam, were observed in the unit. An additional five centimeters were excavated to see if the features would define themselves. They proved to natural formations.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments of level 2 were brown silt loam. The top level of the next stratum was described as a dark brown silt loam. No features were reported after the stains from level 1 were proven to be non-cultural.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: three fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, two ferruginous siltstones, two fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, and one coarse sand tempered plain sherd.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 6

Level 1

The soil removed from stratum I was described as being very dark brown sandy loam with bits of clay. One feature was a collection of seven bricks in the northeast corner. Also, six additional bricks were observed in the northwest corner of the unit and were believed to be a chimney base or house foundation. Both were historic in origin. No special samples were taken.

Several additional prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include one unifacial graver, three baked clay objects, and one complete tertiary flake.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments removed from stratum II were described as dark yellowish brown mottled

with brown soil. This level sat on top of yellowish brown soil mottled with red soil. The two features documented from excavation of level I were identified as brick pillar foundations. Also, a posthole was identified in the center of the unit. No special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherd, one ferruginous siltstone, and one complete tertiary flake.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 7

Level 1

The sediments of level 1 were very dark grayish brown loam. The top of the next stratum was documented as being a brown silt loam with brick and scattered charcoal. A possible historic chimney fall was noted. In addition to roots, a small amount of cow feces were removed during formal excavation.

One prehistoric backed knife was recovered from level 1. Additional prehistoric artifacts recovered include: one fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd, six fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, two baked clay objects, two complete tertiary flakes, and five ferruginous sandstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil removed from level 2 was described as being dark yellowish brown clayey silt. This description matched that of the following layer of sediments. A few soil anomalies were observed and recorded as possible features. These discolorations were all documented as being

dark yellowish brown silty clay loams.

A decent number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: 14 ferruginous sandstones, one two degree flake, four three degree flakes, three ferruginous siltstones, four fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, one piece of chipping shatter, and four baked clay objects. In addition, several prehistoric artifacts were recovered from one of the features, #3. They include: eight ferruginous sandstones, three fine sand and clay tempered sherds, and four baked clay objects.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 8

Level 1

The soil from unit 8 was a dark brown silt loam. A possible feature was noted based on a concentration of bricks in the northeast corner of the unit.

A decent number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: three ferruginous siltstones, 23 ferruginous sandstones, one fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd, five fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, three flakes, and one baked clay object.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments of level 2 were dark yellowish brown silt clay loam. The surface of the stratum below level 2 was described as a strong brown clay loam. A possible feature, described as a dark yellowish brown silt loam, was identified as a possible historic hearth. In addition, a potential post mold was noted to be in the southwest corner of the unit.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one prehistoric fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherd, five fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, and six ferruginous sandstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 9

Level 1

The sediments removed from the top layer of the unit were described as a dark silty clay loam. Immediately below the surface were soils that were identified as dark brown. A possible feature was noted to be toward the center of the unit, and described as hump. This was later identified as a high brick concentration. A layer of charcoal was taken as a sample for a float test. This charcoal was seen in several areas of the unit and contained historic numerous artifacts. Stratum 1 was described as being a natural level.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The second stratum excavated was composed of a dark yellowish brown silty loam which sat on top of a dark yellowish brown clay loam. Several roots were excavated in the unit as digging progressed. No features were described in the excavation reports. While stratum II was described as an arbitrary level, parts of it fell on a natural level.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 10

Level 1

The sediments removed from stratum I were described as being very dark silty loam. No features were recorded and no special samples were taken.

A decent number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: two fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, three complete tertiary flakes, two fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, two large ferruginous siltstones, and three ferruginous sandstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil removed from stratum II was described as brown loamy silt with the following level being composed of dark yellowish brown loamy silt. Four features were identified in the unit. A rectangular shape believed to be the cellar of an historic house was identified as well as broken brick rubble. A collection of whole bricks believed to be the remains of a house pillar were also uncovered in addition to an ash deposit. Each of these features was historic in origin. Furthermore, a possible builder’s trench was observed during the cleaning of the unit.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 2. They include five unaltered ferruginous sandstones, one complete blade like flake, one tertiary flake fragment, three fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, and one complete tertiary flake. In addition, a fine sand and clay tempered red filmed/painted sherd was identified.

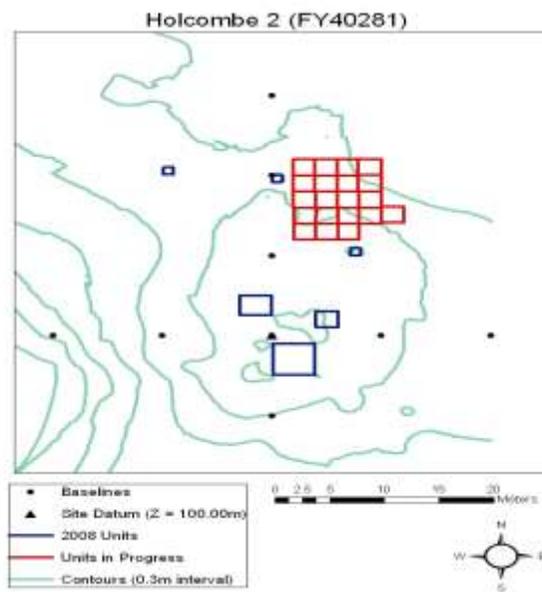
The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 10/16 Balk

One fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd was recovered from the balk separating unit 10 from 16.

2009

In 2009 an additional 18 units were opened. These units were placed in a grid pattern that encompassed the unexcavated area surrounding the 6-9 units. The selection of this location was based on both the total number of historic artifacts excavated from units 6-9 in 2008 as well as their location on a relatively elevated land mass.



Unit 11

Level 1

Stratum 1 was composed of a black silt loam that sat on top of a dark yellowish brown soil. A significant feature observed was a potential historic brick chimney ball.

A large number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 1. They include: nine ferruginous siltstones, 14 ferruginous sandstones, nine fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, 18 fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, one fine sand and clay tempered fabric impressed sherd, and one complete tertiary flake.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

Stratum II was composed primarily of a dark yellowish brown sandy loam which sat on top of a strong brown silt loam. In addition to two rodent burrows, a post mold feature was

noted in the excavation report. Two samples of the features were taken as special samples. Analysis of the soil proved that the middens were natural formations, not cultural remains.

Five ferruginous siltstones were collected from level 2.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 12

Level 1

Stratum I of unit 12 was made up of a very dark grayish brown silt loam that sat on top of a dark yellowish brown silty loam. Excavation reports indicate an absence of features. No special samples were taken at this time.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: four unaltered ferruginous siltstones, three fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, three fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, and seven fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

Stratum II, as well as the following stratum, was composed of a dark yellowish brown silty loam. As with the excavation of level 1, no features were reported within the unit. No special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: two fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, two ferruginous sandstones, two fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, and two ferruginous siltstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a

screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 13

Level 1

The sediments that made up stratum I were described as dark brown soil composed mostly of sand. The topsoil covering later layers was described as highly disturbed and containing various historic artifacts including: brick, glass, and ceramic fragments. These artifacts were mixed and spread throughout the unit without any identifiable concentration. A number of features were noted in the excavation report. Three bricks were protruding from the bulk, two in the southeast corner which corresponds to features observed in units six and seven. A possible feature was identified in the southwest corner, but it disappeared as trowling of the unit continued.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include one complete secondary flake and three fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil of level 2 was composed of a dark brown silty loam that covered a layer of strong brown silt loam. A potential feature, brown color surrounded by ash, was a circular post mold in the center of the east wall of the unit. This feature was left open while the remainder of the unit was closed out.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 14

Not excavated in 2009

Unit 15

Level 1

Stratum I was composed of a dark brown silt loam that was described as an organic layer. The sediments covered what appeared to be a dark yellow brown silt loam. No features were identified.

A large number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: five pieces of chipping shatter, five ferruginous siltstones, seven ferruginous sandstones, one baked clay object, 12 fine sand and clay tempered sherds, and one tertiary flake.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

Level 2 proved to be composed of a brown silt loam that covered a layer of dark yellowish brown silt loam. A feature was identified as a potential laid brick formation that appeared to continue over from unit 8.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: three fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, four ferruginous siltstones, and five ferruginous sandstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 16

Level 1

Level 1 was made up of a very dark grayish brown silty loam. No features were identified.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: two pieces of chipping shatter, one fine sand and clay cord impressed sherd, two tertiary flakes, and two eroded sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

Level 2 was composed of a dark yellowish brown silty loam that sat on top of a slightly darker dark yellowish brown silty loam. Several features were identified during excavation. A potential post mold was noted in the eastern portion of the unit, and an ashy layer was observed. In addition, a dark midden stain was seen in the northwestern portion of the unit.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one ferruginous sandstone, one unifacial side scraper made of ferruginous siltstone, and four fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 17

Level 1

Stratum I of unit 17 was composed of a very dark grayish brown silt loam that was mottled with lighter strong brown and very dark brown soils. A possible posthole was documented to be in the southeast corner.

One prehistoric tertiary flake was recovered from level 1.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

Stratum II was described as a strong brown clay loam that was mottled with remnants of the darker and looser topsoil, brown. This covered a layer of dark yellowish brown silty loam that was also mixed with traces of topsoil. A square historic posthole was noted in the southeast area of the unit.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 18

Level 1

The soil excavated from stratum I was build up of a dark brown surface loam. A feature, feature 10, was noted in the northeast corner and was believed to be a continuation of one observed in unit 6. This feature was in the form of a brick.

A decent number of prehistoric objects were recovered from level 1. They include: four fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, one fine sand and clay fabric impressed sherd, three fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, two ferruginous siltstones, and seven ferruginous sandstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil from stratum II was described as dark yellowish brown loam mottled with a dark brown loam. The feature observed from level I remained as the excavation continued. Stratum II sat on top of a layer of yellowish brown sandy loam.

A decent number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: two pieces of ferruginous sandstone shatter, one ferruginous siltstone flake, one fine sand and clay tempered

eroded sherd, and four pieces of ferruginous siltstone shatter.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 19

Level 1

The soil of stratum I was described as a black silt loam that covered the entire unit. A potential post mold feature was identified along the west wall of the unit. In addition, a continuation of feature 10 was identified in the southeast corner of the unit. This was described as 10 bricks.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include one complete tertiary flake and four fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments removed from level 2 were identified as a yellowish brown silty loam that uniformly covered the entire unit. Beneath this was a yellow brown silty loam that covered the whole unit minus a potential feature. This feature, located in the southeast corner, was described as a large pit, feature 18, with possible midden fill. It existed beneath feature 10 which proved to contain a second layer of bricks. Also, a possible whetstone was observed within feature 18 as well as bone and a long piece of iron, both located in the center of the unit.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 20

Not excavated in 2009

Unit 21

Not excavated in 2009

Unit 22

Level 1

The sediments within level 1 were described as being a dark brown silt loam. No features were uncovered.

A significant number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one complete tertiary flake, two pieces of chipping shatter, three ferruginous siltstones, one complete blade, one fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd, one bifacial flake fragment, six fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, seven fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, and one hammerstone.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil of level 2 was documented as being a dark yellowish brown silt loam. These sediments sat on top of a layer of slightly lighter dark yellowish brown silt loam. As in level 1, no features were observed.

A large number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 2. They include: three ferruginous siltstones, three fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, one fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd, one ferruginous sandstone, four complete tertiary flakes, four fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, and one tertiary flake fragment.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a

screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 23

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were documented as being dark yellowish brown clayey silt. No features were observed by the excavators.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one abrader, one bifacial fragment, four complete tertiary flakes, five fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, two ferruginous sandstones, and two tertiary flake fragments.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil that made up stratum II was described as being dark yellowish brown loamy silt that rested on top of a layer of dark yellowish brown silty clay. No features were identified, and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include two fine sand and clay tempered sherds and one baked clay object.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 24

Level 1

The soil from stratum 1 was described as being brown. Two possible post holes were observed in the southwest portion of the unit. These two features lined up with one another and extended from the west wall to the center. The presence of brick fill within the postholes

indicates they were historic, not prehistoric, cultural remains.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments from stratum II were described as a strong brown silty loam mottled with a dark yellowish brown silty/clayey loam. A third feature was observed in the northeast component of the unit. It, like the other two, was identified as a posthole.

Two prehistoric fine sand and clay tempered sherds were recovered.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 25

Level 1

The sediments from stratum I were described as very dark grayish brown sandy loam. No features were identified.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one complete tertiary flake, six fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, one baked clay object, and one fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil that made up stratum II was described as a strong brown clay loam that rested on top of a layer of strong brown silty clay loam mottled with a light gray silty clay loam. A posthole was observed in the southeast balk of the unit.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one complete secondary flake, one ferruginous siltstone, one blade, and one tertiary flake.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 26

Not excavated in 2009

Unit 27

Level 1

The soil from level I was described as being a dark brown silt loam. A potential feature was observed in the southeast component of the unit. This was described being a collection of bricks that could have served as the foundation of a historic house.

A decent number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one fine sand and clay tempered fabric impressed sherd, one ferruginous sandstone, 18 fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, one fine and coarse sand and clay tempered incised sherd, one tertiary flake fragment, two complete tertiary flakes, and one bifacial tool fragment.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments excavated from level 2 were documented as being dark yellowish brown silt loam that covered an additional layer of dark yellowish brown silt loam. Four features were identified in the unit that included: a brick pier in the southeast area of the unit, a post mold in the southeast area of the unit, an additional post mold in the north area of the unit, and a stain around the brick pier.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one prehistoric secondary flake fragment, five ferruginous siltstones, one piece of chipping shatter, and two fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 28

Not excavated in 2009

Unit 29

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were documented as being a brown silty loam with a uniform structure. A possible feature was documented in the west end of the unit. No special samples were taken.

Two large fine sand and clay tempered prehistoric eroded sherds were recovered.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil from level 2 was described as being dark yellowish brown silty loam with a low moderate structure. No features were noted in the excavation report except for a root stain in the east end.

One prehistoric fine sand and clay tempered plain sherd was recovered.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 30

Level 1

The soil from level 1 was described as being a brown silty loam. A feature, the top of a brick pier, was observed in the southeast corner of the unit. No special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include one complete primary flake and five fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments of stratum II were documented as being a yellowish brown silty clay loam that rested on top of an additional layer of yellowish brown silty clay loam. The feature noted in level I was noted once again as a brick pier. No special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: 24 fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, one complete tertiary flake, and six fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 31**Level 1**

The soil removed from level I was described as being a very dark grayish brown silty loam. Except for a darker patch in the northeast corner there were no observable features. No special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include five fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds and one ferruginous siltstone.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil of stratum II was described as a yellowish brown silty loam that rested on top of a layer of a dark yellowish brown silty loam. No features were identified and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one ferruginous siltstone, two fine sand and clay tempered sherds, one fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd, and one piece of chert chipping shatter.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 32

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were described as being dark brown silt loam. No features were identified and no special samples were taken.

A large number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 1. They include: one ferruginous siltstone, 43 fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, one bifacial microlith, one fine sand and clay tempered fabric impressed sherd, one complete tertiary flake, two fine sand and clay punctated sherds, three large fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherds, one complete secondary flake, and one fine sand and clay tempered incised sherd.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

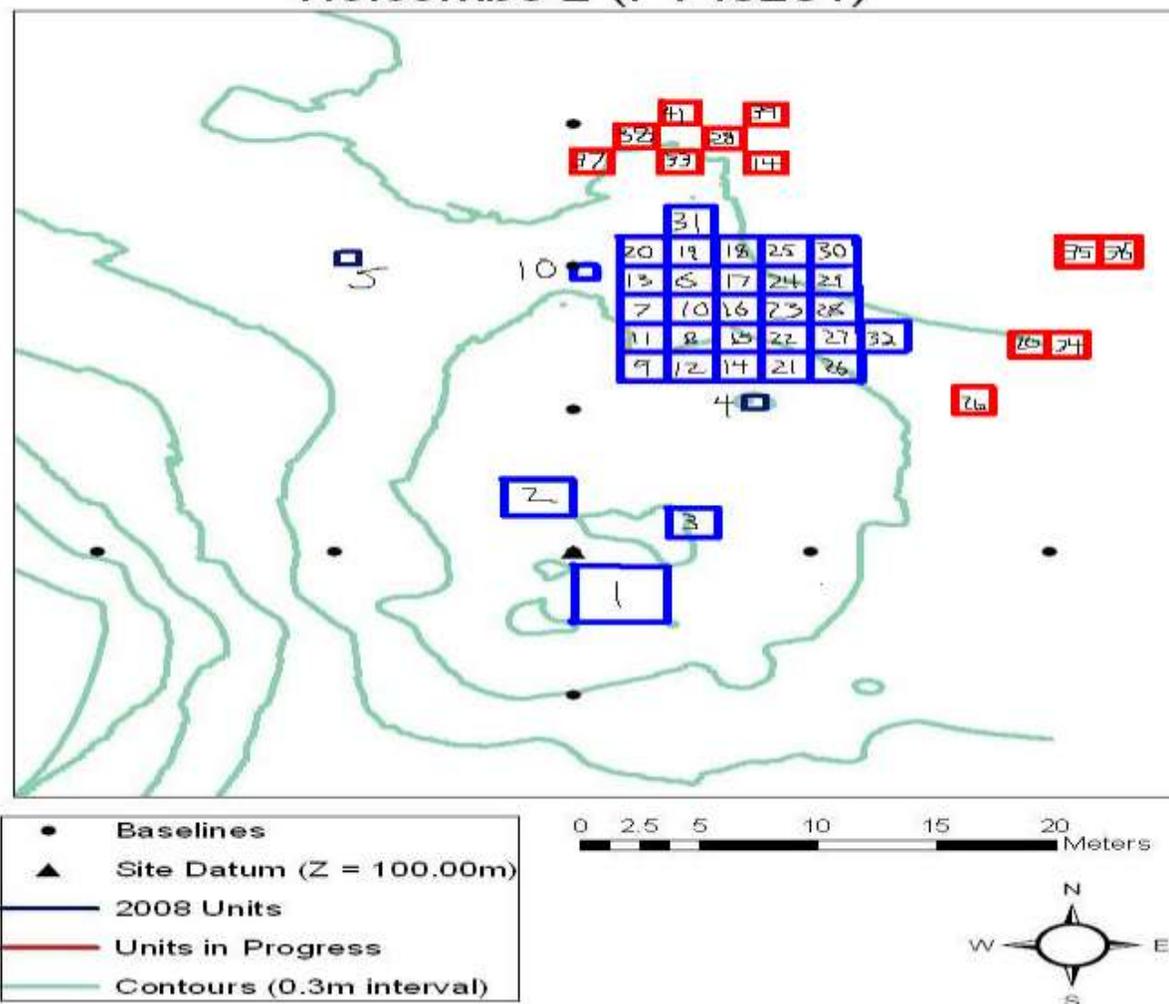
The soil removed from level 2 was documented as being dark grayish brown silt loam that covered a layer of yellowish brown silt loam. No features were documented and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd, 16 fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, and two ferruginous siltstones.

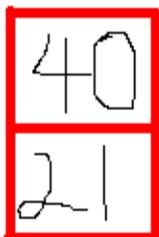
The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

2010

Holcombe 2 (FY40281)



**Holcombe II
Locus II
Unit Excavations**



In 2010 an additional 14 units were excavated. Five of these units were to the east of the group of units excavated in 2009. Unit 26 was established immediately to the east followed by units 20 and 34. These two connected units were to the northeast of 26 with 34 established to the east of 20. To the northeast of these two was the additional pair of units 35 and 36. Unit 36 was set up east of 35. It was believed that the brick support beams excavated in 2009 represented the incomplete dimensions of a manor house, and that units 20 and 34 or units 35 and 36 would contain the remaining support beams. In addition, seven units were mapped out immediately to the north of the 2009 unit cluster. Units 37, 33, and 14 made up the row closest to the 2009 units followed by units 38 and 28. The final two were units 41 and 39. The final two units were mapped out in an area known as locus II. This region was located to the southwest of unit 1 which was excavated in 2008. The area was relatively flat and could have served as the location of an historic structure, such as a slave cabin or horse stable. Given the prominence of the Holcombe family, it was likely that they had a number of structures on their property.

Unit 14

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were described as being a very dark brown silty loam. No features were noted, and no special samples were taken. The area was believed to be a possible dump site given the presence of a historic fork and the absence of a spoon.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They included: two unaltered ferruginous siltstones, four unaltered ferruginous sandstones, and four fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil removed from level 2 was documented as being a dark brown silty clayey loam. Several possible post molds were observed in the unit in addition to a few stains that were concentrated in the southeast corner. The artifacts, both historic and prehistoric, began to dry out after level 1.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: two fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, one tertiary flake, two unaltered ferruginous sandstones, and one baked clay object.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 3

The soil removed from level three was described as being a red silty clayey loam. A post mold was observed in the southeast corner. No special samples were taken.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 20

Level 1

The soil removed from stratum I was described as being a very dark brown silty clay

loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: two unaltered ferruginous siltstones, eight fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, one unaltered ferruginous sandstone.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments that made up level 2 were documented as being a light brown mottled with dark brown silty clay loam that rested on top of a level of a brown clay loam mixed with organic materials. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

A large number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one sandstone manuport, 32 fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, two ferruginous sandstones, two pieces of chert, two complete tertiary flakes, and one fine sand and clay tempered fabric impressed sherd.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 21-Locus II

Level 1

The surface of the unit, the O (organic level), was described as being a very dark gray silty loam organic material. The sediments that made up stratum I were documented as being a dark yellowish brown clayey silty loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: three fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds and one unaltered ferruginous sandstone.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil that level 2 was composed of was described as being a dark brown clay loam. This covered a layer of dark clay loam mottled with dark yellowish brown clay loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 26

Level 1

The sediments removed from level I was described as being a very dark grayish brown silty clayey loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

A large number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 1. They include: one fine sand and clay tempered cord marked sherd, five sand and clay tempered plain sherds, one tertiary flake fragment, four fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, two complete tertiary flakes, and two ferruginous sandstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil removed from level 2 was described as being a brown clayey silt loam. No features were documented and no special samples were taken.

Adding on to the prehistoric artifacts found in level 1, artifacts recovered from level 2 include: three tertiary flakes, one ferruginous siltstone, five fine sand and clay tempered plain

sherds, one large fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherd, and four ferruginous siltstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 3

The sediments that made up level 3 were described as being a red clayey silty loam that covered an additional layer of red clayey silty loam. A soil discoloration was noted, and was believed to be a continuation of a feature located in unit 27. No special samples were taken.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 28

Level 1

The sediments that made up level I were described as being dark brown silty clay loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. A few of the artifacts found in level 2 include: one bifacial fragment, one fine sand and clay tempered sherd, and six baked clay objects. One significant artifact was a fine sand and clay tempered zone incised sherd with punctuations below the rim and cross hatching

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil from level 2 was described as being a brown silty clay loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken. Artifact density dropped significantly after the excavation of level 1 and further digging was not recommended at the time.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 3

The sediments removed from level 3 were documented as being a dark yellowish brown silty clay loam that covered a layer of brown silty clay loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken. Excavators reported a significant drop in artifact quantities.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 33

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were described as being very dark gray silty mulch. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include seven fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds and one ferruginous siltstone.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil removed from level 2 was described as being a brown silty loam that covered a layer of yellowish brown silty loam with low levels of clay. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: seven ferruginous sandstones, two fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, four tertiary flakes, and 16 baked clay objects.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a

screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 34

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were described as being dark brown silt topsoil. This covered a layer of light brown silty clay loam. No features were noted and no special samples were taken.

A large number of prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 1. They include: one complete secondary flake, 57 fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, 18 fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, one swan lake projectile point, one large ferruginous siltstone, and 12 baked clay objects.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 35

Level 1

The sediments from level 1 were described as being dark brown clay loam mottled with a slightly darker clay loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: 17 fine sand and clay tempered plain sherds, one tertiary flake fragment, and four fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments from stratum II were documented as being dark brown loamy clay mottled

with lighter dark brown loamy clay. This covered a layer of dark brown loamy clay mottled with very dark grayish brown clayey silt loam and black loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: 11 fine sand and clay tempered sherds, one ferruginous sandstone, and two ferruginous siltstones.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 36

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were described as very dark grayish brown organic mulch. A large root was removed from the unit and a potential concentration of ash was reported. No special samples were taken.

Four prehistoric fine sand and clay tempered sherds were recovered.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil that made up stratum II of the unit was described as being brown clay mottled with very dark brown clay with possible ash. This covered a layer of dark brown clay mottled with very dark grayish brown clay. A small pseudo circular feature in the northeast section of the unit was reported. No special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: five fine sand and clay tempered sherds and one ferruginous siltstone.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a

screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 37

Level 1

The soil removed from level 1 was described as being dark brown silty clay. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Three prehistoric fine sand and clay tempered sherds were recovered.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments removed from level 2 were documented as being dark yellowish brown clay silt that covered a layer of red clayey silt loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 38

Level 1

The soil from level 1 was documented as being a dark brown silty clay loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include five baked clay objects and one fine sand and clay tempered sherd.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The sediments removed from level 2 were described as dark yellowish brown clayey silt loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: three ferruginous sandstones, one complete tertiary flake, and seven baked clay objects.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 3

The soil from level 3 was documented as being brown silty loam mottled with dark brown silty clay. This covered a layer of dark yellowish brown clay silt. A possible feature, a dark stain, was observed in the northeast section of the unit. No special samples were taken.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Unit 39

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were described as being very dark brown silty loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric ceramic fragments were recovered. They include: one coarse sand tempered sherd, one coarse shell tempered sherd, and one fine sand and clay tempered straight edge sherd.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼" dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil from level 2 was documented as being brown silty clay loam that covered a layer

of dark yellowish brown silty clay loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one tertiary flake, one coarse sand tempered sherd, and four baked clay objects.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 40

Level 1

No soil reports were found for level 1.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: four fine sand and clay tempered sherds, two ferruginous siltstones, and two unaltered ferruginous sandstones.

Level 2

No description of the sediments recovered from level 2 could be located. The soil that built up the proceeding level was described as dark yellowish brown silty clay loam. No features were identified and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one fine sand tempered cord impressed sherd, one large unaltered ferruginous siltstone, and seven fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Unit 41

Level 1

The sediments removed from level 1 were described as being dark brown clayey silt

loam. No features were reported and no special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one piece of ferruginous siltstone debitage, three fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, and 20 baked clay objects.

The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Level 2

The soil removed from level 2 were described as being light brown silty clay that covered a layer of dark yellowish brown silty clay. The remains of an old shovel test were the only observed feature within the unit. No special samples were taken.

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered. They include: one large ferruginous sandstone, three fine sand and clay tempered sherds, one ferruginous siltstone, and 15 baked clay objects.

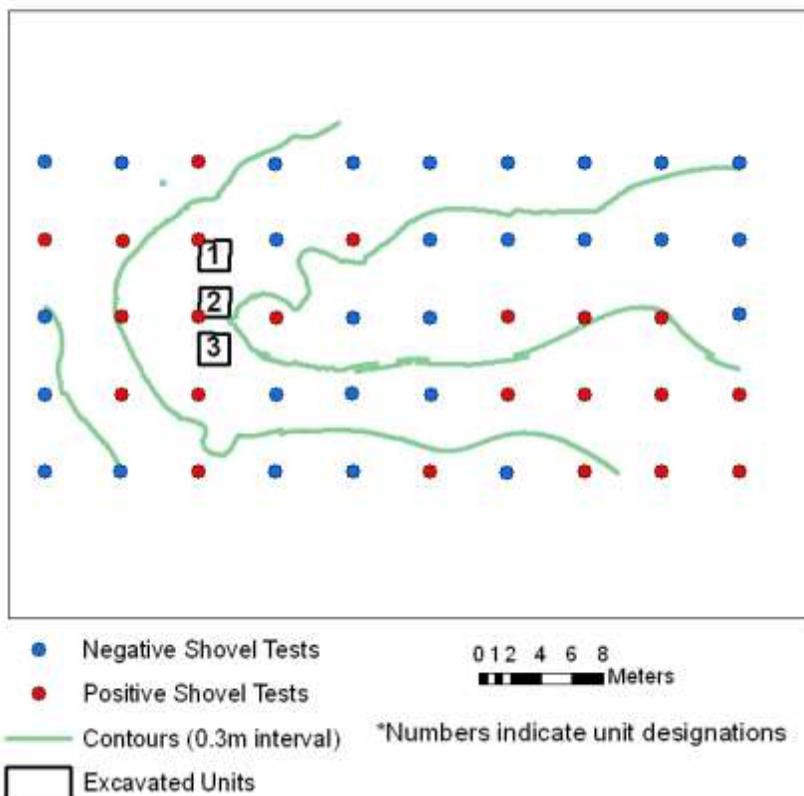
The methods used to excavate the unit involved shovel skimming, trowling, and a screening of the soil through a ¼” dry mesh.

Holcombe III

Shovel test results

Holcombe III is an area of land located to the southwest of Holcombe II beyond the locus II site. In 2008 a series of 50 shovel tests were conducted on a 10 x 10 meter grid that was mapped out using the total station. Of the tests, 28 were sterile. Ten of the tests yielded one artifact while four of the tests contained two. Three of the tests contained three artifacts, and two contained four. Each of these positive tests were evenly distributed throughout the area. The remaining two tests contained five artifacts. The results indicated two potential artifact concentration located in the west region and the southeast region.

Holcombe 3 (FY40298) Shovel Tests



Shovel Test 37

Shovel test 37 was located in the southeast corner of Holcombe III. It contained a fine sand and clay tempered ceramic residual as well as an unaltered ferruginous sandstone.

Shovel Test 38

Shovel test 48 was established in the southeast region of Holcombe III. It contained a backed knife, a siltstone, and sandstone.

Shovel Test 50

Shovel test 50 was located in the southeast region of the Holcombe III site. It contained a complete tertiary flake, a tertiary flake fragment, as well as unaltered ferruginous sandstone.

Formal Excavation

Three units were established at the Holcombe III site in the 2008 field school session. Since the site itself was relatively flat it, any region of it could have easily supported a structure. As a result, the areas where artifact density was highest, as evidenced by the shovel tests, served as the primary factor in determining where to establish the units. Unit 1 was established next to shovel test 13, one of the tests that yielded five artifacts. Unit two was mapped out immediately

to the south followed by unit 3. All three units were 2 x 2 meters.

Unit 1

Level 1

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered from level 1. They included: a biface, an unaltered ferruginous sandstone, 6 baked clay objects, and a fine sand and clay tempered plain sherd.

Level 2

An unaltered ferruginous sandstone was recovered from level 2.

Unit 2

Level 1

Several prehistoric artifacts were located in level 1. Among them included: 4 baked clay objects, and an unaltered ferruginous sandstone.

Level 2

Several prehistoric cultural artifacts were uncovered in level 2. They included: chert shatter, a burned celt fragment, 3 fine sand and clay tempered eroded sherds, and a fine sand and clay tempered plain sherd.

Unit 3

Level 1

Several prehistoric artifacts were recovered in level 1. They included: a baked clay object, a fine sand and clay tempered plain sherd, and an unaltered ferruginous sandstone.

Results

Features

Despite the large number of historic features that were uncovered, no prehistoric features were

found during any of the excavations of Holcombe II and III. This is an unusual phenomenon considering the high quantity of prehistoric artifacts that were recovered at both sites over a three year period. Despite the historical occupation of the area by the Holcombe family, it is unlikely that historical construction projects damaged or destroyed the remains of any prehistoric structures. This is suggested by the high level of preservation of numerous Native American artifacts recovered from the area, such as tertiary flakes. The absence of these features makes it impossible to determine if the site is a summer or winter habitation area. During woodland times it was common for groups to move to ridges, such as the Holcombe sites, during the winter to gather nuts and other wild plants.¹³³ However, stable structures were also constructed to protect the inhabitants from the low temperatures of winter. The site then, based on artifacts and location, fits no existing habitation profile established by experts.

Artifact Assemblage

Ceramic Analysis

Of the 1367 prehistoric artifacts that have been recovered at the Holcombe II and III sites, 886, 65%, of them are ceramics. This total number of sherds has been calculated from the number of ceramic fragments recovered from both formal excavations and shovel tests. All sherds that were retained by a ¼” mesh sifter were analyzed. Anything that passed through the screen was deemed too small for analysis and discarded. Of the sherds that were analyzed 365 were eroded. It was impossible to determine if these remains once had any surface treatments. This damage was likely due to natural forces of erosion over time rather than human activity during the historic period. These fragments were still subjected to paste analysis since, following Mainfort and Smith, paste is determined by feel as well as sight observations.¹³⁴

¹³³ Discussion with Guy Weaver

¹³⁴ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 149

Paste Characteristics

Following Mainfort's guide to ceramic typology, each ceramic fragment excavated from Holcombe II and III was divided into one of four groups. A majority of the sherds were tempered primarily with fine sand and a few baked clay particles. However, 11 sherds only had fine sand mixed into the paste. In addition, three sherds contained only coarse sand and one sherd contained coarse shell.

While paste types are poor temporal diagnostic devices in west Tennessee, it is generally accepted that prehistoric Native Americans shifted from pure clay to pure sand tempered wares over an extended period of time.¹³⁵ Mainfort notes that by AD 100 Pinson mounds, a Middle Woodland site, ceramic assemblage was predominantly sand tempered, suggesting that the Baldwin series postdates the Froked deer and Madison series.¹³⁶ While the Tishomingo series is not considered a viable chronological indicator, it intergrades with the Baldwin series at the end of the sand-clay paste spectrum.¹³⁷ In addition, it is associated with cord marking, a middle woodland surface treatment.¹³⁸

Most of the ceramic fragments that were recovered from both sites were fine sand and clay tempered sherds. The tempering agent used in these sherds was fine sand with a few baked clay objects mixed in. This suggests that the sand was intentionally included and places the artifacts within Mainfort's definition of the Tishomingo series, potentially a Middle Woodland paste type. The baked clay particles were usually few in number, but were clearly visible. While it remains unclear if they were deliberately added, there are usually more than two and therefore places these sherds outside the Baldwin series.

¹³⁵ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 149

¹³⁶ Robert Mainfort jr., Shaun Chapman 168

¹³⁷ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 33

¹³⁸ Discussion with Guy Weaver

These ceramic fragments were fairly evenly distributed throughout both sites with several concentrations in the Holcombe II area. In level I of unit 34 a total of 57 sherds were located, and an extra 43 found in level I of unit 32. In addition, a collection of 32 fragments was located in level 2 of unit 20. A particularly large concentration of fine sand and clay tempered ceramics was discovered in unit 1 level 1. In addition to 149 ceramic residuals, 66 eroded sherds were discovered. Immediately to the north, an additional 32 sherds were found in unit 2. While these artifact concentrations are somewhat scattered, the largest concentrations appear to be located in the eastern and southern areas of Holcombe II with a smaller concentration in the northwest.

An additional tempering agent that was noted from several excavated sherds was fine sand. 11 of the sherds contained very few to no baked clay objects within their paste. This places the artifacts within the Baldwin series identified by Mainfort. Following this definition, these ceramics were likely contemporary with the Tishomingo series during the Middle Woodland period.

These Baldwin series ceramics were few in number and evenly scattered throughout the Holcombe II area. Five sherds were recovered from level two of unit 26, and one was found in level I of unit 40. Also, an additional four were excavated from unit 8. While Unit 26 and unit 8 are located fairly close to one another in the main excavation area, their distance apart combined with the low number of sherds indicates that no concentrations of Baldwin series ceramic fragments were located during the past three years of excavation.

An additional paste type recovered from Holcombe II was coarse sand. These sherds are more difficult to use as chronological indicators because they do not fall within any of the four ceramic paste types outlined by Mainfort. The coarse sand could indicate that they were manufactured during the Archaic period as part of the Knob creek series or perhaps during the

late Woodland period.¹³⁹ Another possibility is that the sherds were developed during the Mississippian period in which case they would postdate the Tishomingo and Baldwin series sherds.¹⁴⁰ A potential indicator that these sherds were contemporaneous with the fine sand and clay tempered sherds is the fact that it was found in level I of unit 39 along with a Tishomingo sherd. However, with only a single sherd it is likely that it was moved there as natural erosion changed the landscape over time.

The final tempering agent identified is coarse shell. This was a Mississippian period development and therefore postdates Woodland period ceramics. The sherd indicates that the site was occupied both by Middle Woodland period Native Americans as well as Mississippian period peoples sometime later.

Surface Decoration

Ceramic decoration is a far more reliable temporally diagnostic tool than paste types. Numerous surface treatments were noted on ceramic fragments found at the Holcombe II site while none were observed from sherds recovered from Holcombe III. A total of 227 non-eroded sherds were



found at the site. Their preservation allowed excavators to conduct analysis of surface treatments. These, combined with ceramic paste types play a crucial role in determining the time period during which the site was occupied.

¹³⁹ Discussion with Guy Weaver

¹⁴⁰ Discussion with Guy Weaver

The largest number of sherds that were not eroded exhibited a plain surface treatment. This is expected considering most ceramics produced by prehistoric Native Americans were given no surface treatment.¹⁴¹ Since all of these sherds were from the Tishomingo series, they can be classified as Baytown Plain var. *Tishomingo*. Unfortunately, aside from paste type no time period can be assigned to the site based on these cultural remains. These ceramics were evenly distributed throughout both the Holcombe II and III areas, but appeared in greater numbers in Holcombe II.

Aside from plain surface treatments, a total of 23 cord marked ceramic fragments were recovered from the Holcombe II site, making it the second most common decorative treatment. Ford contends that cord marking was introduced to the midsouth from the north and reached Pinson by at least 205 BC.¹⁴² By Middle Woodland times it had become the dominant surface decoration of utilitarian surfaces.¹⁴³ Therefore, the comparatively large quantity of cord marked surfaces found at Holcombe II suggests the site was occupied primarily during the Middle Woodland period.

¹⁴¹ Lecture by Guy Weaver

¹⁴² Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59

¹⁴³ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59



Following the cord marked sherds, seven fabric impressed surfaces were found at the Holcombe II site. Like the cord marked ceramic fragments, none were recovered from the Holcombe III site. Philips argues that fabric marked ceramics first occurred during the Tchula period, early woodland.¹⁴⁴ Complementing this, Mainfort suggests that fabric marked surface treatments were introduced or

developed in west Tennessee around 400 BC.¹⁴⁵ Although it was replaced as the dominant surface treatment by cord marking, fabric marking extended into the Middle Woodland period.¹⁴⁶ While it could be argued that these remains suggest the site was occupied during the early Woodland period, their quantity in relation to the number of cord marked sherds suggests they were made during the Middle Woodland period. Although the surface treatment was still employed by prehistoric peoples of the time, it was a less popular decorative mode than cord marking.¹⁴⁷

In addition, three cord impressed ceramic fragments were found in the Holcombe II area. This surface decoration is recognized as a Tchula period marker.¹⁴⁸ Given its location in west Tennessee, the decorative mode can best be identified as Cormorant cord impressed. Just as the Tchula period occurred further south, the Cormorant period occurred in the west Tennessee

¹⁴⁴ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59

¹⁴⁵ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59

¹⁴⁶ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59

¹⁴⁷ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59

¹⁴⁸ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59

area.¹⁴⁹

A surface decoration observed on four Holcombe II ceramic remains that is believed to have occurred along with cormorant cord impression was punctation. This decorative mode is also part of the cormorant stylistic horizon and therefore



Holcombe II
Unit 32, Level 1
Fine sand and clay tempered punctated sherd

dates to approximately 500-200 BC, early woodland.¹⁵⁰ This evidence then further solidifies the possibility that the cormorant stylistic horizon had influenced the people of the Ames site.

Finally, a single fine sand and clay tempered punctated ceramic fragment with incised cross hatching was recovered from the Holcombe II site. A series of oval punctations were observed along the flat rim of the vessel. This characteristic, combined with the sandy paste, is typical of Twin Lakes punctated pottery, a middle Woodland period style.¹⁵¹ In addition, the sherd also displays incised cross hatching directly below the rim. Cross hatching, in many instances, is generally accepted to be a Hopewell surface treatment style, and can be noted on numerous pottery types produced by groups that were part of the Hopewell interaction sphere.¹⁵² One example was Marksville incised, an additional Middle Woodland style. While cross hatching was rare for this particular decorative mode, it is known to have occurred.¹⁵³ These characteristics indicate that the sherd was likely produced during the middle Woodland period.

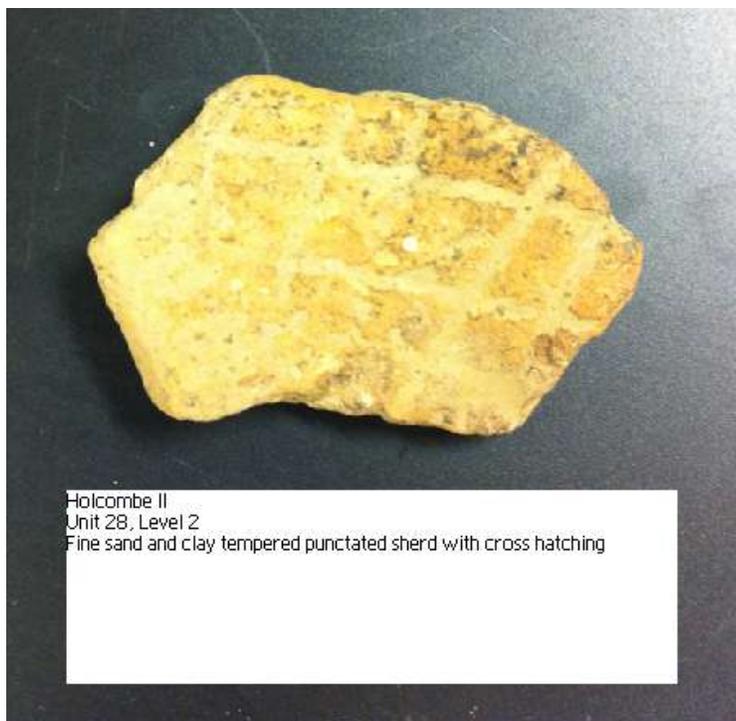
¹⁴⁹ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59

¹⁵⁰ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 59

¹⁵¹ Philip Phillips, James Ford, James Griffin, *Archaeological Survey in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley, 1940-1947* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 76

¹⁵² Discussion with Guy Weaver

¹⁵³ Philip Phillips, James Ford, James Griffin 94



Discussion

Given the comparatively high number of cord marked sherds in the Holcombe II site, it can be argued that the site was occupied most extensively during the Middle Woodland period. This is complemented, but not proven, by the high percentage of fine sand and clay tempered ceramics from the Tishomingo series. Furthermore, the

low numbers of fabric marked, cord impressed, and punctuated sherds can also serve as temporally diagnostic devices. Their presence, but not dominance, within the area suggests that they functioned as less popular surface treatments during the time, likely placing them within the middle Woodland period. However, the possibility that they were made during the preceding early woodland period cannot be ruled out. At the very least, these sherds indicate that the site's inhabitants were influenced by early woodland ceramic styles.

The sherds, in terms of both tempering agent and surface treatment, also contribute to theories concerning paste types as temporally diagnostic devices. The high number of cord marked sherds appearing in conjunction with numerous fine sand and clay tempered sherds may solidify existing assumptions concerning the Tishomingo and Baldwin series being Middle Woodland era developments. The remaining coarse shell tempered sherd indicates the site was occupied to some extent during the preceding Mississippian period. If so, then the possibility of the coarse sand tempered sherds being late woodland creations would indicate the site was

repeatedly occupied from the Middle Woodland period to the early Mississippian period. However, given the comparatively low number of late woodland and early Mississippian sherds, occupation of the site during later prehistoric periods would have been brief.

Also, the sherd exhibiting cross hatching suggests that the group was possibly a part of the Hopewell exchange network. However, given the fact that the surface treatment was placed on clay with fine sand and clay tempering, it was likely locally made. This theory is furthered by the apparent imperfect cross hatching. This indicates that the area's inhabitants had some level of interaction with group(s) connected to the Hopewell exchange network and attempted to replicate an observed decorative mode. Therefore, it remains unclear to what degree the occupants of the Holcombe sites participated in the expansive middle Woodland trading network.

Lithic Analysis

In the past three years excavators have recovered 360 lithic artifacts from the Holcombe II and III sites. This artifact base constitutes approximately 26% of the number of artifacts found. Like the ceramics, the artifacts can serve as temporally diagnostic devices, but more significantly can offer details regarding the lifestyle and subsistence practices of the site's inhabitants. This section offers a basic analysis of several of the artifact types recovered from the Holcombe sites.

Flakes



A total of 73 flakes were recovered from the Holcombe II and III sites in the past three years. A majority of these, 64, were tertiary flakes. These flakes are the byproduct of the maintenance and modification stage of tool production. This indicates that the inhabitants used the site as an area to maintain already made tools that had become worn or damaged over time. If so, this indicates that the prehistoric occupants relied on high quality tools, curated items, to perform daily activities. Had they been more sedentary, the occupants would have manufactured lower quality artifacts that would not be need to be maintained over time, expedient items.

In addition, seven secondary flakes and two primary flakes were found at the site. These flakes display some level of cortex and would have been the byproduct of the primary and

secondary flaking level of reduction. This indicates that tools were also made on site, although apparently less frequently than existing ones were repaired. Nonetheless, this was an advanced stage in the reduction process which further suggests that the people crafted high quality lithic artifacts on and off site.

Projectile Points

Of the three projectile points recovered from the Holcombe II site, two were complete enough to be subjected to analysis. Both had convex shallow sides with expanding stems.¹⁵⁴ The point composed of black flint contained a flat base while the other, made of jasper, had a convex base.¹⁵⁵ However, both had shallow side notches and rounded shoulders. In addition, there are fine serrations on the blade edges, and apparently random flaking was conducted during

their manufacture.¹⁵⁶ Each was also medium in size. These similar characteristics place them within the expanding stem cluster, and identify them as swan lake projectile points.¹⁵⁷



Holcombe II
Unit 34, Level 1
Projectile Point, Lateral Fragment



Holcombe II
Unit 1, Level 1
Projectile Point, Complete

¹⁵⁴ James Cambron, David Hulse, *Handbook of Alabama Archaeology: Part 1 Point Types* (Archaeological Association of Alabama, 1975), p.30

¹⁵⁵ James Cambron, David Hulse 30

¹⁵⁶ James Cambron, David Hulse 30

¹⁵⁷ Discussion with Guy Weaver

As medium sized darts, they were likely used for the tips of atlatls as a posed to the smaller points used on arrows.¹⁵⁸ This combined with side notching indicates that they were likely middle Woodland artifacts. In addition, while jasper is a locally available material, the flint was nonlocal.¹⁵⁹ This indicates the projectile point was likely a trade good, given the apparent absence of flint debitage in the Holcombe II site. Both were part of the secondary flaking stage and, given their high level of craftsmanship, represented curated items.

Biface

A biface exhibiting numerous flake scars was recovered from unit I of Holcombe III. Based on the absence of cortex, the artifact was likely at the secondary flaking stage prior to being lost or discarded. This stage of reduction indicates the item was most likely a curated item. A flat top



on one end likely served as a striking platform making it the proximal, or area closest to the user during the tool's employ. The opposite end of the biface displays

ware which indicates it was the proximal end. Based on these characteristics the biface like served as a wedge, or item hammered into a wood block causing it to split. This would have been useful in the construction of houses or possibly boats.¹⁶⁰

Hammerstone

A hammerstone found at Unit I indicates that tool manufacture occurred on site to some extent. The tool would have functioned as an item used to strike other artifacts during the stages of tool reduction. Since only one was recovered during the past three years of excavation, it is likely

¹⁵⁸ Discussion with Guy Weaver

¹⁵⁹ Discussion with Guy Weaver

¹⁶⁰ Discussion with Guy Weaver

that the site's inhabitants did not commonly manufacture tools on site. This further substantiates the theory established by the high presence of tertiary flakes.

Adze



A single adze was taken as part of the surface collection from the Holcombe III site. This adze

displayed no cortex and was at the secondary flaking stage prior to being discarded. The distal end displays significant wear around the sharp and flat tip. The proximal end on the other hand displays no wear or damage and is relatively flat. In addition, the artifact has relatively smooth surfaces in a small area several inches from the proximal end. This indicates the artifact was hafted and used similarly as a pick ax. It would likely have served as a tool used to chip and scrape wood. This, combined with the presence of the wedge biface, suggests that the inhabitants manufactured boats and/or structures. While both are absent from the site, they cannot be ruled out as possibilities.

Backed Knife



Two backed knives were recovered from the area with one of each found at the Holcombe II and III sites. Each knife displays numerous flake scars and have a large amount of visible cortex on the dorsal side. These characteristics place them within the primary flaking stage of reduction. The

proximal end is relatively flat while the distal end is a sharp edge that displays wear. Backed knives would have been used as cutting instruments that could have been used on a number of things, such as animal hides. In addition, both knives were manufactured out of locally available ferruginous siltstone. This indicates that the items were likely locally made rather than having been gained through trade. These characteristics mark a shift from the higher quality items found at the Holcombe sites. The local material and stage in the reduction process indicate that the artifacts were quickly made and likely discarded despite being relatively unused. This behavior is representative of a more sedentary people.

Abrader

The abrader is an artifact used to polish and smooth out stone tools. This further indicates that tools to some extent were built and maintained on site. However, only one found lithic tool, a celt fragment, displays a smoothed texture.

Celt Fragment



Perhaps the most valuable artifact recovered from the Holcombe sites is a celt fragment which was recovered from Holcombe III. Celts are known to have been produced during the Middle Woodland era as a trade good. While some are known to have been functional, many display no evidence of wear, indicating they had ceremonial significance.

In addition, they gained increased prominence during the Mississippian period, notably at the Moundville site in Alabama (AD 1000-1650).¹⁶¹

The Holcombe celt fragment displays no sign of wear which indicates it was likely a

¹⁶¹ Discussion with Guy Weaver

ceremonial item. The artifact was manufactured through the process of pecking and grinding. This method of manufacture was very meticulous and involved systematic pecking with a stone tool and then grinding with an abrader, such as the one recovered from Holcombe II. This process, taking approximately a week, further reflects the importance of the artifact. Significantly, the celt recovered is made of locally available siltstone while the archaeological record indicates a majority of celts were made of greenstone. This suggests that the inhabitants had some level of interaction with celt manufacturers, possibly those at Moundville, and replicated their techniques.

However, the most troubling aspect of the celt fragment is the fact that it is broken and carries burn residue. As a highly valued non-used item, it is likely that the celt would only have been broken if someone intentionally destroyed it. Sam Brooks notes that similar instances of people destroying non-used biface blades occurred in the southeast near the end of the Archaic period.¹⁶² It has been suggested that this destruction of valued trade goods was organized by people who sought to display their wealth. If so, the artifact is possibly a Mississippian period item as complex chiefdoms would have likely developed as a product of increased social stratification.¹⁶³ It remains unclear if this is the case with the celt fragment, but it is highly unusual for such a valuable object to be destroyed.

Unaltered Ferruginous Sandstone and Siltstone

Excavators recovered 131 unaltered ferruginous sandstones and 71 unaltered ferruginous siltstones throughout the Holcombe II and III sites over the past three years of excavation. Their presence in the Ames site is the result of the inhabitants travelling to obtain them for tool making purposes. This indicates that the people experienced an increased reliance on locally available

¹⁶² Discussion with Guy Weaver

¹⁶³ Guy Weaver, C. Andrew Buchner, Mitchell Childress, Mary Starr 24

materials for tool production. Such a phenomenon possibly marks an increased shift towards sedentary lifestyle as evidenced by an apparent lessened dependency on higher quality trade goods. This could suggest that the inhabitants were shifting towards an increasingly sedentary lifestyle as local stones were more often employed in the production of expedient tool production. These stones were evenly distributed throughout both sites.

Core

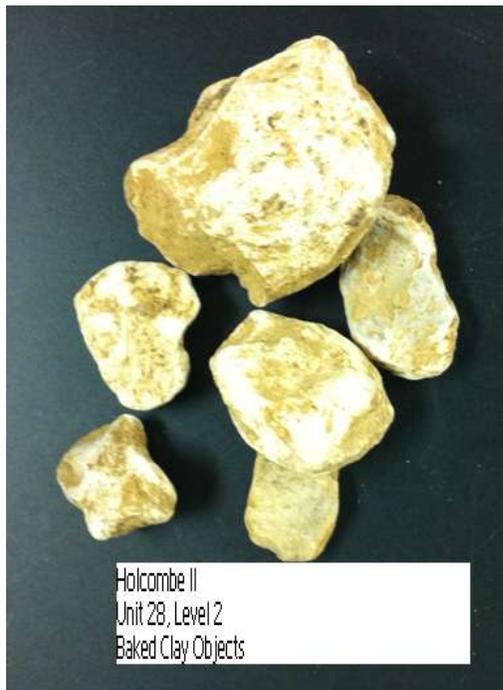
A single core was discovered in Holcombe II. This further indicates that the manufacture of stone tools on site likely occurred less frequently than the maintenance of stone tools produced off site. The core has several flake scars indicating it had been used prior to its discard.

Discussion

The lithic remains suggest that the inhabitants were largely mobile and experienced a shift towards an increasingly sedentary lifestyle. While mobility characterizes groups of the Archaic period, woodland groups developed at different rates depending on the availability of natural resources in the area. Since there was an abundance of resources in the region, the occupants could have been inclined to maintain a hunter gatherer lifestyle well into the Woodland period. If so, the inhabitants may have only later developed horticultural practices. The residents of the site then appear to have experienced a shift in subsistence practices during the time in which they occupied the site as evidenced by the combination of recovered curated and expedient tools. Although admittedly speculative, the wedge and adze could have been used for the making of boats which would suggest they moved through rivers, the nearest being the north fork of the Wolf River, to different sites. Their advanced stage of reduction indicates they prepared in advance for travel, suggesting it would have been a routine part of their lifestyle. This would

indicate they had a hunter gatherer lifestyle, but likely picked specific occupations based on the availability of resources in the area.

Baked Clay Objects



In the past three years excavators have recovered 132 baked clay objects throughout Holcombe II and Holcombe III. These artifacts were used to for cooking purposes. Each object was placed in a fire until it became heated and then was put into a bag filled with water and food items. These artifacts were introduced during the early Woodland. It has been suggested, though not proven, that baked clay objects co-occurred in the area along with fabric marked vessels. Their presence indicates that the occupants of the site had

some level of interaction with Tchula peoples of the early Woodland period. While it is likely that these objects were still used by the site's occupants during the Middle Woodland period since they were recovered on the same level as numerous Middle Woodland artifacts, it cannot be proven. Erosion could easily have changed the landscape and mixed artifacts from different time periods together.

V. Conclusions

While only a small portion of the Holcombe II and Holcombe III sites was excavated over the past few years, a series of significant artifacts have been uncovered. The ceramic fragments potentially reinforce existing theories concerning the validity of certain paste types as temporally diagnostic devices. The lithics on the other hand indicate that the development of horticulture

was contingent on the availability of resources in the area. Subsistence practices then cannot always be a reliable chronological indicator.

Given the site's geographical proximity to the Pinson mound complex it is likely that they were related to the peoples of Pinson during the Middle Woodland period. This is somewhat substantiated by their use of Tishomingo and Baldwin series paste types as sand tempered wares were the norm at Pinson by AD 100. In addition, with cord marking being the dominant surface decoration it is likely that the site was mainly occupied during the Middle Woodland period. Such evidence further establishes a connection to the Pinson mound complex.

Despite this, the presence of shell tempered ceramics as well as the celt fragment indicates that Mississippian peoples were present at the site at some point. This indicates that the site was repeatedly occupied over numerous generations. Evidence then suggests that the period in which the site was occupied extends from as early as the early Woodland period through the Mississippian period.

The presence of the Mississippian artifacts also establishes a connection between the inhabitants of the site and those of the Ames mound complex. The mound complex, though primarily a Mississippian site, displays woodland remains in mound D. The mounds were then built over a period of time equal to the period in which the Holcombe sites were occupied, roughly AD 100 to AD 1200. Considering this, it is possible that the inhabitants of the Holcombe sites could have had some level of interaction with the mound builders. However, this is highly speculative and only further investigation of the area could conclusively prove a connection between the mounds and the Holcombe sites.

VI. Future Investigations

The excavation of the Holcombe sites thus far is incomplete. Given the high quantity of

prehistoric artifacts and the presence of several concentrations it is apparent that further excavation is needed. The recovered artifacts, though significant, likely only represent a small portion of the total number that could be present at the site. This section will recommend how the upcoming field school excavations should proceed based on gathered evidence from Holcombe II and Holcombe III.

A significant archaeological method that has yet to be employed is examination of the phytoliths, microscopic components of plants, present on ceramic fragments and lithics. These tests could indicate what plants the site occupants relied on. This is a crucial part of assessing prehistoric subsistence practices.

Also, it is possible that a body of water was present during the time period that the site was occupied. Historical remains indicate that cisterns were not constructed which suggests a reliable source of water was present in the area, at least during the 19th century. Examination of the geological elements in the immediate area is therefore highly recommended in future investigations.

In addition, since no structures have been uncovered it is unclear if the site represents a summer or winter habitation area. Up this point, most of the concentrations of prehistoric artifacts have been located on the outside edges of the Holcombe sites. Therefore, it is recommended that the field school conduct excavations of the southern portion of Holcombe II surrounding units 1 and 2. The large concentration of prehistoric artifacts suggests there could be additional finds in the immediate area, such as structural remains.

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Lecture by Professor Moreland

Professor Moreland is currently the head of the Rhodes college archaeology department and an associated professor of religious studies at Rhodes College. In addition, he is currently the director of the Rhodes college field school. This lecture was offered on the first day of the 2010 Field School session during which Professor Moreland discussed how the policies of Ames plantation impacted archaeological investigations of the area.

Lecture by Andrew Mickelson

Andrew Mickelson is an assistant professor of archaeology in the department of earth sciences at the University of Memphis. Since 2008 he has been a part of the Rhodes College field school as a leading director of the excavation of the Ames Mississippian period mound complex. His lecture, also delivered during the 2010 session of the field school, covered the research he has gathered on the mounds during the past two years of excavation.

Lecture by Guy Weaver

Guy Weaver is a season archaeologist who owns and operates Weaver and Associates, a cultural resource management firm located in Memphis, TN. In the past three years he has worked as a director of the Rhodes College field school program, providing both lectures and direction to students on site. His lecture covered some of the fundamental phases of archaeological excavation that would be conducted during the 2010 field school session. In addition, he covered basic terminology that students might not be familiar with.

Lecture by Rob Lusteck

Rob Lusteck is an assistant professor of anthropology and sociology at Rhodes College. His specialty covers how humans in the past have relied on and exploited plant resources. His lecture, also delivered during the 2010 field school session, discussed how maize was adopted as a food source by different prehistoric Native American groups. During this time he discussed some of the characteristics of maize and how they influenced people's decision to rely on it for subsistence. He also explained that analysis of Phytoliths is crucial in understanding what plants were depended upon during specific time periods and areas.

Discussion with Guy Weaver

As an experienced archaeologist who has conducted numerous excavations of prehistoric sites in West Tennessee, his input is highly valued. He has detailed knowledge of prehistoric ceramic and lithic styles as well as an understanding of how new advancements in the field have changed views concerning artifact analysis.

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