

MIAMI-WEST INDIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
DADE COUNTY CHAPTER
of the
FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OLYMPIA HEIGHTS BRANCH P.O. BOX 53 MIAMI, FLORIDA 33165



SUPPLEMENTAL EXCAVATIONS AT ARCH CREEK

Second Week

4/16/72-4/22/72

by the

Miami-West India Archaeological Society

and the

Broward County Archaeological Society

Jack Erne, Field Director

Bert Mowers, Asst. Field Director

922-6487

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THE ARCH CREEK SITE

Columnella Pendant or Plummet

In Pit EW-6A, in Level 1 (0-6") Alice Cohen found a shell Columnella pendant or plummet, which was given the designation "AC6A1D". This is the first such pendant or plummet found at Arch Creek, and it merits some explanation, as to its nature, and its uses by the Tequestas.

A columella is the central spiral of solid material in marine snail shells. Several large species may furnish good raw material for pendants locally. The outer whorls are broken off, and the columella ground to the required shape, by rubbing on stone with wet sand as an abrasive. This is a very time-consuming job, and the Indians therefore treasured their ornaments accordingly.

The pendant Alice Cohen found is $2 \frac{3}{4}$ " long, and $\frac{7}{8}$ " in diameter. It is a long oval in profile, very symmetrical and well made, with a circular notch or ring at one end, for tying on a suspending cord. There is a trace of another such notch at the lower end.

The pendant, or plummet, is a common decorative item, reported from many prehistoric Indian sites. Dr. John Goggin reported many from South Florida sites, including Matecumbe and Goodland Point. Dr. Cushing, who excavated at Key Marco, wrote "Highly finished plummet-shaped pendants were secured in great numbers."

The French artist LeMoyne, who visited Florida in 1564, made drawings from live models wearing plummets. They seem to have been hung around the neck, and also tied to arm and knee bands.

Other decorative items found on this site are large numbers of shark vertebrae of all sizes up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter. Ear-plugs made from these vertebrae, which look like small drums, must have been commonplace.

The use of materials from the sea describes the lives of the Arch Creek village people. Their culture was sea-based, and developed over a period of thousands of years. The sea gave them sustenance, and also the materials with which to adorn themselves.

THE ARCH CREEK SITE

DA-23

Pit EW-5A

This is a test pit, 5' x 5', on the edge of the mowed area adjoining 135th Street. It is parallel to the property line. This pit was started on April 23, 1972, by Mark Greene and Marvin Levine, who completed Level 1 that day (0-6").

LEVEL 1 (0-6") This level yielded 237 potsherds in black midden, very rich in shells, bones, and artifacts. This was the best midden area excavated to date.

Ceramic artifacts included: Key Largo Incised (1 rim), Dade Incised (2 rims), Opa-Locka Incised (3 rims), Miami Incised (1 rim), Ft. Drum Ticked (1 rim), Ft. Drum Punctate (8 rims-same pot), Unclassified Incised (1 rim), Belle Glade Plain (1 rim plus 12 misc. body sherds), Goodland Plain (2 rims plus 18 misc. body sherds), St. Johns Plain (1 rim), and Glades Plain (12 rims plus 17 1/4 misc. body sherds).

This is a typical Glades II assemblage, with no later material, and only a hint of possible earlier occupancy (Ft. Drum may be partly Glades I.) Again there is a strong indication that the top 6" or so of the mound was shaved off in bulldozing-levelling operations many years ago, and probably pushed into low pockets nearby. Most sites in this area are heavily loaded with Glades Tooled, St. Johns Checkstamped, Surfside Incised, and a few other patterns common to the Glades III Period--none of which were found in this pit.

The Unclassified Incised rim found is an incomplete pattern with very unusual curved lines which may be stamped. Perhaps more of this pot will be found.

Non-ceramic artifacts found were: shark vertebrae, a very large number of these, from large to small, (45), shark teeth (2), bone points (4), worked bone pendant, engraved, drilled, broken (1), Strombus celts (2), Strombus scrapers (2), shell gouge (1), Columnella tools (2), Columnella tips (5), Busycon vessel (1), and a worked shell pendant, made of coon oyster, very thin and notched for suspension (1).

The many non-artifactual bones and shells found, along with the great number of artifacts and potsherds, make this the richest part of the site yet excavated.

LEVEL 2 (6"-12") Unlike previously dug pits (Units #1, #2, and #3) a full two 6" levels were dug without encountering bedrock.

The potsherd yield, 317, in this level was very high and is as follows: Key Largo Incised (18), Opa-Locka Incised (1), Ft. Drum Rim Ticked (7), Ft. Drum Punctate (4), Unclassified Incised (3), Goodland Plain (25), St. Johns Plain (7), and Glades Plain (252).

While many incised patterns characteristic of Glades II pottery were dug, the increasing amount of Ft. Drum patterns indicate greater age, and quite probably a Glades I component. Unfortunately, there is no good Glades I marker, and some archaeologists question whether there really is a Glades I Period as defined by Dr. Goggins.

The Ft. Drum patterns are the oldest pieces of pottery yet found on this site, during this excavation at least.

Non-ceramic artifacts unearthed were: shark vertebrae (77), shark tooth (1), bone bi-points (2), Strombus celts (3), Busycon tools (2), Columella tips (2), worked bone (2), and worked antler (1).

This site is loaded with shark vertebrae, for some as yet undetermined reason. No doubt the site's easy access to salt water explains the quantity of vertebrae found. Surely ear plugs must have been popular here. Most vertebrae are not perforated.

The worked antler was found by gluing two split fragments together, when it was discovered that a central hole had been drilled from the base up. Either it was a handle of some sort, or an atl-atl hook.

LEVEL 3 (12" to Barren) At one point, 13" below the surface, the rock ridges were found, and soon all the digging was confined to solution holes between the ridges. The deepest hole reached to 27" below the surface. Much pottery was found, including many large sherds and rims.

A total of 172 sherds were found, as follows: Key Largo Incised (1), Opa-Locka Incised (2), Ft. Drum Rim Ticked (2), Ft. Drum Punctated (6) from 2 different pots, Unclassified Incised (6), from 2 different pots, St. Johns Plain (1), Goodland Plain (13), and Glades Plain (141).

An unusual incised pattern like an inverted Opa-Locka was found, for the second time on this site. This pattern will be named shortly.

A total of 727 sherds were dug from this pit.

The lowest level produced sherds of greater antiquity, as was expected. The Ft. Drum patterns indicate Glades I age, more than likely. However, no really old wares were found, to indicate great age. In all probability this area was lived on beginning about 400 B.C., at the earliest.

COMMENTS

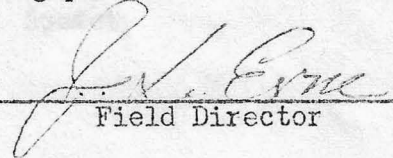
Due to excessive rainfall during the week of April 23rd to April 29th no excavation was accomplished. Members of the Miami-West India Archaeological Society did come out to the site, in hopes that the weather would clear. Unfortunately, it did not, so they were unable to dig.

The shell pendant or plummet, found by Alice Cohen, is written up for the period covering April 30th to May 7th. However, the full write-up for this excavation is not as yet complete but will be forthcoming shortly.


According to Dr. Ripley P. Bullen, Curator of the Florida State Museum, who was at Arch Creek on May 1st and commented on this site, it would be very advantageous to extend the excavation period beyond the 60-day period originally granted as there is such a large amount of material at this site. He also commented on the importance of Arch Creek in being a very large village site and of having a fair degree of depth to it, which is important for dating purposes.

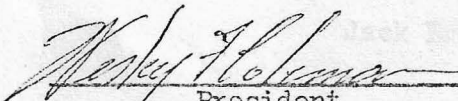
Mr. F. T. Huna, Museum Director of the South Florida Museum, located at 777 Sharazad Boulevard, in Opa-Locka, is now in the process of preparing the artifacts unearthed in the first week's excavation to be placed on display in the museum.

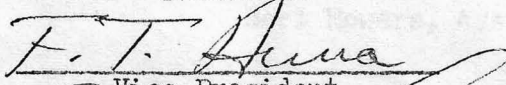
Each excavation continues to provide us with new evidence indicating the importance of preserving this site as a monument to a Florida of another era, where present and future generations of Americans can learn of Florida's fascinating past.

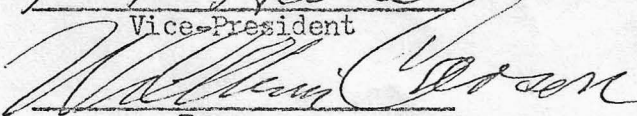

Field Director

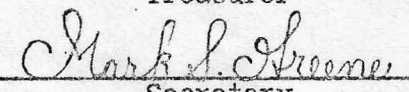
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