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THE MONTGOMERY FIELDS SITE ON THE LOWER FLINT RIVER

by Nancy Marie White (Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida)

ABSTRACT

Near the Flint-Chattahoochee-Apalachicola River forks, the Montgomery Fields site, 9Dr10, was dug in 1953 by Carl Miller for the River Basin Surveys program. Abundant check-stamped and plain sherds and freshwater-shell midden deposits were thought to represent mundane Late Woodland habitation. The site was never reported, but Smithsonian records and collections include materials diagnostic of five additional components: Archaic and possibly Paleo-Indian points, and Late Archaic, Early Woodland, Middle Woodland, and historic Creek ceramics. An expedient-tool lithic industry on diverse raw materials, some fancy ceramics, quartz crystals, and other artifacts suggest special activity and wide economic networks were typical of long-term everyday domestic life at this strategic location. The old records and legacy collections have enormous research potential.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological investigations were conducted from 1948 through 1953 along the lower Chattahoochee and lower Flint Rivers in Georgia and Florida (Figures 1, 2) before the construction of the Jim Woodruff Dam at the rivers' confluence (or "forks"), which then caused inundation of several significant sites (Bullen 1950, 1958; Caldwell 1978; Caldwell et al. 2014; Kelly 1950). A. R. Kelly of the University of Georgia (UGA) recommended testing at Montgomery Fields, 9Dr10. In 1953, Carl

Miller, of the Smithsonian River Basin Surveys (SRBS) program, excavated there for a few weeks. Miller was quickly sent to another reservoir salvage job in Tennessee, so no report was ever done. The next professional work in the area was my survey of the reservoir shoreline in 1979-80. By that time the site was drowned and gone, and the Jim Woodruff reservoir was (euphemistically) called Lake Seminole. I examined Kelly's survey materials and data in the Georgia collections then, and only briefly viewed the large collection and accompanying field notes and correspondence in the Smithsonian. I wrote that someone should study all these more intensively, because the site was more significant and better documented than most recorded in the region, and most in Georgia before the reservoir was filled (White 1981:50-51). Finally, I got to do this work myself in May 2017 during a 4-day visit to the Smithsonian Institution archives and collections.

Kelly and Miller recorded many freshwater shell midden sites all along Spring Creek, a tributary of the Flint. Still a bubbling-spring-fed recreational place today, Spring Creek was quite attractive in the prehistoric past, as was the main Flint River, also fed by myriad springs and thick with prehistoric sites along its banks. Much of the pre-reservoir work on the lowest part of the Chattahoochee and Flint is less well known because the archaeology on the *upper* part of the *lower* Chattahoochee, near Columbus, Georgia, has always gotten more attention. However, there are about

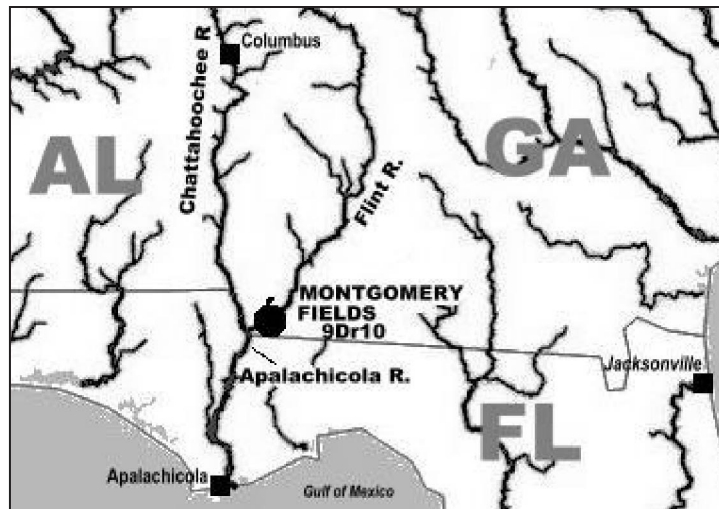


Figure 1. Location of Montgomery Fields site, 9Dr10, near the Georgia-Florida border.

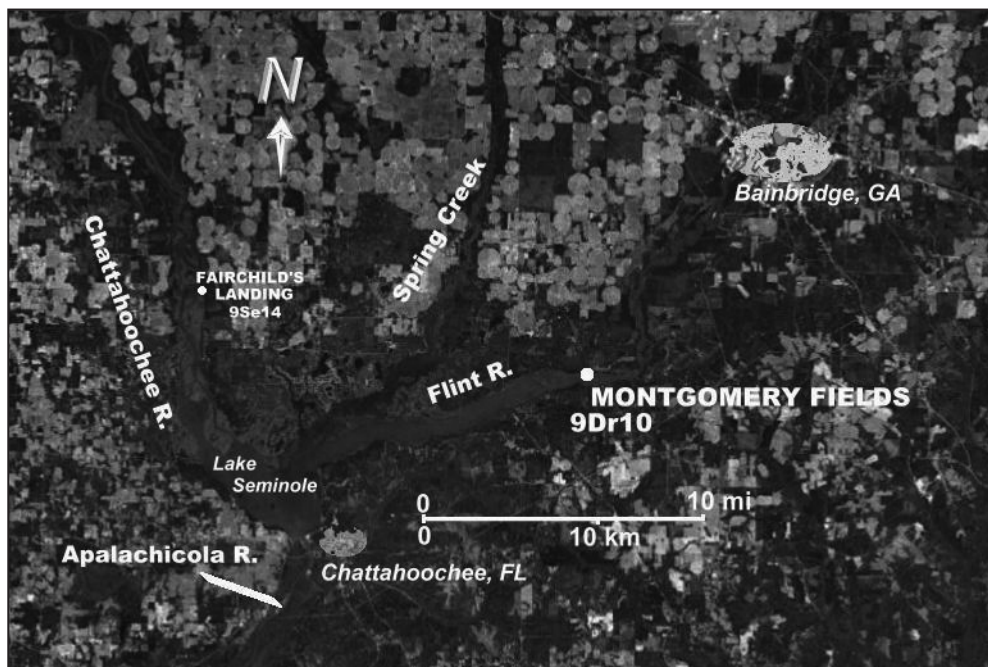


Figure 2. Montgomery Fields (9Dr10) and Fairchild's Landing (9Se14) site locations shown on 2017 Google-Earth image; note darker (clearer) water of Spring Creek even with flow backed up in the reservoir (Lake Seminole). Also note circular agricultural fields in Georgia, more rectangular fields in Florida (because of different irrigation methods).

157 river (or navigation) miles (253 km) of valley below Columbus before the Chattahoochee joins the Flint, and 15 miles (24 km) up from the forks on the Flint was the Montgomery Fields site.

Two cabinets of drawers full of check-stamped and plain pottery now in the Smithsonian's Museum Resource Center are what led

Miller, Kelly, and Joe Caldwell to deem Montgomery Fields less than exciting, a simple habitation site. Nonetheless they sent Miller (1953) to dig it. When he first got there on March 23, 1953, he found UGA had already done "considerable digging right in the center of two small shell heaps." The federal permit was issued on 16 April, and he

must have begun excavation by then because on 24 April he submitted a biweekly payroll to Washington and asked if one guy from the state employment service could be paid \$.90/hr instead of the usual .85 because he was like a supervisor. Miller's correspondence is fascinating. He noted how the white men on the crew teased the black men to make them afraid to dig and even quit. He was required to send back to Washington official forms and brief reports, but many letters included personal items such as opinions of other archaeologists' work. Miller complained that Kelly was vague about what he wanted, even vague about pointing out where sites were within a 4-5 mile stretch. His letters to Caldwell often had the greeting "Amigo José" (with the accent handwritten since it didn't exist on the typewriter); Caldwell answered with "Dear Carlos."

EXCAVATIONS AND SITE LAYOUT

The Montgomery Fields site, on the north (west) bank of the Flint, was 20 m wide and ran east-west 60 m, paralleling the river, about 60 m back from the water. It was described as an L-shaped field located in Lots 191 and 200, District 21, Southern Craft Company, with tenant

George Cochran. The site was about 1.5 mi (2.4 km) west from Southland Ferry and 15.3 mi (24.6 km) miles up the river from its junction with the Chattahoochee. Such geographical indicators have disappeared under the reservoir. Miller's site grid was in 10-foot (3 m) squares, 60 feet (18 m) N-S and 160 feet (49 m) E-W, with a datum near the southwest corner. He named units by a system giving numbers of feet north, the letter R (apparently for "right" [east] side), then the number of feet east of the datum; the few units to the south had negative numbers for the first coordinate. The gridded area encompassed two oval freshwater shell middens that Kelly and the UGA crew had tested with east-west trenches (Figure 3). Sherd counts were very important in those days, apparently as measurements of site significance. Miller's (1953) correspondence included a sketch of the site grid with sherd totals written in each square, though it is unknown if the numbers included both surface and excavated ceramics. Also unknown is whether the individual numbers indicate different ceramic types, or counts of what was picked up different days, or some other recording system. I cannot correlate the sherd numbers in the squares with the actual collections. He claimed to have gotten

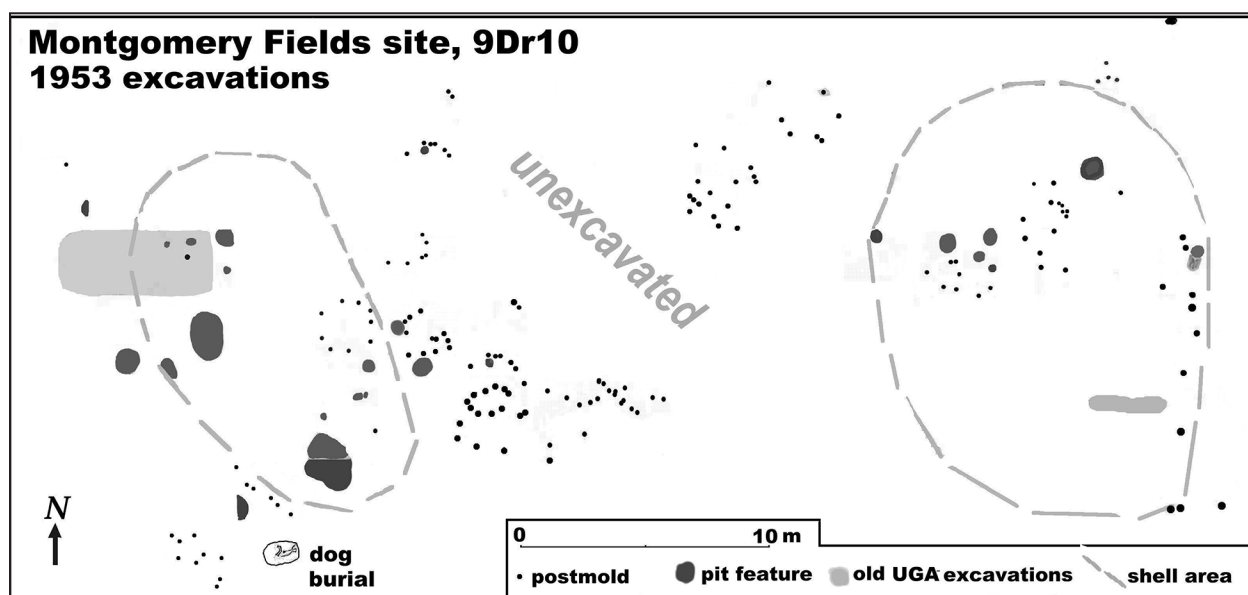


Figure 3. Montgomery Fields site map created from 10-x-10-foot unit floor plans in Carl Miller's field notebook. UGA tests prior to Miller's work were a larger and a smaller horizontal unit (light gray) at each of the two oval shell midden areas (shown by dashed lines). Diverse structure patterns can be inferred depending on how postmold outlines are interpreted.

at total of 10,027 sherds but I looked at over 2/3 of the collection, and inventoried fewer than 4000 sherds. Possibly due to time constraints, the excavations at Montgomery Fields were done in only 31 of the 94 gridded squares (but that's still 3100 square feet or 288 square meters!).

Unfortunately, no photographs of Montgomery Fields were in the archives, though Miller mentioned taking pictures. There is no site map of the excavations, but Miller sketched individual unit floor plans in his field notebook. Scanning and photocopying are not allowed in the Smithsonian Anthropological Archives, but photography is permitted. Thus, from photos of these pages I (laboriously) pasted together the site map in Figure 3, assuming the 10-x-10-foot (3-x-3-m) units all showed features at the base of the plow zone/top of the subsoil, and thus were roughly the same depth/elevation.

The sandy plow zone averaged 15 to 18 cm thick. Features appeared below it in the lighter-colored alluvial sand subsoil (which would have been around Munsell color 10YR8/4 to 7/6, pale brown to yellow, as is most of the natural riverbank sand in the region). Miller uncovered postmolds and larger features he called "midden pits," which were for storage, refuse, and/or fires. The underlying deeper clay subsoil was reached at depths up to 122 cm. Pit features were named A, B, and so on beginning again in each unit, so there are many proveniences labeled "Feature A" across the site, some without unit affiliation. The pits usually contained mixed shell, charcoal, bone, and artifacts. At the southeast and west sides of the site, Miller's excavation units encountered UGA's trenches that had been dug earlier through the two shell piles. Excavation was in 6-inch (15 cm) levels, and measurements were made in decimal feet (a truly awful system). There appears to have been no screening, and Miller did not backfill because he assumed that the reservoir's filling and water action would cover open units.

The site map shows Miller's 272 postmolds and 33 other (pit) features, occasionally with intruded straight lines showing unit boundaries (such as within the large feature on the southwest

side). There are so many potential postmold patterns, so many possible ways of connecting the dots, that several outlines of probable houses and other constructions are possible, probably from multiple occupation episodes. Rectangular, round, and oval structures can all be inferred. Interestingly, Miller thought that the small round structure in the west center, within the shell midden, 2.1 m in diameter, made up of 9 postmolds, might be a sweat lodge or menstrual hut, demonstrating that he was ahead of his time in suggesting possible female-associated buildings (Galloway 1997); a building of similar size and shape may be just to the southeast of it. A feature on the site's southwest edge he labeled a burial of a pregnant dog, apparently because its skeleton contained a fetal skeleton. Some features might have been for burying garbage, since they contained food waste, but others could easily have been latrines (a kind of feature curiously seldom mentioned in archaeological reports. In fact, since most of the pit features seem to have shell layered in or mixed into the fill, there is a better argument for latrines, since lime can be thrown into human waste to neutralize the smell).

Miller's notes explore his research questions about Montgomery Fields, the one big one being whether the site is "late or early?" (presumably Early Woodland/Deptford or Late Woodland/late Weeden Island, two time periods in the region mostly characterized by check-stamped pottery). He asked if the overwhelming amount of check-stamped sherds meant that these ceramics were made for a long time, or were recurring, and noted that this surface treatment was even found on specimens associated with the Chatahoochee Brushed sherds in the small eighteenth-century Creek Indian component. He had probably not gone through every bag of artifacts he had recovered. Nor did he have the benefit of another 60 years of archaeological work, including radiocarbon dates. Now we know that this incredibly strategic location near the confluence of the three major rivers was probably occupied for at least 13 millennia, and that later peoples commingled their habitation debris with that of earlier peoples. We also know that varieties of check-stamped pottery,

often overlapping in appearance, were made from Early Woodland times onward (Willey 1949; Williams and Thompson 1999). The artifact record from Montgomery Fields demonstrates prehistoric components ranging from Early Archaic or even Paleo-Indian through Late Woodland, as well as the brief historic Native American occupation.

MATERIALS RECOVERED

Chipped Stone

Miller's team recovered 28 projectile points/point fragments (Figure 4). Some from be-

neath the plow zone were labeled with measured depths. The Bolen Beveled or Big Sandy beneath the west-side shell pile was 91 cm deep. It may represent an Early Archaic occupation *in situ*, but also, later inhabitants may have picked up earlier materials to reuse and thus mixed up the cultural deposits. However, surface collection included potentially even earlier points such as a Greenbriar or (locally-named) Chipola point, an unthinned but reworked/sharpened-down possible Paleo base, and a dark gray spike of foreign chert and unknown age. As every archaeologist knows, prehis-

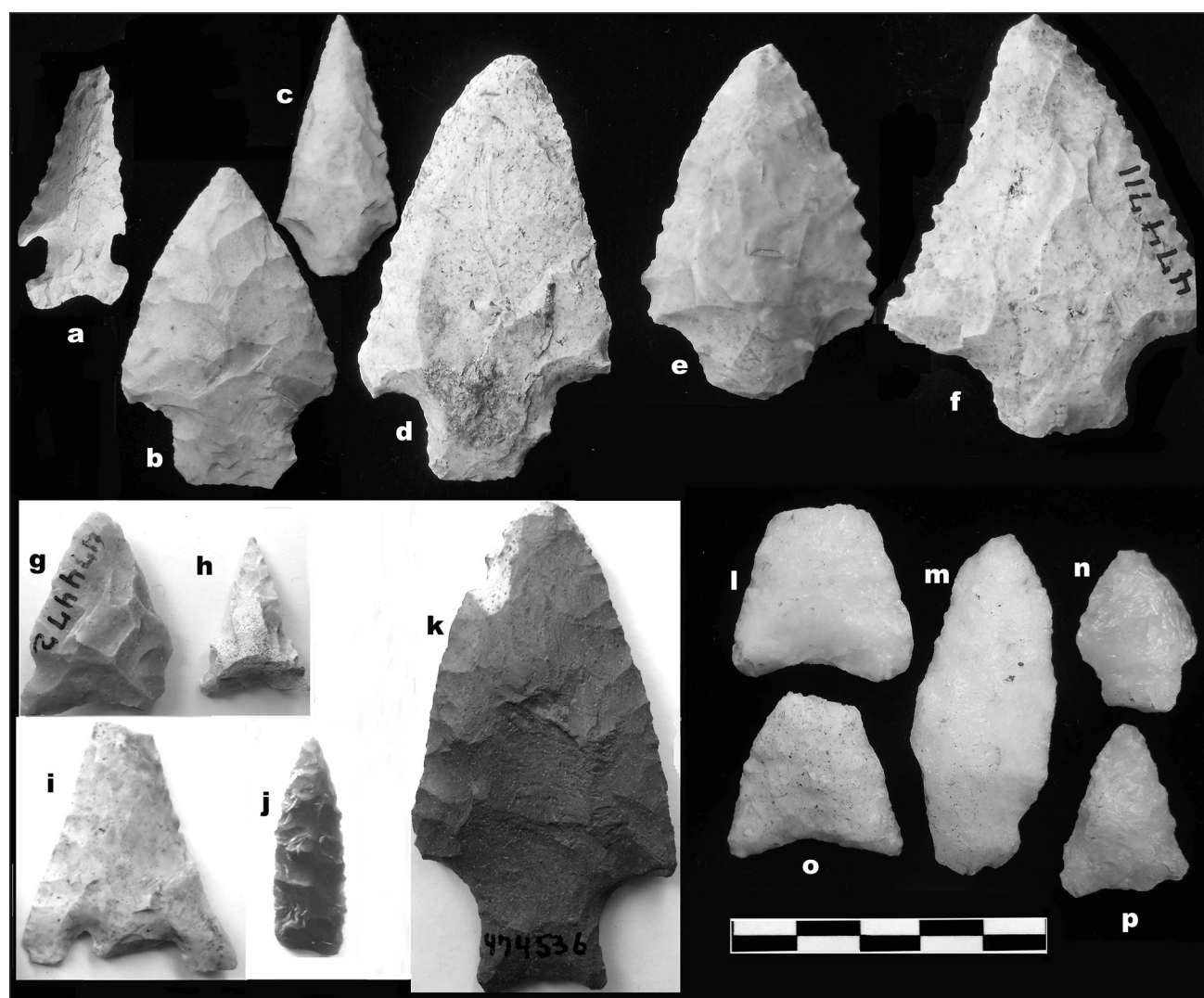


Figure 4. Sample projectile points: a, Bolen Beveled or Big Sandy; b, d, Marion or Florida Archaic Stemmed; c, e, Morrow Mountain; f, Abbey; g, Greenbriar or Chipola; h, unthinned sharpened-down Paleo-Indian? i, Hernando; j, Benjamin or Flint River Spike? of dark foreign chert; k, Florida Archaic Stemmed (Levy) or McIntire, with later chipping on upper left that removed dark patina; l, o, possible Paleo-Indian bases; m, Flint River Spike or Kiokee? n, Halifax or Otarre? p, Damron or Late Woodland triangular? (l-p are milky quartz; the rest are chert).

toric flintknappers did not read our point guides, so we can only classify their work as well as possible using the existing standards. This can be difficult for the region's location near the juncture of three states with slightly different typologies (Bullen 1975; Cambron and Hulse 1964; Whatley 2002), so my identifications (in the figure caption) are certainly up for debate.

But other points at Montgomery Fields do suggest more of an Archaic presence. The Middle or Late Archaic Abbey point (Figure 4f) was 40 cm deep. Some from the surface are closest to Morrow Mountain types, as well as the broad category of Florida Archaic Stemmed. The Hernando Point is typical of Early through Middle Woodland times, and one Archaic point is clearly chipped through the peanut butter-colored ancient patina for reuse by later prehistoric collectors. An interesting group of points is made of milky quartz, much more characteristic of piedmont Georgia or farther north than of the region around Montgomery Fields, which is rich in local chert and agatized coral. Two examples (Figure 4l, o) even display characteristics of Paleo-Indian morphology, adding to the possibilities of very early occupation. Why and when local people were importing quartz from hundreds of miles upriver is unknown, but demonstrates the range of group mobility and great extent of this watery interaction network.

Thus, there is reasonable support for recognizing an Early Archaic, even Paleo-Indian presence at the site, continuing throughout the Archaic. Miller did say in letter (May 2, 1953) to Frank H. Roberts, SRBS director, that he thought there was a "faint suggestion of an early preceramic" component lying beneath the whole deposit, especially on the west side of the site, because a few stone artifacts were recovered from directly above the red clay subsoil stratum. All this evidence demonstrates the longstanding importance of the critical forks area for any human groups. The site was shallow, plowed, deflated, but so many people probably lived there over such a long time, possibly up to 13,000 years, that it is no surprise to see some really ancient archaeological materials remaining, though they got jumbled around with later deposits.

Many other chipped-stone tools (Figure 5) were recovered at Montgomery Fields. Several are unifacial and appear multipurpose, with wide notches (for shaft straightening?) and chisel bits as well as scraping edges. An interesting ordinary flake of local chert has 8 little notches or ticks carved into it (Figure 5c). Whether keeping track of something, doodling, making a special object, or doing something else, the person making those grooves had to work hard to cut into this chert. A large number of tools appear to have been knocked out quickly without regard to any refined shape. The most prominent of these expedient tool types is the core/chopper/scrapper made on an agatized coral head, with steeply retouched sharp edges (Figure 5e, f). These range from small to large and heavy, depending on the original size of the coral piece, and always retain a large amount of cortex showing the exterior of the silicified coral.

Among the large amount of lithic debitage and tools, at least five source materials can be recognized: local chert that weathers whitish but starts out translucent and honey-colored; agatized coral also obtained locally in creek bottoms; Tallahatta quartzite (also called Tallahatta sandstone), which outcrops in south Alabama on the Chattahoochee; milky quartz from piedmont or farther north in Georgia; and foreign materials such as the dark gray chert that looks like Dover (from north Alabama). An estimated 20% of the flakes have a reddish color suggesting thermal alteration. Lithic production included a lot of bashing off a couple flakes from a chunk of raw material just to expose some good stone, then sharpening that and leaving the whole chunky tool mostly covered in cortex, no matter what the raw material. The resulting thick, expedient tools were probably for scraping and pounding, with some having the thin tips possibly for chiseling and chopping. The remaining cortex may have been for backing, to permit holding the sharp tool in a bare hand. Even the smaller expedient tools are always thick, made mostly on primary or secondary decortication flakes. Use-wear study was not done but offers potential for further research.

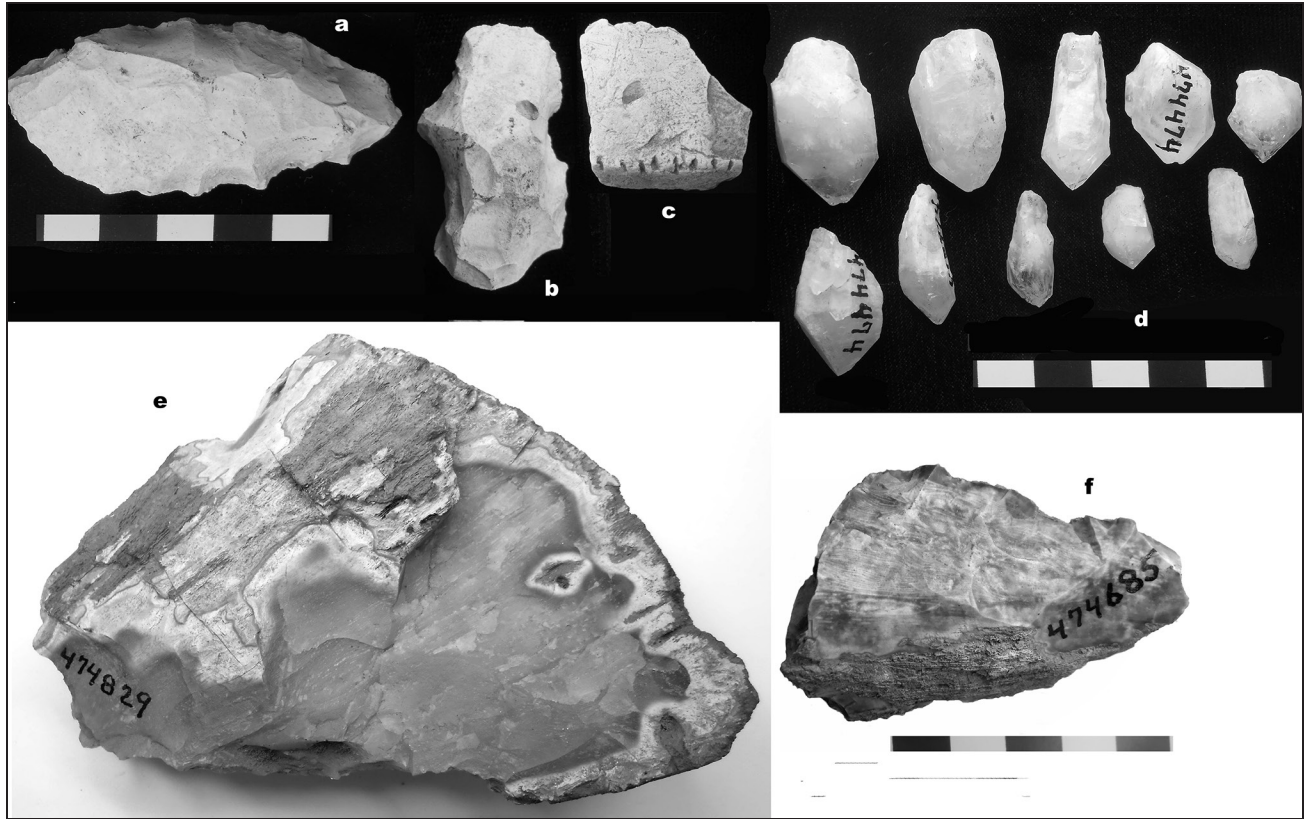


Figure 5. Other stone artifacts: a, chert biface; b, chert uniface with notches and scraper edges; c, chert flake with 8 tiny carved notches; d, 10 natural quartz crystals; e-f, large and small agatized coral heads with bifacially-chipped sharp working edge (sharp edge in e, at bottom and f, at top of photo).

Ground Stone and Other Stone

The Montgomery Fields site produced many quartzite cobbles with use wear, often with indications of bashing or hammering on one end and grinding on another, as well as smaller quartzite pebbles. Several large red sandstones hones had multiple worn grooves, probably from sharpening bone and/or wood tools. Grainy chunks of hematitic sandstone or red ochre may have been used for pigments. Gnarly, grainy natural sandstone concretions are abundant, in various ovoid shapes but also long thin pieces. They range from hematitic, black, and hard, to crumbly, to soft fine-grained red or yellow ochre.

Features including such hematitic stones may be part of Middle to Late Archaic ceremonial practice, as seen just over 21 miles downriver on the Apalachicola at the McKinney site, 8Ja1869 (Prendergast 2015). This multicomponent occupation, on high ground along a spring run on the first river terrace, had at least 22 very small features

that looked like hand-scooped pits extending into the hard clay subsoil, each containing similar materials: chert flakes and/or a broken chert tool, charcoal, shiny black hematitic stones, quartzite shatter fragments, smooth river pebbles (some battered), and ochre or soft reddish or yellowish sandstone/clay concretions. Charcoal from one of these features was dated 3630-3375 cal. B.C., at about the Middle/Late Archaic boundary (and the earliest chronometric age obtained so far from controlled excavation in the region). The mundane contents of these little features might have denoted individual rituals or rites of passage in which the pebbles sustained the use wear, skin was colored with the red or yellow pigment, the sharp flake or point cut something, and the charcoal resulted from burning/destroying something (or also was used for pigment). Perhaps it was an observance for a birth or coming of age, an event commemoration or a seasonal offering of used/worn-out items (Prender-

gast 2015). So far no such features have been found elsewhere beyond the McKinney site, but they are so small and nondescript that they could be missed during shovel-testing or other sampling.

While Miller described no such unusual small features at Montgomery Fields, he did pick up some other potential ritual evidence: 10 natural clear-to-white quartz crystals (Figure 5d). Though they were apparently not modified, they came from a long distance away and were undoubtedly special. Today local collectors dig into shallow ground in central and north Georgia to obtain such natural crystals, which are the official gemstone and symbol of the state.

Ceramics

Montgomery Fields was initially characterized as a Late Woodland (late Weeden Island) site with mostly check-stamped and plain pottery, and thus not very interesting. However, closer examina-

tion of the thousands of sherds provides a wealth of additional information. All ceramic pastes were micaceous, typical of the region. Tempers were sand, grit, and/or grog, and most sherds have all three. The grog is red or whitish crushed clay particles, and the grit is clear, white, or rarely red, crushed quartzite particles. Sherds often have fresh gouges on the surface probably caused by a plow, trowel, or bulldozer. A sample of the range of types is shown in Figure 6.

A couple dozen fiber-tempered sherds characterize a ceramic Late Archaic component. Some were from deeper levels, and some were mixed with later deposits. This pottery, made of clay mixed with Spanish moss fibers, has been dated as old as 4000 years or more in the region (White 2003), as early as anywhere else in the South. Much of the lithic assemblage may be associated with this Late Archaic occupation as well, but point types diagnostic of this time are not well known.

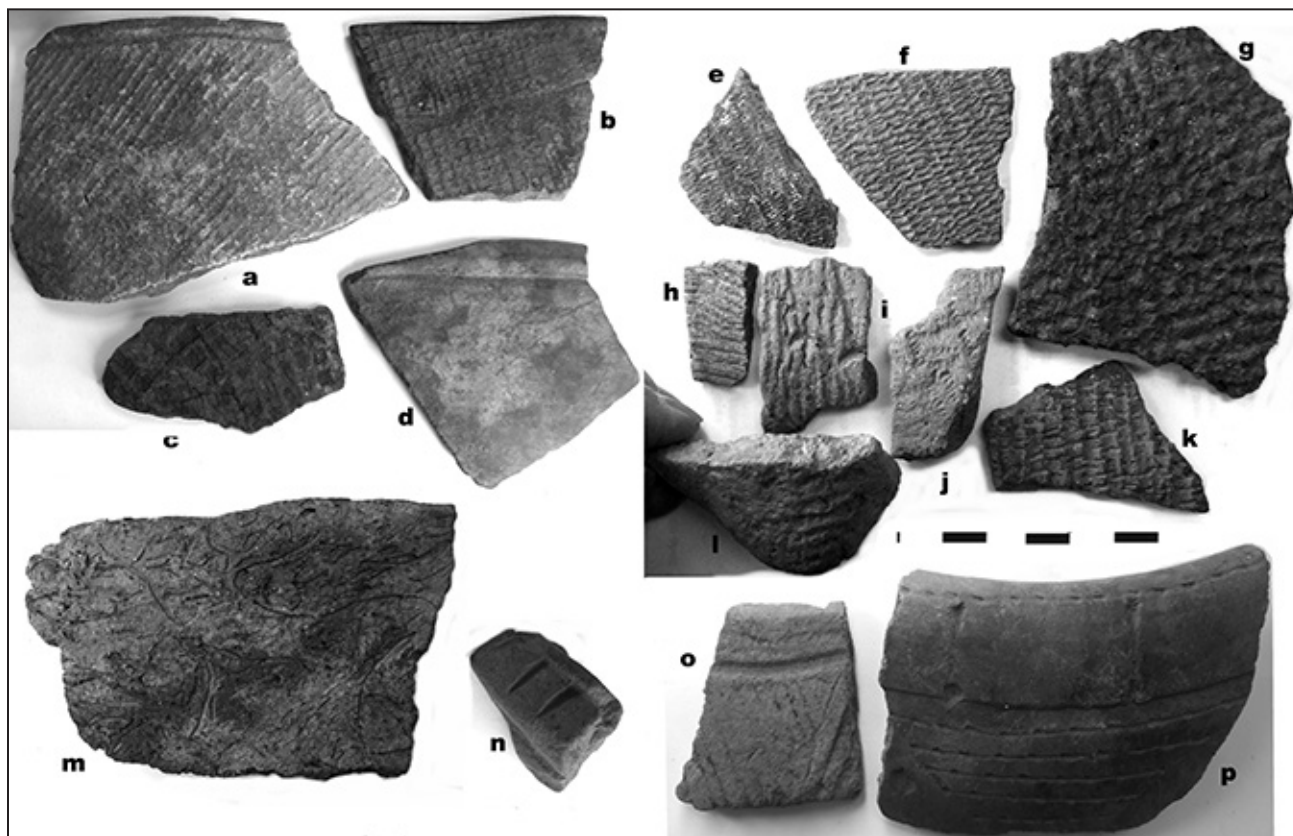


Figure 6. Prehistoric ceramics: a-c, check-stamped; d, plain (sand-tempered); e-g, k, fabric-marked; h-j, cord-marked, with variable amounts and types of impressions of twisted cords; l, Deptford Check-Stamped tetrapod; m, plain fiber-tempered; n, early Weeden Island rim, horizontally expanded and with triangular punctations; o, Carrabelle Incised rim; p, Weeden Island Punctate rim.

Some of the check-stamped sherds must come right after the Late Archaic in temporal association, from an Early Woodland component (about 500 B. C. to A. D. 350). There is a wide range of difference in check sizes, rim treatments, and other vessel attributes. Archaeologists in Miller's day assumed most check-stamped pottery was associated with a late Weeden Island/Late Woodland or in Willey's (1949) terms, Weeden Island II time period (now well dated at A. D. 700-1000). However, a small amount of the Montgomery Fields check-stamped is clearly Deptford (Early Woodland), including some with linear checks (not pictured) and the basal sherd with a podal support (Figure 6i). One of the biggest problems with the typical check-stamped sherd is distinguishing Deptford from Late Woodland Wakulla types – and all the other check-stamped types in between and afterward, without such diagnostic pieces, since the type definitions overlap so much. At Montgomery Fields, check-stamped sherds and vessels were often the largest, and vessel walls ranged from thin to thick (about 4 mm to 12 mm). Check widths ranged from barely over 1 mm to at least 6 mm, but sometimes the impressions are faint, smoothed-over, or eroded. Some sherds have encrusted black material on the exterior that could be AMS-radiocarbon-dated.

The temporal associations during Woodland times of cordmarked and fabric-marked ceramics are uncertain, but they probably appear first during Early Woodland. The fabric-marked sherds show coarse to finely-woven textiles. The cord markings may be in many roughly parallel rows or single, loosely scattered impressions of twisted cords at different angles. A single Swift Creek Complicated-Stamped sherd from an ambiguous

provenience (not pictured), and a very few early Weeden Island sherds from the plow zone suggest only the most fleeting Middle Woodland (A. D. 350-650) presence. The rim with a horizontally-expanded lip and large triangular punctations is unmistakably Weeden Island Plain, and the Weeden Island Punctate rim has typical large round and small trailed punctations. A polished tiny plain bowl (not pictured) is of less certain cultural affiliation, but could also be Weeden Island Plain; perhaps it is a toy or a paint pot. Other Middle to Late Woodland types include Carrabelle Punctate and Carrabelle Incised. Interestingly, there is no pottery identifiable as Fort Walton, the local Mississippian cultural manifestation, though there are plenty of Fort Walton sites elsewhere around the forks.

Prehistoric (?) clay pipes of unknown cultural affiliation are represented by five pieces (Figure 7). The small burnished-black elbow pipe is similar in execution to the tiny possible Weeden Island Plain bowl, but the additional stem fragments do not fit it. The long nearly-flat clay pipe is in two fragments, one from the plow zone and another from Level 2 (at least 15 cm deeper) in a unit 20 feet away (units are labeled right on the pieces). This specimen is still not complete and is unusual, with notches along the two edges and a red-painted surface. It seems to have no residue or suggestion of a bowl, and may not have been for smoking but some other function (sucking out evil spirits?).

The protohistoric and/or historic Native American presence at Montgomery Fields is represented by typical Creek/proto-Creek pottery: Chattahoochee Brushed (Bullen 1950), rough Leon Check-Stamped, and Lamar-type folded, notched rims with appliqué strips (Figure 8). The



Figure 7. Clay pipes: left, bowl and stem fragments from three different pipes; right, two fragments of long flattened tube, notched, of very red clay with some red paint (paint evident on darker areas at each end of photo).

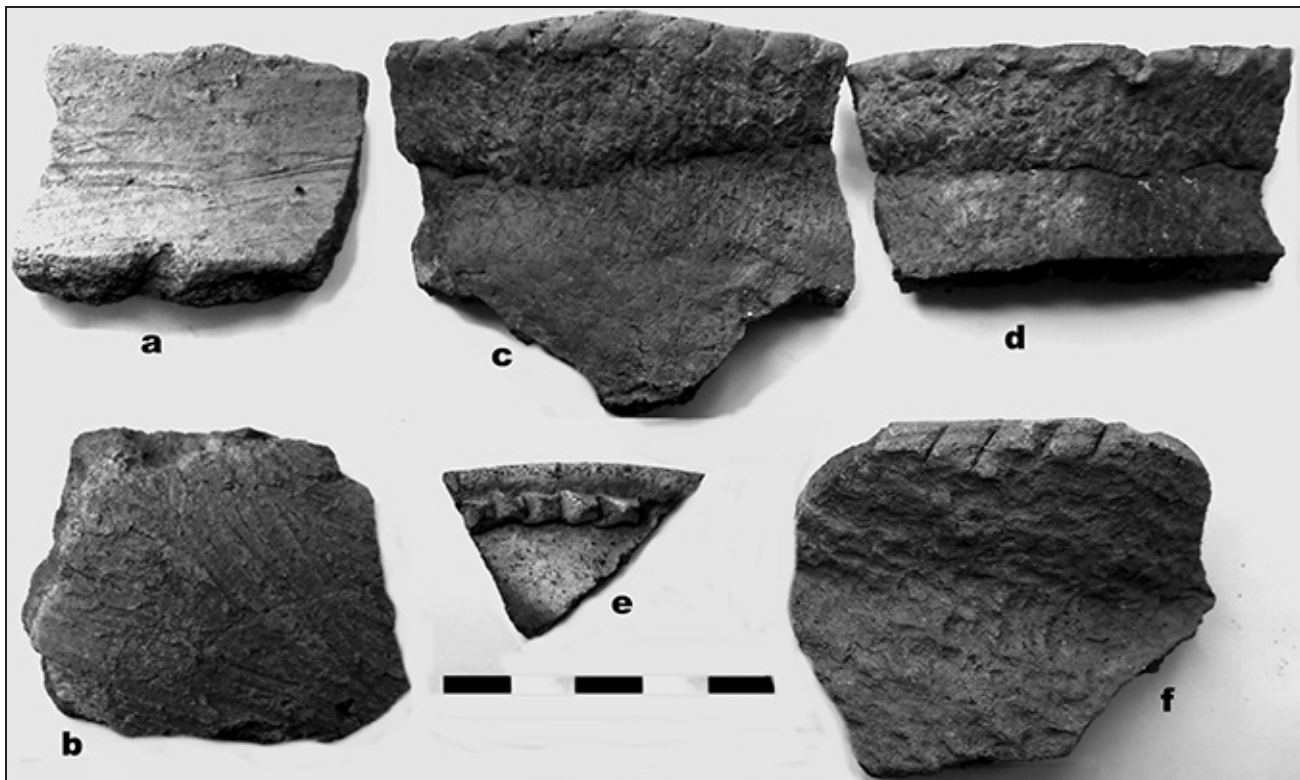


Figure 8. Creek Indian or other historic Native American sherds: a-b, Chattahoochee Brushed; c-d, f, Leon Check-Stamped; e, Lamar Plain or Creek-type rim with appliqué strip.

unusual nature of these types within the entire ceramic chronology of the region demonstrates that new people must have been moving downriver from farther north in Georgia and Alabama (where such ceramics are earlier) after the original Fort Walton populations died out by about 1700 (White et al. 2012). These new native groups came into the empty lands that had once hosted large, dense populations until they were decimated by Spanish and British colonial conflicts. With the historic aboriginal pottery are typical European items such as British crockery sherds and a green glass (liquor) bottle fragment. As with any ceramic assemblages, those from Montgomery Fields site show good potential for yielding information on temporal components and other aspects of past human activity with additional studies such as trace element and clay mineral analyses.

Faunal Materials

Unfortunately, Miller's (1953) field notes say that he did not keep much of the animal bone or shell from Montgomery Fields. However, some

deer, small mammal, turtle, and fish bones and teeth are in the collections, and good examples of the freshwater mussels and snails that must have had nearby beds in the river, constituting the probable reason for settlement there. Study of freshwater shellfish in archaeological contexts in this valley system have identified at least one new species not known historically, the Unionid mussel named *Apalachicola ebonyshell*, *Fusconaia* (now *Reginaia*) *apalachicola*. This river bivalve became extinct with the inception of Euro-American widespread clearing of farm fields and consequent erosional runoff (Williams and Fradkin 1999; Williams et al. 2014). Proper zooarchaeological research on the Montgomery Fields collections might identify this species and provide additional insights into prehistoric subsistence, environments, seasonality, and ecosystem shifts through time. For now it is clear that the rich terrestrial and aquatic environments around the site were well exploited by successive peoples.

Miller said (p. 132, field notebook) "With all the shell present there is not even the slight-

est indication that the material was utilized in any form. One would think that the larger mussel shells may have served as spoons and such. If so, they were only used during the single meal and then discarded and another used at the next meal. No beads or any ornaments, fragmentary or otherwise, were seen or found. No bone tools either." Indeed, riverine-shell artifacts are still not known in the region. A reason for this was probably that more durable marine shell was easy to obtain from the coast, 120 miles downriver, to make better implements, such as the scraper or spatula of *Busyon sinistrum* or lightning whelk shell that Miller did recover. Among other items in the Montgomery Fields site collections are lots of pieces of charcoal including charred wood fragments with unburned edges. They might represent prehistoric human activity, and could be radiocarbon-dated and studied to determine species.

SITE SUMMARY AND FIELD ISSUES

Much can be reconstructed from Miller's documentation of his work at Montgomery Fields. Though I did not have time to complete classification of all the materials from the site, I did go through all boxes with items other than ceramics, all ceramics that were not check-stamped or plain, and about 2/3 of the remaining large trays of the check-stamped and plain sherds. This work permitted the addition of at least four components to the site's characterization. The Early Archaic and possibly even Paleo-Indian points, later Archaic points and Late Archaic fiber-tempered pottery add at least 8000-9000 years of time depth. The Early Woodland ceramics are real but few – and there are no Deptford Simple-Stamped, which are typical in the region. The Middle Woodland sherds are extremely few but present. Historic indigenous peoples were present, but there were no late prehistoric Fort Walton agriculturalists, despite the presence of fertile alluvial terraces on the riverbank, as well as a major temple mound center a mere 15 miles (24 km) downriver at Chattahoochee Landing (White 2011).

Most of all at Montgomery Fields the abundant Late Woodland evidence is useful for under-

standing adaptation in the region right before the emergence of Mississippian food production at around A. D. 1000. Over the long millennia, people wanted to live near the forks of the big rivers and the abundant springs. Miller was correct in his characterization of the major occupation at Montgomery Fields as Late Woodland. He said that the work would add to knowledge of late Weeden Island and possibly also the Creeks, and it has. In another letter (dated May 30, 1953), commenting on all the survey and testing, he says "it looks as though we will have to further subdivide the Weeden Island culture. From the added traits we have gained a fuller insight into the economy of the Weeden Islander." This is indeed true as we now recognize Middle vs. Late Woodland encompassed in Willey's (1949) original definition of the Weeden Island ceramic series.

In the ceramic assemblage, plain sherds constitute between 45% and 50% (whether by numbers or total weight), and the check-stamped comprise about the same percentage, leaving less than 5% of all the sherds as something else, indicative of several different components. I believe that all through time, both plain and check-stamped vessels were for everyday utilitarian purposes, but probably each had different functions. The raised checkerboard-patterned exteriors served to provide more surface area, possibly for heating and/or cooling. Many check-stamped vessels have grass marks on the exterior, as if they were set down on the ground before they were completely dry during manufacture. They seem to be more friable than the plain sherds, though the similar sizes for sherds of both kinds suggest similar amounts of use and breakage. Few examples of what would have been fancy vessels are present, but then this is true for Late Woodland everywhere in the region. Perhaps the black burnished wares, such as the pipe and small bowl, served more special purposes. The stone artifacts nearly all look expedient and mundane. But the site also produced artifacts revealing activity beyond humdrum daily life. The pipes, especially the red one, the few fancy sherds and, notably, the small quartz crystals were extraordinary items, probably both socially and ideologically sig-

nificant. They could have been used in some sacred ritual or just as charms, say, for good fishing, or perhaps only decorative, if expensive objects.

Miller noted (in a letter of May 18) that Kelly was now admitting he was never favorably impressed with Montgomery Fields but it had to be excavated because it was second-best in the reservoir, though it was “mainly a check-stamped” site. The Fairchild’s Landing site, 9Se14, not far away on the lower Chattahoochee (see Figure 2), which Caldwell (1978; Caldwell et al. 2014) was digging at the same time, was considered more important and became more famous because of its Middle Woodland component, especially its Swift Creek Complicated-Stamped pottery. However it, too, was a basic shell-midden habitation site, and it also had a later, Late Woodland component similar to that at Montgomery Fields. Most of the sites along the Flint and lower Chattahoochee were apparently plowed up; the abundance of materials in the plow zone was what probably attracted archaeologists in the first place. But Miller said he got real stratigraphy, if shallow, at Montgomery Fields, which was rare in Georgia at that time.

He saw that at Montgomery Fields and also at Fairchild’s Landing, the ceramic stratigraphy did not agree with what Sears (e.g., 1951a, b) was getting at the Kolomoki mounds (9Er1), 67 miles (108 km) upriver on the lower Chattahoochee. One of Miller’s letters to the Smithsonian says that Caldwell was “tickled to death” at the possibility of “throwing a monkey wrench” into Sears’s chronology. Sears (1956) misinterpreted the time of the height of burial mound construction associated with Middle Woodland ceramics, which are both Swift Creek Complicated-Stamped and early Weeden Island types in this region, considering it to be happening in later Mississippian times, thus reversing the chronology. He also promulgated the notion of a “sacred-secular” dichotomy in the lives of Woodland peoples, the idea that material culture was different at mounds than at camps or villages because these were two different parts of life (Sears 1973). Such interpretations have been soundly contradicted by data from sites throughout the region, where plain, even ugly pots are

common as elite burial goods, and fancy artifacts are often found at everyday domestic sites (e.g., White 2014). What seems to count more is what might have been done with the artifacts that became grave goods, during people’s lives or during funerary rituals, not necessarily how special their manufacture or styles were.

By the Late Woodland, at Montgomery Fields and elsewhere in the region, people had apparently stopped building burial mounds with elaborate graves, though certainly ritual or other ideologically-driven behavior remained significant. Probably springs were revered as favorable places to live near; cold fresh water gushing out of the ground on a hot day can be pretty sacred, and we know that springs were very important in the belief systems of historic indigenous peoples of the Southeast (Hudson 1976). But the site has much to say in terms of how everyday life was lived – fishing, shellfishing, gathering, hunting – and how materials were obtained from afar by those repeatedly residing at this strategic location. Another hypothesis is that Late Woodland peoples such as those at this site were also becoming busy with gardens featuring maize, a crop being introduced to the region around A.D. 800-900 (e.g., Milanich 1974).

Miller wrote, about halfway through his Dr10 field notebook (p. 56) that “Cotter and Caldwell visited the site today and both reacted similarly in that they thought that there was not much to the site. I thought so from the immediate start but thought it politic to keep my mouth shut and to dig it since it was recommended by the U. of Georgia upon Kelly’s word.” He did not realize why the reservoir-area archaeology was so crucial, and thought there was enough outside the actual pool area (within which salvage was taking place) which was not destined to be damaged and was far more significant, so the expenditure was not justified to extract “meager bits of information from the small insignificant sites therein.” At that time he could not understand that, not only were these sites significant, but also damage outside the immediate pool – indirect adverse effects – would later be extensive, with construction of parks, residential areas, and so on. Nor could he know that

archaeological investigations in the region after reservoir survey and salvage would be few, since such government programs as he participated in are gone. But, given the attraction of the spectacular, mounds with exotic Middle Woodland artifacts being unearthed in the first half of the twentieth century, his views are understandable. There was much less interest in the supposedly unexciting daily life of the common people of the past.

Today we are more interested in the commonplace. The Montgomery Fields site big picture is one of continual, probably regular reoccupation of a favored fishing/shellfishing spot and riverbank village through centuries, even millennia. Miller surveyed extensively in the region and recorded several other sites. For example, he found another shell area a mere 500 feet (150 m) west of Montgomery Fields, apparently labeled Dr10B on his sketch map, calling it thin and not worthwhile. Between it and the main site was a sandy hammock 170 feet (52 m) in diameter that produced no artifacts, though he spent considerable time digging there. Another site, 2000 feet (610 m) to the west-southwest of Montgomery Fields, numbered either Dr19 or Dr31 or both (White 1981:38-55), was possibly another Creek Indian occupation where Miller seems to have excavated additional evidence of a (Late Woodland?) structure pattern, a crude half-circle or half-oval of postmolds. This site was described as being on Southland plantation, but had extremely few notes and no map. He said the deposit was thin and churned up by logging and clearing for the reservoir. Neither of these two sites was well documented enough to say a lot about, but they illustrate the bountiful archaeological record of the forks area.

Many other tasks occupied the archaeologists. On a rainy day (10 May letter) Miller "brought in the boys to clean up sherds." The following week (May 25), he appeared before the Chattahoochee Rotary Club. He spent a lot of time filling out government forms, especially for payrolls and vehicles (getting three estimates for repairs and inspection – some things never change!). Miller apparently intensively excavated at Montgomery Fields for only a couple weeks, with the rest of his time spent on

survey and testing the additional sites that are far less well recorded. He received a total of \$2500 for the work, which lasted approximately 1½ months. This sum covered his and the fieldworkers' pay, per diem, gas and repairs to vehicles, and equipment that included seven shovels and a 10-gallon water barrel with a brass faucet. On June 5, 1953, he shipped 31 cartons of sherds plus 2 bundles of shovels and the water keg back to Washington, D.C., and went on to the next project.

LEGACY OF THE WORK

Prehistoric structures have seldom been recorded archaeologically for any time period in this research region, so the Montgomery Fields work adds knowledge of this for the Late Woodland. As noted, the postmold patterns (see Figure 3) could be interpreted in almost any fashion by connecting various dots and leaving out others, and it is so far unknown if structures were dwellings, special-purpose buildings, or small shelters for people who spent a great part of their time, especially when cooking and food processing, outdoors. But their abundance suggests that most postmolds are from houses. Some occur under the shell midden piles, indicating continued buildup of midden garbage – they may have thrown shell and bone garbage right out the door. Others are away from the main shell areas but had features that could have been garbage pits. Various features could be inside the structure outlines but most seem to have been outside, with a few overlapping postmolds.

By comparison, the only other known Late Woodland house in the region is at the Sycamore site (8Gd13), on the west bank of the Apalachicola about 23 navigation miles (37 km) downriver from Montgomery Fields, excavated by Milanich (1974) twenty years after Miller's work. Sycamore had one house pattern, consisting of a few postmolds in a rough oval surrounding a hard-packed, dark gritty-sand floor that contained many artifacts, a hearth, another firepit, and a storage pit feature. At 8.9 m by 6.2 m, this oval structure was not too different in size from the potentially oval buildings at Montgomery Fields, and its earlier midden layers also contained Late Archaic fiber-tempered pottery, as at Montgomery Fields. Some 35 m to the

southwest of this structure was an area of freshwater shell midden refuse about 4.6 m in diameter, by contrast with the shell midden areas right at or near the structure patterns at Montgomery Fields. The Sycamore ceramic assemblage is comparable to that of Montgomery Fields, with just under half the sherds being check-stamped, another roughly 49% plain, and a few decorated wares. At least one check-stamped podal support attests to an Early Woodland component. Similar stone tools include Archaic and Woodland points, grinding stones, and hematite. A difference from Montgomery Fields is that at Sycamore, a few tiny charred maize kernels recovered from a pit feature were dated to cal. A.D. 900-1240 and a few maize-cob-marked sherds were in levels dated to cal. A.D. 680-1030 (Milanich's [1974] original dates recalibrated by Beta Analytic). The absence of maize or cob-marked sherds does not necessarily make Montgomery Fields an earlier site, though it might be by perhaps a century or so; the rest of its ceramic assemblage is similar to that at Sycamore.

While the records and procedures of the pre-reservoir archaeology might not compare well with today's standards, Miller's good solid work needs more professional attention. It is unfortunate that so much salvage archaeology had to be done at these sites that had already been heavily damaged by so many processes: later prehistoric and historic peoples living on top of earlier cultural deposits, traditional recent practices such as farming and timber harvesting, and clearing and bulldozing for dam and reservoir construction. But useful information can be derived from the work of those who came before us. Miller's floor plans and observations, even if not overly enthusiastic about past humble domestic life, are nonetheless major contributions, and the large artifact assemblages he recovered provide insights into many millennia of human life in the region and retain great potential for further investigation.

In the region of the lowest part of the Flint and Chattahoochee valleys and the whole Apalachicola valley, the problems of research right at the state boundaries and insufficient reporting as dams and reservoirs were being built left lasting biases. This incredibly rich region was an im-

portant nexus of human habitation, aggregation, and politics. But it has seldom been studied as a whole, and the documentation and materials are spread among collections across the eastern U.S. However, thanks to the wonderful institutions that preserve this archaeological heritage, it is there to study. The Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives and National Museum of Natural History Collections at the Museum Support Center are valuable resources (Rappaport 2017). A more comprehensive report on the Montgomery Fields site will be submitted to the Smithsonian, with a catalog of all artifacts I studied in 2017. Much more could be done on this site and others on the Georgia side of this reservoir. However, I hope this summary will prove of value to future investigators.

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