

RESEARCH

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The Thom's Creek site 38CH1693 was occupied when sea levels were 12 or more feet below today's high marsh surface.
- One of the most common plant foods at 38CH1693 was hickory nutshell.
- The new Thom's Creek pottery is finger impressed or smoothed.

CAROLINA PARK FUNDS THOM'S CREEK RESEARCH

Carolina Park Associates has funded research at 38CH1693 — briefly mentioned in our September newsletter.

Since then we have completed analysis of the pottery, received our consultants' reports on the faunal remains, pollen, and phytoliths, and examined the geomorphology of the site.

While the public often thinks of archaeology as painstakingly brushing away the dust of the ages, it often involves far less glamorous work, like measuring the thickness of sherds or examining charred plant remains under a microscope.

But the work has paid off at 38CH1693 — we have several radiocarbon dates that tell us the site was occupied about

1925 B.C. and again at 1825 B.C. The site appears to be a small encampment, very different from the huge shellrings used by the Thom's Creek people as large permanent villages along the coast.

Unlike the large shell rings where shell is overwhelming, 38CH1693 contains only shallow features filled with oysters, periwinkles, and stout tagelus — all gathered within a mile of the site.

The site also lacks the ornate worked bone pins and the carefully crafted shell tools, suggesting that different activities were taking place at this smaller, inland site. We did find, however, a new type of Thom's Creek pottery.



Chicora archaeologists excavating one of deep tests at the Thom's Creek site.

Like a good detective story, for each question answered at 38CH1693, several more immediately present themselves.

ARTIFACT CLOSE-UP: COPROLITE

This strange looking nugget is actually a coprolite — a fragment of calcified human feces. Deposited in shell rich soils, the organic matter has been replaced by calcium, resulting in its preservation.

Coprolites are recognized by their markings, shape, size, and

content. Relatively large quantities have been found at Thom's Creek shell ring sites (probably because there were so many Native Americans living at the sites), but the finds at 38CH1693 are the first from a smaller midden.

The remains are especially im-



portant since they can provide information on diet.

Portion of a coprolite from 38CH1693, a Thom's Creek site.

EXPLORING SANTEE TIDAL RICE RESOURCES

Chicora archaeologists recently completed the exploration of a portion of an island in the Santee delta associated with the nineteenth century processing of “Carolina Gold” rice.

One of the most intriguing resource was the remains of a brick hurricane shelter. Sometimes called “storm towers” these were built by rice planters to provide shelter for their slaves during

severe storms.

The towers were typically 20-30 feet in diameter and 20 feet in height. Their walls were several feet thick and the structures were designed to resist the fierce surge of hurricane storms.

How many were built is unknown, although in the early 1980s only five were known to still exist, primarily along the northern coast.

Unfortunately these pieces of South Carolina history are rapidly disappearing and there may be only one or two left.

The remains of a brick hurricane shelter on a Santee island.



PLANTATION GARDENS—THE UNSTUDIED RESOURCE

Gardens are all around us — in public spaces and most particularly in our own yards. Gardens were just as popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with many plantation owners creating large “pleasure grounds” around their country seats.

Unfortunately, they are rarely studied by archaeologists. Thus, we know about these

gardens primarily through maps and scattered historical accounts.

Recently, however, Chicora archaeologists examined the gardens associated with Tranquil Hill Plantation in Berkeley County. We have previously explored the gardens associated with Crowfield, also in Berkeley County.

We found evidence of the garden area, divided into

quadrants by ditches. There were garden structures and less substantial follies. We also found evidence of planting pits — some still evidencing rich, organic soil.

What we didn’t find, however, were many artifacts. And this may be why archaeologists have traditionally not sought out plantation gardens. Since no one lived in the gardens, the only remains are items lost there by workers.

The Tranquil Hill report, complete with details about its garden, will be available early in 2007.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PHOSPHATE MINING

Phosphate mining in South Carolina began after the Civil War and dominated the industry in the 1880s. Most miners were young African Americans.

Historical research reveals that the ex-slaves incorporated mining into a two-day system that included farming, hunting, fishing, and other

jobs.

Recently Chicora archaeologists have had the opportunity to expand our knowledge of phosphate mining by examining several phosphate mining settlements. The research is particularly important since it can help compare slavery and post-slavery lifeways, as well as examine

the condition of sharecroppers with conditions common in the mines.

This is the first opportunity to examine African American laborers in the phosphate industry — a critical component in South Carolina post-bellum economy.

One of the many house sites associated with a phosphate mining village.



MUSINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR

Saint Consulting is an organization that yearly explores attitudes and activism toward real estate development. The 2006 results have been released and here are some key findings.

- Twice as many Americans actively oppose development as support it.
- Fully 70% support using tax dollars to keep land

undeveloped, with over a third (38%) supporting it “strongly.”

- Three-quarters of the respondents believe that the relationship between elected officials and developers make the permitting process unfair.
- Tops on the most-hated list are landfills, quarries, power plants, Wal-

Mart, and Casinos. Only 6% of those surveyed oppose housing developments.

This serves to remind us that preservation, in spite of political ups and downs, is fundamentally supported by the American public. It should also remind us that **preservation can be good business**, as many of Chicora’s business partners clearly recognize.



ANOTHER VIEW OF RICE AND TEACHING HISTORY

What are middlings? How is upland rice cultivation different from tidal rice? What does rice look like in the field?

These are just some of the questions students are left with after the conventional teaching of rice cultivation in South Carolina. Sometimes the facts just aren’t enough — and when that is the case we

often lose the interest of students.

That’s why Chicora created its study package, *Benjamin Mazyck, The Mystery Man of Goose Creek*. This curriculum material not only explains upland rice cultivation, but it even includes packages of rough rice, hulled rice, rice hulls or chaff, hand pounded rice, hole rice, middling rice,

and short rice (also known as rice grits).

Students get not only the fact, but also the experience of actually seeing what planter and slave would have seen and eaten. The materials help bring history alive.

The materials can be ordered from chicora at http://www.chicora.org/curricula_materials.htm.

Good teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourths theater.

— Gail Godwin

KING TUT CONTINUES TO BE A BIG HIT

Since the discovery of his tomb in 1922, Tutankhamen has captured the imagination of students around the world.

Chicora has been presenting an Egyptian program in schools for several years now — and it is still one of the most requested in-class programs.

As with all Chicora programs, it is designed to make the past come alive for students who may never have the opportunity to visit Egypt or the King Tut exhibit. We bring the recipe used by ancient Egyptians to create mummies, as well as examples of Egyptian foods and papyrus. We explain ancient religions, food-

ways, and daily life — all in ways that students can understand.

Universally the reaction is one of excitement, stirring imagination and *encouraging students to explore history*.

For more information visit our website or call 803-787-6910 and ask for Debi.



Students learn how “mummies” were made and also how they are studied today in explore the cause of death, health, and disease.

We're on the web

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Chicora Foundation is public, non-profit research foundation with 23 years of experience. We operate under a broad heritage preservation umbrella, conducting archaeological and historical research, providing a broad range of public education programs, and offering technical preservation for museums, libraries, and archives.

Our web site, at www.chicora.org, provides a great deal of additional information about our work and includes lists of all available publications.

If you have additional questions, please contact us and we'll be happy to provide additional information.

PRESERVING THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE

WHAT CAN A TINY SHELL TELL US ABOUT THE PAST?

What can a tiny little snail shell tell us about when the Thom's Creek people were collecting and eating oysters? As it turns out, a whole lot.

We're talking about the impressed odostome or *Boonea impressa*, a small parasitic snail that feeds on oysters. It attaches to the edge of the shell and inserts its proboscis into the mantle cavity of the oyster. When the Thom's Creek people collected oysters they would occasionally also collect a few of these shells as well —



and the *Boonea* would get deposited in the shell mid-dens.

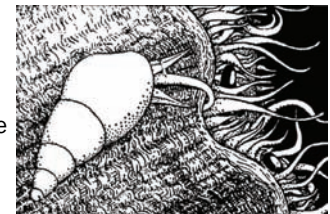
Researchers have been able to identify that certain size snails are typical of certain seasons. So it is possible to collect the shells, measure them, and then graph the results to determine the seasons of collection.

This is time consuming research since the shells may measure from about 1 to 6 mm in size (6 mm is about ¼ inch).

Boonea about 2 to 2½mm

were collected in the spring, those 3 to 3½mm were collected in the summer, those 4 to 4½mm were collected in the autumn, and the largest snails were collected in the winter.

One researcher looking at the snails from the Fig Island Shell Ring report they suggest the oysters looked at were collected in the autumn and winter. Our research from 38CH1693 (discussed on page 1 of this issue) were also collected in the autumn, although we don't see any indication of winter collection.



Drawing of a *Boonea* attached to a scallop and feeding on the mantle.