

# **HOGCRAWL CREEK: EARLY MISSISSIPPI PERIOD OCCUPATION IN THE MIDDLE FLINT RIVER FLOODPLAIN**

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During the summer of 1989, archaeological investigations were carried out at the Hogcrawl Creek Site (9Dy15) in Dooly County (Figure 1). The site, originally recorded in 1986, is situated on a natural levee within the modern floodplain of the Middle Flint River at the mouth of Hogcrawl Creek, and is under continual threat from fluvial erosion. The exposure of a flexed human burial beneath rich midden deposits early in 1989 underlined the urgency of archaeological work at the otherwise pristine archaeological deposits, and a team of 7th grade students from an exploratory class taught by Maxwell Duke at Fort Valley Middle School was assembled, with financial aid from the Peach County Historical Society.

In June of 1989, surface collection, mapping, and test excavation was accomplished at the site. Archaeological investigations have revealed



mapping, and photography, the skeletal remains were reburied *in situ*.

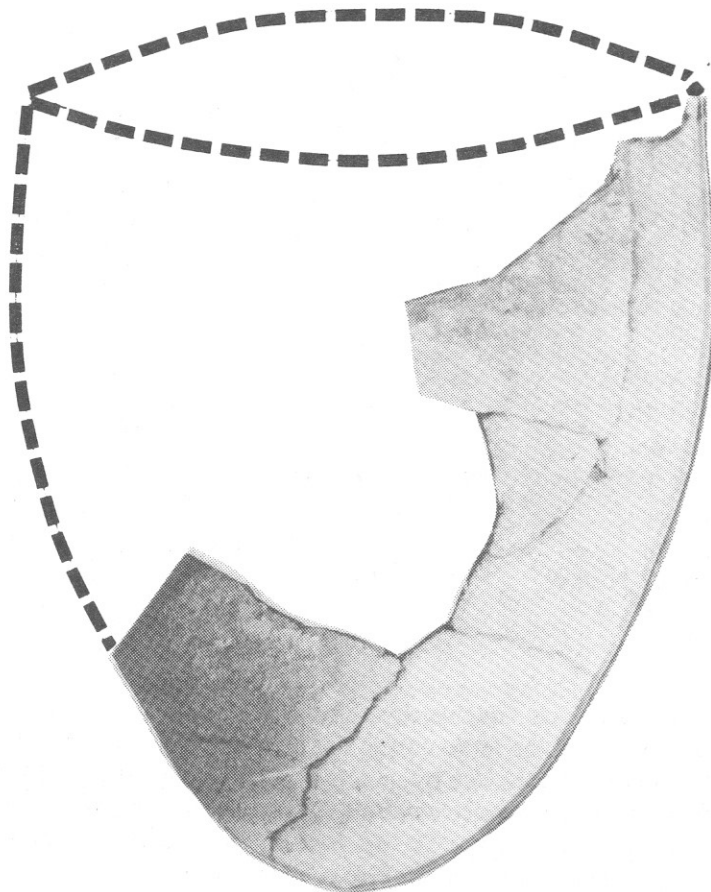


Figure 2. Reconstructed plain jar.

#### 1989 INVESTIGATIONS

The goals of archaeological work were twofold: first, to map the site and determine the extent and date of the archaeological remains, and second, to provide actual exposure to archaeological fieldwork for middle-school students. The Peach County Historical Society agreed to

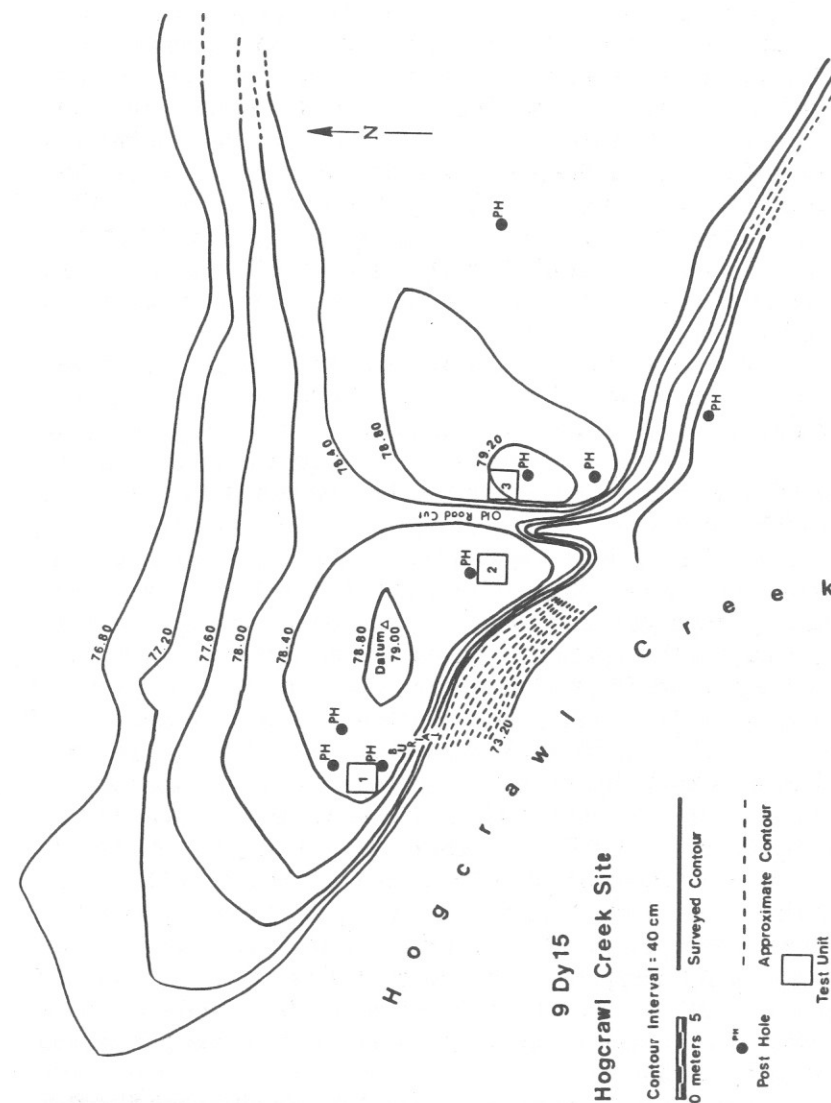


Figure 3. Topographic map of the Hogcrawl Creek Site.

fund the project, and also to serve as a focal point for further projects and educational adventures for the middle school in an effort to promote the concept of public archaeology and encourage an appreciation for the preservation of archaeological remains. As chairman of the archaeology committee of the Historical Society and a teacher of Early Georgia History at Fort Valley Middle School, Maxwell Duke was responsible for the logistics involved with organizing the field crew and securing equipment and transportation. The students who participated in the project were involved with an exploratory program in Southeastern Indians and advanced anthropology/archaeology, and had to meet certain requirements and complete specific courses offered as part of their curriculum. Fieldwork was accomplished under Duke's direction, and John Worth served as on-site technical advisor and field consultant. Laboratory analysis was carried out by Worth with the assistance of selected students.

The testing strategy employed at the Hogcrawl Creek Site encompassed three dimensions. Surface collection of the eroded creek bank and creek bed was carried out primarily by the students when the water was low and clear. Several attempts were made to sift the bed-load of the creek, with some degree of success, but this proved less satisfactory than surface collection. In addition, artifacts were collected from the eroding bank of the large ditch in the middle of the site. Artifacts recovered during this phase were primarily sherds, and the entire collection gives a good cross-section of the occupational history at the site (Table 1). Among the chert debitage recovered were several flake-tools, a large biface fragment, a small bifacial preform, and two corner-notched projectile point fragments, probably Woodland in date.

Mapping constituted a major dimension of the project, and involved the greatest use of labor. Initially, two concrete markers were placed along an east-west axis in order to establish a site grid with an arbitrary center of 500N500E. Three transit stations were then set up along this axis to serve as centers for radial mapping of the site. Radials were chosen and students cleared the dense floodplain vegetation to provide corridors for mapping. Finally, students were involved in all elements of the mapping process, from stadia work to sighting and recording, with instruction and supervision from trained adults. Elevations were calculated by students, and the map was plotted and drawn by the authors.

As a part of the mapping process, posthole tests were placed at various points across the site in order to examine cultural stratigraphy and artifact distribution. The combined ceramics from all fourteen posthole tests are presented in Table 1.

Test excavation was carried out under the direction of the

authors, using students for all stages of excavation, including digging, sifting, mapping, and recording. Ultimately, three 2 m by 2 m testpits were excavated in the area of densest artifact concentration. Units were excavated using arbitrary levels 5-10 cm in thickness, with artifacts screened through 1/4" mesh. All testpits were excavated to sterile soil.

### ABORIGINAL OCCUPATION

As noted above, the Hogcrawl Creek Site is located on a relict natural levee of the Flint River, at the mouth of Hogcrawl Creek. The levee rises about 3.5 m above the active floodplain, and Mr. Lester reports that this is one of the few locations within the swamp which is not inundated during seasonal floods. This feature, combined with the levee's location at the junction of a major creek and the Flint River in the rich swampbottom habitat, undoubtedly accounts for the rich occupational debris at the site. The site is located some twelve miles below the southern end of the wide sub-Fall Line floodplain intensively occupied during the later Mississippi period (Worth 1988:24-5), but the two-mile wide floodplain here is nonetheless a rich habitat.

As can be seen in Figure 3, Hogcrawl Creek has been eroding this natural levee, and the archaeological site on its summit, for some time. The highest point on the summit is at the steep bank overlooking the creek, suggesting that fully half of the original width of the levee has been destroyed. Nonetheless, occupational debris are distributed across a wide area on the remaining portion of the levee. Midden deposits extend for over 70 m along the length of the levee, reaching a thickness of up to 60 cm along the summit. Artifacts are naturally most dense in these areas. Testpits 1-3 were placed in the areas of heaviest artifact concentration in order to provide stratigraphic collections of sufficient size for useful analysis.

No architectural remains were encountered in test excavations, and no pit or other feature outlines were identified. Two clusters of artifacts, one composed of unassociated sherds and another of lithics, discussed below, were located in Testpit 1, but no pit outlines could be discerned. In general, the 1989 test excavations penetrated undifferentiated midden deposits. Testpit 3 produced by far the largest amount of debris, including some faunal remains. This fact, along with the recovery of several burned fragments of mud-dauber nests in the upper level of the midden, may attest to some form of aboriginal structure in the vicinity.

Artifact analysis revealed that the midden deposits at the site are largely homogeneous with regard to the complex of artifacts represented (Tables 2-4). There is stratigraphic evidence of earlier occupation at the



Table 2. Diagnostic Artifacts from Testpit 1

	Level									Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Incised	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
Simple Stamped	-	4	1	2	2	2	2	-	2	15
Plain	1	50	86	82	31	28	30	15	31	354
Cordmarked	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Total Identifiable Ceramics	1	54	89	84	33	30	32	15	35	374
Triangular Projectile Points	-	4	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	10
Other Bifaces	-	-	5	-	1	-	1	1	-	8

Table 3. Diagnostic Artifacts from Testpit 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Incised	-	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	5
Simple Stamped	1	17	8	5	6	1	1	-	38
Plain	14	118	83	50	58	9	19	1	351
Swift Creek Comp. Stamped	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Weeden Island folded rim	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total Identifiable Ceramics	15	136	93	57	66	10	20	1	397
Triangular Projectile Points	-	4	2	4	3	-	-	-	13
Other Bifaces	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	3

Table 4. Diagnostic Artifacts from Testpit 3

	Level							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Incised	-	2	9	2	-	2	-	15
Simple Stamped	3	22	41	16	7	1	1	91
Plain	42	108	311	157	78	1	1	732
Wakulla Check Stamped	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	3
Swift Creek Comp. St.	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Stallings Island Plain	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
Total Identifiable Ceramics	45	133	362	178	87	39	2	844
Triangular Projectile Points	2	9	5	4	-	3	-	22
Other Bifaces	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2

site, but in general, midden deposits appear to be the result of an intensive single-component occupation. Diagnostic artifacts associated with this occupation include plain, simple stamped, and incised pottery, along with small triangular chert projectile points. This artifactual complex shares characteristics of two nearby Early Mississippi period phases: the Averett phase on the Chattahoochee River drainage, originally defined by Chase (1959, 1963), and the Vining phase on the Oconee River drainage (Elliott and Wynn, this volume).

Although the plain and incised ceramics bear similarities to the type descriptions for Averett Plain and Averett Incised, there are disparities, particularly as regards vessel forms and style of incision. In addition, simple stamped sherds associated with contemporaneous ceramic complexes in eastern Georgia and central South Carolina occasionally display incised decoration over the stamping (Elliott and Wynn, this volume; Stuart 1975; Anderson, Cantley, and Novick 1982:307), suggesting a somewhat wider regional distribution for incised decoration during the Early Mississippian period. As a consequence, it seems premature to incorporate the plain and incised Hogcrawl ceramics into the Averett typology. As represented at the Hogcrawl Creek Site, both types are characterized by moderate amounts of sand temper. Plain

ware is generally smooth surfaced, but unburnished. Some specimens exhibit occasional striations which resemble brushing, but these appear to have been an unintentional result of the manufacturing process. Vessel forms include a simple conoidal jar form (Figures 2 and 4) with typically vertical or slightly incurvate rims, though occasionally slightly flaring. A simple open bowl form is also represented among the rims. Vessel lips are rounded or flattened, and one example possesses ticking on the lip. One sherd from the creek collection displays light fingertip impressions along the rim just below the lip. Plain sherds constitute between 87 and 95 percent of the identifiable pottery in the excavated samples (Table 5), dominating the ceramic assemblage.

Incised pottery is the least common type in the Hogcraw Creek assemblage, making up only between 1 and 2 percent of the identifiable ceramics in the excavated collections (Table 5). Vessel forms appear to be largely similar to the plain ware. Incising typically takes the form of two or three horizontal parallel lines around the rim of an otherwise plain vessel (Figure 5). Incision was carried out in the leather-hard stage, and lines range between 1 and 3 mm in width. In addition to this style of incised decoration, there is one example of a more complex pattern with diagonal sets of three lines crossing to form a rough design. One flaring rim displays diagonal incision on the interior of the vessel rim. While incised decoration is clearly a minority surface decoration in this assemblage, the restriction of incision to the vessel rim area obviously implies that a certain portion of the plain sherds in any

Table 5. Identifiable Ceramics from the Hogcraw Creek Site  
(number/percent of provenience)

	Provenience				Total
	Surf. +PH's	TP #1	TP #2	TP #3	
Incised	6/3	4/1	5/1	15/2	30/2
Simple Stamped	44/19	15/4	38/10	91/11	188/10
Plain	170/73	354/95	351/88	732/87	1607/87
Cordmarked	9/4	1/<1	--	--	10/1
Wakulla Check Stamped	3/1	--	--	3/<1	6/<1
Swift Creek Comp. St.	1/<1	--	2/1	1/<1	4/<1
W.I. folded rim	--	--	1/1	--	1/<1
Stallings Island Plain	--	--	--	2/<1	2/<1
Total	233	374	397	844	1848

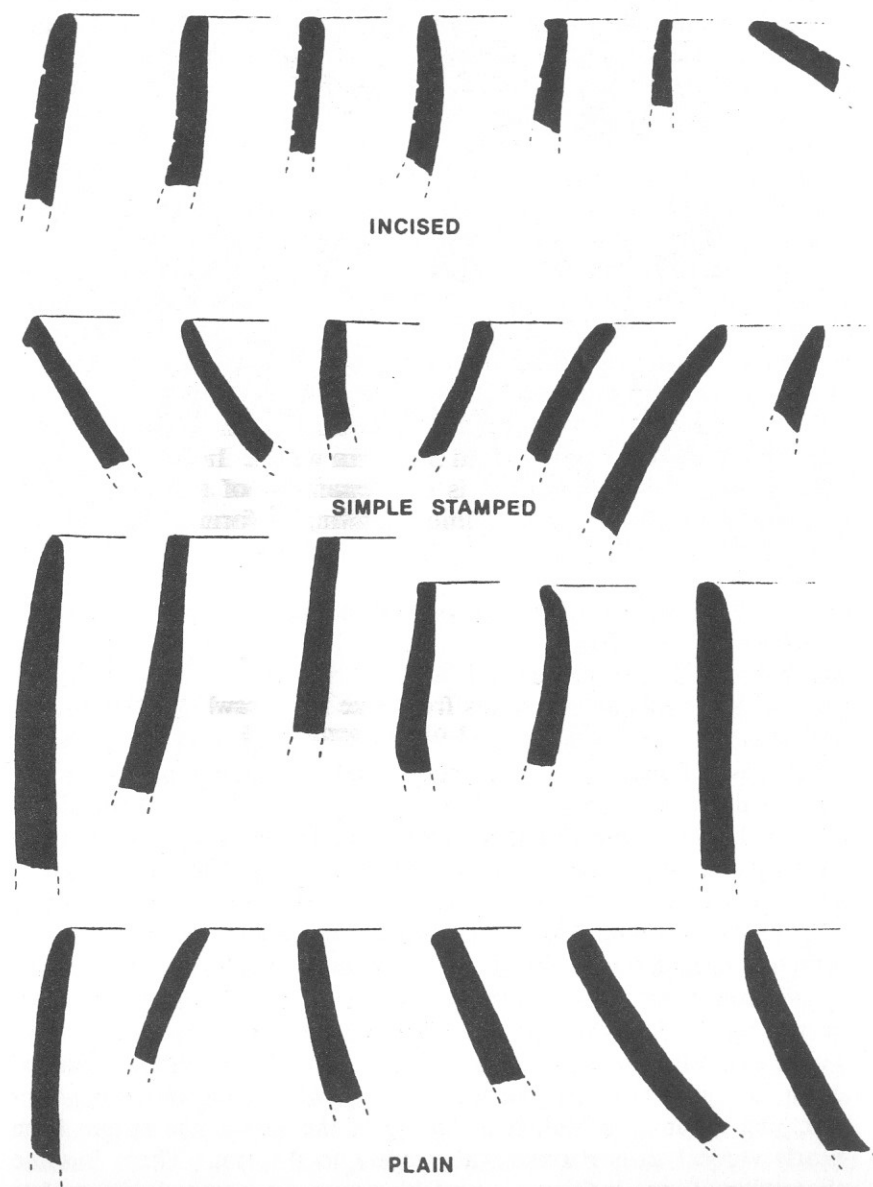


Figure 4. Rim profiles for incised, simple stamped, and plain vessels.

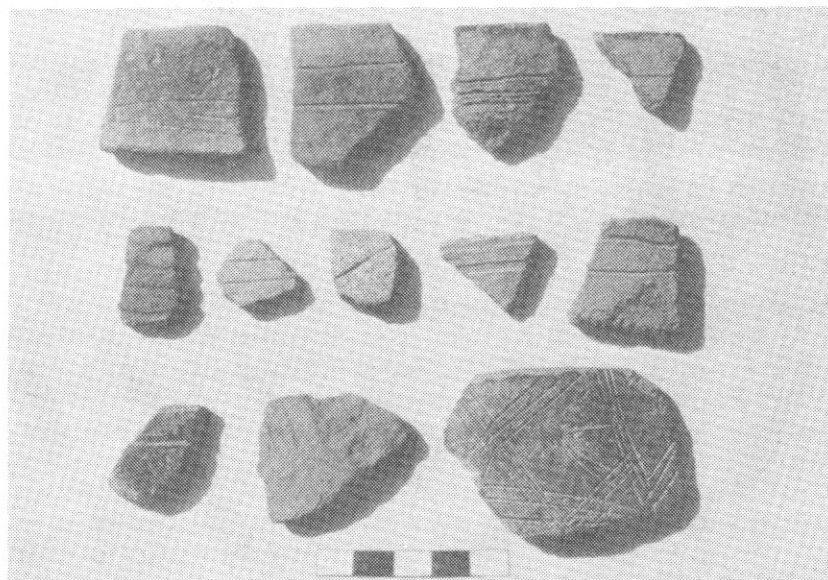


Figure 5. Incised sherds.

assemblage will have come from the bases of incised vessels.

A comparatively common surface treatment in the ceramic assemblage at the Hogcrawl Creek Site is simple stamping, which comprises between 4 and 11 percent of the identifiable pottery in the excavated samples (Table 5). This type appears to be characterized by slightly different vessel forms than the plain and incised types. Vertical rims are currently unknown, and open bowl forms and bowls or jars with sharply incurvate rims and restricted orifices seem to predominate (Figure 4). Ceramic paste conforms to the plain and incised types. Simple stamping ranges widely in style of execution, from light to heavy application, from crossing over stamps to clear parallel lines, and from narrow to wide lands and grooves (Figure 6). These characteristics were found to be largely continuous, and thus varieties of simple stamped decoration were not distinguished. Some sherds exhibit smoothing after stamping. Stamping extends to the lip of the vessel, and ranges from nearly vertical to horizontal with respect to the rim. There is some suggestion of rare incision or scratching over the stamped surface, but this treatment does not otherwise resemble that of the incised sherds described above.

The simple stamped ceramics at the Hogcrawl Creek site seem

to be related to the type Vining Simple Stamped, derived by Elliott and Wynn (this volume) from the enigmatic Mossy Oak Simple Stamped (Jennings and Fairbanks 1939). This ceramic type appears to the east of the Flint River during the Early Mississippian period, and constitutes the only major decorated type of the Vining phase on the Oconee River (Elliott and Wynn, this volume; Wynn, Bruce, and Certain 1990). The chronological and regional implications of the presence of this simple stamped ware on the Middle Flint will be discussed below.



Figure 6. Simple stamped sherds, and 2 Wakulla Check Stamped sherds.

The three ceramic types described above constitute 99% of the identifiable sherds in the excavated sample, and all appear together throughout the midden deposit. The remaining sherds appear to be related to prior or subsequent occupations, and stratigraphic evidence bears out this conclusion. Two fiber-tempered sherds of the Late Archaic Stallings Island Plain were recovered deep in Testpit 3, and the lower levels of Testpits 2 and 3 produced three Wakulla Check Stamped sherds, three Swift Creek Complicated Stamped sherds, and a folded Weeden Island Plain rimsherd, all dating to the Late Woodland period (Tables 3 and 4). In addition, a single cordmarked sherd was found at the base of Testpit 1, suggesting its earlier chronological placement, discussed below (Table 2).



One rimsherd recovered near the surface of Testpit 2 appears to be simple stamped (Figure 6, lower right), but the clarity of application and the sharply flaring rim suggest affiliations with Late Etowah ceramics of the Brunson Phase (Worth 1988). While Etowah Complicated Stamped pottery on the Middle Flint River is characterized by the well-known nested diamond motif, a small percentage of such sherds display a parallel-line (i.e. simple stamped) background around the diamond motif. The similarity of the decoration of the sherd in Testpit 2 to this Etowah "background", combined with its Etowah-style flaring rim, which is quite distinct from all other rims, implies at least that a minor Etowah occupation may have followed the Averett/Vining component. Additionally, it is possible that the simple stamped background of certain sherds of the initial Etowah occupation in this region may reflect a carryover of the simple stamped stylistic trait associated with the Hogcrawl assemblage.

Lithic artifacts at the site included both unworked and worked Coastal Plain chert flakes, along with occasional quartz. By far the most common lithic artifacts were the small triangular projectile points recovered universally in direct association with ceramics of the Averett/Vining-related complex. These points are generally quite small and finely worked, although larger and more roughly fashioned varieties are common (Figure 7). The sides and bases of these points are almost always straight, with infrequently excurvate and rarely incurvate sides, and occasionally incurvate bases. Only a single example recovered in a posthole test exhibits serrations. There is no stratigraphic evidence for any chronological significance of point size or shape. It is clear, however, that these triangulars occur in direct association with the plain, simple stamped, and incised ceramic complex, for the relative frequencies of all are linked in each testpit (see Tables 2-4).

Other worked lithics almost certainly predate the Early Mississippian occupation at the site. The lower levels of test excavations produced a Kirk corner-notched point, a fragment of a Late Archaic stemmed point, a broken drill, a preform or knife blade, and three large biface fragments (Tables 2-4). Level 3 of Testpit 1, however, contained five worked lithic artifacts which may represent curation by an individual of the Early Mississippi period culture. Two large points were discovered in direct contact, a complete Yadkin point and a nearly complete Kirk stemmed point, and nearby were recovered the base of another Yadkin, a broken drill, and the tip of a large biface. Based on the close proximity of these artifacts, the wide variance in dates represented, and the fact that all other upper levels of each testpit are devoid of such artifacts, it is possible that they represent a "collection" of earlier artifacts made during the later occupation. However, they may simply represent deposition of fill excavated from an early portion of the site.

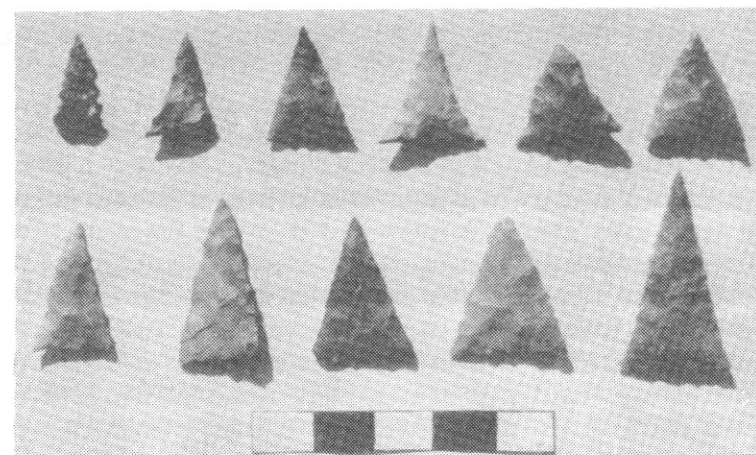


Figure 7. Selected triangular points.

Food remains are evidently scarce in the midden deposits. Two fragments of deer bone, one burned, were recovered in testpit excavations, along with a fragment of mussel shell and a portion of a hickory nutshell. Mussel shells were also occasionally found eroding out of the creek bank below the site, and a burned distal fragment of a deer humerus was recovered in the ditch bank. Preservation at the site appears to be favorable, however, and thus features in other areas of the site may possess more faunal and floral remains.

## DISCUSSION

Aboriginal occupation at the Hogcrawl Creek Site appears to have been largely limited to relatively intense habitation by a small population culturally similar to both the Averett phase to the west (Chase 1959, 1963; Hally and Rudolph 1986) and the Vining phase to the east (Elliott and Wynn, this volume). The Averett phase on the Chattahoochee River dates to the Early Mississippi period, with seven uncorrected radiocarbon dates from the Carmouche site averaging A.D. 1127 (Gresham et al. 1985), and three uncorrected dates from the Florence Marina site ranging from A.D. 860-1020 (Ledbetter and Braley 1989). While the distribution of Averett phase sites has previously been presumed to be limited to the Fall Line region of the Chattahoochee River (Hally and Rudolph 1986:35-6), the similarity in material culture suggests a similar date for the Hogcrawl Creek occupation. Gresham et al. (1989) report an Averett component at the Mill Creek Site within the Lower Flint River watershed near Americus (Figure 1). While this site



is on the same river drainage as the Hogcrawl Creek Site, and roughly fifteen miles to the southwest, it appears to be more similar to classic Averett assemblages on the Chattahoochee than that of Hogcrawl Creek, particularly as regards the lack of associated simple stamping (beyond the handful of Deptford Simple and Check Stamped sherds).

The Vining phase in the Piedmont Oconee River drainage has been dated to the Early Mississippi period (Wynn, Bruce, and Certain 1990), making it roughly contemporaneous with the Averett phase on the Chattahoochee. Typical Vining phase assemblages are characterized by roughly thirty percent simple stamped decoration (Jack Wynn, personal communication, 1990), with plain ceramics making up the remainder of the assemblage. Similar ceramics are reported at the Fall Line of the Oconee River, at the Shinholser site (Williams 1990:85-93). Here, simple stamped sherds appear in a premound midden deposit, and are interpreted to be contemporaneous, perhaps only partially, with the Savannah period occupation at the site.

The simple stamped ceramic complexes described above for eastern Georgia may form part of a broader complex of Late Woodland/Early Mississippi period cultures extending into South Carolina. The simple stamped Santee series of central South Carolina is associated with six radiocarbon dates ranging between A.D. 810-1340 (Anderson, Cantley, and Novick 1982), and Anderson (1985, 1989) argues for the existence of a Late Woodland horizon marked by plain, simple stamped, and brushed ceramics occurring across portions of South Carolina, eastern Georgia, and western North Carolina. Some temporal overlap with the Mississippian period is indicated by the data, pushing the date for these ceramics as late as A.D. 1000. Given the lack of simple stamped ceramics in the contemporaneous Averett phase, the Middle Flint River may indeed fall on the western boundary of such a broad ceramic complex.

On a smaller scale, the Hogcrawl Creek ceramic assemblage seems to represent a combination of ceramic features from contemporaneous assemblages on either side of the Flint River drainage. It differs from the Averett phase with the presence of a simple stamped ware related to the Vining phase, and it differs from Vining phase with the smaller percentage of simple stamped sherds, and with the presence of an incised ware related to Averett Incised. Nevertheless, the co-occurrence of ceramics typical of both phases on one of the two intervening river valleys would seem to independently confirm their relative contemporaneity.

The Late Woodland-Early Mississippi period to the south of the Fall Line region seems to be dominated by cordmarked ceramic

assemblages, including the Ocmulgee Cordmarked complex (Snow 1977; Stephenson 1990) along the Big Bend region of the Lower Ocmulgee River, and the extensive distribution of similar cordmarked ceramics on the Lower Flint River along modern Lake Blackshear (Schnell 1975). Regional survey of the Middle Flint River region north of Lake Blackshear has demonstrated the relative paucity of cordmarked ceramics in comparison to the regions to the south and southeast (Worth 1988:121), and Gresham et al. (1989:131-5) suggest that predominantly cordmarked assemblages extend no farther to the west than the Lake Blackshear area.

While it is possible that the cordmarked complexes to the south are regionally distinct but contemporaneous with Averett and Vining complexes along the Fall Line, there is stratigraphic evidence at the Mill Creek site (Gresham et al. 1989) that cordmarked ceramics may be chronologically prior to the Averett occupation. The single cordmarked sherd at the base of Testpit 1 at Hogcrawl Creek may bear out this suggestion. If this is the case, then the Averett/Vining-related ceramic complex to the north may post-date an earlier cordmarked occupation, admittedly light, although there is no reason to conclude that cordmarked complexes did not persist to the south, coexisting with contemporaneous Averett and Vining occupations to the north.

The existing ceramic sequence of the Middle Flint (Worth 1988:76) reveals a gap between the Late Woodland Weeden Island occupation and the Early to Middle Mississippian Brunson Phase (A.D. 1150-1225). Based on test excavations at the Hogcrawl Creek Site, it is possible to place the Hogcrawl Creek assemblage within this gap (Table 6). Stratigraphic data indicate that this occupation was preceded by a Weeden Island II occupation, as marked by the presence of Wakulla Check Stamped, along with other Weeden Island ceramics (Willey 1949; Milanich et al. 1984; Steinen 1989). Although occupation at this particular site seems to have been minimal during the Weeden Island period, regional survey reveals heavy Weeden Island occupation along the Middle Flint River valley (Worth 1988:120-1). Interestingly, two of the Wakulla Check Stamped sherds excavated at the Hogcrawl Creek site display extremely elongated checks, with very narrow vertical lands spaced widely along the pronounced horizontal lines (Figure 6). These sherds are visually similar to many of the simple stamped sherds, and it is tempting to suggest a stylistic connection between the late Weeden Island II check stamped and the Early Mississippian simple stamped decoration.

If the beginning of the Averett/Vining-related occupation on the Middle Flint may be dated to the end of the Weeden Island II period at

roughly A.D. 900, then its termination may date to approximately A.D. 1150, with the beginning of the Late Etowah Brunson Phase (Worth 1988). These dates conform with radiocarbon determinations for the Averett phase, and fit within the parameter of known occupation on the Middle Flint.

Table 6. Late Woodland-Early Mississippian Chronology for the Middle Flint River

A.D. 1200	BRUNSON PHASE (Late Etowah)
1150-----	
1100	
1050	LESTER PHASE (Averett/Vining)
1000	
950	
900-----	
850	WEEDEN ISLAND II

The terminal date of 1150 reflects the possibility of stylistic overlap between Averett and Etowah ceramics of the Brunson Phase, noted above. Indeed, many Averett sites possess Etowah ceramics, and Schnell (1981) has suggested that Averett on the Chattahoochee was a sort of "buffer" between contemporaneous Etowah occupations in the Piedmont and the Rood Phase to the south on the Lower Chattahoochee. Hally and Rudolph (1986:36), however, suggest this conclusion is hindered by the current lack of data regarding the Averett phase. Nonetheless, available evidence does imply the persistence of Averett culture into the Etowah period.

Presuming that this Early Mississippian occupation at Hogcraw Creek does in fact extend beyond A.D. 1000, this site may be contemporaneous with the famous and problematic Macon Plateau culture at the Fall Line of the Ocmulgee River (Hally and Rudolph 1986:32-5). As a result, the site may be evidence for the lack of

influence of Macon Plateau culture beyond the Ocmulgee, at least towards the west. The Hogcraw Creek occupation on the Middle Flint displays none of the characteristics of the Macon Plateau culture, and indeed provides a stark contrast to the monumental achievements of the Macon Plateau occupation.

Based on the results of ceramic analysis at the Hogcraw Creek Site, along with regional survey since 1986, it is now clear that ceramics related to both Averett and Vining phases do indeed occur with some frequency along the Middle Flint River, even up to the Fall Line. Simple stamped ceramics appear to be a good marker for Early Mississippian period occupation on the Middle Flint, since plain sherds are often virtually impossible to date accurately, and since the associated incised ware is so uncommon (and can sometimes be confused with the later Lamar Incised). Although Middle Woodland Deptford (Cartersville) assemblages often possess simple stamping as well, these earlier sites typically include a large proportion of Deptford Check and Linear Check Stamped sherds, and also possess tetrapodal supports. In addition, the small triangular arrowpoints are quite common on Averett/Vining-related sites, and thus may be used to distinguish between Deptford and Early Mississippian sites.

It is useful to insert here that these triangular points, which are extremely common at the Hogcraw Creek Site and other contemporaneous sites in middle Georgia, are quite rare during later Mississippian phases on the Middle Flint River (Worth 1988:135-6). Whether this distinction represents a greater reliance on hunting during the Early Mississippian period, or simply a difference in raw material usage, is unclear. The fact that Averett and Vining cultures rest on the boundary between Woodland and Mississippian cultures at the Fall Line makes such questions significant with regard to the emergence of agriculturally-based chiefdoms in the Southeast.

While the precise geographical distribution of Averett/Vining-related ceramics along the Middle Flint River is not completely understood, the characteristics of Early Mississippian period occupation in this region clearly differ from contemporaneous phases to the west and east, particularly as regards the presence of surface treatments which may not co-occur elsewhere. Additionally, the incised decoration at the Hogcraw Creek site displays a simplicity in style which is not reflected in classic Averett phase assemblages (compare Figure 5 with, for example, Figure 52 in Gresham et al. 1985:165,167, and Figure 5.1 in Ledbetter and Braley 1989:125). Furthermore, the Hogcraw Creek assemblage seems to lack the more sharply flaring rims found on Averett sites (although this may relate to the lack of any Etowah ceramics at this

site). Consequently, Early Mississippian period occupation on the Middle Flint River will be provisionally designated as the Lester phase, dating between A.D. 900 and 1150. These dates may be refined with future research, and the spatial distribution of the Lester phase should be explored further.

The Lester phase is characterized by a ceramic assemblage consisting of plain (88%), simple stamped (10%), and incised pottery (2%). Incised decoration is generally restricted to parallel lines below the vessel rim. Vessel forms include a narrow range of simple conoidal jars and open and restricted bowls. Rims are both simple and flattened, with almost no evidence of modification (save single examples of a ticked lip and fingertip impressions). Small triangular projectile points are quite common. Limited subsistence information indicates that deer, mussels, and hickory nuts formed at least part of the diet, and there is as yet no evidence for cultigens such as maize. Preliminary examination of regional survey data suggests a settlement distribution focusing on the swampbottom habitat, but this conclusion may be altered with future work.

Although the lack of both Etowah and Rood phase ceramics at the Hogcraw Creek site may reflect a regional characteristic which persists throughout the Lester Phase, it is possible that this site may date to the early portion of this time period (perhaps A.D. 900-1000), and that later assemblages within the Lester phase might include contemporaneous Etowah and Rood phase ceramics as minority wares. Preliminary examination of surface collections from several sites on the Middle Flint reveals the co-occurrence of both simple stamped and Etowah/Savannah ceramics, but there is as yet no clear indication that these types were ever contemporaneous.

The relationship of the nearby Mill Creek assemblage (Gresham et al. 1989) to the Lester phase is unclear, but the lack of simple stamping and the higher percentage of cordmarked sherds suggests that it may be regionally distinct from the Lester phase, which at present is known only from the floodplain of the Middle Flint River to the northeast. Mill Creek may indeed represent a sort of "outpost/border settlement" (Gresham and Ledbetter 1989) between the Averett culture to the west and the cordmarked cultures along the Lower Flint and Ocmulgee Rivers to the east, and thus may not share characteristics of the Lester phase to the north.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigations at the Hogcraw Creek Site have

revealed several things. First, this project has further demonstrated the potential of public archaeology, not only as a means to expose the public to archaeological fieldwork, but also as a means to accomplish important archaeological goals even beyond mere salvage work. The interest and support of the Peach County Historical Society and the eager participation of Duke's seventh-grade students were essential to the planning and execution of this project. It is hoped that such work can serve as a model for greater involvement by the public in learning about and preserving our State's past.

Secondly, this project has provided a great deal of important archaeological data about a site which is rapidly being destroyed by natural processes. The Hogcraw Creek Site is now recognized to have been occupied during the poorly understood Early Mississippi period. The undisturbed portion of the site has yielded information regarding the material culture of the site's occupants, and has permitted the preliminary identification of the Lester phase, filling a geographical and chronological gap in our understanding of the archaeology of this region.

Finally, the results of archaeological investigations at the Hogcraw Creek site have suggested several avenues for future research. For example, what is the relationship of the Early Mississippi period culture on the Middle Flint River to contemporaneous cultures in adjacent regions? How does the Lester phase fit into the cultural history of western and central Georgia? Specifically, what is the relationship, if any, between cordmarked, Etowah, and Rood phase ceramics and those of the Averett, Lester, and Vining phases, and between the Lester phase and the preceding Weeden Island II and subsequent Etowah complexes on the Middle Flint? And perhaps most significantly, what was the role, if any, of these Early Mississippi period cultures in the transition to intensive agriculture and in the emergence of chiefdoms in the Mississippi period? Answers to such inquiries, however, must await future research.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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