

MISSISSIPPIAN OCCUPATION ON THE MIDDLE FLINT RIVER

by

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

This thesis reports the results of two years of archaeological research on the Middle Flint River in central Georgia. Regional survey and test excavations were carried out between 1986 and 1988 with the aim of delineating the geographic and chronological distribution of Mississippian occupation in this region. More specifically, the project had three goals: to contribute to the growing archaeological data base for the late prehistoric societies in the Southeastern United States; to evaluate whether local Mississippian occupation conforms to widely accepted models of Mississippian settlement distribution and political organization; and to evaluate the proposal by Hudson, et al. (1984) that the DeSoto expedition encountered the Province of Toa on the Middle Flint River in 1540.

Two complementary sets of data were collected in the project. Test excavations at two known platform mounds on the Middle Flint, Neisler (9Tr1) and Hartley-Posey (9Tr12), resulted in the recovery of stratified ceramic collections which were employed in the construction of a Mississippian period ceramic chronology for the region, and which

additionally supplied information regarding the dates of mound construction and use. Regional survey resulted in the identification of archaeological sites dating to the Mississippian period. These sites were then placed within the chronological framework constructed on the basis of stratigraphic collections in order to evaluate temporal variation in Mississippian settlement distribution. The results of the project were ultimately synthesized to provide an initial view of the spatial and temporal distribution of Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint River.

CONSTRUCTION OF A DATA BASE

Recent archaeological research in the Southeast has witnessed a fluorescence of interest in the late prehistoric chiefdoms of the Mississippian period. Numerous studies have examined the specific nature of individual Mississippian polities, and many authors have attempted to provide synthetic overviews of the social geography of the late prehistoric southeast, examining such problems as political integration into paramount chiefdoms (Peebles and Kus 1977; Steponaitis 1978), cycles in the rise and fall of chiefdoms (Anderson 1986), inter-chiefdom competition and conflict (Larson 1972), and a variety of other topics. Such questions, particularly as they relate to broad-scale regional synthesis of the geographic and temporal distribution of Mississippian polities, may only be properly

addressed upon the creation of an archaeological data base comprehensive enough to include the geographic location and spatial extent of every Mississippian polity throughout the entire late prehistoric period under consideration. The interpretive potential of any regional synthesis is only as great as the least well-known element in its analysis.

A primary goal of all current archaeological research into the nature of Mississippian societies should be to contribute to this data base. While in many areas such information is already in existence, a great many gaps remain. Hally and Rudolph (1986:86), for example, characterize the nature of archaeological research in the Mississippian period of the Georgia Piedmont as "at best... opportunistic and narrowly focused; at worst... haphazard, poorly executed, and unreported." Their report indicates that base-line archaeological data for this part of Georgia is, in the majority, poor to non-existent, although notable exceptions exist.

One area which has received almost no archaeological attention is the Middle Flint River in central Georgia. In all fairness, this is most likely due to the region's remoteness from Universities or institutions with major archaeological programs, but this is hardly an excuse, since two Mississippian platform mounds are known to exist on the Middle Flint, one of which, Neisler Mound (9Tr1) has been recognized by the archaeological community since before the WPA era at Macon Plateau. While some testing has been

carried out at Neisler, there are no extant records from such activity, and prior to this project, these two mounds were the only recognized Mississippian sites along this stretch of the Flint River. The Middle Flint thus constitutes a significant gap in the archaeological data base for the Mississippian period.

EXAMINATION OF THE NATURE OF MISSISSIPPIAN SOCIETIES

The Fall Line zone has long been regarded as an especially attractive location for Mississippian populations. Clusters of Mississippian mound sites exist at the Fall Line zone of virtually every major river which flows from the Piedmont onto the Coastal Plain. Since none of these regions have been subjected to extensive archaeological survey, however, there is little to no evidence available regarding the spatial distribution of Mississippian occupation around these mound centers. Furthermore, although suggestions have been offered to explain the preference of Mississippian groups for the Fall Line zone, there have been no serious attempts to test them. The Middle Flint River represents an excellent opportunity to examine the nature of these Fall Line societies.

Among the possible explanations which might be proposed regarding the attractiveness of the Fall Line zone to Mississippian societies, the presence of extensive floodplain along these rivers immediately below the Fall Line (Figure 1.1) may play a significant role. Archaeologists

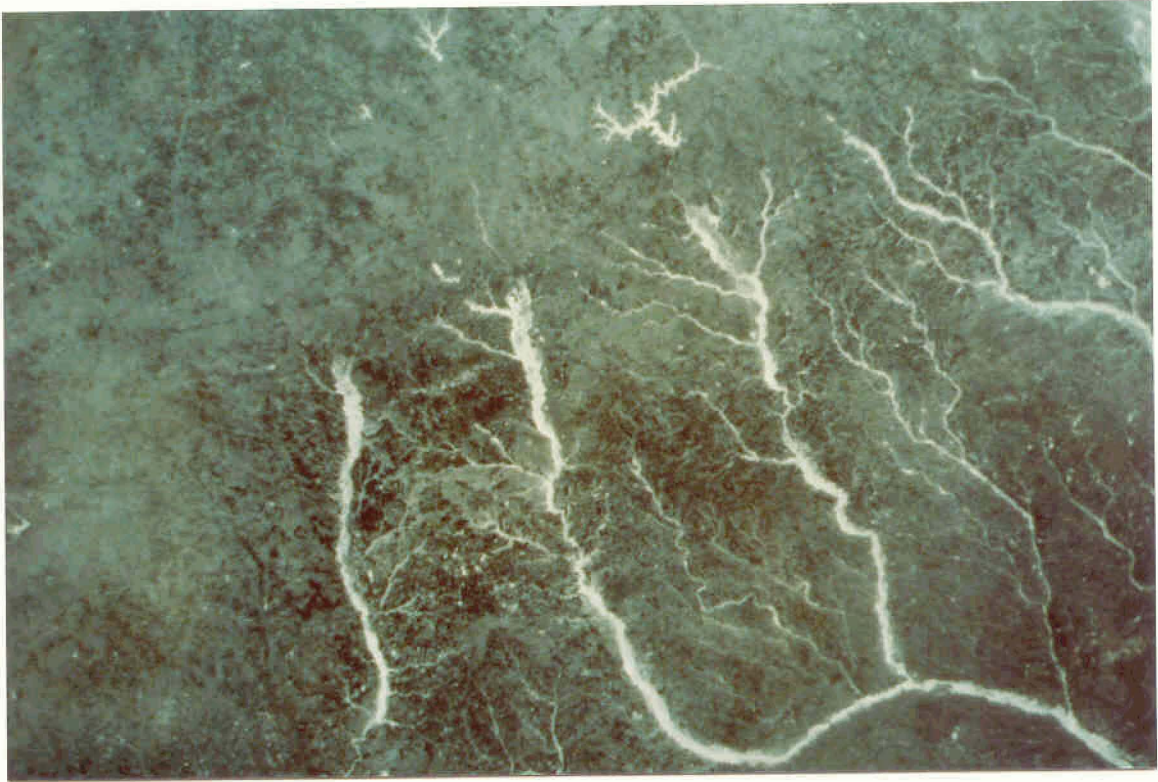


Figure 1.1
ERTS Mosaic of Middle Georgia

have long recognized a preference of Mississippian groups for riverine floodplain soils. This is certainly the case in Georgia. Hally and Rudolph (1986) note that Mississippian sites in Georgia do seem to be most common adjacent to large areas of floodplain, and least common in interfluvial upland regions. Lee (1977) demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between large Mississippian sites in the Oconee Valley in the Georgia Piedmont and the fluvial landforms of major drainages, such as rivers. Ward (1965) suggested that floodplains were attractive primarily due to the high fertility of the soils comprising them, and this explanation seems to be widely accepted among modern southeastern archaeologists. Recent work, however, has augmented this explanation. Smith (1978) presents a well-developed argument that many elements of the entire floodplain habitat complemented each other to produce an optimum environment for Mississippian populations.

Smith (1978:486) asserts that Mississippian groups may be characterized by "a specific complex adaptation to linear, environmentally circumscribed floodplain habitat zones." In particular, Smith argues that the degree to which any floodplain zone approached the optimum habitat for Mississippian groups is dependent upon two primary factors: the total area of well-drained, friable land within the floodplain habitat, and the total area of permanent and seasonal lakes within this habitat (Smith 1978:484-5). It seems evident that, although considerable variation with

regard to these two factors may exist between different floodplain segments, the larger the total area of the floodplain habitat, the greater the possibility that an optimal level of these two factors may be reached. In this regard, then, it may be predicted based on Smith's argument that Mississippian groups would in general be most likely to inhabit the largest floodplain segments along major river systems. For the purposes of this study, it is thus hypothesized that, within the context of the Middle Flint River region, Mississippian occupation should be concentrated along the river valley, and in particular should be associated with the widest expanse of floodplain below the Fall Line.

In evaluating the actual settlement distribution within such an optimum habitat, Smith (1978:491) points out that Mississippian populations balanced the need for optimal exploitation of energy sources within the floodplain with the necessity of maintaining social cohesion and defensive boundaries as competitive cultural entities. The resultant settlement pattern reflects a compromise between complete dispersal of habitations associated with preferred locations within the floodplain, and total nucleation into fortified villages as a defensive strategy. Mississippian settlement systems consisted of "dispersed farmsteads surrounding a local center" (Smith 1978:491), and thus represented a flexible adaptation which could be altered in response to a variety of factors.

Mississippian societies are also believed to have been characterized by a ranked social structure, and to have been organized into chiefdoms, with centralized political authority. Archaeological evaluation of this feature is undoubtedly difficult, but Smith (1978) asserts that:

...the degree to which any large-scale construction projects appear to have been organized and carried out under centralized control could also be employed to measure centralization of decision making.

Smith 1978:497

Clearly, mound construction falls within the realm of consideration as a tool for estimating the degree of centralization within any Mississippian society. Scarry and Payne (1987) utilize total mound volume as a measure of the centralized political influence of Fort Walton polities in northwestern Florida and southwestern Georgia, but since mound volume may also reflect the number of stages of mound construction, and the length of time a mound was in use, the present study will simply employ evidence of mound construction alone, without any measure of mound volume, as a measure of centralized political authority during each phase of the Mississippian period. The existence of two platform mounds on the Middle Flint River certainly indicates centralized decision-making, and analysis of the actual dates of mound construction, as a part of this study, should reveal during what periods of time this political centralization was in existence.

Steponaitus (1978) constructs a model of the optimal placement of major and minor centers within a complex chiefdom using central place theory. According to this model, major centers are located centrally with respect to minor centers within the same chiefdom, and these minor centers gravitate spatially toward the major center with respect to the population which they serve. Data from this study will be used to test the hypothesis that the mound centers on the Middle Flint River were placed in a central location with respect to the Mississippian population for which they served as administrative centers.

EVALUATION OF THE ROUTE OF DESOTO

One extremely valuable source of information regarding the nature of the late prehistoric Mississippian chiefdoms which has only recently begun to be fully exploited is the documentary accounts of several sixteenth century Spanish expeditions into the interior southeast. Although these sources have been available to researchers for many years, recent attempts to precisely trace the routes of these expeditions on the modern landscape have met with great success, permitting the integration of archaeological and historic evidence regarding the societies encountered by the Spaniards. Most notable among these expeditions whose routes have now been located with a reasonable degree of accuracy are those of Juan Pardo (DePratter, et al. 1983), Hernando DeSoto (Hudson, et al.

1984, DePratter, et al. 1985, Hudson, et al. 1985a), and Tristan de Luna (Hudson, et al. 1985b), all of which date before A.D. 1570. While archaeological evidence seems to bear out these reconstructions for much of the expedition routes, in some areas such evidence is lacking, due to the absence of archaeological research.

One such area is the Middle Flint River, which Hudson, et al. (1984) suggest was the location of the Province of Toa, visited for a short time by DeSoto in March of 1540. Their placement of DeSoto's crossing of the River of Toa (identified as the Flint River) south of present-day Montezuma, Ga. had no archaeological evidence to substantiate their conclusion, making the results uncertain until archaeological data is compiled for the region. It is thus one goal of the present study to examine the validity of Hudson, et al.'s (1984) placement of Toa using archaeological data regarding the spatial distribution of Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint River during the mid-sixteenth century.

In summary, this study examines the temporal and geographical distribution of late prehistoric Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint River in order to evaluate the nature of Mississippian society responsible for the two known platform mounds at the Fall Line. Subsurface testing of stratified ceramic deposits in each mound was performed, and artifactual collections were analyzed for the purpose of constructing a Mississippian period ceramic chronology for

the Middle Flint River. This additionally permitted the dating of periods of mound construction, and thus periods of centralized political authority. The results of regional archaeological survey were then analyzed to reveal the spatial distribution of Mississippian occupation during each phase of the ceramic chronology, in particular as it relates to the physical environment of the survey area.

Chapter Two presents an overview of the physical environment of the entire Flint River valley. Chapters Three and Four present the results of test excavations at each of the two known Mississippian platform mounds in the study area, and Chapter Five establishes a ceramic chronology based on the results of these excavations. Chapter Six includes the survey strategy and results of regional archaeological survey in the study area, and describes all Mississippian sites discovered as a result of the project. Chapter Seven synthesizes all available data in an analysis of the geographic distribution of Mississippian occupation during each ceramic phase, and evaluates the significance of these results. Conclusions and suggestions for future research comprise Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER TWO

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE MIDDLE FLINT RIVER REGION

INTRODUCTION

The Flint River is a major waterway of the southern Appalachian slope. It originates deep within the Piedmont of northern Georgia and flows generally southward across the Piedmont, crossing the Fall Line into the Coastal Plain and ultimately joining with the Chattahoochee River to form the Apalachicola River, which empties into the Gulf of Mexico in northwestern Florida. The Flint River watershed is 212 miles long and averages 40 miles in width, draining 8,460 square miles (Stanley Consultants 1973). Of the major rivers originating in the Piedmont, the Flint is the easternmost river which drains into the Gulf of Mexico, making the watershed boundary between the Flint and the Ocmulgee River to the east also the boundary between the Gulf and Atlantic watersheds (Figure 2.1).

The region through which the Flint River flows may be characterized as having a temperate to warm-temperate climate, with from 220 to 250 frost-free days per year in the northern reaches of the river, and from 240 to 280 days in the southern portion. Rainfall ranges from the higher Piedmont average of 44-56 inches per year to 40-54 inches in

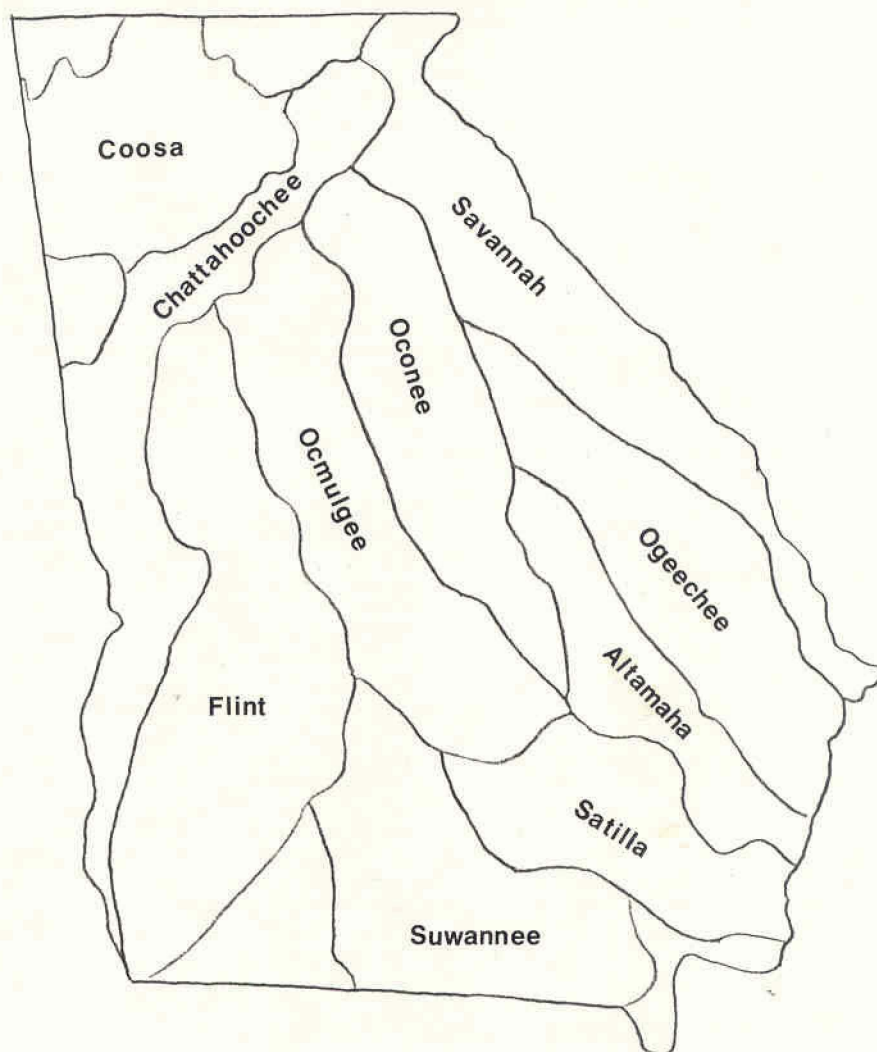


Figure 2.1

Watersheds of Major Georgia Rivers

the southern Coastal Plain. Precipitation peaks during the late winter and early spring, resulting in greatest discharge rates for the Flint River (measured at the Sprewell Bluff gaging station in the Piedmont) in spring and early summer, peaking in June and July. Temperatures are highest in July, and lowest in January.

Although the total length of the river channel is considerably longer due to meanders within the valley, the Flint River valley is roughly 278 miles in length, and may be divided into three sections based on topographic and geologic characteristics (Figure 2.2). The Upper Flint River extends from the source of the river to the Fall Line, covering approximately 98 miles across the metamorphic and crystalline rocks of the Piedmont. The Middle Flint River, under consideration here, flows from the Fall Line across the upper Coastal Plain, or the Fall Line Hills region, to the northern limit of the Dougherty Plain at Lake Blackshear, comprising roughly 46 miles of the total length of the valley. The Lower Flint River crosses the Dougherty Plain in southwestern Georgia until its confluence with the Chattahoochee, making up the remaining 134 miles of the Flint River valley. These three sections of the river are characterized by variations in topography, underlying bedrock, lithic resources, soil associations, hydrologic characteristics, vegetation and wildlife, and climate, and a description of the major environmental features of the entire Flint River should prove useful in order to provide a

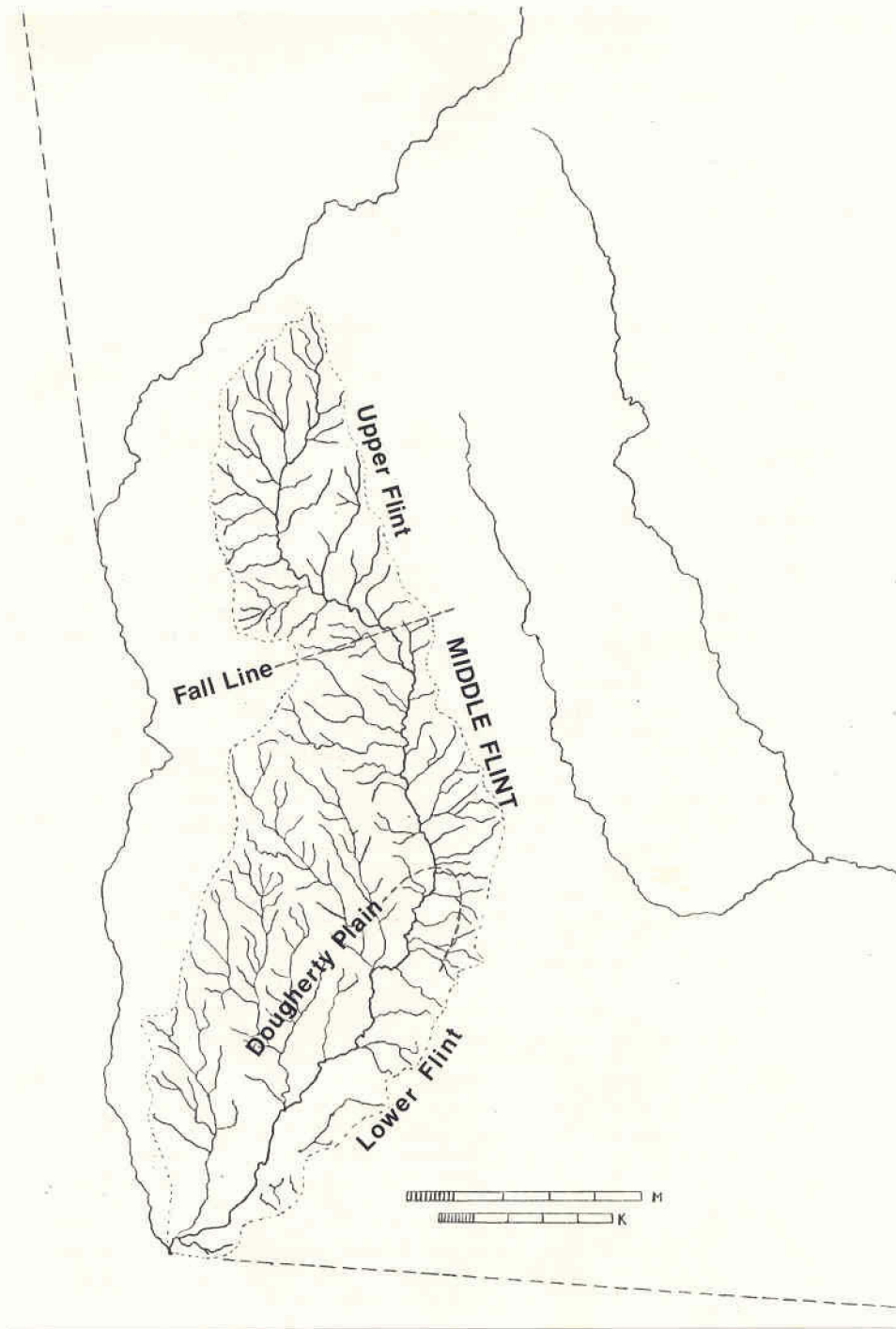


Figure 2.2
Physiographic Divisions of the Flint River Watershed

context for a more detailed examination of the Middle Flint River as the study area.

UPPER FLINT RIVER

The Flint River originates as a small stream immediately south of Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta, and flows southward across the Piedmont. This northernmost section of the Upper Flint crosses the Greenville Slope District, characterized by rolling topography which descends from 1000 feet to 600 feet in elevation (1976 Physiographic Map of Georgia). This region is underlain by acid crystalline and metamorphic rocks including granite, mica schist, gneiss, and amphibolite. The river channel widens from less than 25 feet to 200 feet along this stretch, and is marked by gradients less than 5 and generally under 2 feet per mile, with slow to moderate velocity and numerous riffles (Stanley Consultants 1973). The easy Canoe Class rating of 2 for this section reflects its relatively smooth course. Floodplain development, although present along this portion of the Flint, is minimal, with widths of less than half a mile.

After crossing the Towaliga Fault, the Flint flows into the Pine Mountain district, where quartzite-capped ridges rise abruptly to elevations as high as 1300 feet. Here the Flint has cut a deep and narrow gorge up to 400 feet below the Pine Mountain ridge summit. The river turns to the southeast below Pine and Oak Mountains, and descends

gradually from 800 to 500 feet in elevation to the Fall Line, flowing across mica schist, gneiss, amphibolite, and hornblende, granite, and biotite gneiss. The channel width ranges from 250 to 300 feet, and drops a steep 8 feet per mile over a stretch which includes extensive shoals and rock outcrops, and numerous islands (Stanley Consultants 1973). Such shoals seem to have served historically as major trail crossings, as early accounts and maps demonstrate. This section is classed as moderate to difficult (Canoe Classes 3 and 4) for canoe travel, indicating its rapid rate of descent and rough course. There is no floodplain development in the Pine Mountain area, but between 14 and 9 miles above the Fall Line the floodplain expands to up to one mile in width at Bivens Bend, with smaller floodplains less than one half mile wide appearing downstream at points above the Fall Line (Figure 2.3).

The Upper Flint River flows through a region currently dominated by loblolly pine climax forests (Stanley Consultants 1973). Oak-pine forests are less common, with upland areas such as Pine Mountain including oak, hickory, and long leaf pines as predominant vegetation. While pines seem to dominate the modern forests of the Upper Flint, this may not have been the case in prehistoric times. Benjamin Hawkins, the Creek Agent from 1796 to 1816, wrote in 1799 of

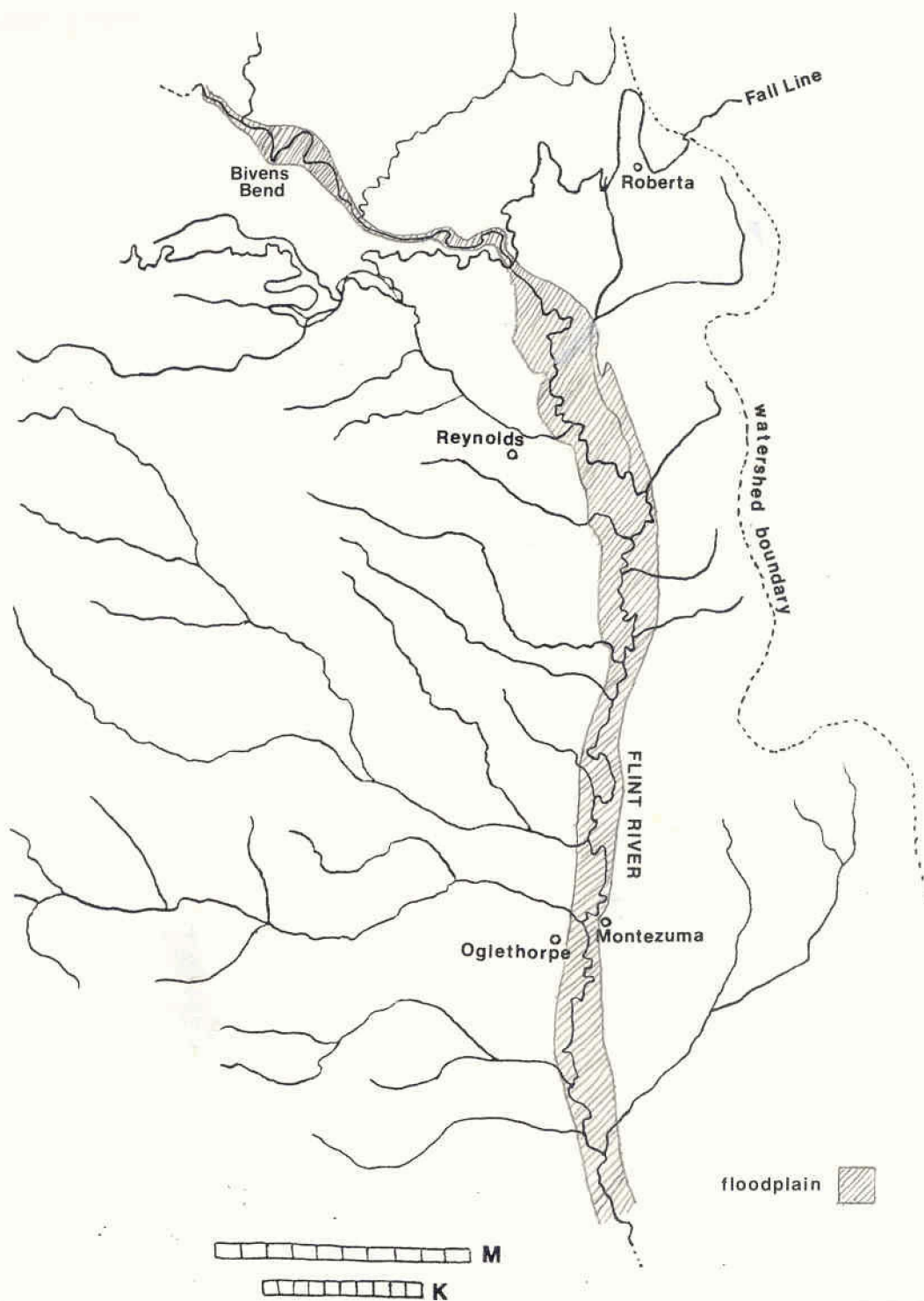


Figure 2.3

Floodplain Width of the Middle Flint River

the source of the Flint and the region above its falls as being marked by:

...open, flat land, the soil stiff, the trees post and black oak, all small. The land is generally rich, well watered, and lies well as a waving country for cultivation; oak, hickory, and the short leaf pine; peavine on the hill sides and in the bottoms, and a tall rich grass, on the richest land.
Hawkins 1980:285

While his evaluation of the region is colored by hopes for European agriculture, his descriptions imply that hardwoods may have been more prevalent in prehistoric times. Plummer's (1975) examination of early nineteenth century land plat surveys for the Pine Mountain region of the southwestern Georgia Piedmont revealed that post and red oaks together comprised 69 percent of the trees in the forest; the entire region was an oak-pine-hickory community, with chestnut, poplar, black gum, dogwood, and white oak of greatest importance nearest the Flint River (Plummer 1975:9). In general, modern Piedmont forests possess more pines than was the case two centuries ago (Plummer 1975:16). These modern forests may to some degree reflect the extensive loss of topsoil in the Southern Piedmont as a result of intensive European agriculture during the late nineteenth century (Trimble 1973). Soils immediately above the Fall Line are characterized today as in general well-drained with coarse loamy surface layers, often cobbly or stony, with clayey or loamy subsoils (1965 Soil Associations of Georgia map).

MIDDLE FLINT RIVER

The Flint River crosses the Fall Line at an elevation of roughly 320 feet above sea level, and enters the Fall Line Hills District of the Coastal Plain. The Fall Line marks the northern boundary of the Middle Flint River, and is the point at which the Flint River experiences a major change. Hawkins (1916:173) notes that "here the falls terminate and the flats begin to spread out." After crossing this boundary, the Flint flows across the sedimentary rocks of the Gulf Coastal Plain, including marine sands, loams, and clays which were deposited during the Cretaceous, Paleocene, and Eocene geological periods. The river's gradient drops to 1.8 feet per mile, and its channel begins to meander on this comparatively level terrain. Immediately below the point at which the river emerges from the Piedmont onto the Coastal Plain, the floodplain expands in width to three miles, encompassing a vast swamp bottom which stretches downriver for a distance of 17 miles below the Fall Line (Figure 2.3). This floodplain is by far the largest on the entire Flint River, comprising an extremely large area subject to seasonal flooding and alluvial deposition.

The river follows a sinuous course, meandering widely within a floodplain marked by numerous abandoned meanders and oxbow lakes. Outcrops of bedrock appear occasionally along the bluff edges of the floodplain, but the riverbed is almost exclusively sandy, with rare sorted

gravel beds at points along the river's course. The active floodplain is bordered by both eroded sedimentary deposits which comprise the bedrock underlying the entire Flint River valley, as well as remnants of a series of six relict fluvial terraces dating to the Pleistocene (Carver and Waters 1984). These terrace remnants, ranging from 10 to 190 feet in elevation above the modern floodplain, are scattered along the margins of the river valley, and generally take the form of nearly level plateaus with steep bluffs overlooking the active floodplain. The lowest of such terraces are locally known as "second bottoms", which extend out into the swamp bottom from the valley margins (Figure 2.4). Such fluvial terraces represent the eroded remnants of ancient floodplains associated with the Pleistocene Flint River, which flowed at an elevation much higher than the modern river. Within the modern floodplain, many of the topographic rises known as "sand hills" and "islands" probably represent isolated remnants of these Pleistocene terraces, although some may be dunes of eolian sand which accumulated on the surface of the modern floodplain (Figure 2.5 exhibits a projected cross-section of the Middle Flint River valley).

This modern floodplain is composed of sediments derived primarily from sources within the Piedmont, and along the Middle Flint River, these alluvial soils are of the Chewacla-Wehadkee- Alluvial Land association, described as "nearly level, moderately well drained to wet bottomlands

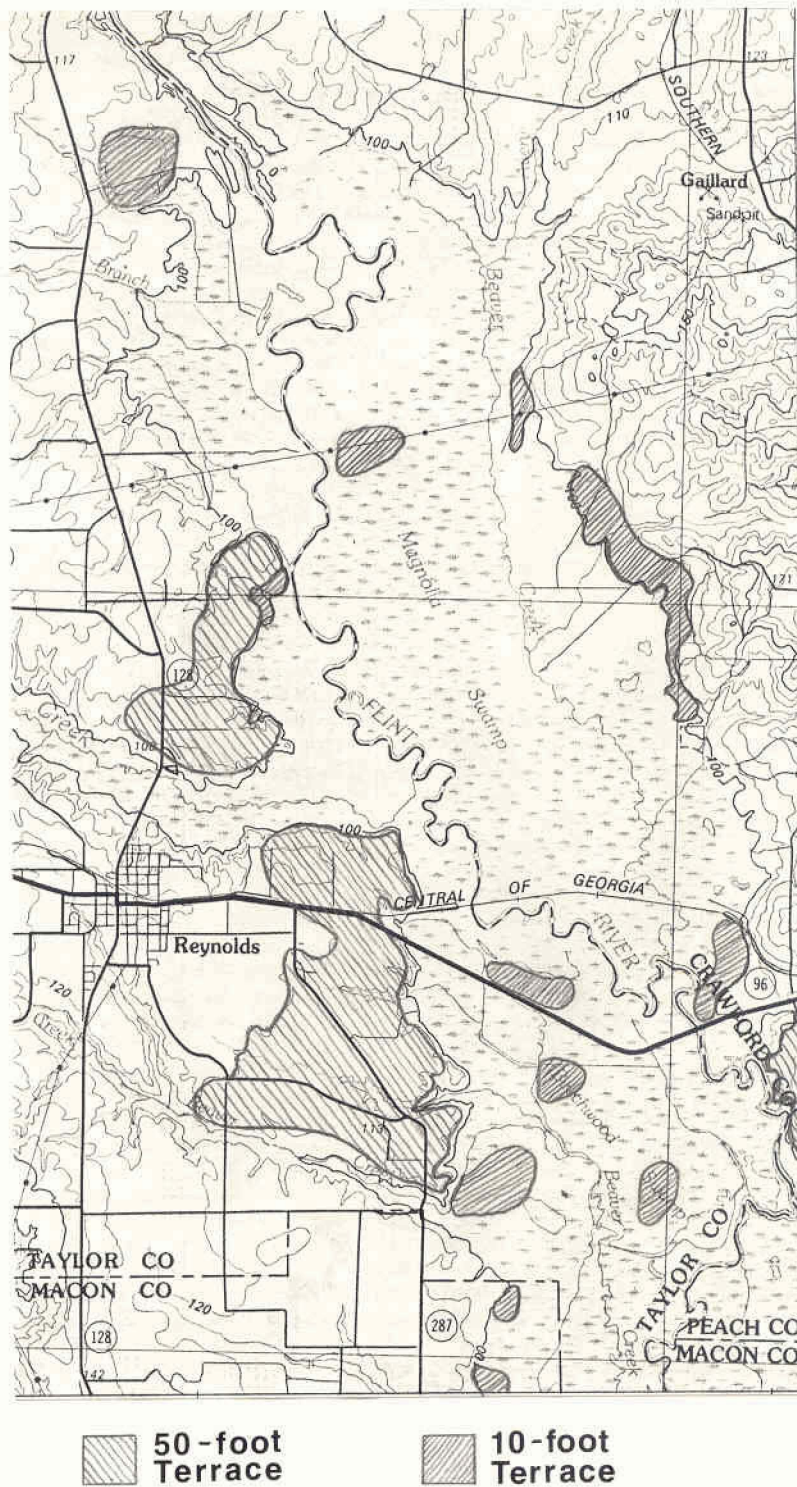


Figure 2.4

Pleistocene Terrace Remnants on the Middle Flint River

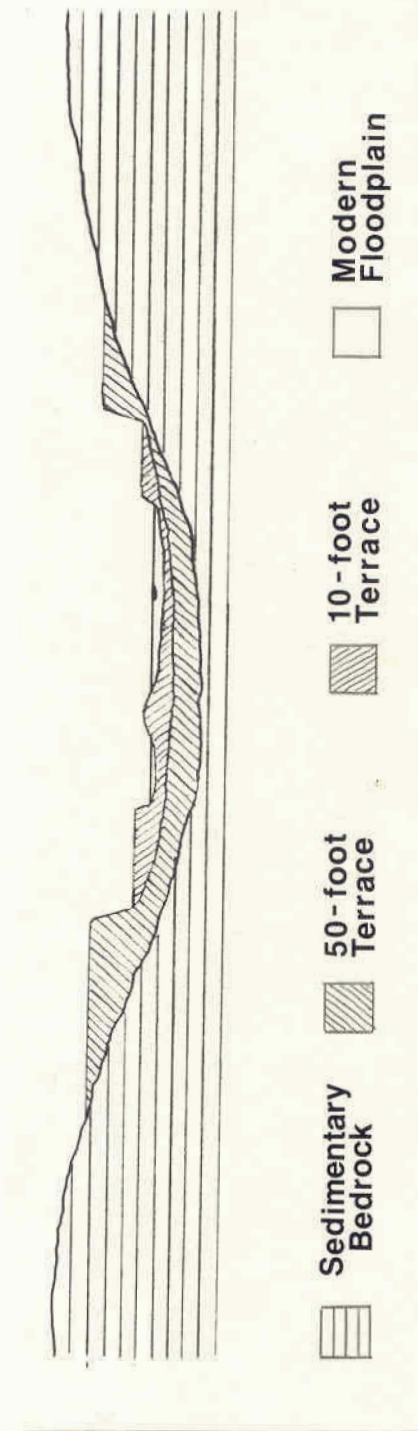


Figure 2.5
Projected Cross-Section of the Middle Flint River Valley

along large streams flowing from the Piedmont area"(1965 Soil Associations of Georgia map). Soils are "fine loamy textured throughout and drainage is variable." While the sediments comprising the northernmost portion of this floodplain derive almost exclusively from Piedmont soils, farther to the south, as the river flows across the upper Coastal Plain, these Piedmont sediments become increasingly mixed with those derived from the Coastal Plain. These Coastal Plain sediments, which have been subjected to weathering and transport before their original deposition as marine strata, are presumably somewhat less fertile than those derived from the Piedmont. Although the precise effects of this process are not known at this time, it seems clear that the nature of the sediments comprising the floodplain of the Middle Flint River -- specifically their texture, mineral content, and natural fertility -- must change with distance from the Fall Line.

This possibility may be reflected in a feature of the Middle Flint River noted by the author during survey in the swamp bottoms. Immediately below the Fall Line, levees bordering the river channel seem much larger and more pronounced in profile than they are along the lower portions of the 17-mile long section of floodplain. This may in part relate to the composition of the sediments carried by the river at various points below the Piedmont. The overall width of the floodplain also changes with distance from the Fall Line. While the floodplain expands to a width of three

miles immediately after the Flint flows onto the Coastal Plain, it constricts to a width of roughly half its original size at seventeen miles below the Fall Line, and remains at a width of no more than a mile and a half throughout the remaining 29 miles of the Middle Flint River.

As the Flint crosses the Fall Line it undergoes yet another change: the watershed within which the Flint flows becomes asymmetrical, with the great majority of the water entering the Flint coming from the western portion of the watershed. In the Piedmont, the watershed is comparatively balanced with regard to the area of land drained on each side of the river. Here, along the Upper Flint, the distance from the main river to the watershed boundary ranges from 12 to 20 miles on each side, averaging about 15 miles. Below the Fall Line, however, the eastern watershed boundary drops to only 10 miles average distance from the Flint, while the western watershed expands to 25 to 30 miles in width (Figure 2.2). A number of major creeks drain this western portion of the watershed, including Patsiliga, Whitewater, and Buck Creeks. These creeks are substantial in size, and often possess minor floodplains of over half a mile in width close to their confluence with the Flint. There are, in comparison, only a few large creeks draining the eastern watershed of the Middle Flint, and these are typically quite short in length.

In 1799, Benjamin Hawkins described the Flint River below the Fall Line, and his description seems to note many

of the same patterns in the physical environment which become apparent in the text above. He notes:

Flint river has below its falls some rich swamp, for not more than 20 miles. Its left side is then poor, with pine flats and ponds, down within 5 miles of its confluence with the Chattahoochee. These 15 miles is waving, with some good oak land in small veins. On its right bank are several large creeks, which rise out of the ridge dividing the waters of the Flint and Chattahoochee. Some of the creeks margined with oak woods and cane.

Hawkins (1980:285-6)

Hawkins makes particular note of the rich bottomlands below the Fall Line, within which the Flint meanders amidst good oak land (Hawkins' reference to "waving" seems to describe the sinuous course of the channel). He also points out the major creeks on the western side of the river, bordered with the oak woods and cane of their floodplains. There is additional note of the poor quality of the pine uplands below this rich swamp.

In general, the Middle Flint River floodplain gives every appearance of having been an island of rich, hardwood bottoms amidst an upper Coastal Plain region of pine barrens. The river seems to have occupied a bounded corridor of rich floodplain habitat, bordered to the east and west by pine uplands. As it flows southward through the Fall Line Hills District, the Middle Flint crosses a region currently dominated by forests of pine, particularly subclimax longleaf pine forests maintained by periodic fire (Braun 1950:285). Modern forests may contain more hardwoods

than in years past due to commercial fertilizers (Plummer (1975:16). These upland pine forests seem to have been dominant along the Middle Flint before European settlement, for an examination of the original land plats drawn up in 1827 for District 1, Section 2 of the original Muscogee County (plats on file at the Surveyor General's Office, Department of Archives and History in Atlanta) reveals that the uplands surrounding the main body of the sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion were characterized by a forest composed almost exclusively of pine, comprising 95 percent of the trees, with occasional oak and hickory trees amidst the pines.

This same survey also indicates that the floodplain itself, within the area currently known as Beechwood Swamp (see Figure 2.4), was forested by markedly different vegetation, including a great variety of hardwood species, dominated, interestingly, by 50 percent beech trees, as well as a diversity of holly, white oak, gum, bay, maple, poplar, ash, sassafras, and other trees adapted to the rich floodplain environment. Portions of the modern floodplain which have been spared logging activity for a number of years display a similar range of hardwood species, as well as extensive development of floodplain vegetation such as river cane, which occurs in vast stands at points in the bottoms of the Middle Flint. At one level of generalization, these floodplain forests may be characterized simply as hardwood bottoms, yet this does not

accurately reflect the diversity of bottomland habitats within the context of the floodplain. Braun (1950:291) recognizes three subdivisions: deep swamp forest, hardwood or glade bottoms, and ridge bottoms, or cane ridges. While it is clear that the distinctions between the vegetational patterns of these habitats within the swamp is crucial for an understanding of the entire floodplain environment, such a detailed examination of the Middle Flint River bottoms is beyond the scope of this study.

LOWER FLINT RIVER

At a point roughly 46 miles south of the Fall Line, somewhere under the northern end of modern Lake Blackshear, the Flint River valley emerges onto the Dougherty Plain District of the lower Coastal Plain. This region, underlain by Ocala Limestone of Eocene age, descends from elevations of 300 feet to 77 feet above sea level at the confluence of the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers (1976 Physiographic Map of Georgia). The karst topography is almost completely level, interrupted by a great number of limestone sinkholes, frequently forming ponds and swampy areas. The Lower Flint River curves gently to the west, ultimately flowing in a southwestern direction toward its confluence with the Chattahoochee River at the southwestern corner of Georgia (Figure 2.2). The watershed remains imbalanced as was described for the Middle Flint; the western watershed boundary ranges from 35 to 40 miles in distance from the

Lower Flint, a distance more than twice that of the eastern portion of the watershed. There are numerous outcrops of limestone along the Lower Flint, including the sources of chert which gave the Flint its name.

The river valley exhibits no measurable floodplain development throughout the 134 miles of the Lower Flint, but several of the creeks draining the western side of the Flint possess considerable swamp bottoms. Minor floodplains border Kinchafoone Creek and its major branch, Muckalee Creek, above 25 to 30 miles upstream from its confluence with the Flint some 41 miles south of the beginning of the Lower Flint. Much greater floodplain development is seen along several branches of Ichawaynochaway Creek, which enters the Flint 47 miles south of Kinchafoone. Both Ichawaynochaway and Pachitla Creeks possess small floodplains above their confluence 24 miles from the Flint, and Chiskasawhatchee Creek flows through a swamp bottom up to 2 miles wide between 20 and 30 miles above its confluence with the Flint. Although separated by upland terrain, these creekbottom floodplains are within close proximity of each other, and as such form a larger region characterized by isolated but considerable floodplain environments on the western side of the Lower Flint, to the west of modern-day Albany, Georgia. This region is thus marked by the second-largest development of floodplains along the entire Flint River, overshadowed only by the major floodplain immediately below the Fall Line.

It seems evident that the Lower Flint, while similar in some ways to the Middle Flint in the upper Coastal Plain, was characterized by a physical environment notably different from other portions of the river, perhaps in part due to the limestone bedrock, resulting in distinct topographic, hydrologic, and vegetational characteristics. Benjamin Hawkins noted that:

All the branches have reed for seventy miles below the falls; from thence down it is bay galls and dwarf evergreens, cypress ponds, with some live oak...Within 25 miles of the confluence of the rivers, the live oak is to be seen near all the ponds, and here are limestone sinks; the lands are rich in veins of the flats and on the margins of the rivers. The trees of every description are generally small.

Hawkins 1980:286

The character of the Dougherty Plain through which the Lower Flint flows was dominated by stunted vegetation adapted to the limestone bedrock and karst topography, offset by occasional rich land along the southernmost reaches of the river and at points in the uplands. Plummer (1975:13) found that the early nineteenth century forests in this area of the Dougherty Plain were dominated by pine and pine-sweet gum forests.

It seems evident that the Lower Flint, while similar in some ways to the Middle Flint in the upper Coastal Plain, was characterized by a physical environment distinct from other portions of the river, perhaps in large part due to

the limestone bedrock, resulting in distinct topographic, hydrologic, and vegetational characteristics.

OVERVIEW

It is evident from the above descriptions that the Flint River flows across several distinct physiographic regions in Georgia, and thus changes markedly along its 278 mile southerly course toward the Gulf of Mexico. It originates within the Piedmont, flowing rapidly across the weathered crystalline and metamorphic bedrock, cutting deep valleys and crossing broad shoals in its Upper portion. The Flint empties onto the comparatively level Coastal Plain after crossing the Fall Line and begins to meander within a broad floodplain which gradually constricts amid the pine uplands of the Fall Line Hills. Flowing onto the Dougherty Plain, the Flint runs amidst level karst topography punctuated by numerous limestone sinks until it joins the Chattahoochee before emptying into the sea as the Apalachicola River. The Flint River is quite diverse in character, but individual stretches of the river, such as the Middle Flint under consideration in this study, exhibit a degree of internal coherence and homogeneity which makes them useful analytic units for intensive examination.

CHAPTER THREE

1986 TEST EXCAVATIONS AT HARTLEY-POSEY MOUND (9Tr12)

INTRODUCTION

An important dimension of this study was the construction of a Mississippian Period ceramic chronology which permitted the placement of regional Mississippian sites within a more refined temporal framework. Test excavations were carried out in both Hartley-Posey (9Tr12) and Neisler (9Tr1) Mounds in order to obtain stratified ceramic collections to be used in accomplishing this goal. Since little to no information was previously available regarding the nature and age of these mounds, test excavations additionally provided the first information on the dates of mound construction at both sites. Such information was then employed along with regional survey results in order to reveal the existence of centralized administrative authority during each Mississippian phase, specifically as an indicator of chiefdom-level society.

Test excavations at other Lamar platform mounds in northern Georgia, such as Dyar (9Ge5) (Smith 1981) in the Oconee valley, have revealed that debris from the mound summit was frequently dumped off the side of the mound, typically along the northeast slope. Excavation of such

deposits of accumulated debris often yields large stratified ceramic collections which serve to date periods of mound construction and use. Based on this observed pattern, subsurface testing at both Hartley-Posey and Neisler Mounds was directed at the base of the northeastern slope of each mound. Posthole tests were placed along the mound flank to determine the area of greatest ceramic concentration, and test pits were excavated through these "Northeast Dumps" in order to obtain a large stratified collection of pottery for dating purposes.

Chapters Three and Four present the results of test excavations at Hartley-Posey and Neisler Mounds. The physical setting and history of each site are presented, and the excavation procedure and stratigraphy of each testpit is described. Ceramic tables are presented as a part of these chapters, but the ceramic chronology constructed from this data is presented in Chapter Five.

SETTING

Hartley-Posey Mound (9Tr12), located on the west side of the Middle Flint River near Reynolds, Georgia, is the smaller of the pair of aboriginal platform mounds located just below the Fall Line. It is situated on a peninsular remnant of a relict Pleistocene alluvial terrace which rises to roughly fifty feet above the modern Flint River floodplain (Figure 3.1). This terrace is located on the western border of the large floodplain expansion below

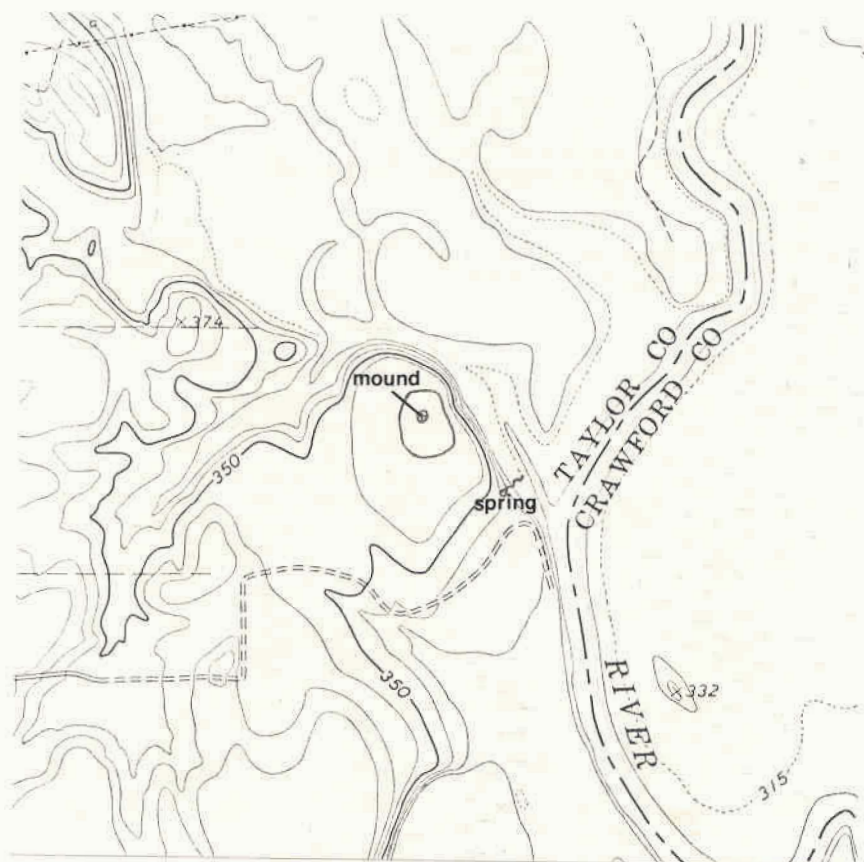


Figure 3.1
Hartley-Posey Mound (9Tr12)

the Fall Line, and is thus placed with direct and easy access to the widest floodplain on the entire Flint River. The summit of the terrace is quite flat, and although the topography slopes gradually away to the south and west, where it joins the uplands bordering the floodplain, an extremely steep bluff borders the terrace to the north and particularly to the east. A creek flows against the base of this bluff, connecting with a wide meander of the Flint River some 1400 feet from the mound. A seep or spring emerges at the base of the bluff to the south of the mound, providing a relatively constant source of clear water.

The mound is flat-topped and roughly circular in shape, rising to a height of just under four meters. The summit is slightly less than eighteen meters in diameter. Ceramic debris contemporaneous with the mound is densely scattered across the surface of the terrace immediately around the mound and extending to the bluff edge on the east. A USDA aerial photograph of the site taken in 1942 (Figure 3.2) shows dark midden deposits extending from west of the mound to the bluff edge, roughly corresponding to the observed surface distribution of Mississippian ceramics. This photo additionally shows details of the midden distribution across the site, revealing what may be the remains of structure floors or other features such as pits, ditches, or walls. Further subsurface testing at the site is clearly needed to explore this possibility. Limited posthole testing in the village area around the mound

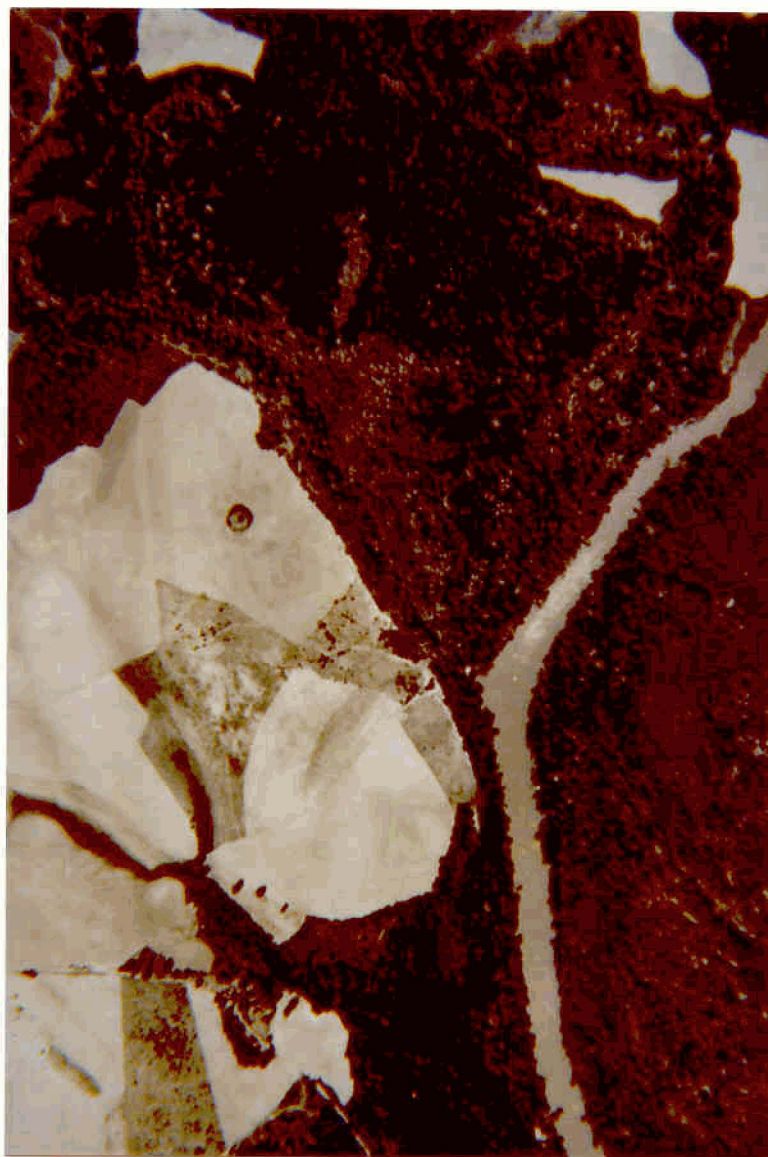


Figure 3.2

1942 Aerial Photograph of 9Tr12

revealed a plowzone depth of approximately 30 cm. No midden deposits were found in these tests below the plowzone, indicating that surficial village deposits have been largely destroyed by plowing and erosion. Subsurface features such as postmolds, pits, and perhaps semisubterranean structure floors may remain in some locations.

SITE HISTORY

There is no evidence for aboriginal occupation at the site subsequent to the termination of mound construction. It is possible that the intact remains of this prehistoric village may have been visible as late as the end of the eighteenth century. Benjamin Hawkins noted the remains of an abandoned Indian village which was almost certainly at this location. He describes this town, called Coocohapofe, as follows:

On the right bank here was formerly an old town; the fields were cultivated on the left bank; the swamp three miles through; on that side large sassafrass.

Hawkins 1916:173

Hawkins places this town five miles downriver from the Fall Line crossing of the Old Horse Path (or Lower Creek Trading Path), and three miles above the Yuchi town of Padgeeligau, which has been located by the author at Brunson Field (sites described in Chapter Six). Goff (1975:343) locates the town in the immediate vicinity of Thornton's Bluff, on which Hartley-Posey Mound rests, although he was unable to

discover the mound despite the aid of local informants. The meaning of the name Coocohapofe, translated by Goff (1975:342), is "By Canes Ground", which certainly corresponds to the location of Hartley-Posey directly across the Flint River from a vast canebrake explored by the this author in Magnolia Swamp.

If this is the location of Coocohapofe, then the absence of any evidence of aboriginal occupation at the site postdating 1550 may imply that Hawkins was referring to the visible remains of the sixteenth century Hartley-Posey Mound Site. Perhaps even more surprising is his descriptions of the agricultural fields across the river from the site. Although this location is logical based on the position of the Flint River directly below the occupational area, it seems doubtful that evidence of aboriginal fields would last over two centuries. Unless evidence of historic Creek or Yuchi occupation in this vicinity is found in the future, however, it is probable that the remains of the Hartley-Posey Mound Site were known as the town of Coocohapofe among the historic Creeks.

Soon after the lands west of the Flint River were distributed to Georgians in 1827, the terrace upon which Hartley-Posey Mound rests was subjected to intensive farming, which apparently continued until only recently, when the terrace was planted in pines. While the site was in an open plowed field, local collectors recovered a large number of artifacts spanning the range of human occupation

in the region. The mound itself, however, remained relatively unmolested, save for a few small potholes, one large pothole in the center of the summit, and a somewhat recent attempt to recover artifacts using a bulldozer. This activity fortunately only resulted in the removal of a wide, sloping cut out of the western side of the mound, extending to the summit. Damage appears to have been minimal to the bulk of the mound. The site is presently forested, and there are no immediate plans for further destructive activities.

PROCEDURE

Prior to excavation, posthole tests were placed along the eastern and northern flank of Hartley-Posey Mound in order to discern the precise area of greatest artifactual concentration. Seven postholes were excavated, and based on the heavy concentration of sherds encountered on the northeast side of the mound, a one by two meter test trench was staked out in this location. Running directly into the mound slope from a point just above the mound base, the trench was oriented at precisely 45 degrees east of north. In order to facilitate the recording of data, an arbitrary north was designated at true northeast.

Test Trench #1 was excavated in arbitrary levels ranging in thickness between 10 and 20 cm. These levels were begun and ended in most cases where differences in soil

texture or artifactual density were noted during excavation, but the nature of the excavation technique, employing a mattock and shovel to remove each level, was not precise enough to follow natural stratigraphy as later revealed in the profile. Consequently, Test Trench #1 must be considered excavation by arbitrary levels, although the levels were not uniform in thickness. Soil from each level was dry screened through a 1/4 inch mesh, and all artifacts recovered were bagged separately. No attempt was made to save unmodified rock, and only charcoal samples potentially large enough for dating were preserved. Only large or well preserved bone and shell was saved in special containers; the remaining faunal material was bagged with the other artifacts.

Upon contact with the sterile subsoil underlying the mound, the profiles and floor of the trench were troweled and recorded. The south profile displayed relatively clear natural stratigraphy, and the decision was made to excavate a second trench adjacent to the first in order to follow the natural stratigraphy revealed in that profile. Test Trench #2 was excavated using similar techniques, although care was taken to follow the natural layers evident in the south profile of Test Trench #1. Thick layers were excavated in multiple arbitrary units, following the slope of the strata. As before, artifacts from each unit were 1/4 inch dry screened and bagged separately. The base and profiles of Test Trench #2 were mapped.

Two primary factors made it difficult to follow precisely the natural stratigraphy: lack of continuity in certain layers evident in the south profile of Test Trench #1, and two pits encountered during excavation which cross-cut several strata. The excavation technique, employing a mattock and shovel to remove each layer, shovel scraping only at the base, compounded these problems. As a result, the excavation units of Test Trench #2 do not precisely follow the natural stratigraphy, although they are considerably closer to it than the levels of Test Trench #1.

STRATIGRAPHY

The sterile subsoil upon which all cultural deposits rest is a yellow sandy loam, homogenous in character and devoid of artifactual debris. This layer presumably represents the terminal alluvial deposit of the relic riverine terrace on which the site rests. It is overlain by a dark brown organic midden roughly 20 cm thick, which contains artifacts associated with human activity at the site before mound construction began. The contact between this Premound Midden and the sterile subsoil below is not sharply defined, and artifacts appear throughout both the transitional zone and the midden layer itself.

At the contact layer between the sterile subsoil and the Premound Midden, there is evidence of a lithic scatter which predates the Mississippian period. One ground based quartz Palmer point, a ground based chert Kirk or Bolen

point, which had been reworked into a hafted scraper, and the ground base of another chert Kirk point, along with a number of chert and quartz flakes, were recovered from this contact layer. These artifacts reveal the existence of an Early Archaic occupation at this point on the terrace millenia before the mound was begun.

Extending from the Premound Midden down into the sterile subsoil is evidence of at least seven postmolds between 7 and 9 cm in diameter (Figure 3.3), as well as three pit features, one of which originates higher in the mound and will be discussed later. The postmolds are aligned in an arc facing eastward from the center of the testpit, and almost certainly constitute a portion of the wall of a circular structure or square structure with rounded corners. One postmold was bisected and found to slant roughly 6 degrees off perpendicular, leaning directly away from the projected center of the structure. A pit feature (Feature 2) was discovered just inside the arc of posts, and is of a size and shape to suggest that it may be a burial associated with the structure. The pit, originating at the base of the Premound Midden layer, was not excavated. No additional features attributable to the structure were discovered; the central area of the structure, including its hearth, should lie immediately to the east of the testpit, if they have not been disturbed by plowing beside the mound.

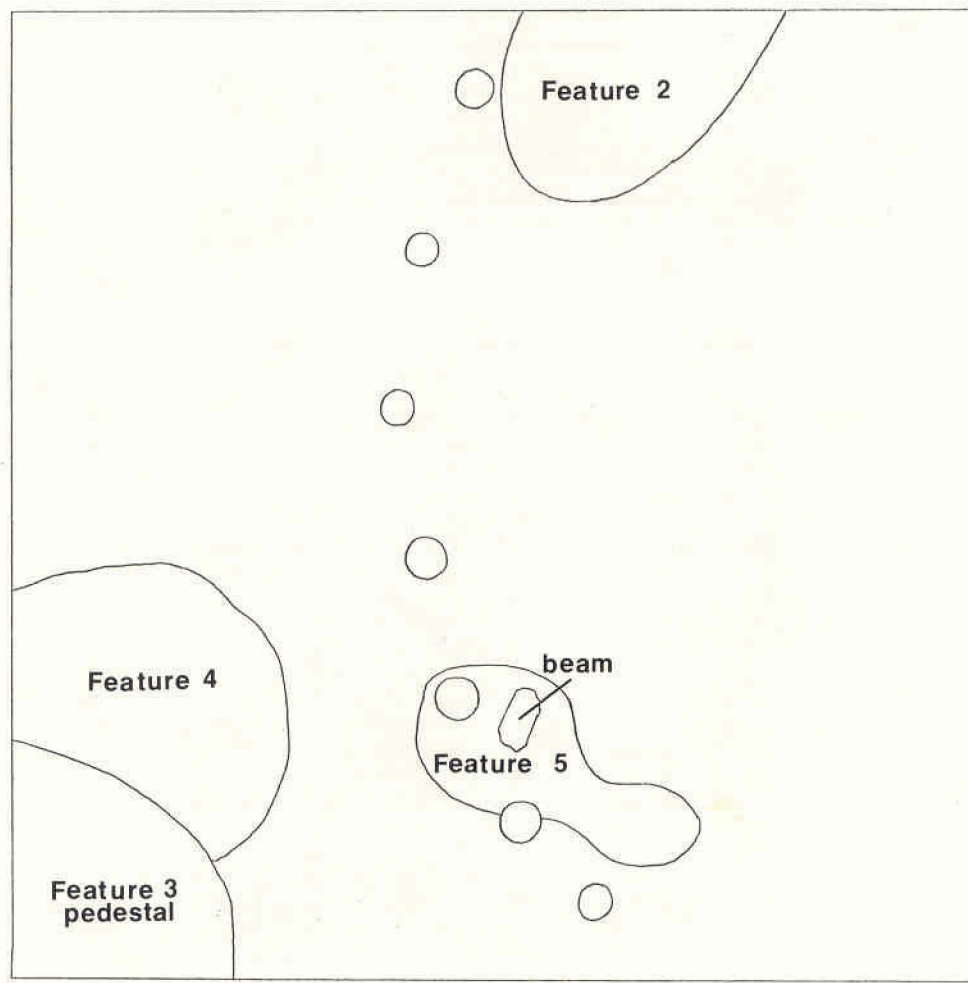


Figure 3.3

Base of Hartley-Posey Testpit

Two of the postmolds of the premound structure intruded upon an irregular pit feature which predates the structure. Within this midden-filled pit was a 15 cm long section of an intact wooden post, possibly burned in place beneath the ground. Its orientation and association with the irregular pit feature predating the structure suggest that it was not a part of the premound structure already described, and may date to an earlier occupation of the site. The charred post was preserved for identification and possible carbon dating, although its cultural affiliation is not clear.

This Premound Midden stratum contained a number of potsherds (Tables 3.1 and 3.2), which upon examination indicate that it was deposited during the Brunson Phase (defined in Chapter Five), between A.D. 1150 and 1225. While there is no direct evidence to associate the structure originating in the Premound stratum with the Brunson Phase occupation, the lack of artifacts dating to any period other than the Early Archaic suggests that the structure was built by the Brunson Phase occupants of the site.

The Premound Midden is largely indistinguishable in both color and texture from the overlying stratum, here interpreted as the first mound stage. In the western end of the testpit, a distinct layer of orange-tan sandy loam with small river-worn pebbles capped the Premound Midden, separating it from the dark brown midden sediment comprising Mound Stage I (Figure 3.4). This gravelly layer contained

Table 3.1
Sherd Counts for Hartley-Posey Test Trench #1

CERAMICS	EXCAVATION UNIT										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Etowah Comp. St. Motif	-	3	2	3	3	7	5	6	1	13	-
Savannah Comp. St. Motif	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Lamar Comp. St. Motif	-	-	2	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	-
Rectilinear Comp. St.	5	22	16	17	22	11	11	2	-	20	1
Curvilinear Comp. St.	10	35	11	10	11	6	21	3	-	13	-
U. D. Comp. St.	15	11	52	39	32	13	14	6	4	22	1
Lamar Incised	1	11	7	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lamar Check Stamped	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Etowah Red Filmed	-	1	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	-
Corncob Marked	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shell Tempered Plain	10	5	9	26	8	9	9	4	-	-	-
Dallas Incised	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Abercrombie Incised	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dallas Filleted	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Plain	46	143	83	95	80	70	91	73	15	91	4
TOTAL	88	237	185	199	164	121	154	97	21	162	6
Natural Strata	IV			II, III			I			PM	

Table 3.2
Sherd Counts for Hartley-Posey Test Trench #2

CERAMICS	EXCAVATION UNIT										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Etowah Comp. St. Motif	4	2	3	1	-	9	5	1	4	5	2
Savannah Comp. St. Motif	-	-	1	3	3	2	2	-	1	2	2
Lamar Comp. St. Motif	-	2	3	1	1	2	1	-	1	-	-
Rectilinear Comp. St.	4	8	7	6	9	14	8	4	6	3	2
Curvilinear Comp. St.	7	7	15	20	6	11	10	2	17	2	1
U. D. Comp. St.	39	31	42	54	22	41	6	4	19	8	-
Lamar Incised	7	3	4	7	2	-	2	-	1	-	-
Lamar Check Stamped	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Etowah Red Filmed	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Corncob Marked	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Shell Tempered Plain	17	9	16	23	11	14	9	2	4	-	-
Dallas Incised	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Abercrombie Incised	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dallas Filleted	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Plain	70	48	63	120	73	76	89	5	82	35	12
TOTAL	148	114	156	237	128	171	132	18	143	55	19
Natural Strata	IV				II, III			I			PM

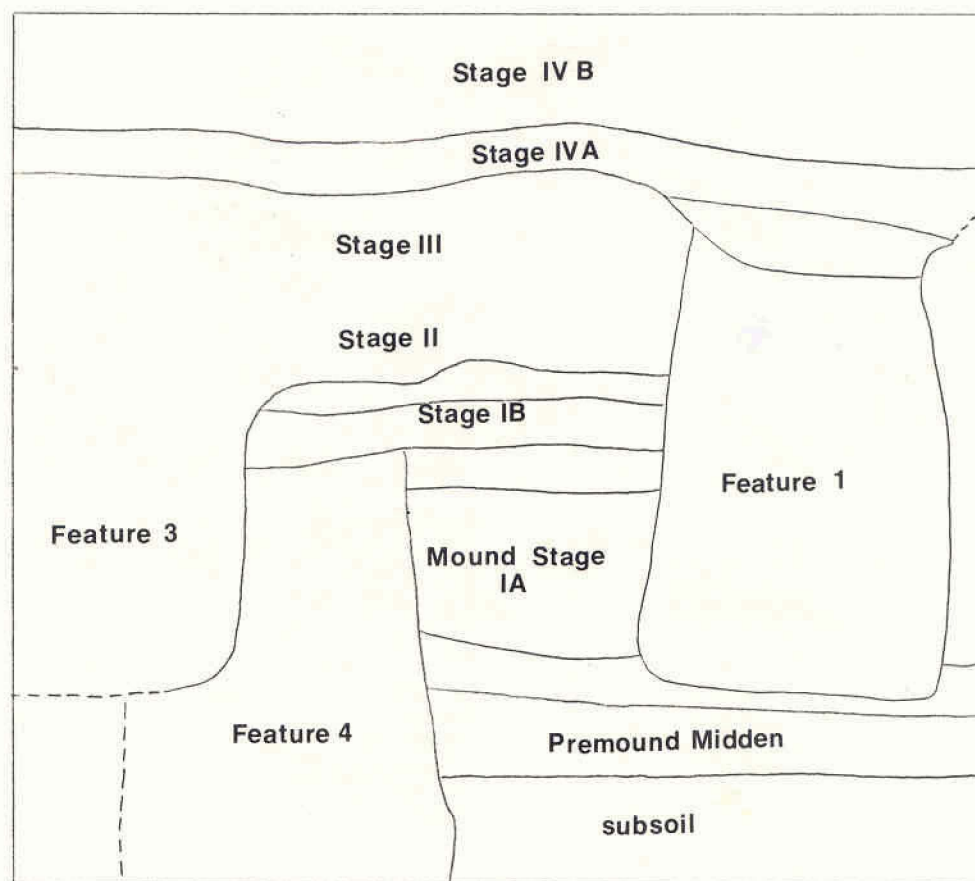


Figure 3.4
West Profile of Hartley-Posey Testpit

few artifacts or other cultural debris, and may be interpreted in one of several ways. It may represent a core deposit of material laid down as a preface to the erection of Mound Stage I using midden soils, or it may be the base of the slope of an earlier mound stage which predates Mound Stage I, but which did not extend eastward into this testpit. In the absence of further data, Mound Stage I is presumed to represent the initial construction of Hartley-Posey Mound, although future work may alter this conclusion.

Primary construction on Mound Stage I includes the addition of midden soil, probably taken from portions of the site with earlier occupations. The maximum height of this stratum in the testpit is 45 cm above the surface of the Premound Midden (Figure 3.4). This fill deposit was then capped by a layer of slightly mottled orange and dark brown sandy loam with river-worn pebbles. This entire construction will be designated Stratum A of Mound Stage I. The time span between the completion of this construction and the next event is uncertain, but a large pit feature (Feature 4), probably a burial based on size and shape, was excavated through the cap layer in the western end of the testpit, and another cap layer, similar to but more densely concentrated than the first, was added on top of previous sediments. Above this cap layer is a zone of mottled dark brown loam and decomposed tan daub, possibly associated with a mound summit structure. Artifactual debris was present in

this layer. Based on the thinness of the sediments deposited after Feature 4 was excavated, this addition will be identified as Stratum B of Mound Stage I, as the entire sequence may be associated with a single construction event, punctuated by mortuary activities involving Feature 4.

Artifactual debris was primarily ceramic, including three pottery discoidals. Ceramic analysis (Tables 3.1 and 3.2) reveals that Mound Stage I was completed during the Thornton Phase (defined in Chapter Five), between A.D. 1350 and 1450. This late date for the construction of Mound Stage I would suggest a gap of over 125 years between the deposition of the Premound Midden and the initiation of mound construction. Although this could result from the fact that the testpit may have missed early stages of mound construction which predate the Thornton Phase, there is no evidence on this site, or any other site in the survey area, of an intermediate occupation. The possibility of regional abandonment will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Before Mound Stage II was begun, Feature 3, a human burial pit, was excavated into the side of Mound Stage I, intruding into the fill of Feature 4 (Figures 3.4 and 3.5). The articulated feet of the adult individual buried in this pit extended into the testpit. This burial seems to have immediately preceded the addition of dark brown midden sediments for Mound Stage II, for no distinct boundary between burial fill and moundfill was noted in the profile.

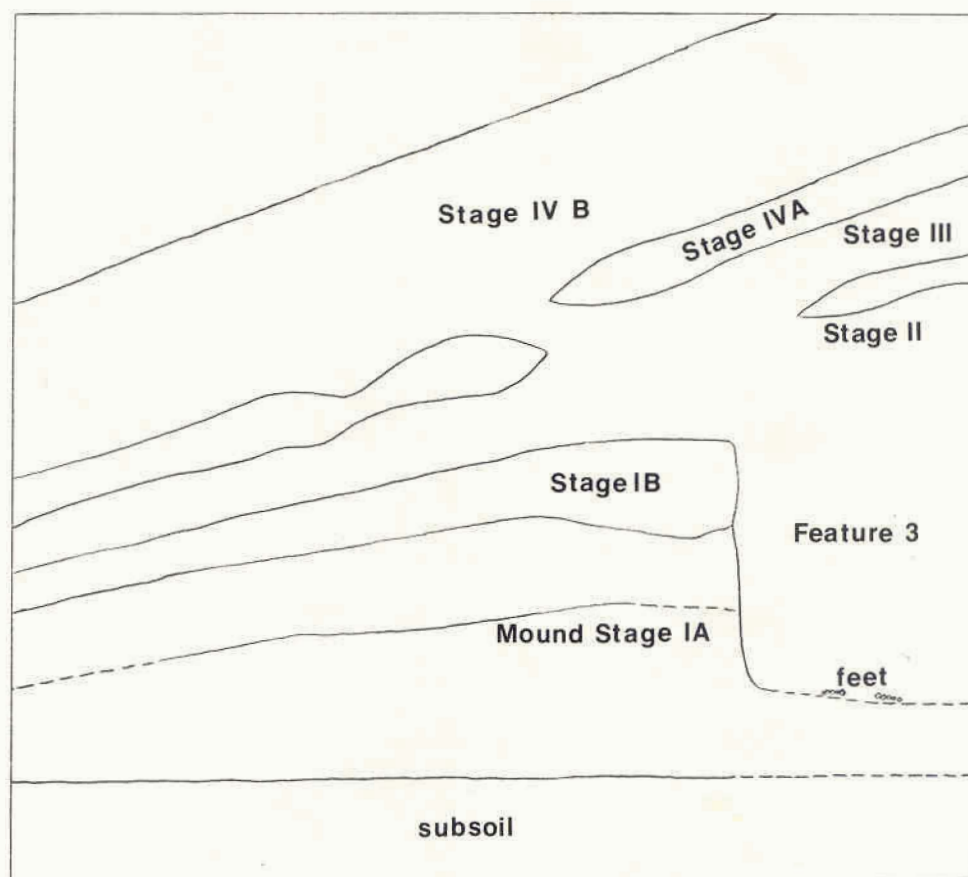


Figure 3.5
South Profile of Hartley-Posey Testpit

Mound Stages II and III, both composed of dark brown loam containing artifacts, are separated by a lens of debris noted in the southwest corner of the testpit (Figure 3.5). This debris layer, containing decomposed daub, charred wood, and river-worn pebbles, is very similar in nature to the large debris layer overlying Mound Stage III (discussed below), and probably represents a summit structure-burning event which divides Stages II and III. Only a small portion of this debris layer was encountered in the test pit, making interpretations difficult. Ceramic debris included two pottery discoidals.

After the addition of Mound Stage III, Feature 1, again probably a burial due to size and shape, was excavated deep into the mound, cutting across Mound Stages I, II, and III (Figure 3.4). A large fragment of the bit of a well-polished greenstone or fine-grained diabase celt was recovered within the pit fill, as was a phalanx bone of a bear (Ursus americanus). The pit was capped with a lens of reddish clay, and probably immediately thereafter covered with an extensive debris layer. This layer is composed of large quantities of densely packed daub and charcoal, including many large chunks, as well as river-worn pebbles and artifacts. The layer extends down the mound slope a good distance, and partially overlaps a layer of light brown mottled loam with pebbles on the lower slope of Mound Stage III, the origin of which is undetermined. The entire deposit may represent debris from the burning of a structure

on the summit of Mound Stage III in anticipation of Mound Stage IV construction, and as such will be designated Stratum A of Mound Stage IV.

The bulk of Mound Stage IV is composed of dark brown loam, which extends to the present surface of the modern humus layer. There is no evidence of a debris layer capping this final Stratum B of Mound Stage IV, suggesting that no summit structure-burning episode may have occurred before the mound was abandoned. Artifacts recovered within this terminal mound stage include fragments of two ground greenstone celts, five pottery discoidals, and one small quartzite discoidal, as well as a large amount of ceramic debris. A small fragment of a crystalline quartz bead was recovered from Mound Stage IV, probably from within the debris layer preceding the final addition of moundfill. This artifact may be of considerable significance, as will be noted in Chapter Seven. Based on the ceramics recovered in Mound Stages II, III, and IV, it is possible to date these construction events to the Lockett Phase (defined in Chapter Five), dating between A.D. 1450 and 1550 (Tables 3.1 and 3.2). There is no evidence of either mound construction or habitation at the site after roughly A.D. 1550, suggesting abandonment.

It is important to note that inferences proposed here regarding mound construction stages are based on profiles from a single testpit near the base of the mound slope. Even presuming a correct interpretation of these

profiles, evidence for other stages and events in mound construction almost certainly exists in other sections of the mound. Only extensive excavations, neither likely nor necessarily desirable in the near future, would truly clarify the situation. As further work in the near future is quite unlikely, it was deemed appropriate to designate tentative mound stages based on even this limited data.

CHAPTER FOUR

1987 TEST EXCAVATIONS AT NEISLER MOUND (9Tr1)

SETTING

Neisler Mound (9Tr1) is the larger and better known of the two platform mound sites located immediately below the Fall Line on the Middle Flint River. It is located within the active floodplain on the western side of the river just north of the point where it begins to meander within the broad alluvial plain (Figure 4.1). The mound is situated on a small rise in the floodplain, a topographic feature which today serves to elevate the mound and surrounding village deposits above the winter water-level of the swamp. This island is a considerable distance from the uplands flanking the edge of the valley, and only about 900 feet from the modern river channel. Between the mound and the river is a series of natural levee ridges, one forming a part of the active river channel, the other two lying along relic channels to the west of the modern one. All three run roughly north-south, paralleling the river.

A series of exploratory posthole tests were placed in the island around the mound and along the natural levees in order to discern the extent of occupational debris associated with the mound. Midden sediment was present to a

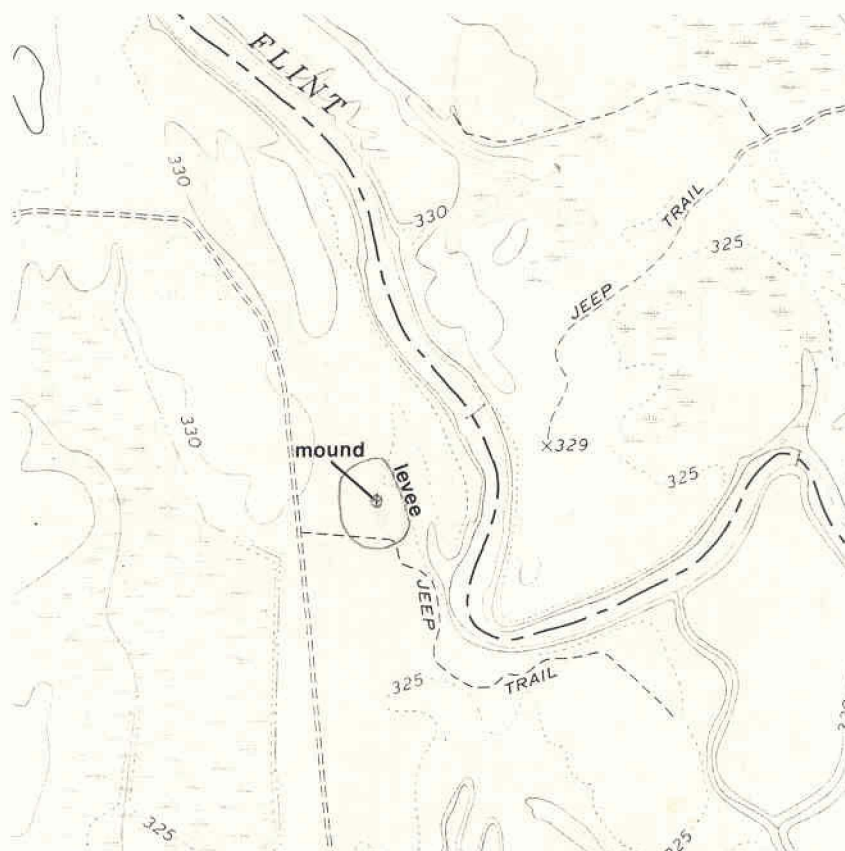


Figure 4.1
Neisler Mound (9Tr1)

depth of 80 cm. southwest of the mound base toward the center of the island, although up to nearly half a meter of modern plowzone churning has destroyed the integrity of the upper portions of the midden. During the winter when these postholes were placed, the high groundwater level impeded subsurface sampling to the extent that the base of the midden sediments could not be reached in postholes toward the center of the island, suggesting that modern water tables are comparatively higher than they were during late prehistoric times. The natural levee closest to the mound, just to the east of the island, displayed considerable midden deposits, ranging between 55 and 70 cm. thick. These deposits extend approximately 150 meters north and south of the mound along the levee. Artifactual debris recovered on the surface around the island suggest that the village surrounding Neisler Mound was quite large, probably covering all the high ground on the island and extending 300 meters along the summit of the nearest levee ridge, placing it somewhere in the range of 9 hectares in area.

The mound itself rests on the northeastern end of the island, separated from the occupied natural levee by a swampy bottom (the origin of which is unclear, as will be noted below). The mound is quite large, rising to a height of roughly seven meters above the surface of the island. The summit is very broad, between twenty-five and thirty meters in diameter, and appears to have been largely level, although this judgement is difficult to make due to recent

digging. There is no clear evidence of any ramp-like structure on the mound slope, although a detailed topographic map may reveal the remnants of such a feature.

These descriptions are based on brief and inadequate reconnaissance of the site, and further testing should produce a far more clear picture of the village remains associated with the mound. In the absence of a topographic map, accompanied by systematic subsurface sampling, the original configuration of the site remains problematic, in particular due to a number of destructive forces, both human and natural in origin, which may have served to alter the site considerably over the centuries since its abandonment.

SITE HISTORY

While there is no evidence of aboriginal activity on the site after the final abandonment of the mound during the sixteenth century, the years following 1827, when the land was allotted to white citizens of Georgia, witnessed a considerable amount of destructive activity. Sometime during this period, the relatively level summit of the island on which the mound rests was subjected to farming, which seems to have continued until only recently, when the field was put in pasture. Far more significant destruction occurred sometime before the Civil War, when the owners of the land constructed an earthen dike extending to the north and south of the mound, which seems to have itself served as a part of this flood control system for the landowners. The

earth for the dike was evidently scraped up in mule-drawn pans from the swamp bottom to the east of the dike and west of the aboriginally occupied natural levee. This apparently deepened an earlier relic river channel, and with the additional presence of the dike blocking water flow to the west, this area has been subjected to extreme fluvial scouring and erosion. The degree to which this area was aboriginally occupied may never be discerned, although several intact burials associated with midden soils have been encountered by local residents in high spots in this zone. These small rises could be the remnants of low house-mounds, or may rather be all that remains of a once level midden deposit which was largely destroyed by dike-building and erosional activities. Further evidence for this is the presence of a large amount of artifactual debris within the dike itself, which remains largely intact today. When the dike broke in 1981, artifacts were scattered across the site, suggesting that the dike may be composed almost entirely of village midden.

An additional result of intensive land use by late nineteenth and early twentieth century white farmers was a substantially increased rate of erosion in the uplands of the Southern Piedmont and a consequent increase in stream sediment loads, resulting in increased alluviation of the floodplains of many rivers, a phenomenon which has been well documented by Trimble (1969, 1973). Although archaeological sites within Piedmont floodplains are known to be covered by

as much as 1.5 meters of recent alluvium, posthole testing at Neisler Mound demonstrates that only 15 cm. of alluvium caps midden deposits in lowlying portions of the site, with the majority of the site completely unaffected by recent alluviation. While this may be due in part to the presence of the dike across the middle of the site, Trimble (1975) indicates that less than 5 percent of this increased stream sediment load ever crossed the Fall Line into the Coastal Plain during the nineteenth-century, remaining instead in the Piedmont itself.

In the late 1920's, Margaret E. Ashley, an amateur working with Warren K. Moorehead of the Peabody Museum, evidently conducted somewhat extensive excavations at Neisler Mound. These activities are here included under destructive activity, for no report was ever assembled, and if any field notes ever existed, they have been lost. Photographs taken by Frank Schnell, Sr. of Columbus, who participated in the dig, show that long, narrow trenches were excavated into the summit of the mound, and several larger trenches were dug in the village area, probably to the west of the mound. Burials seem to have been encountered by Ashley, but there is no record of any of the results.

Sometime in the 1930's, the famous Neisler Dog Effigy Bottle was discovered on the site, although the location is unknown. This vessel was bought by Mr. Neisler from the boy who found it, and has been preserved by the

family. The vessel is currently on permanent loan to the Columbus Museum of Arts and Sciences. Other reconstructed vessels which may have been recovered from Neisler during the WPA era at Ocmulgee are also in Columbus.

In recent years, human disturbance of the site seems to have been limited to random digging in the mound summit and slopes, and on the island and occupied levee. While the specific results of such activities are unknown, burials are reported from west of the mound on the island. Maxwell Duke of Fort Valley has assembled the most complete collection of artifacts from the site, most of which were recovered after the dike broke in 1981, allowing flood erosion to scour midden deposits to the north and south of the mound.

In general, then, current knowledge of the site is confused by post-abandonment destructive forces. The village deposits on the island are undoubtedly highly disturbed, except for the area immediately adjacent to the mound. The mound itself is in excellent shape overall, although the summit has been considerably churned by digging, and several large potholes extend relatively deep into the slopes. The least impacted area of the site is the natural levee to the east; this has never been plowed, and only a small number of potholes have disturbed the thick mantle of midden deposits. In an overall perspective, then, the Neisler site represents an excellent potential for excavation and further research.

EXCAVATION PROCEDURE

The goal of test excavations at Neisler Mound was precisely the same as that for Hartley-Posey Mound (9Tr12), tested in 1986: the recovery of a stratified ceramic sample from the mound slope in order to date periods of mound construction and use. A series of eleven posthole tests were placed along the mound slope to discern the relative concentrations of pottery at various positions around the mound. As at Hartley-Posey, the greatest concentration of ceramic debris was encountered precisely at the northeast corner. A pair of one by two meter testpits were staked out to form a single two by two meter pit originating on the lower portion of the mound slope. These pits were oriented such that an arbitrary north was established at 45 degrees west of actual north.

The southern half of the testpit, Trench #1, was excavated first. Shovels and a mattock were used to remove sediment, which was then screened through one of two sifters, one with 1/2 inch mesh, the other with 1/4 inch mesh. Excavation units were distinguished by changes in soil color, texture, or composition, and generally followed the mound slope until horizontal strata were encountered. Large units were subdivided into several arbitrary units, generally 20 cm thick, in order to provide stratigraphic separation. The floor of each unit was scraped and features mapped; pit or posthole features were then excavated and bagged separately from the next unit, or were pedestaled for

later excavation. Once sterile clay had been contacted at a depth of nearly three meters, the north profile was mapped in preparation for the excavation of the second trench.

The northern half of the testpit, Trench #2, was excavated using the same technique employed at Hartley-Posey Mound in 1986; excavation units comprised natural strata evident in the north profile of Trench #1, and soil was peeled back from each break in the profile, following the natural strata as closely as possible. Thick strata were again subdivided into arbitrary levels. Due to the complex stratigraphy of the Premound strata overlying the sterile clay, the observed natural levels could not be separated, and thus the division between the final two excavation units was largely arbitrary. Upon completion of Trench 2, all remaining profiles were mapped, and the pit was backfilled.

STRATIGRAPHY

The sterile subsoil upon which this mound rests is an extremely dense clay which displays a range of mottled colors including shades of yellow, orange, red, and grey. Sandy loams immediately overlying this subsoil are markedly less dense, and defining the boundary between these strata is a simple task. This subsoil is completely devoid of artifacts, and was almost certainly deposited long before human presence in the region.

Immediately overlying this clay subsoil is nearly a meter of Premound Midden, almost all of which contains rich

artifactual debris. These strata are extremely complex, and only exposure of a wider area of this Premound Midden would permit more detailed interpretation. Based on information recovered within this testpit, however, it is possible to subdivide the Premound Midden into four strata (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). Stratum A appears to comprise the remains of a burned structure, the floor of which was the hard clay sterile subsoil. Within this Stratum is an enigmatic mound or ridge of sterile tan sandy loam which rests on the surface of the clay subsoil and which underlies the rich debris-filled midden interpreted as the structure remains. The sterile deposit is restricted to the eastern edge of the testpit, and extends into the profile to the east. This may have been a structural feature of the burned house -- for example, an interior wall -- but its significance is unknown at the present time.

The majority of Stratum A is composed of a brown midden deposit which rests directly on the clay subsoil. On the northern edge of the testpit, a portion of a hearth or firepit was encountered, presumably associated with the burned structure (Figure 4.2). This hearth occupies a shallow excavation into the subsoil, and is marked by dense deposits of charcoal, burned orange clay, and a considerable quantity of faunal and ceramic debris. Within the firepit there were a number of large bone fragments, primarily deer, but also including turtle and wild turkey. The most notable feature of the firepit was the presence of fragments of a

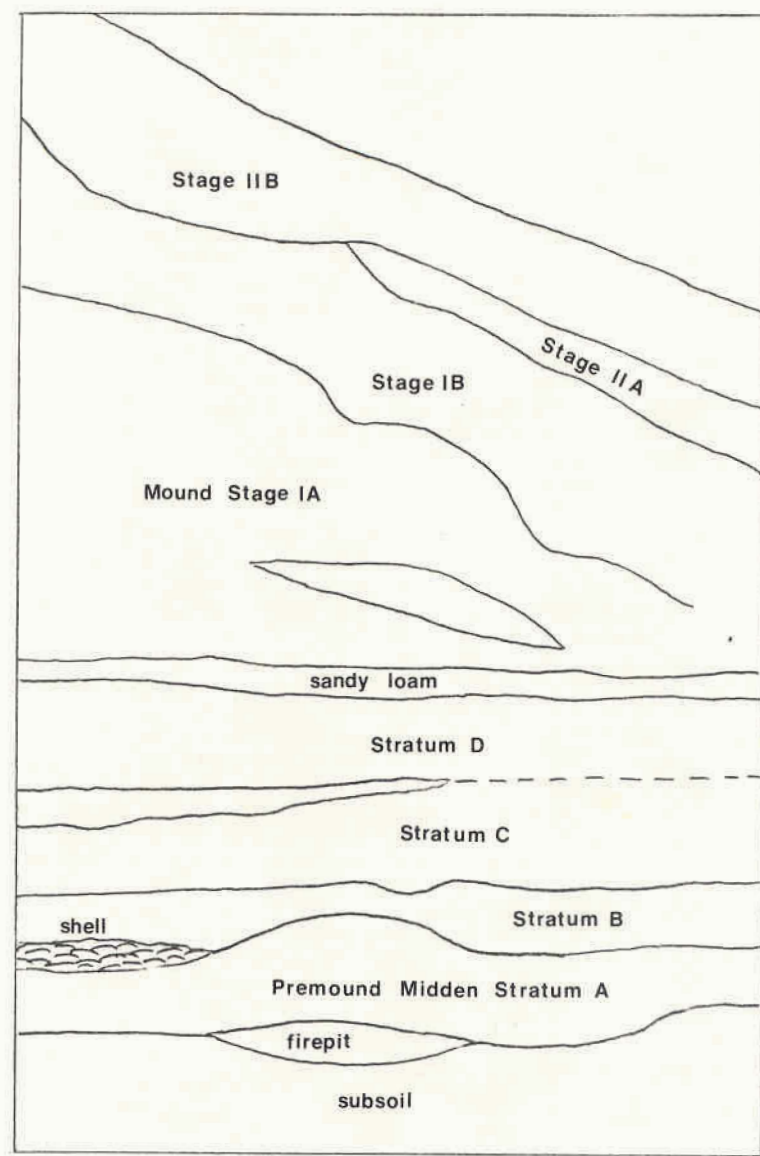


Figure 4.2
North Profile of Neisler Testpit

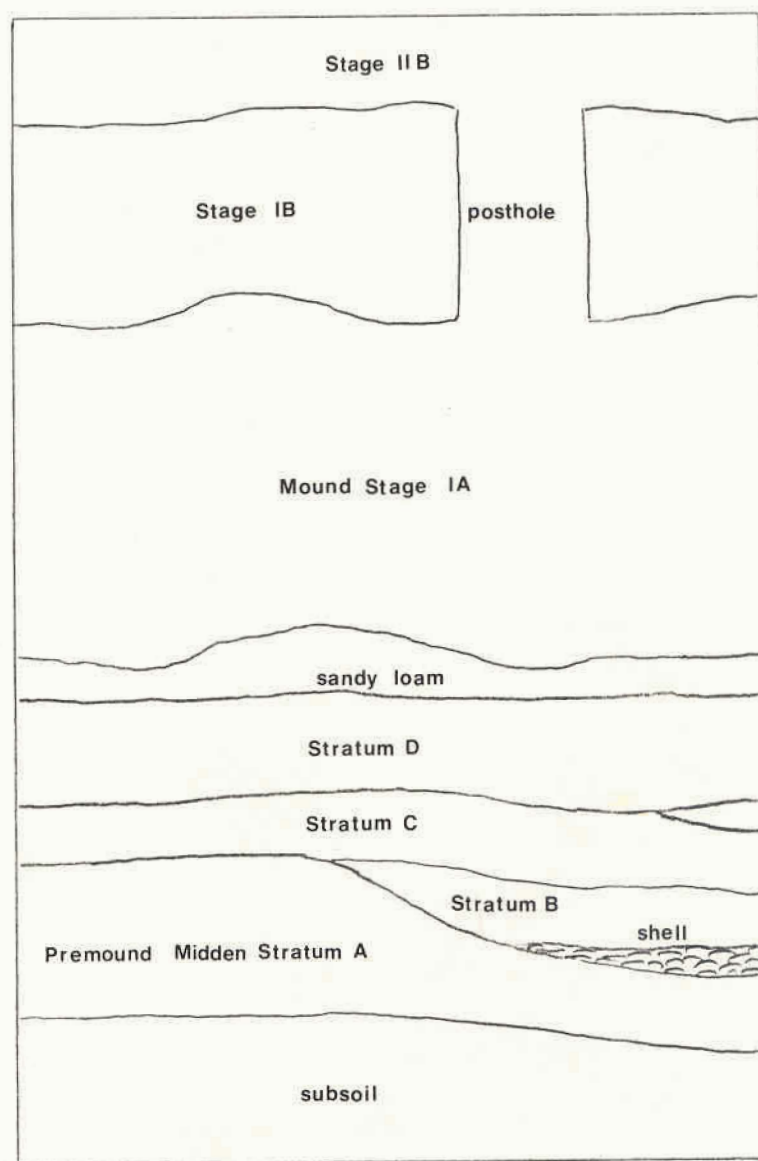


Figure 4.3

West Profile of Neisler Testpit

pottery vessel which may have been crushed in the burning structure. A very large section of the rim and neck of this jar, fragmented but in original position, lay on the surface of the firepit, and two deer vertebrae, still articulated, lay upon the inner surface of these sherds. Other large fragments of the vessel were recovered throughout the hearth deposit, although these fragments would not form a complete vessel. The rest of the vessel may be in the northern half of the firepit, still in the profile of the testpit. It is tempting to suggest that the deer vertebrae were a part of the contents of this vessel, cooking over the hearth, when the structure was destroyed by fire.

On the floor around the firepit, extending partially up and over the tan sand deposit on the east, Stratum A is rich in charcoal and artifactual debris, including a very large amount of pottery and faunal remains. Portions of at least one partially reconstructable jar were recovered from this stratum, as was a fragment of a ceramic pipe. Resting on the surface of the tan sand deposit, above a thin deposit of grey clay, was the crushed but complete carapace and plastron of a turtle. Although the rest of the faunal remains include a predominance of deer with a few turtle and turkey bones, seven well-preserved bones were recovered which have been positively identified as the remains of at least two individual Passenger Pigeons (Ectopistes migratorius). This find is of some significance, considering the rarity of prehistoric archaeological

specimens of this extinct species from the southeast. Neisler is located just over four miles from a major creek which has been known as Patsiliga (Muskoghean for "pigeon roost") Creek at least since Benjamin Hawkins first recorded its name in 1799 (Hawkins 1980:313). Based on the documented habit of Passenger Pigeons to form vast roosts in specific, long-standing locations year after year, it is possible that this may account for the presence of these unusual specimens.

Within Stratum A, a horizontal profile revealed at least one decomposed burned wooden beam, and a good deal of charcoal debris mottled throughout the deposit. Interestingly, no daub was recovered from this Stratum, as might be expected from a burned wattle-and-daub structure. In general, however, it is proposed that Stratum A represents the remains of the interior of a burned structure with at least one hearth. The considerable amount of faunal and ceramic debris suggests a residential function for the structure.

Stratum B is a 15-20 cm. thick deposit of brown midden loam which completely overlies Stratum A. While the northeastern portion of this deposit is mottled with yellow and orange and contains charcoal, the remainder of the Stratum is unremarkable save for a shallow pit in the northwest corner of the test unit (Figure 4.3). This pit was excavated into Stratum A sediments, and contains a thick bed of mussel shells across its base, two and three shells

thick in places. Almost all of the shells are intact, and some individual shells were stacked. A few shells appear to have been unseparated at the time of deposition. The pit fill above is a mottled brown sandy loam with bits of charcoal and shell. There does not seem to be enough charcoal for this to have been a roasting pit. Three isolated postmolds penetrate Stratum A from the surface upon which the pit was excavated, two in the northwestern quadrant, and one on the south profile wall, but these form no apparent pattern. Based on analysis of the ceramics recovered within Strata A and B (Tables 4.1 and 4.2), they may be dated to the early Brunson Phase (defined in Chapter Five), probably between A.D. 1150 and 1200.

Strata C and D are composed of dark brown midden fill which completely overlies the lighter sediments of Stratum B (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). These deposits, each roughly 20 cm. thick, contain a large amount of artifactual debris, and are separated from one another by a single deposit of concentrated debris, including daub, charcoal, and artifacts. This debris layer is not continuous across the unit, and thus appears in the profile as a lense-shaped stratum. Its origin is unknown. While most excavation units which include artifacts from Strata C and D are at least partially mixed with other strata (Tables 4.1 and 4.2), it is possible to place these terminal Premound Midden deposits in the late Brunson Phase, dating to from roughly A.D. 1200 to 1225. It is clear, therefore, that all

Table 4.1
Sherd Counts for Neisler Test Trench #1

CERAMICS	EXCAVATION UNIT												
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
Etowah Comp. St. Motif	4	6	6	2	3	4	6	5	5	5	14	4	
Savannah Comp. St. Motif	1	-	2	-	2	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	
Lamar Comp. St. Motif	-	2	1	2	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Rectilinear Comp. St.	12	18	11	7	16	13	9	7	5	-	11	2	
Curvilinear Comp. St.	3	15	12	9	26	17	8	5	9	2	-	-	
U. D. Comp. St.	27	45	31	15	34	42	22	23	17	7	9	-	
Lamar Incised	1	8	5	2	3	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Lamar Check Stamped	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	
Etowah Red Filmed	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	4	3	
Corncob Marked	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	
Shell Tempered Plain	3	18	12	5	19	5	1	1	-	-	-	-	
Dallas Incised	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Abercrombie Incised	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Dallas Filleted	-	-	1	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Plain	105	88	135	83	149	172	177	103	82	24	86	26	
TOTAL	158	201	219	126	259	270	232	148	120	39	127	38	
Natural Strata	IIB	IIA	IB	IA, PMD, PMC, PMB	PMA								

Premound Midden deposits date to the Brunson Phase, and as such were deposited at least two centuries before the Mound Stage deposits which immediately overlie them.

Immediately beneath the first mound stage, and capping the Premound Midden deposits, is a layer of tan sandy loam which extends across almost all profiles (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). This is a thin, horizontal band of sediment which contains slightly greater amounts of well-sorted sand grains. In several areas, the layer actually disappears from view, but in general, it may be said to form a largely uniform blanket over the premound deposits. Its origin is uncertain, but several suggestions may be offered. The sand may represent a hiatus in activity on this square of land; a number of rainfalls could wash away the clay component of the sandy loam of the former ground surface, concentrating the heavier sand particles on the surface of the ground. This would tend to suggest a lack of consistent human activity on this particular spot. On the other hand, the sand may have been purposefully spread across the ground by the inhabitants of the site, perhaps long before the initiation of mound construction over this location, or possibly as some sort of preparatory activity associated with the initiation of mound construction. A similar, although somewhat thicker, deposit of waterlain sand was noted at the Beaverdam Mound (Rudolph and Hally 1985), and was interpreted as wash from the slope of the mound. If this were the case at Neisler, the sandy layer might be

evidence for the existence of mound construction preceding Mound Stage I described below. Even detailed study of this layer might not provide a definitive answer. Based on ceramic analysis of each stratum, however, it is evident that this sandy layer marks the boundary between deposits which are separated by over two centuries of time, a fact which may aid in its interpretation.

Above this layer lies the moundfill of Mound Stage I (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). This deposit has been subdivided into two easily distinguished strata. The lower deposit, Stratum A, is composed of brown loam, comparatively rich in artifactual debris. This Stratum is quite thick -- nearly one meter on the western profile. At least one lense of daub fragments was recognized in the profile of this moundfill deposit. Stratum B is a 30-40 cm. thick layer of rather dense tan clayey loam which overlies Stratum A. This upper deposit is characterized by far fewer artifacts in comparison with Stratum A. Based on the density and composition of Stratum B, it seems safe to conclude that this layer was a cap over the core of easily eroded midden fill, implying an aboriginal anticipation of a long period before the construction of a subsequent mound stage.

Mound Stage I included a large amount of artifactual debris, primarily ceramics. Although it is clear that these moundfill deposits contained a large amount of pottery dating to both the Brunson and Thornton Phases (Chapter Five), this initial mound stage was constructed during the

Lockett Phase, sometime between A.D. 1450 and 1550 (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). Although there is no direct evidence of actual mound construction during the preceding Thornton Phase, dating from A.D. 1325 - 1450, the quantity of Thornton Phase diagnostics mixed in with the Lockett Phase debris, combined with the size of the mound, suggests that one or more Thornton Phase mound stages may lie deeper within Neisler Mound. Mound construction at Hartley-Posey Mound to the south did begin at least as early as the Thornton Phase, but only further testing will verify if this was the case at Neisler.

Other types of artifacts appear within the context of this Mound Stage I deposit, including pottery discoidals, both whole and broken. Nineteen were recovered, as well as two small crudely fashioned quartzite discoidals of similar size and shape. Four fragments of ceramic pipes were also recovered, as were a fragment of a ground stone celt, a crystalline fragment of galena and a flake of mica.

Some time after the completion of Mound Stage I, several postholes were excavated through the clay cap of Stratum B. One very large (36 cm. diameter) posthole penetrated the layer high on the mound slope, appearing in the western profile of this testpit. Two smaller postholes appear farther down on the mound slope. None of these postholes form a recognizable pattern, and it seems unusual for posts to have been necessary on the actual slope of the mound.

Prior to the addition of Mound Stage II, the remains of a burned structure were deposited along the lower slope of the mound, presumably having been dumped off the summit (Figure 4.2). This deposit is rich in artifactual debris, including large amounts of daub, charcoal, and potsherds. The stratum is presumed to represent the remains of a summit structure burned in preparation for new mound construction. As such, it will be designated Stratum A of Mound Stage II. The final deposit on the mound slope, Stratum B of Mound Stage II, is composed of dark brown midden fill, and presently forms a thick humus layer, rich with roots and organic debris. Artifacts are present to the surface. This last Stratum of moundfill represents the final addition to the northeast slope of Neisler Mound.

While Mound Stage II is markedly smaller in depth and volume than the first mound stage, it contained a large quantity of artifacts, primarily potsherds (Tables 4.1 and 4.2), but also eight pottery discoidals and a fragment of a greenstone celt. Diagnostic ceramics indicate that this final addition to the mound occurred during the Lockett Phase, not later than A.D. 1550, when the site appears to have been completely abandoned.

CHAPTER FIVE

CERAMIC CHRONOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

A major objective of this study was the construction of a ceramic chronology for the Mississippian period. As described in Chapters Three and Four, test excavations in two known platform mounds, Hartley-Posey and Neisler, were carried out in order to obtain stratified ceramic collections to be used in constructing a Mississippian chronology for the Middle Flint River. Analysis of these stratified collections resulted in the recognition of three Mississippian phases, described below (Figure 5.1). Ceramics are the sole criteria employed for phase definition here, although future work should examine other distinguishing features.

BRUNSON PHASE

Ceramic collections used in the characterization of the Brunson Phase include sealed stratigraphic deposits beneath both Neisler (9Tr1) and Hartley-Posey (9Tr12) Mounds, as well as surface collections from a number of non-mound sites. The Brunson Phase ceramic complex includes the types Etowah Complicated Stamped, Savannah Complicated

	REGIONAL SEQUENCE		MIDDLE FLINT RIVER SEQUENCE
A.D. 1600		.	
		.	(abandonment)
	Late Lamar	.	-----
A.D. 1500		.	LOCKETT PHASE
	-----	.	-----
A.D. 1400	Early Lamar	.	THORNTON PHASE
	-----	.	
A.D. 1300		.	-----
	Savannah	.	?
		.	
A.D. 1200	-----	.	-----
	Etowah	.	BRUNSON PHASE
		.	-----
		.	?

Figure 5.1
Mississippian Ceramic Chronology
for the Middle Flint River

Stamped, Etowah Red Filmed, and plain ware which includes a small amount of sparsely brushed material (Figure 5.2). A single rimsherd of a Columbia Incised plate was recovered at Hartley-Posey, and its chronological placement within the Rood Phase on the Lower Chattahoochee (Schnell, et al. 1981) makes it contemporaneous with the Brunson Phase ceramics. Vessel forms include flared rim jars, hemispherical bowls, and, rarely, water bottles of the Etowah Red Filmed type. Rims are typically simple in profile, with rounded or squared lips, although rolled rims do occur, especially on bowls. Loop handles appear during the phase, but there is no evidence for the presence of strap handles, lugs, nodes, or adornos. Temper is exclusively grit, and ranges from fine to coarse textured.

Complicated stamped pottery is the dominant mode of decoration during the Brunson Phase, comprising almost 24 percent of the sealed ceramic sample in Premound Strata A and B at Neisler Mound (Table 5.1). Eighty percent of the complicated stamped sherds could be identified as to rectilinear or curvilinear designs, and of these, 85 percent were identified as the rectilinear Etowah Complicated Stamped, with the remaining 15 percent belonging to the curvilinear type Savannah Complicated Stamped. This heavy predominance of rectilinear decoration seems to persist across the Brunson Phase, although the curvilinear Savannah designs increase through time, reaching 40 percent of the identifiable complicated stamped ceramics in Premound Strata



Figure 5.2
Brunson Phase Ceramics

- Row 1: (L-R) Etowah Complicated Stamped one bar cross diamond, two bar open cross diamond (rim), two bar open cross diamond.
- Row 2: (L-R) Etowah Complicated Stamped two bar open cross diamond (rim), two bar open cross diamond, three bar ladder based cross diamond, three bar ladder based cross diamond.
- Row 3: (L-R) Savannah Complicated Stamped two bar open simple circle, one bar cross circle, two bar open cross circle; Etowah Red Filmed (bottle neck).

Table 5.1

Brunson Phase Assemblage in Neisler Premound Strata

CERAMIC TYPES	BRUNSON PHASE	
	Early	Late
	(PMA,PMB)	(PMC,PMD)
Etowah Complicated Stamped	20%	15%
Savannah Complicated Stamped	5%	10%
Etowah Red Filmed	3%	1%
Plain	70%	74%

C and D at Neisler. This gradual increase in the relative frequency of Savannah over Etowah decoration serves as a chronological marker dividing the early and late portions of the Brunson Phase (Table 5.1).

An analysis of decorative motifs subsumed under the Etowah and Savannah Complicated Stamped types is particularly interesting, and reveals regional traits of the Brunson Phase which contrast with all currently recognized Late Etowah phases (Figure 5.3). The nested diamond motifs of Etowah Complicated Stamped may be divided into two types: open barred and ladder based diamonds. Open barred diamonds dominate the assemblage with 79 percent of the identifiable motifs (Table 5.2). Open barred diamonds are predominantly of the cross variety, although simple forms do appear as a small percentage of the assemblage. Analysis of the number of bars in each motif included sherds which could only be identified as to the minimum number of bars in the motif, and thus the resultant frequencies reflect the range of possible percentages. One bar diamonds are the least common type in the open barred group, while two bar diamonds are by far the most common type. Three bar diamonds are less common, though they occupy a large range of possible frequencies. In summary, then, open barred diamonds, which dominate the Etowah Complicated Stamped assemblage during the Brunson Phase, are generally of the cross variety, and typically possess two bars, although triple and single barred forms do occur.

	OPEN BARRED			LADDER BASED	
	one-bar	two-bar	three-bar	two-bar	three-bar
SIMPLE DIAMOND					
CROSS DIAMOND					

Figure 5.3
Etowah Complicated Stamped Motif Terminology: Brunson Phase

Table 5.2
Etowah Complicated Stamped Open Barren Motifs
Neisler Testpit

	Simple	?Simple?	Cross	.	#	%
1 bar	-	7	3	.	10	6
1+ bar	2	9	2	.	13	8
2 bar	2	49	37	.	88	53
2+ bar	1	35	5	.	41	25
3 bar	1	4	4	.	9	5
3+ bar	-	3	1	.	4	2
				.		
#	6	107	52			
%	4	65	32		N=165	

Table 5.3
Etowah Complicated Stamped Ladder Based Motifs
Neisler Testpit

	Simple	?Simple?	Cross	.	#	%
2 bar	17	5	2	.	24	57
2+ bar	3	6	2	.	11	26
3 bar	1	3	2	.	6	14
3+ bar	-	1	-	.	1	2
				.		
#	21	15	6			
%	50	36	14		N=42	

Ladder based diamonds comprise just over 20 percent of the Etowah Complicated Stamped motifs, and of these, the majority (at least half) are of the simple variety, although cross forms do comprise at least 14 percent of the collection (Table 5.3). Two barred ladder based motifs dominate over those with three bars.

While Savannah Complicated Stamped designs comprise only 15 percent of the recognizeable complicated stamped motifs, the distribution of specific motif elements within the type is revealing. Open barred concentric circles dominate the assemblage, constituting over 95 percent of the collection (Table 5.4). Cross barred motifs are more common than simple ones, and as is the case with rectilinear open barred designs, two barred forms comprise a large proportion of the collection. One and three bar varieties appear in smaller frequencies. Only two examples of ladder based motifs were identified among the Savannah designs: a two bar cross variety and a three bar form (Table 5.5).

Etowah Red Filmed is a minority ware in the Brunson Phase ceramic assemblage, comprising roughly 3 percent of the early Brunson Phase collection, and apparently dropping to 1 percent during the late Brunson Phase (Table 5.1). Red filming almost always appears on plain sherds, although rare examples of red filming on the interior of complicated stamped bowls, even over the stamped decoration itself, have been identified. Red filming occurs with equal frequency on the interior and exterior of vessels, and although vessel

Table 5.4
Savannah Complicated Stamped Open Barren Motifs
Neisler Testpit

	Simple	?Simple?	Cross	.	#	%
1 bar	2	1	1	.	4	10
1+ bar	-	3	1	.	4	10
2 bar	2	10	8	.	20	49
2+ bar	-	7	3	.	10	24
3 bar	-	1	-	.	1	2
3+ bar	1	1	-	.	2	5
	-----	-----	-----	.	-----	-----
#	5	23	13			
%	12	56	32		N=41	

Table 5.5
Savannah Complicated Stamped Ladder Based Motifs
Neisler Testpit

	Simple	?Simple?	Cross	.	#	%
2 bar	-	-	1	.	1	50
2+ bar	-	-	-	.	-	-
3 bar	-	1	-	.	1	50
3+ bar	-	-	-	.	-	-
	-----	-----	-----	.	-----	-----
#	-	1	1			
%	-	50	50		N=2	

forms are not well known, bowls seem to predominate. One example of red filming on the narrow neck of a water bottle was recognized.

Plain ware comprises the major portion of all Brunson Phase collections, exhibiting frequencies of nearly 80 percent in early Brunson Phase deposits (Table 5.1). While a portion of the plain sherds in all collections undoubtedly derives from the undecorated lower portions of vessels, a significant but unknown number of vessels were completely plain, including the broken jar in the firepit of Premound Stratum I at Neisler. This plain ware includes a range of minor variations in surface treatment, appearing along a continuum from a highly burnished surface to an extremely rough surface. Brushing appears on a small amount of the sherds, but it is never regular or patterned, and may have been more a result of manufacturing techniques than an intentional decorative feature.

Dating the Brunson Phase ceramic complex proved somewhat problematic based on comparisons with the established ceramic sequence for North Georgia. Hally and Langford (1987) review the Etowah ceramic sequence as originally defined by Caldwell (1957) and Sears (1958) for the Etowah River Valley. Four phases were originally recognized: Etowah I through IV. Decorative motifs diagnostic of Etowah I include the almost exclusive use of simple ladder base diamonds and line block motifs. Simple ladder base diamonds decrease in frequency in Etowah II, and

simple two-bar diamonds become important. Two bar diamonds and lineblock motifs are important in Etowah III, and the filfot cross appears. Etowah IV is marked by two and three bar diamonds and the filfot cross motif. In their synthesis of the Mississippian period in the Ridge and Valley Province, Hally and Langford (1987) recognize only two Etowah Phases, combining Etowah I and II to form Early Etowah, and combining Etowah III and IV to form Late Etowah. In general, the two phases are distinguished by a decrease in the frequency of ladder base diamonds and the appearance of the filfot cross motif during the Late Etowah. Shell tempering decreases in frequency during the Late Etowah as well.

While in most ways Brunson Phase ceramics resemble Etowah assemblages of northern Georgia, certain motifs are evidently unique to the Middle Flint, combining both early and late diagnostic traits as recognized for North Georgia. Placing the Brunson Phase within this broad framework necessitates a recognition that local ceramic sequences may differ from the established sequence in the Etowah Valley in certain ways.

In the Brunson Phase, the distinction between open barred and ladder based motifs, in both Etowah and Savannah Complicated Stamped designs, does appear to be chronologically significant. As noted above, the Brunson Phase may be divided into early and late periods based on the increasing frequency of Savannah Complicated Stamped

ceramics. Ladder based forms are quite rare among Savannah motifs, occurring with less than one-fourth the frequency than is the case with Etowah motifs, resulting in a consequent drop in the overall frequency of ladder based diamonds in the late Brunson Phase. The relative frequency of ladder based forms among the late Brunson Phase Etowah motifs (in Premound Strata C and D at Neisler) also decreases, resulting in an extremely low frequency (only 6 percent) of ladder based motifs during the late Brunson Phase (Table 5.6).

In addition, ladder based motifs appear to be tied to another chronologically sensitive element of Etowah design structure; ladder base forms are at least twice as common on simple rather than cross motifs, in contrast to the open barred forms, which occur at least three times as commonly on cross motifs as on simple ones. Based on the results of work in northwest Georgia (Sears 1958), it is evident that cross motifs are decorative forms which appear later than the early simple motifs, and which increase in frequency toward the end of the Etowah period.

This evidence would initially suggest that the Brunson Phase deposits beneath Neisler Mound represent both an Early Etowah occupation (as defined by Hally and Langford 1987), marked by the presence of ladder based motifs dominated by simple rather than cross forms, and a Late Etowah occupation, including a heavier percentage of open barred cross diamonds and a small amount of curvilinear

Table 5.6
 Etowah/Savannah Complicated Stamped Motifs
 Neisler Testpit

MOTIFS	Premound Strata	
	A + B	C + D
Open Barred	62%	94%
Ladder Based	38%	6%

Savannah motifs. It is clear, however, that ladder based motifs were in use during the occupation of the first pre mound structure in Premound Stratum I of Neisler Mound, since several fragments of at least one and probably two ladder based vessels crushed under the burning structure were recovered in this unit. This is additionally substantiated by the presence of the Early Etowah ladder base design element in motifs displaying the clearly Late Etowah traits of cross barring with three bars. Furthermore, the existence of ladder based Savannah motifs, admittedly rare, argues strongly for the overlap of the ladder base trait with Late Etowah ceramics. This evidence demonstrates quite convincingly that both ladder based and open barred motifs were employed together throughout the Brunson Phase. Such evidence reveals that, contrary to data from northwest Georgia, ladder based motifs remained a common part of the ceramic design assemblage on the Middle Flint River even into the Late Etowah period.

The Brunson Phase displays a number of specific traits which distinguish it from all previously defined late Etowah phases. Whereas the Etowah III Phase of northwest Georgia (Sears 1958) includes a heavy percentage of simple two barred diamonds, a minor amount of cross diamonds, an almost total absence of ladder based diamonds, and a heavy frequency of line block and filfot cross motifs, the Brunson Phase includes only a minor percentage of simple two barred diamonds, a predominance of cross barred diamond motifs, a

relatively large amount of ladder based diamonds, and a total absence of line block and filfot cross motifs. The presence of a small but increasing frequency of curvilinear Savannah motifs would suggest, additionally, that the Brunson Phase incorporates what has been referred to as Etowah IV (Sears 1958), which Hally and Rudolph (1986) suggest is actually a poorly defined transition between the Etowah and Savannah periods, marked by the appearance of curvilinear motifs late in the Etowah and their increase in frequency during the Savannah. In addition to these stylistic distinctions, the Brunson Phase shows a marked difference in temper in comparison with the northwest Georgia Etowah ceramics; there is no evidence of shell tempering in the Brunson Phase, and temper particles display a wide range of variation in size, including fine sand and heavy grit in varying proportions, contrasting with the homogeneous fine sand temper of northwest Georgia ceramics during this period.

In terms of temper characteristics, the Brunson Phase shows a strong similarity to the late Etowah Stillhouse Phase of the middle Oconee River region as defined by Smith and Hally (1981). On stylistic grounds, however, the Brunson Phase departs from the Stillhouse Phase. The Stillhouse Phase once again includes a dominance of simple two barred diamonds, a small minority of cross diamonds, and an extremely small percentage of ladder based diamonds, all in direct contrast to the Brunson Phase. In

addition, the Stillhouse Phase includes small amounts of check stamped and corncob/fingernail marked ceramics which are not present in the Brunson Phase. Stillhouse and Brunson are alike in the absence of line block and filfot cross motifs, however. Stillhouse Phase also includes a small amount of more curvilinear motifs which suggest a similar, if more limited, temporal overlap with the transition between Etowah and Savannah.

One further phase which displays some similarities to the Brunson Phase is the Late Etowah Jarrett Phase of the upper Savannah River, defined by Hally and Rudolph (1986:50-1). This phase appears to be contemporaneous with Etowah III of northwest Georgia. Again, this phase is characterized by significant percentages of simple barred diamonds, with one bar forms slightly more common than two bar forms. Cross diamonds comprise only one tenth of the assemblage, and ladder base diamonds, although more common than in other previously defined phases, make up only ten percent of the collection. The Jarrett Phase also includes line block, check stamped, and corncob impressed decoration, as well as collared jar rims, all of which are absent in the Brunson Phase. It is clear that while these phases are probably roughly contemporaneous, their ceramic assemblages vary in a number of details. The subsequent Early Savannah Culture Beaverdam Phase (Rudolph and Hally 1985) on the upper Savannah River probably overlaps the late Brunson Phase chronologically, as the use of cross barred diamonds

with curvilinear Savannah motifs of the Beaverdam Phase suggests.

In general, it may be stated that the Brunson Phase is a regional variant of the late Etowah culture of northern Georgia which, based on similarities with recognized ceramic trends, may be dated to between approximately A.D. 1150 and A.D. 1225, making it roughly contemporaneous with the Etowah III and Etowah IV Phases of northwest Georgia [Hally and Langford's (1987) Late Etowah Phase], the Stillhouse Phase of the middle Oconee River, and the Jarrett Phase and early Beaverdam Phase of the upper Savannah River. The Brunson Phase does exhibit regional traits which contrast with these neighboring areas, specifically the persistence of ladder based motifs into the late Etowah period. Additionally, the complete lack of any motifs other than nested diamonds and circles is unique to the Brunson Phase. It is hypothesized that these dissimilarities reflect the development of local ceramic decorative styles within the geographically extensive Etowah culture. The Brunson Phase is simply a middle Flint River manifestation of the Late Etowah culture of northern Georgia.

THORNTON AND LOCKETT PHASES

As noted in Chapters Three and Four, there is no clear evidence of a classic Savannah Period ceramic complex in the stratified deposits tested at either mound. This pattern appears to hold true for the entire Middle Flint

River region, for no Savannah ceramics were recognized in the regional survey collections (Chapters Six and Seven). Perhaps the most revealing evidence for the absence of a Savannah phase is the lack of any recognizable transitional ceramic complex which provides evidence for in situ development of the later Lamar ceramic complex out of the Brunson Phase assemblage. In both mounds, Brunson Phase pre-mound deposits immediately underlie Lamar mound stages, dating to at least one century after the Brunson Phase. Even though all mound stage deposits yielded both Lamar and Etowah ceramics, no evidence has been recognized which demonstrates convincingly that any transitional stage might be represented within these obviously mixed collections. In general, while it is possible that ceramics dating to the Savannah Period might exist unrecognized within the project area, this author is unable to find solid evidence of a Savannah occupation on the Middle Flint River. Given this situation, it appears likely that the Middle Flint River was abandoned during the period A.D. 1225-1325.

All mound stages encountered in test excavations at Neisler and Hartley-Posey can be dated to the Lamar period on the basis of the latest pottery types associated with them. As noted above, however, all pottery collections from all mound stages in both mounds are highly mixed. Due to the fact that no pure Lamar ceramic collection was recovered from test excavations, all interpretations regarding Lamar Phase definitions are limited to those ceramic types which

on stratigraphic and comparative grounds may be unequivocally assigned to a particular phase.

Because of this situation, the definitions of Lamar Phases will proceed in a different manner than was employed for the Brunson Phase, which had the advantage of several pure ceramic collections from sealed premound deposits. Initially, those ceramic traits which characterize the overall Lamar occupation at the sites will be examined as a means for distinguishing the Lamar mound stage ceramic assemblages from the Brunson Phase assemblage. Subsequently, utilizing chronological trends and markers established on the basis of both more highly refined Lamar chronologies across Georgia and stratigraphic separation observed within the two testpits excavated for this study, a definition of two Lamar phases will be presented using diagnostic ceramic traits which serve to distinguish each phase.

Lamar ceramics recovered on the Middle Flint display many of the same characteristics as Lamar assemblages described for other regions of Georgia. Ceramics present throughout the Lamar period include Lamar Complicated Stamped and Lamar Plain, both marked by Lamar rim modification, as well as a variety of minority ceramic wares which include the shell-tempered Dallas Incised, Dallas Filleted, and Dallas Plain wares, as well as extremely small amounts of check-stamped, corncob-marked, net-marked, and fine cord-marked ceramics. Although these last types may in

fact be phase-specific, their low frequency precludes any significant comment in this regard, and thus they are included under the general Lamar category.

Lamar Complicated Stamped (as well as the minority type of Lamar check-stamped ware) and Lamar Plain are characterized by marked differences in paste and vessel wall thickness from that of the Brunson Phase. The paste of these types includes a large amount of coarse grit temper, primarily composed of quartz and feldspar particles, which often protrudes from the surface of the sherds, creating a rough, bumpy surface. Vessels were apparently quite thick-walled in comparison to Brunson Phase ceramics, although wall thickness obviously varies with height above the vessel base.

Lamar Complicated Stamped and Plain occupy extreme ends of a continuum of surface treatment, for the vast majority of sherds could be placed in a category of "rough plain", which simply reflects the poorly defined quality of the stamping treatment. Most of these stamped designs were curvilinear, but mixing from earlier deposits obscured the actual percentages. Of those motifs which were clear enough to be evaluated, the majority were evidently portions of the filfot cross, while figure nine and concentric circles do seem to have formed a part of the assemblage. Complicated stamping appears to be a major mode of decoration on jars, although carinated bowls often possess stamping below the shoulder. The poor execution of Lamar Complicated Stamped

and Plain surface treatments does not permit them in all cases to be distinguished from Brunson Phase complicated stamped sherds. Not only do some Brunson Phase sherds display remarkably similar rough plain and stamped surfaces, some Brunson Phase ceramics are marked by similarly coarse temper particles, and thus it is impossible to relate the exact percentages which Lamar Complicated Stamped and Plain types occupy in the moundfill assemblages. In general, however, the Lamar excavation units reveal that Lamar Complicated Stamped should comprise roughly 30 percent of Lamar assemblages, whereas Lamar Plain dominates the assemblage with approximately 60 percent of the collections (see Tables 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.2).

The Lamar period additionally witnesses the introduction of rim modification of jars, specifically the Lamar folded rim, which may be subjected to a variety of treatments. Pinching or modeling of rims appears throughout the Lamar period, although the width of the fold and the treatment of the rim varies with time, as will be noted in detail below in the phase definitions. Other rim modifications include the addition of lug and loop handles, as well as nodes, both large and small, which are sometimes modeled into animal or human effigy adornos on hemispherical bowl rims. Some bowls also possess notched lips.

The Lamar period marks the introduction of a small amount of shell tempered pottery into the Middle Flint River assemblage. Shell tempered sherds only rarely exceed ten

percent of Lamar ceramic collections, more typically comprising three to nine percent (Tables 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.2). These sherds, generally tempered with relatively large amounts of shell, as well as insignificant amounts of sand or grit, are primarily plain-surfaced. Many of these sherds may be identified as Dallas Plain, although some are almost certainly associated with another shell-tempered ware which appears late in the Lamar period (to be discussed below). Dallas Plain rims are generally simple, although faintly modeled effigy (frog?) forms appear on a few rimsherds. Two wide shell-tempered strap handles, apparently on Mississippian jar forms, were recovered; these may be associated with Dallas Plain or Incised vessels.

Several shell-tempered sherds exhibit fine incising in the form of parallel diagonal lines, generally on the necks or shoulders of what appears to be a Mississippian jar form. This incising is often burred on the edges, and is typically very light. This decoration is identified as Dallas Incised.

Several examples of Dallas Filleted were identified in the Lamar collections. These are characterized by a notched filleted strip placed below the lip of small hemispherical bowls. These sherds were typically more highly burnished than other Dallas wares.

The association of a small percentage of Dallas wares with the Lamar period on Middle Flint River is not surprising. Dallas ceramics of the types described above

comprise an integral part of two Lamar phases defined for Northwest Georgia, the Early Lamar Little Egypt Phase (Hally 1979) and the Late Lamar Barnett Phase (Hally 1970). The presence of Dallas Incised may thus serve as a chronological marker confirming the relative contemporaneity of the Middle Flint River Lamar period with these two Northwest Georgia phases.

The remaining surface treatments which appear during the Lamar period are rare. Check-stamping characterized by large checks is a minor decoration which appears on sherds with paste and thickness characteristics identical to Lamar Complicated Stamped. Corncob-marking appears on the neck of an early Lamar pinched rim jar, as well as on hemispherical bowl rims. Single examples of net-marked and possible fine cord-marked sherds were recovered in Lamar moundfill.

One additional characteristic of the Lamar ceramic assemblage is the appearance of pottery discoidals ground from potsherds. Ten of these artifacts were recovered from Lamar mound stages at Hartley-Posey, and twenty-seven were found in Lamar mound stages at Neisler, along with two small quartzite discoidals. These artifacts are very common at both mound sites, but only a handful of them were recovered during surface survey. No evidence of their manufacture or use during the Brunson Phase has been found. Although some discoidals found in Lamar moundfill were made of older Brunson Phase sherds, none were found in pure Brunson Phase deposits. Whether this distinction is temporal in nature,

or simply reflects the different cultural context of discovery (i.e. mound vs. non-mound), is unknown at present.

As noted above, it is possible to divide the Middle Flint River Lamar ceramic assemblages into two broad categories which represent the Early and Late Lamar period occupation. This division is made based on the presence or absence of certain chronologically sensitive ceramic features and types in Lamar period collections, presented in Table 5.7 and described below.

Thornton Phase

The Thornton Phase is here defined as the regional manifestation of the Early Lamar culture on the Middle Flint River, dating from roughly A.D. 1325 to 1450 (Figure 5.1). Ceramic collections used in the characterization of the phase were derived from Mound Stage I of Hartley-Posey Mound and from mixed ceramic deposits of all later Lamar mound construction stages at both mounds.

The Thornton Phase is characterized by the presence of the ceramic types described above for the Lamar period -- Lamar Complicated Stamped and Plain, and Lamar Pinched Rims-- although these types are not by themselves diagnostic of this phase alone. The primary diagnostic ceramic trait which distinguishes the Thornton Phase from the succeeding phase involves the treatment of the Lamar rim modification and the absence of Lamar Incised. Lamar folded rims during the Thornton Phase are exclusively of the pinched variety,

Table 5.7
Diagnostic Traits for Lamar Phases

-Trait-	THORNTON PHASE	LOCKETT PHASE
Lamar Pinched Rims	narrow	wider
Cane Punctated Rims	absent	present
Lamar Incised	absent	present
Abercrombie Incised	absent	present

and these pinched rims may be distinguished from later Lamar rims by the generally narrow width of the fold, the heavy pinching of the fold (often modeled into a series of small nodes), and the extremely small distance between the pinching on the rim fold and the lip of the vessel (Figure 5.4). This last trait is present even on rims exhibiting wide folds, and thus may be a more certain chronological marker than overall rim fold width, the latter having been advocated as a sensitive chronological marker by Hally (1979), Smith (1983), and Rudolph (1983).

Nodes are present on several bowl rims from the mixed collections at Neisler. They resemble rim nodes from the Beaverdam Phase on the Upper Savannah River (Rudolph and Hally 1985), and suggest that the Thornton Phase may have begun in late Savannah times. The beginning date of the Thornton Phase is thus placed at A.D. 1325 to account for this possibility.

In general, however, the Thornton Phase conforms quite well to the ceramic assemblages of other Early Lamar phases across Georgia. These include the Stubbs Phase of the middle Ocmulgee River (Williams 1975), the Duvall Phase of the Oconee valley (Smith 1981), the Little Egypt Phase of Northwest Georgia (Hally 1979), and the Rembert Phase of the middle Savannah River (Rudolph and Hally 1985). While the ceramic assemblage of the Thornton Phase exhibits a large amount of similarity to that of these other phases, it comprises a degree of variation, specifically with regard to



Figure 5.4
Thornton Phase Ceramics

- Row 1: Lamar pinched rims.
 Row 2: (L-R) Lamar Complicated Stamped (two sherds displaying filfot cross motif); Dallas Filleted (two bowl rims).
 Row 3: (L-R) Dallas Incised (one with pinched rim); Dallas Plain (strap handle).

styles of rim modification, which permits its designation as a regional variant of the Early Lamar culture of northern Georgia.

Lockett Phase

The Lockett Phase is identified here as the regional manifestation of the Late Lamar culture on the Middle Flint River, dating between A.D. 1450 and ca. 1550. Ceramic collections utilized include all mound stages at Neisler and Mound Stages II, III, and IV at Hartley-Posey. These collections are mixed with Brunson and Thornton Phase sherds, and thus assignment of some sherds to one phase or the other with certainty is difficult.

The Lockett Phase is marked by the appearance of several ceramic features and types not present during the Thornton Phase (Table 5.7). While all the general Lamar traits are still present, Lamar Incised appears as a minor part of the assemblage, along with small amounts of the shell-tempered Abercrombie Incised (Figure 5.5). In addition, Lamar folded rims evidence a degree of change in the manner pinching is executed and in the addition of cane punctation as a decorative technique.

Regional ceramic chronologies elsewhere in North Georgia place the appearance of Lamar Incised at roughly A.D. 1450, marking the beginning of the Late Lamar period. This serves as the primary chronological marker for the Lockett Phase. In the available collections, Lamar Incised



Figure 5.5
Lockett Phase Ceramics

- Row 1: Lamar pinched rims.
 Row 2: (L-R) Lamar cane punctated rims (3); Abercrombie Incised (2).
 Row 3: Lamar Incised rims (human effigy adorno 2nd from right, owl(?) effigy adorno on right).

vessels are exclusively carinated bowls, and incised decoration is confined to the zone above the shoulder of the vessel. These bowls may be either plain surfaced or complicated stamped on the bottom, and in some cases possess a row of cane punctations on the shoulder. Designs are generally quite simple, comprising parallel horizontal lines interrupted at intervals by pendant loops and festoons. Three examples of human or animal effigy adornos on the exterior rim of Lamar Incised bowls were found.

Lamar Incised is recognized as a chronologically sensitive ceramic type, characterized by increasing numbers of incised lines used in decoration and decreasing width of each line. Analysis of the number of lines per sherd and the widths of the incised lines was carried out for Lockett Phase collections in order to assess the relative date of the assemblage (Tables 5.8 and 5.9). Results indicate that the majority of the sherds possessed less than two incised lines, and no sherd possessed more than five. Additionally, the majority of these lines were bold incised, with virtually all of the rest medium incised. This analysis suggests that, based on the character of the Lamar Incised, the Lockett Phase probably does not extend later than the middle of the sixteenth century.

Along with the introduction of Lamar Incised, the Lockett Phase witnesses the appearance of yet another variety of incised ware, one which, in contrast to the Lamar Incised type, is marked by shell tempering. This ceramic

Table 5.8
Number of Incised Lines per Sherd, Lamar Incised

Number of Lines	Hartley-Posey		Neisler	
	#	%	#	%
1	14	25	16	37
2	20	36	16	37
3	12	22	9	21
4	5	9	2	5
5	4	7	-	-
	N=55		N=43	

Table 5.9
Width of Incised Lines, Lamar Incised

Line Width	Hartley-Posey		Neisler	
	#	%	#	%
Bold	33	60	30	81
Medium	20	36	5	14
Fine	2	4	2	5
	N=55		N=37	

type, identified as Abercrombie Incised (DeJarnette (1975:61-67)), is also characterized by a smooth, almost burnished surface finish, widely spaced designs composed of bold and medium incised lines, and a collared rim. Designs of this variety appear to exist contemporaneously in regions to the west and southwest, including the Chattahoochee River. The type appears to be associated with the Late Lamar Bull Creek Phase, and appears at the Park Mound (9Tp41) on the Chattahoochee (Hally and Oertel 1977). While Abercrombie Incised may persist into the late sixteenth century and beyond, it seems clear that it is contemporaneous with the Lockett Phase, once again providing confirmation of the chronological placement of the phase.

One further distinguishing feature of the Lockett Phase is the wider rimfolds and larger distance of the pinching on the fold from the vessel lip (Figure 5.5). This pinching seems to be generally lighter and more well-executed than was evidenced for the Thornton Phase. In addition, cane punctation appears as an alternate method of rim modification, replacing the position of the pinches on folded rims. Cane punctation is a very common technique in the Lockett Phase, and thus serves as a good temporal and regional marker for the phase.

In general, the Lockett Phase is distinguished from the preceding Thornton Phase by the presence of several diagnostic ceramic features. The phase again conforms very well with the ceramic assemblages of other Late Lamar phases

across Georgia. These include the Bull Creek Phase on the lower Chattahoochee (Hally and Oertel 1977), the Cowarts Phase on the middle Ocmulgee (Hamilton and Swindell 1975), the Dyar Phase in the Oconee valley (Smith 1981), and the Barnett Phase in Northwest Georgia (Hally 1970, 1979).

Although there is an evident similarity of the Lockett Phase ceramic complex to those of its neighbors, the Lockett Phase ceramic assemblage is sufficiently distinct, especially with regard to forms of rim modification, to permit its designation as a regional variant of the Late Lamar culture of northern Georgia.

CHAPTER SIX
REGIONAL SURVEY OF THE MIDDLE FLINT RIVER

SURVEY STRATEGY

As a complement to the construction of a regional Mississippian period ceramic sequence for the Middle Flint River, a regional archaeological survey was conducted in order to examine the geographic distribution of Mississippian sites during each phase. In this way, the spatial extent of Mississippian occupation associated with mound construction at Neisler and Hartley-Posey could be established, permitting evaluation of the hypothesis that the mound sites served as administrative centers of a polity centered on the Fall Line zone of the Middle Flint River. More specifically, the survey was designed to test the related hypothesis that Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint River should be concentrated along the river itself, clustering about the widest expanse of floodplain.

The survey strategy was formulated in order to maximize the number of sites examined within this 36-mile survey area, taking into account the limitations imposed by the nature of the project. Survey was in large part carried out by the author alone, or with the aid of one or more associates. Only two years were allotted for the completion

of the survey, with most fieldwork taking place on weekends during the academic year when the author was enrolled in regular classes. These limitations in both manpower and time necessitated efficiency in survey design, and thus an "informant survey" strategy was adopted which was neither systematic nor intensive, but which permitted the discovery of most of the larger sites in the survey area, as well as a large number of smaller sites. Although it is evident that this approach involves the introduction of biases, noted below, into the process of data collection, informant survey appears to be an extremely efficient strategy for the construction of an archaeological data base.

This survey strategy primarily involved the establishment of a wide network of local contacts and informants able to give information regarding the location of archaeological sites in the survey area. A variety of individuals were approached, including local farmers and landowners, residents of local towns and communities, artifact collectors with experience on the Middle Flint, fishermen, pulpwood company tract managers, and a number of other people who were able and willing to discuss local artifacts and their sources. As a result of this strategy, a large number of sites were reported, most of which were subsequently visited and collected.

Sites with good ground visibility were surface collected. Many sites were in cultivation, and collection took place under a variety of conditions, including freshly

plowed fields, those grown up in crops, and those littered with cut and standing crop debris as well as weed growth. A number of other sites had been clearcut for planting in pines, and collecting conditions varied from excellent to extremely poor based on the length of time since the clearcut. Among those sites which were surface collected, sites which seemed likely to possess subsurface deposits or midden were postholed or shovel tested in order to increase the artifactual sample and examine the site stratigraphy. Some sites, such as those within the modern floodplain, were completely wooded, and thus only subsurface testing was employed to recover artifacts for dating purposes. Artifacts from all sites were bagged separately for examination in the laboratory and eventual curation at the University of Georgia, and each site was mapped on the 7.5 minute USGS topographic maps of the survey area and given a project identification number.

It is important to make explicit the working definition of archaeological sites employed in this survey. A site is considered to be a focus of aboriginal occupation, in particular an area of concentrated artifactual density which is separated from other sites by areas of minimal artifactual density. Woodland and Mississippian sites with ceramic debris were in general more spatially discrete than pure lithic scatters, which often extended over a broad area. These sites typically occupy topographic features such as low rises or high areas in the local terrain, and in

general the areal extent and configuration of sites reflect the presence of such topographic features. While many sites are separated by large distances and marked variations in topography, others are situated in close proximity on the same landform, such as is the case on many fluvial terraces bordering the river valley. Since such landforms commonly display a relatively continuous low-density artifact scatter across a large area, sites are defined as foci of concentrated occupational debris, again typically occupying high points in the topography of the larger landform. The result of this approach is that several sites in close proximity may have been occupied contemporaneously, and may have formed a single, if dispersed, community at various points in time. During other periods, only a single site of several may have been occupied. The approach employed in this project is thus flexible enough to recognize variability in community size and configuration which might be masked if such foci of occupation were lumped together as a single site.

While it is clear that the use of local informants in the survey strategy introduced a number of biases, most notably against smaller sites and those without high quality lithic collectables, it seems reasonable to assume that most of the larger archaeological sites in any region will have been discovered at some point by local landowners and collectors, and thus entered the body of local and regional knowledge, often attaining larger-than-life proportions. To

ignore this corpus of information and attempt to locate archaeological sites using a random and systematic sampling strategy is to discard an extremely useful, if unrefined, data base which may be tapped to provide a wealth of archaeological information. Although it is almost certain that a number of locally recognized sites were not encountered as a part of this survey, the majority of such sites were documented. Toward the end of this project, interviews with new local informants almost invariably resulted in the re-identification of sites which were already on the maps. Based on this result, it is not unreasonable to assert that a substantial number of the larger archaeological sites known to local informants in the Middle Flint River region have been identified in this survey; only more intensive survey will produce significant numbers of new archaeological sites, and most of these should be minor occupations.

Using the accumulating information regarding the locations of sites revealed by local informants, a number of areas were identified on the topographic maps as being likely to have evidence of aboriginal occupation, and these areas were then surveyed. Although the majority of such surveys resulted in the identification of new archaeological sites, these were typically small both in size and artifactual density, once again demonstrating that most larger sites had been identified using informant survey. It is apparent, however, that the informal and subjective model

of aboriginal settlement patterns which developed in the author after extensive periods of survey was at least a useful heuristic device, serving as an aid in the prediction of site locations.

Survey coverage was admittedly limited due to the large amount of area under consideration and the limited amount of time in which to accomplish it (Figure 6.1). Coverage of areas along the upland margins of the river valley, including high alluvial terraces flanking the modern floodplain, was comparatively good. Although areas farther from the river valley were examined, coverage was not as complete as that for the valley margins. While a number of sites were located within the modern floodplain, it is this vast swamp bottom which remains least known. Survey within the floodplain aimed at locating reported archaeological sites typically took the form of long and unproductive treks through relatively pristine wetlands. High areas and levees were randomly postholed on such expeditions, but no sites were located either as a direct or indirect result of such survey. Local informants seem to be the best source of information regarding the floodplain, due to their greater exposure to the area. The character of the swamp bottom, however, with few notable topographic features to serve as landmarks, and even fewer roads, makes it virtually impossible to locate reported sites without actually being led to them, and additionally quite difficult to place them on topographic maps, which are almost useless within the

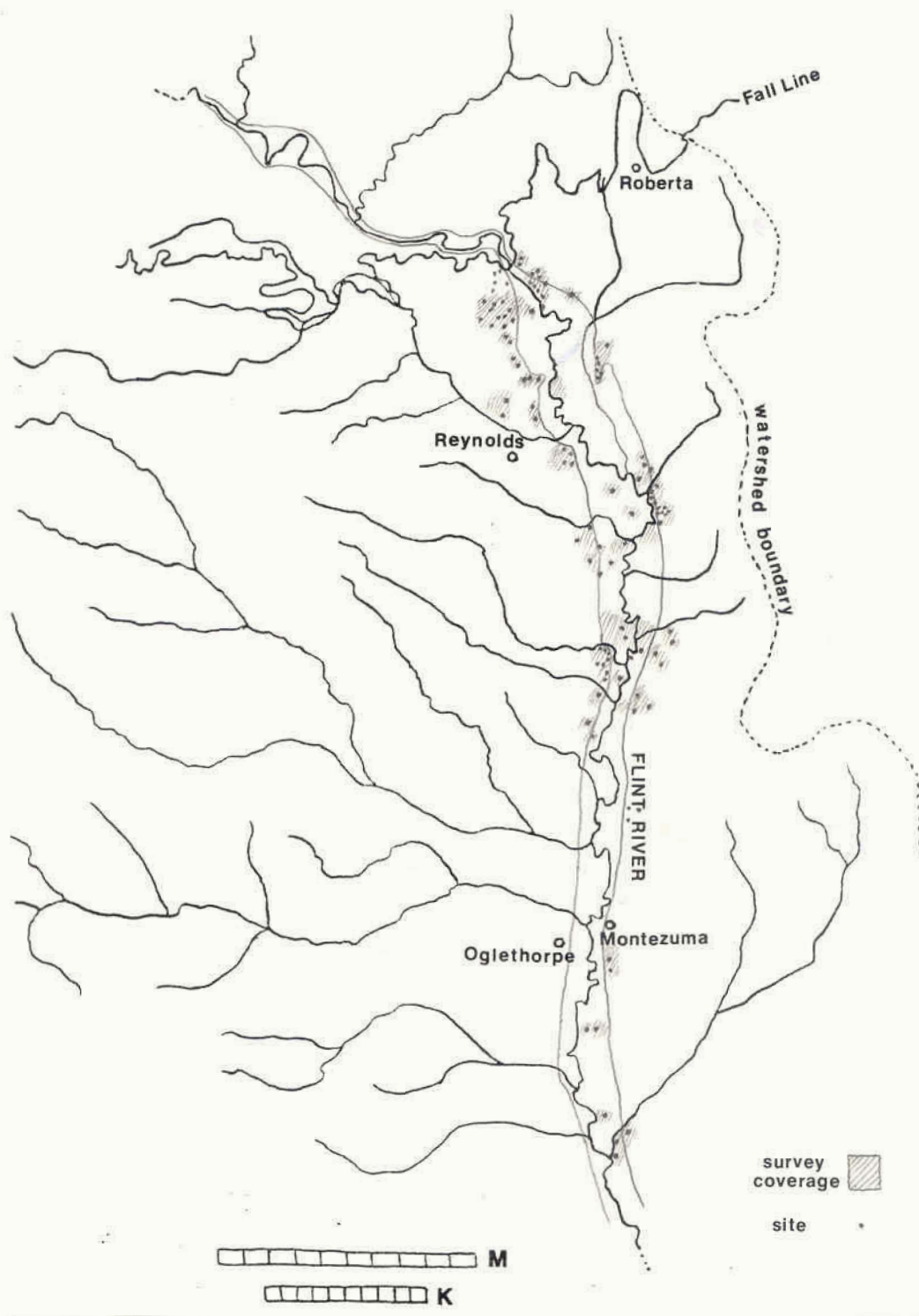


Figure 6.1
Survey Coverage and Sites Located

swamp. It is certain that a number of sites remain undiscovered within the floodplain, and only future intensive survey will reveal their location.

It should be noted that although the proportion of the area of the entire survey region actually visited and surveyed on foot was quite small (Figure 6.1), the vast majority of all other areas were initially excluded from consideration using the informant survey strategy. The area known to local informants was quite large, representing most of the upland margin of the river valley, and a large portion of the swamp bottoms. The proportion of the area of the entire survey region covered by the body of information revealed through interviews with local informants, then, is in actuality far greater than that covered by direct survey. The level of confidence within this broader area of informant survey coverage is, of course, much smaller due to the limitations and biases discussed above.

One hundred thirteen archaeological sites previously unknown to the archaeological community were documented as a result of this project (Figure 6.1). The majority of these were visited by the author, and artifactual collections were subjected to laboratory examination in order to date the periods of occupation. Although only those sites displaying Mississippian occupation have been examined in detail for this thesis, an overview of all other periods of prehistoric aboriginal occupation on the Middle Flint River is provided

below in order to provide a background for the Mississippian period.

PALEO INDIAN PERIOD

Although few verifiable artifacts dating to the late Pleistocene Paleo Indian period were recovered as a direct result of this survey, there is good evidence in local collections of Paleo Indian occupation on the Middle Flint River. The classic diagnostic of eastern Paleo Indian occupation, the Clovis point, is only rarely encountered in this region. At least two definite and complete examples of this artifact type were viewed by the author in local collections, and two more were described in detail by a local landowner. There is little information regarding the locations of these finds, nor the context in which they were recovered. A single fragment of the fluted base of a large Clovis point was recovered by the author on the surface of site 9Ma20, located on the western end of a low alluvial terrace on the eastern side of the Flint River. Although the terrace is scarcely higher than the modern floodplain, it probably dates to the late Pleistocene.

Later Paleo Indian occupation is evidenced by the diagnostic Dalton point, which is much more common in this region. Although none were found by the survey, well over a dozen of these points were viewed in local collections, and many more were reported. Almost any large local collection includes one or more Dalton points. Finds are reported from

a variety of settings, including one report of Daltons excavated from the base of stratified deposits in sand hills within the modern floodplain. It seems clear that the late Paleo Indian Dalton occupation in this region was greater than that evidenced for the Clovis occupation, but far more research is needed for meaningful conclusions.

ARCHAIC PERIOD

The evidence for aboriginal occupation during the Archaic period is abundant in the Middle Flint River region. The majority of biface projectile points recovered in the survey, and by far the vast majority of points in local collections, date to the Archaic. Early Archaic diagnostics are very common finds on most sites. These include not only the classic Palmer, Bolen, and Kirk points, but also a variety of unifacial tools such as thumbnail scrapers and gravers (some of which may also date to the Paleo Indian period). Raw materials are predominantly local Coastal Plain chert, however a small but significant percentage of the Early Archaic assemblage includes quartz, often crystalline, from the Piedmont, and Northwest Georgia chert.

Middle Archaic diagnostics such as Morrow Mountain points are present in the region, but are comparatively uncommon. Those which are found are typically made of quartz, though other raw materials are present. The apparent drop in the frequency of Middle Archaic diagnostics

may be due in part to a poorly defined lithic chronology for the upper Coastal Plain.

The Late Archaic is extremely well represented in artifactual collections from the Middle Flint. Stemmed Savannah River point varieties are virtually omnipresent in the region, and the great majority of all archaeological sites located display Late Archaic occupation. Raw materials are generally local chert, but Piedmont materials such as quartz appear. There is good evidence for the use of steatite, or soapstone, during the Late Archaic. Fragments of steatite bowls, thick but finished, are not uncommon on Late Archaic sites, and other artifacts of steatite, such as drilled atlatl weights, occur on such sites, although their chronological position is unsure. Late Archaic sites also commonly produce one or two fiber-tempered sherds of Stallings Island wares, primarily plain, but occasionally including stab and drag decorations. Steatite and fiber tempered sherds are commonly found on the same sites.

In general, Archaic settlement patterns seem to reflect a wide distribution of occupation across the landscape; sites are found in virtually every setting, including the eroded uplands, alluvial terraces on the borders of the Flint River valley, and sand hills within the floodplain. Archaic groups appear to have exploited a diversity of habitats, and there seems no definitive evidence of a preference for the river valley over upland

locales. Much further research is required to substantiate these observations.

WOODLAND PERIOD

Evidence for Woodland occupation of the Middle Flint River region is ample. Roughly half of the total number of sites discovered show evidence of some occupation during the Woodland period, and a large number of these sites comprise very dense concentrations of artifacts dating to the Woodland period. In general, Woodland sites, and in particular those with comparatively large Woodland occupations, tend to occur only on landforms directly adjacent to or in close proximity with floodplain habitats. Almost without exception, rises or hills within the active floodplain display abundant evidence of Woodland occupation, and virtually all other Woodland sites are located on the margins of fluvial terraces or upland landforms which directly border the modern floodplain. Upland sites removed from the floodplain generally possess little or no evidence of Woodland occupation, although an isolated sherd or diagnostic point appear occasionally on a few sites. It seems clear that Woodland groups tended to occupy sites in close proximity to the floodplain habitat, although further study is needed to examine and substantiate this pattern, and perhaps address the reasons why this may be the case.

Evidence for Woodland occupation encompasses a wide range of ceramic diagnostic types. Dunlap Fabric Marked

sherds are present though rare, and Deptford Check Stamped varieties appear quite common. By far the most common Woodland ceramics form a part of the Weeden Island complex of ceramic types, including a predominance of plain, almost temperless wares, plain folded rims, sometimes heavily thickened, and a diversity of incised, punctated, and check and complicated stamped types including abundant evidence of Swift Creek ceramics. These Weeden Island sites are extremely common, and a number of large and intensively occupied sites were discovered during this survey. No artificial earthen or rock mounds were documented as a part of this survey.

Other ceramics which have been included in the Woodland assemblage for the survey are simple stamped and cord marked varieties. The simple stamped ceramics appear on a number of sites, several of which include a large number of these sherds. Cord marked ceramics are perhaps less common, but do appear on a number of sites. It is clear that the ceramic chronology for the Woodland period in the Upper Coastal Plain region must be refined before substantive conclusions regarding Woodland occupation may be attempted.

MISSISSIPPIAN PERIOD

Of the 113 sites discovered as a result of this survey, 27 exhibited some evidence of occupation during the Mississippian period. Including the two mound sites, then,

29 out of a total of 115 known sites on the Middle Flint River possess Mississippian components. In order to more precisely date the periods of Mississippian occupation, artifacts from each site were examined for the presence of diagnostic ceramics which would permit the placement of each site within the framework of the ceramic chronology constructed in Chapter Five primarily on the basis of stratigraphic tests in the two mounds. These diagnostics, listed in Table 6.1, include the presence of Etowah or Savannah Complicated Stamped sherds for the Brunson Phase, and the presence of Lamar folded rims, Lamar Complicated Stamped and Incised sherds, and shell tempered sherds for the Lamar period. Lamar occupation was broken down into the two phases based on rim treatment and the presence of Lamar Incised. Thornton Phase occupation is distinguished by narrow, heavy pinched rims, and Lockett Phase occupation is indicated by wider pinched rims, cane punctation on folded rims, Lamar Incised sherds, and bold and medium incised shell-tempered sherds (Abercrombie Incised). Although paste and temper characteristics of plain sherds might reveal dates of occupation on sites lacking other diagnostic ceramics, only those diagnostics noted above were employed in the analysis of surface collections. As a result of this analysis, eight of these twenty-nine sites were found to possess multiple-phase Mississippian occupation, and the remaining 21 exhibited occupation during only a single phase.

Estimation of the relative amount of occupation at each site, both in terms of the size of the occupation area and the density of artifacts within that area, is difficult at best considering the limited nature of the survey data for this project. While it is quite clear that some sites were intensely occupied over a large area for long periods of time, and that other sites were occupied for only a short period of time over a very small area, the question of relative site importance during each Mississippian phase cannot be addressed in a rigorous fashion using this data. Sites were collected under a great variety of surface conditions, by variable numbers of people with different amounts of experience, and for different lengths of collection time, and some sites were collected solely by posthole and shovel testing. Collections from these sites are hardly comparable, and thus only general suggestions regarding relative site importance can be made in most cases.

Each Mississippian site discovered during this survey is described below, including such information as the physical setting, dates of occupation, and possible inferences about relative site importance. A topographic map showing all Mississippian sites described in the text is presented in Figure 6.2, and Table 6.1 displays the diagnostics used in establishing phases of occupation. Interpretations regarding Mississippian settlement

Table 6.1
Phase Diagnostics for Mississippian Sites

	BRUNSON		THORNTON	LOCKETT			
	Etowah/ Savannah Comp. St.	Etowah Red Filmed	Narrow/ Noded Rims	Wide Rims	Cane Punc. Rims	Lamar Inc.	Aber. Inc.
9Tr1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9Cd46	X						
9Tr43						X	
9Cd38	X						
9Cd41				X			
9Tr12	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9Tr24	X		X				
9Tr37	X						
9Tr17			X				
9Tr44	X						
9Tr19	X		X	X	X	X	
9Tr23			X				
9Tr18	X		X				
9Tr22	X			X			
9Cd2	X						
9Cd39	X						
9Tr20	X		X		X	X	
9Tr46	X				X		
9Cd18	X						
9Cd12			X				
9Pe5	X						
9Ma38	X						
9Ma32	X						
9Ma44	X						
9Ma23	X						
9Ma50						X	
9Ma18	X						
9Ma41	X						
9Ma19	X						

distribution on the Middle Flint River will be presented in the following chapter.

Neisler Mound Site (9Tr1)

Neisler, described in Chapter Four, was the site of a large and intensive occupation during the Brunson Phase. Ceramics dating to the Brunson Phase have been recovered in posthole tests and surface collections in the area around the mound itself, and nearly a meter of midden deposits date to the Brunson Phase in the Neisler testpit. Based on the limited nature of survey and testing at the site, it is impossible to determine the area of land encompassed by the Brunson Phase occupation, but it seems to have been somewhat smaller than that of the succeeding phases. There is no clear evidence for mound construction at this site during the Brunson Phase. Based on the size of Neisler Mound, however, it is possible that a Brunson Phase construction stage may be present at the core of the mound. Only extensive testing deeper in the mound will answer this question.

Neisler was the site of a large and intensive occupation during the Thornton Phase. Ceramics diagnostic of this period are present across the site and in moundfill context, indicating that the site may have reached its largest size during this phase. While there is no direct evidence for mound construction during the Thornton Phase, the abundance of Thornton sherds mixed in with later sherds

in Lockett Phase moundfill, as well as the large size of the mound, suggests that mound construction may have occurred during the Thornton Phase.

During the succeeding Lockett Phase, the occupation at Neisler appears to have been at least as large as it was during the Thornton Phase, for diagnostic ceramics are found in great abundance across the site, both in the surface and in thick midden deposits. Large volumes of moundfill were added to the mound during the Lockett Phase, and it is during this time that Neisler achieved its present height and volume. It is apparent that the site was completely abandoned at the end of the Lockett Phase, no later than A.D. 1550, for there is no evidence of artifacts postdating the Lockett Phase in either the terminal stage of the mound or surface and subsurface samples across the entire site.

Crook Bowl Locality (9Cd46)

This site marks the location where a large, intact hemispherical bowl was found in 1967 on the east bank of the Flint River by George Crook of Potterville. The vessel is decorated with a Savannah Complicated Stamped motif, and dates to the Brunson Phase. The source of this find has not been located beyond its verbal placement "across from the Lockett place", which situates it nearly a thousand feet east of the Neisler site.

Deer Stand Gallery Site (9Tr43)

This site is a small surface artifact scatter located on a gentle rise in the modern floodplain, possibly an erosional remnant of a 10-foot alluvial terrace. The site is on the western side of the river valley, at the head of the sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion and less than a mile from Neisler. It is 3700 feet across the modern floodplain from the channel of the Flint River. The surface collection from this site is quite small, and interpretations regarding both dates of occupation and site importance are limited. Diagnostic ceramics indicate a minor Lockett Phase occupation at the site. This is not surprising, since the nearby Neisler site was at its height of occupation during this phase. There is no definite evidence of occupation earlier than this phase.

This site may be the source of two ceramic vessels which were found some years ago by the now deceased former landowner, Mr. McCree. These vessels were discovered together on the surface of a ditch, having been washed out in a flood. One is a small grit-tempered Mississippian Jar with two strap handles and no surface decoration. The other vessel is a negative painted water bottle with a tall, narrow neck and flat base. Five spirals ascend from the base of the bottle to form sun-circle designs on the side. The bottle seems to be almost temperless. These two vessels are quite unusual for this area, and most likely represent the burial goods of a very high status individual. Their

specific source is unknown, but they were found somewhere on the McCree land. Since 9Tr43 is the only recognized Mississippian site on the property, it is the most likely point of origin. The proximity of this site to Neisler Mound (only 4000 feet away) may explain the high-status nature of these artifacts.

Barefield Site (9Cd38)

This site comprises a relatively dense artifact scatter on the southern end of a peninsular ridge on the east side of the river valley, just over a mile northeast of Neisler. The site, which borders a 50-foot drop to the floodplain, is 3300 feet from the Flint. Artifacts were collected from a recent clearcut, and include a large amount of ceramic debris, primarily Woodland in age. A single diagnostic sherd reveals a minor occupation at the site during the Brunson Phase.

Jameson Sandpit Site #1 (9Cd41)

This site is a light ceramic scatter on the southern end of a peninsular remnant of a low Pleistocene terrace on the eastern margin of Magnolia Swamp, across the floodplain from Hartley-Posey Mound. The site is 7600 feet from the Flint, making it the Mississippian site most distant from the river channel. A single diagnostic rim reveals a minor Lockett Phase occupation.

Hartley-Posey Mound (9Tr12)

Hartley-Posey, described in Chapter Three, was also the site of a comparatively intensive occupation during the Brunson Phase. Surface collections across the site include ceramics dating to this phase, and from 15 to 20 cm. of midden deposits in the mound testpit may be dated to the Brunson Phase. Once again, there is no evidence of mound construction at the site during this phase, but the possibility cannot be ignored due to the limited nature of testing in the mound itself.

As was the case at Neisler to the north, occupation during the Thornton Phase was intensive, as evidenced by surface collections at the site. At least one mound stage was added to the mound during the Thornton Phase, indicating that mound construction had begun at least as early as A.D. 1350 - 1400. This level of occupation appears to have continued into the Lockett Phase, as ceramics diagnostic of this phase are common across the site. Large volumes of moundfill, in at least three stages, were added to the mound during this phase. Once again, all mound construction and occupation at the site terminated at the end of the Lockett Phase, indicating that the site was abandoned sometime before A.D. 1550.

Hartley Field Site #1 (9Tr24)

This site is situated on the back side of the bluff on which Hartley-Posey Mound rests. It occupies a gentle

rise on the northwestern side of this 50-foot Pleistocene terrace, and borders a small intermittent stream which runs northeastward at the base of the slope below the site. Water presently seeps from the slope below the artifactual scatter, and thus there may have once been a spring in close proximity to the site. The Flint River is 2000 feet from the site.

The site is currently in a plowed field, and artifacts were surface collected under good conditions across the summit of this rise. Brunson Phase occupation, although present, was probably minor based on the relatively small number of sherds recovered which date to this period. Two diagnostics reveal evidence of a very minor occupation during the Thornton Phase. The site is roughly a thousand feet from the Hartley-Posey Mound Site, but nevertheless comprises a spatially distinct focus of occupation. Based on its proximity to and contemporaneity with the mound site, however, this site may have been a residential area tied in to the larger Hartley-Posey Mound Site.

Hartley Field Site #2 (9Tr37)

This site occupies the northern portion of a low ridge in the same Pleistocene terrace on which both Hartley-Posey and 9Tr24 are located. The site is just west of 9Tr24, and borders the same intermittent stream to the north. It is 2400 feet from the Flint. Surface collection under good conditions revealed that artifacts are scattered

across the ridgetop, and include a good amount of ceramics, several sherds of which date to the Brunson Phase, indicating a very minor occupation during this phase. This site was therefore contemporaneous with 9Tr24 and Hartley-Posey, both on the eastern portion of the same terrace, during the Brunson Phase.

Parks Site #3 (9Tr17)

This is an extremely sparse surface artifact scatter situated on the sloping summit of an upland erosional remnant half a mile to the northwest of Hartley-Posey Mound, across the intermittent stream bordering both 9Tr24 and 9Tr37. The site is 3400 feet from the Flint River channel. Surface collection took place along a road across the site, which is in pasture. Only one sherd, a single Lamar folded pinched rim, was recovered here, indicating a very minor occupation during the Thornton Phase.

Dykes Field Site (9Tr44)

This site is a small surface artifact scatter on the eastern margin of a large fluvial terrace on the western side of the Flint River valley, only a mile and a half south of Hartley-Posey. The site borders a 60-foot drop to the floodplain, which is three miles wide at this point. Of a small number of sherds recovered at this site, one dates to the Brunson Phase, indicating a very minor occupation during this phase.

Brunson Field Site #2 (9Tr19)

This site is one of four sites which are situated on the summit of a large Pleistocene terrace three miles to the south of that which Hartley-Posey occupies. The terrace is a comparatively level plateau on the west side of the Flint River just south of where Patsiliga Creek enters the floodplain of the Flint. The terrace drops off to the north and east in a steep bluff roughly 50 feet in height. The river flows only 1500 feet from this site, though the floodplain itself is three miles wide at this point.

This site is the northernmost on the terrace, and is situated on a topographic rise at the northeast corner of the terrace, bordering the floodplains of both Patsiliga Creek and the Flint River proper. The site is in a large plowed field, and artifacts are scattered over the high ground in this section of the field. A large number of sherds were recovered under excellent surface collecting conditions, and a major portion of these date to the Mississippian period. There appears to have been a moderate occupation during the Brunson Phase, and there is good evidence of a relatively major occupation during both the Thornton and Lockett Phases. While this site is much smaller in area, the Lamar occupation here seems to have been the largest yet discovered outside the two mound sites to the north. Two chert Mississippian triangular projectile points were found at the site, and may date to any of the three phases of Mississippian occupation. These artifacts

are remarkably uncommon in the Middle Flint River region, even on large Mississippian sites.

Brunson Field Site #4 (9Tr23)

This site is situated on another rise on the eastern margin of the large terrace on which 9Tr19 is located to the northwest. The river channel is 1500 feet distant. Artifacts are densely scattered across the site, and include a large amount of ceramic debris, dating primarily to the Woodland and historic periods, but including evidence of a minor Thornton Phase occupation. A small quartzite discoidal and a fragment of the bit of a polished greenstone celt may also date to this occupation.

Brunson Field Site #1 (9Tr18)

This site comprises a broad artifactual scatter over a level portion of the terrace south of 9Tr19 and 9Tr23. The site is not immediately adjacent to the bluff slope on the east, but is rather situated west of site 9Tr22, described below. The site lies 2200 feet from the Flint River. While the abundant ceramic debris is primarily historic in date, a small number of diagnostics indicate a minor occupation during both the Brunson Phase and the Thornton Phase. A fragment of the bit of a greenstone celt probably dates to these occupations.

Brunson Field Site #3 (9Tr22)

This site produced the densest concentration of Brunson Phase artifacts recovered in this study outside of the two mound sites, and thus serves as the namesake for the phase. The site is a large artifactual scatter on the eastern edge of the southern portion of the terrace described above, and occupies a gentle topographic rise on the terrace summit. The bluff on the east drops 50 feet to the Flint River floodplain, and the river is 2000 feet distant.

Surface collection took place under ideal conditions, as with all other sites in the large agricultural field on this terrace. The site consists of a dense scatter of artifactual debris, including a large proportion of ceramics which date to the Brunson Phase. A small polished greenstone chisel was also recovered, and may date to this period. While diagnostic ceramics are highly fragmented due to plowzone damage, it seems clear that there was a substantial occupation during the Brunson Phase. Although systematic survey of artifactual density was not attempted, surface collection revealed an apparent clustering of ceramic debris into small areas, possibly representing debris associated with the subsurface remains of houses or other structures. No subsurface testing was carried out to verify this possibility, or to evaluate the depth of intact midden, if any, which remains.

There is also evidence of a very minor Lockett Phase occupation at the site, represented by a single diagnostic sherd.

96 Bridge Site (9Cd2)

This site consists of a broad artifactual scatter on the western end of a low alluvial terrace immediately to the east of the Flint River channel. This "second bottoms" landform is only slightly above the elevation of the floodplain, and thus the site is situated on level topography removed from most flooding, but within easy access to both the Flint River itself and the floodplain around it. Surface collection, while hindered by poor visibility, revealed a good amount of ceramic debris, the majority of which appears to date to the Brunson Phase, with the remaining material being primarily simple stamped. Posthole tests and an examination of the profile of the riverbank on the western end of the site showed evidence of midden deposits half a meter in depth, with sherds present throughout. Although further survey is needed, it is evident that this was the site of a major Brunson Phase occupation.

Salt Lick Field Site #1 (9Cd39)

This site is located on the southwestern corner of another low alluvial terrace only half a mile to the north of the 96 Bridge Site. Surface collection was hindered by

the overgrown clearcut vegetation, but artifacts were lightly scattered across an area 1200 feet from the Flint River channel, and among the sherds recovered were several dating to the Brunson Phase, indicating a minor occupation at this time.

Gin House Ridge Site (9Tr20)

This site is situated deep within the floodplain of the Flint River, in Beechwood Swamp. Artifacts are densely scattered over the summit of a large ridge or hill, perhaps an erosional remnant, which rises from the swamp bottom just over half a mile from the western margin of the floodplain. Black Bottom Creek flows southward past the western end of the ridge, and the Flint River is roughly 4300 feet to the northeast. The site is plowed periodically, and surface collection under good conditions revealed evidence of intensive aboriginal occupation, primarily during the Woodland period, but also including a moderate Brunson Phase component, as well as minor Thornton and Lockett Phase occupations, revealed by the presence of a small number of diagnostic sherds. No subsurface testing was performed, but a local resident related having excavated an intact vessel from this site, suggesting that subsurface features may remain.

Beechwood Swamp Site (9Tr46)

This site is located on another very large topographic rise in Beechwood Swamp, just a mile and a half to the southeast of Gin House Ridge. Conversations with local residents and pulpwood company employees revealed that these two hills are the only two of their kind in all of Beechwood Swamp, and as such represent the only high ground within this portion of the floodplain consistently removed from seasonal flooding of the Flint River.

This southern site, located 3800 feet from the Flint River to the east, consists of an extremely dense concentration of ceramic and lithic artifactual debris across the summit of this rise. The great majority of the sherds are Woodland in age, primarily of the Weeden Island variety, and there may be a small plowed-down mound associated with this occupation. Among these artifacts is evidence of a moderate Brunson Phase occupation at the site, and a minor Lockett Phase occupation.

Nakomis Site (9Cd18)

This site is a broad artifactual scatter on the northwestern corner of a 50-foot fluvial terrace on the eastern side of the river valley. The site borders a small feeder stream which runs into the Flint River 1900 feet distant. Ceramic debris was found only in a small area on the sloping margin of the northwest end of the broader lithic scatter. Although surface collection was hindered by

clearcut vegetation, the site appears to have been the location of a minor Brunson Phase occupation, and the recovery of several fragments of aboriginal faunal remains on the disturbed surface of the site may indicate extant subsurface features.

Beaver Jump Bluff Site #1 (9Cd12)

This is a light artifactual scatter on the western edge of a high fluvial terrace on the eastern side of the river valley. The Flint River flows at the base of the 40-foot precipice immediatly east of the site. The site is half a mile southeast of 9Cd2 and just over a quarter mile from 9Cd18. Of the small amount of ceramics surface collected from this overgrown site, the majority appear to be Lamar based on paste and temper characteristics, and the recovery of a single pinched folded rim indicates that the site has a Thornton Phase component. Further collection may reveal this Lamar occupation to be more substantial than was indicated by this limited surface collection under poor conditions.

Fountain Bluff Site (9Pe5)

The Fountain Bluff Site is located on the southwestern corner of a high Pleistocene terrace on the eastern side of the Flint River valley. The river flows at the base of the steep 50-foot bluff bordering the site. The site occupies a gentle rise in the relatively level terrace

summit, and encompasses a small area littered with artifactual debris. A large portion of the ceramics recovered under good collection conditions on the surface of the site date to the Brunson Phase, as do sherds recovered over half a meter deep in a posthole test. In general, although the site is somewhat small in area, the Brunson Phase occupation appears to be comparatively major.

Harp Hillock Site #1 (9Ma38)

This site is located on a small rise within the floodplain of the Flint River, adjacent to the the river channel on the east and immediatly south of the mouth of spring-fed Beaver Creek. The hillock is low in elevation, but the summit is probably removed from most flooding; it may be an erosional remnant of an ancient fluvial terrace. The site is completely wooded, and five posthole tests produced a sample of ceramics and lithics which permit the dating of a minor Brunson Phase occupation, which may be more intensive than was revealed by this limited testing. Thick midden deposits extend to the humus layer of the site, indicating that this site is largely pristine, undisturbed by agricultural activities, and untouched save for a narrow jeep trail which crosses a portion of the site. The site appears to have remained unmolested since its abandonment, an is unique in this regard.

Harp Bluff Site #3 (9Ma32)

This is a small site situated on a sloping colluvial outwash deposit at the base of a 50-foot high fluvial terrace on the western side of the river valley. Gin Creek enters the floodplain to the south of this site, and the Flint River is 3600 feet to the east. The steep incline of the bluff slope above the site accounts for a rapid colluvial accumulation, and based on excavations carried out by the landowner, this site appears to contain well stratified deposits dating at least as far back as the Late Archaic. In addition, several sherds diagnostic of the Brunson Phase have been recovered, although the occupation appears to have been a minor one, perhaps in part due to the small area of the site and its severe slope.

Daniels Field Site #3 (9Ma44)

This site is one of six sites located on the margins of a 10-foot alluvial terrace on the western side of the river valley, immediately south of Horse Creek. It is the northern of the two easternmost sites which border the main floodplain of the Flint River, flowing 3200 feet away. The site occupies a gentle rise in the terrace, and artifacts are densely scattered across this landform, which was collected under excellent conditions in a plowed field. Among a number of sherds collected from the plowed surface of the site, two diagnostics reveal a minor Brunson Phase occupation.

Hobbs Field Site #1 (9Ma23)

This site is the southern of the pair of sites described above, and comprises a very dense artifactual scatter across another gentle rise in the terrace. The river is 3000 feet to the east of this site. Once again, a pair of diagnostic sherds indicate another minor Brunson Phase occupation at this site.

Miona Ferry Locality (9Ma50)

This site consists of artifacts which have been located by local residents during the last 25 years within the active channel of the Flint River itself roughly one mile above Miona Ferry. Sherds have been reported by several individuals, and at least three complete ceramic vessels have been recovered from this area. While only one of these has been viewed by the author, it provides clear evidence of Mississippian occupation. This vessel, found by Mrs. Leonard Beavers of Marshallville in 1963 (reported in the Macon Telegraph and News on November 13), is a large intact Lamar Incised carinated bowl. Its decoration is atypical for this region, taking the form of wide, rectilinear incisions in the common scroll design. The shoulder exhibits cane punctations, and the base of the bowl is complicated stamped with a concentric circle motif.

The bowl dates to the Lockett Phase, and thus indicates a Lockett Phase component at the site of origin. Examination of the sandbars bordering this segment of the

river, as well as extensive survey and posthole testing of the swamp bottoms along this portion of the river, has not revealed the source of these vessels. Although future work may result in the discovery of this site, it is only possible at present to suggest that an archaeological site of unknown size with a Lockett Phase occupation may have eroded into the river, or may be in the process of eroding into the river, along this section of the Middle Flint.

Underwood Millpond Site (9Ma18)

This is a large site located on the northeastern margin of a 30-foot alluvial terrace a mile south of the one described for 9Ma44 and 9Ma23. Toteover Creek flows into the floodplain just north of the site, and enters a large oxbow lake less than half a mile east of the site. While the river is 5000 feet to the east, the creek would have provided easy access to the main river channel by way of the oxbow between the river and the site. This oxbow may even have been a part of the active river channel during prehistoric times. A local resident asserted that this site was marked by the densest concentration of pottery he was aware of, but surface collection under poor visibility resulted in the recovery of a comparatively small number of sherds. There is evidence of a moderate occupation of the site during the Brunson Phase, based on the presence of several diagnostics.

Miona Bridge Site (9Ma41)

This site is located on a level portion of a long, sloping ridge which forms a part of the eastern border of the river valley, directly across from 9Ma18. The site is over 70 feet above the floodplain, yet over 120 feet below the summit of the upland bluff on the east. A small intermittent stream borders the site to the north, and the river is 1300 feet to the west. The site was surface collected under fair conditions, and artifacts were found to be scattered across the level portion of this ridge. Among the few sherds recovered was a single sherd which indicates a very minor Brunson Phase occupation. This site is being destroyed by highway construction, and thus will no longer exist upon the completion of this project.

Wilder Spring Site (9Ma19)

This site is far to the south, almost eight miles below the southernmost documented Mississippian site on the Middle Flint River valley. It occupies a large sand hill in the middle of the floodplain on the eastern side of the Flint, just north of Hogcraw! Creek. The rise borders a large oxbow lake, which connects with the Flint River proper 2100 feet to the west and would thus have provided easy access to the main river channel, presuming it was not a portion of the active channel during the Mississippian period. A flowing spring emerges from the base of the hill on the bank of the oxbow. Several sherds of the large

number collected under good conditions provide evidence for a minor Brunson Phase occupation at this site.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MISSISSIPPIAN SETTLEMENT DISTRIBUTION

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter synthesizes the results of regional survey presented in Chapter Six in order to assess the geographic distribution of Mississippian sites in the Middle Flint River region. An overview of the distribution of all Mississippian sites precedes a more detailed examination of settlement distribution within each phase defined in Chapter Five in order to examine temporal variation during the Mississippian period. This analysis includes an evaluation of the possibility that DeSoto visited this region in 1540.

OVERVIEW

Archaeological survey of the Middle Flint River region, aimed at discerning patterns in the geographic distribution of Mississippian occupation in the survey area, resulted in the discovery of 113 previously undocumented archaeological sites along the Middle Flint. Of this number, only 27 sites displayed concrete evidence of occupation during the Mississippian period, making a grand total of 29 Mississippian sites including the two mounds.

What is perhaps most instructive about these figures is that just under three-quarters of the archaeological sites which had been occupied at some point in prehistory were never re-occupied by Mississippian groups. While it is possible that a decline in regional population might produce such a result, it seems far more likely that this feature represents a concentration of occupation in specific locales, and as such reflects a shift in the settlement strategy of aboriginal groups during the Mississippian period.

In order to evaluate the hypothesis proposed in Chapter One that Mississippian occupation should concentrate along the Middle Flint River valley, specifically within the widest expanse of floodplain below the Fall Line, the location and physical setting of each Mississippian site discovered in the region was evaluated. Upon visual inspection of the map in Figure 6.2, it is clear that Mississippian sites do concentrate along the river valley. Although survey coverage was admittedly greatest along the margins of the valley, a number of sites were discovered in upland settings removed from the river valley. None of these contained evidence of Mississippian occupation. Of the 29 known Mississippian sites, 26 are either within or directly adjacent to the modern floodplain of the Middle Flint, and the remaining three sites are located no more than 1800 feet up small stream valleys adjacent to the floodplain (Table 7.1). Two of these sites, in fact, may

Table 7.1
Environmental Setting of Mississippian Sites

	Floodplain	River Distance	Setting
9Tr1	surrounding	900 ft.	hillock/levee
9Cd46	surrounding	adjacent	?
9Tr43	adjacent	3700 ft.	10' terrace
9Cd38	adjacent	3300 ft.	upland ridgetop
9Cd41	adjacent	7700 ft.	10' terrace
9Tr12	adjacent	1400 ft.	50' terrace
9Tr24	800 ft.	2000 ft.	50' terrace
9Tr37	1200 ft.	2400 ft.	50' terrace
9Tr17	adjacent	3400 ft.	upland ridgetop
9Tr44	adjacent	2700 ft.	50' terrace
9Tr19	adjacent	1500 ft.	50' terrace
9Tr23	adjacent	1500 ft.	50' terrace
9Tr18	adjacent	2200 ft.	50' terrace
9Tr22	adjacent	2000 ft.	50' terrace
9Cd2	adjacent	adjacent	10' terrace
9Cd39	adjacent	1200 ft.	10' terrace
9Tr20	surrounding	4300 ft.	sand ridge
9Tr46	surrounding	3800 ft.	sand ridge
9Cd18	1800 ft.	1900 ft.	50' terrace
9Cd12	adjacent	adjacent	50' terrace
9Pe5	adjacent	adjacent	50' terrace
9Ma38	surrounding	adjacent	hillock
9Ma32	adjacent	3600 ft.	colluvial footslope
9Ma44	adjacent	3200 ft.	10' terrace
9Ma23	adjacent	3000 ft.	10' terrace
9Ma50	surrounding	adjacent	?
9Ma18	adjacent	5000 ft.	30' terrace
9Ma41	adjacent	1300 ft.	upland ridgetop
9Ma19	surrounding	2100 ft.	hillock

have been associated with the Hartley-Posey Mound Site, making this larger residential unit as a whole directly adjacent to the floodplain.

This observed pattern appears to confirm the hypothesis that Mississippian occupation should concentrate along the river valley, although further survey, particularly in upland settings far removed from the main river valley, is called for in order to substantiate this conclusion. Within the context of this observed clustering of sites about the floodplain, survey results additionally indicate that Mississippian occupation does, in fact, concentrate on the widest expanse of this floodplain. As noted in Chapter Two, the Middle Flint River is marked by the largest expanse of active floodplain along the entire river valley. This floodplain, which originates at the Fall Line, extends seventeen miles downriver, where the valley constricts to a width of only half its former size. An examination of Figure 6.2 reveals that 24 of the total of 29 Mississippian sites are in or adjacent to this major floodplain expanse, and that four of the remaining five sites are within two miles down the river valley from the point where the floodplain constricts to a width of one and a half miles. Of the 12 sites located by the survey below these four southernmost Mississippian sites, only one site displays evidence of minor occupation during a single Mississippian phase. Although it is apparent that survey coverage was again less complete along the portion of the

Middle Flint below its major floodplain, almost all of the sites located in this southern segment of the valley are situated on landforms virtually identical to those displaying Mississippian occupations along the major sub-Fall Line floodplain expanse to the north. South of the floodplain expansion, for example, sand hills within the active floodplain and alluvial terrace remnants bordering the floodplain show no evidence of Mississippian occupation save in one case (9Ma19), whereas these landforms were evidently prime locations for Mississippian occupation along the northern floodplain expanse.

While it seems apparent that the great majority of Mississippian sites along the Middle Flint River are associated with the major expanse of floodplain immediately below the Fall Line, additional systematic survey is needed to confirm this pattern. The observed distribution supports Smith's (1978) argument regarding optimum habitats for Mississippian groups, in that the segment of the river valley chosen for intensive occupation possesses the largest total area of arable floodplain soils and the largest total area of permanent and seasonal lakes within the Middle Flint River region. Within this large floodplain habitat, however, there is further patterning in the spatial distribution of Mississippian sites, and an examination of such patterns is instructive regarding the nature of Mississippian settlement distribution on the Middle Flint.

Visual inspection of the locations of Mississippian sites in the survey area (Figure 6.2) reveals that these sites do not appear to be randomly distributed across the entire three-mile width of the floodplain, but rather tend to lie close to the modern river channel. Where the river flows against the western margin of its valley, Mississippian sites appear on this side of the valley, and after it crosses to the eastern bluffs, Mississippian sites appear on the eastern side. Compilation of the distances of each Mississippian site from the Flint River indicates that half of the sites are only 2000 feet or less from the channel, and all but one are less than a mile in distance from the Flint, despite the fact that the floodplain within which the river flows is up to three miles wide here (Table 7.1). Nevertheless, even presuming that the distribution of known Mississippian sites is representative of the actual distribution of such sites, it would be reasonable to suggest that the Flint River may have meandered considerably across the floodplain during the last several centuries, making the present correlation between Mississippian period site location and the river channel merely a product of coincidence.

Examination of the detailed survey maps of this portion of the river valley constructed for the 1827 Georgia Land Lottery shows, however, that not only was the river flowing in the same general portions of the floodplain over a century and a half ago, but also many of the bends and

meanders depicted on the 1827 map are still evident today in the modern course of the river. While some of the more marked departures of the 1827 river from its modern channel have long since been cut off by meander action, at least three of these cutoffs are presently oxbow lakes within the floodplain, and have yet to be filled in or erased by further lateral river channel movement. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the river meandered little more between 1550 and 1827 than it has between 1827 and the present. It seems likely, therefore, that the Flint River may well have been flowing through a channel during the Mississippian period which to a large extent parallels the modern course. Indeed, the fact that other sections of bluff do not have Mississippian sites suggests that river proximity is a determinant factor of site location and that the Flint River channel has changed relatively little in the last seven centuries.

If it can therefore be assumed that the present correlation between the locations of Mississippian sites and the proximity of the Flint River holds true for the late prehistoric period, then several possible explanations may be proposed for this pattern. If, as Smith (1978) argues, Mississippian groups tended to inhabit areas with preferred soil types, the proximity of such sites to the active river channel may reflect the better quality of soils nearer the river, perhaps partly as a result of the presence of well-drained natural levees renewed each year by seasonal

flooding. Another factor may have been important to Mississippian peoples, and that is the need for easy access to major waterways for transportation of people and goods. If, as Steponaitus (1978) asserts, Mississippian societies acted as redistributive entities, the flow of tributary goods from production areas to a local center would be of great importance to the functioning of the Mississippian chiefdom, and thus access to primary corridors of transportation, such as the Flint River as a major waterway, might have played a significant role in Mississippian settlement systems. The river may thus have served to link the various communities comprising the Mississippian society in the Middle Flint River region.

Examination of the physical setting of the Mississippian sites located on the Middle Flint reveals further patterns in Mississippian settlement distribution. Eighteen of the twenty-nine Mississippian sites are located on Pleistocene alluvial terraces bordering the active floodplain of the Flint (Table 7.1). These terraces represent broad, level plateaus which typically drop abruptly to the modern floodplain. They are the largest and most level landforms in the region which exhibit both of two important characteristics: immediate access to the floodplain habitat, and safety from seasonal flooding of the Flint River. They may additionally display unique and desirable soil or drainage characteristics, but information of this type was not assembled for this study.

Interestingly, nearly two-thirds, or eleven, of these terrace sites are situated on the remnants of the 50-foot Pleistocene terrace, making this particular landform the most utilized of all settings where Mississippian sites occur. Whether this particular terrace simply represents an optimal elevation above the active floodplain, or perhaps is comprised of particularly desirable soils may only be determined with future research. Of the remaining seven terrace sites, six are located on the 10-foot terrace, much closer to the elevation of the active floodplain. These sites are similar in elevation to six of the ten remaining Mississippian sites not located on fluvial terraces. Most are situated on topographic rises within the floodplain, many or all of which may actually be remnants of the 10-foot alluvial terrace. The seventh site, located on a low colluvial outwash slope, is similar to these low sites with regard to its elevation above the floodplain.

In general, then, most Mississippian sites seem to be located either on high alluvial terraces, on the order of 50 feet in elevation, or on lower landforms, such as 10-foot terraces or terrace remnants and sand hills within the floodplain. Only more intensive survey, however, will reveal whether this apparent pattern is real or not, and what reasons may be proposed for its existence.

One further pattern in the spatial distribution of Mississippian sites will be noted here. The largest and most intensive Mississippian occupations seem to occur

closest to the Fall Line, at the head of the major floodplain expansion in the northern portion of the survey area. Neisler Mound (9Tr1), argued to be the most intensive Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint, is immediately below the Fall Line, just above the point where the river channel begins to meander within the floodplain. As such, this site is not centrally placed with respect to the floodplain occupied by Mississippian populations, but is actually on the northern margin of this floodplain expansion. The second most intensive Mississippian occupation, at Hartley-Posey Mound (9Tr12), occurs just three miles to the south, still within the northern portion of this floodplain. Two major occupations in Brunson Field (9Tr19 and 9Tr22) are three miles south of Hartley-Posey, roughly at the mid-point of the sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion. Below this point are two relatively major Mississippian sites, 9Cd2 and 9Pe5, which display the least intensive occupation of these six largest sites, and which are only slightly south of the mid-point of this floodplain expansion. The southern end of the floodplain is marked by only minor Mississippian occupations.

It is evident that the intensity of Mississippian occupation of this optimal floodplain habitat on the Middle Flint is heavily skewed toward the northern reaches of the sub-Fall Line floodplain. Perhaps more significantly, the administrative mound centers are located at the north end of this northern group of large Mississippian sites. This

distribution appears to violate Steponaitus' (1978:432) argument that the administrative centers of Mississippian chiefdoms should be "geographically centered with respect to the population in its own district." Presuming that Mississippian societies tended to occupy optimal floodplain habitats, which seems to be the case on the Middle Flint River, it might be expected that the Mississippian administrative center on the Middle Flint River would be centrally placed with regard to the spatial distribution of the population it served, and thus would be located somewhere near the mid-point of the floodplain expansion occupied by Mississippian peoples; that is, roughly six or seven miles below their actual location.

This is clearly not the case. Both mound centers are located at the northern end of the hypothesized optimum floodplain habitat, which has been empirically demonstrated to have been a region of comparatively concentrated Mississippian occupation. Upon reevaluation of the expectation based on central place theory, it is apparent that this expectation is based on two assumptions that may not be valid for the Middle Flint River. First, this expectation assumes that the entire population of the Mississippian society associated with these two mound centers is located within the optimum habitat of the sub-Fall Line floodplain expanse, and second, the expectation assumes that this optimum habitat is relatively

homogeneous with respect to resources crucial to Mississippian populations.

In regard to the first assumption, while it is clear that little Mississippian occupation occurred south of this floodplain segment, this survey did not extend north of the Fall Line into the Piedmont region of the Upper Flint River, and thus must rely on previous archaeological work for site distribution data. Don Gordy (1966) surveyed a large portion of the bottomlands of the Upper Flint River in order to assess archaeological resources potentially threatened by three proposed reservoirs. His survey extended as far south as the mouth of Auchumpkee Creek, just seven miles above the Fall Line. Within the moderate expansion of floodplain including Bivens Bend, just under 12 miles above the Fall Line, Gordy found a number of archaeological sites which displayed some evidence of Mississippian occupation. This author has reexamined the collections from ten of these sites, confirming their assignment to the Mississippian period. Gordy's survey was far more intensive, and thus may be expected to have resulted in the discovery of many more sites per area of land under consideration. It is clear, however, that Mississippian occupation was not completely confined to the sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion, but rather appears above the Fall Line within the Piedmont. It is unclear whether this group of Mississippian sites is spatially discontinuous from the group below the Fall Line, for the portion of the river between the lower end of

Gordy's survey and the Fall Line has not been examined for evidence of Mississippian occupation. Although these sites may have been associated with Neisler and Hartley-Posey Mounds, their distance from the mounds and the nature of the intervening terrain suggests that they could represent a separate group. The distance of the Bivens Bend group of sites to the administrative mound centers below the Fall Line is close to the maximum distance proposed by Hally (1987) as an effective limit of administrative control within Mississippian chiefdoms of northern Georgia, and thus it seems possible that these sites may not have been a part of the sub-Fall Line chiefdom identified in this study. A more detailed evaluation of this Piedmont occupation will be presented later in this chapter, but this brief overview of Gordy's results indicates that the first assumption stated above regarding the central place expectation of the two mounds was not violated unless these Piedmont sites were indeed associated with Neisler and Hartley-Posey. Extending Mississippian occupation to the north would be expected to result in a gravitation of the administrative mound centers to the north as well, which could account for the placement of Neisler and Hartley-Posey.

The second assumption, regarding the overall homogeneity of the floodplain habitat, may have been violated as well. As noted in Chapter Two, the composition of the sediments comprising the floodplain expansion below the Fall Line appears to change with distance from the

Piedmont. The increasing dominance of sediments derived from Coastal Plain sources may have rendered the southern reaches of this floodplain expansion less suitable for Mississippian agriculture, and thus less preferable as a habitat for occupation. This may have resulted in a heavier Mississippian occupation of the northern portion of the floodplain expansion, in part explaining the location of the mound centers at the northern end of the valley. The specific location of Neisler, as the largest and most intensively occupied Mississippian site, may have been influenced by the presence of higher and more well-defined natural levees, which definitely played a major role in the internal configuration of the site. Such levees appear only near the Fall Line, declining in size and definition to the south, and their value as occupational areas and highly desirable soils for agriculture may have served to skew the optimal floodplain habitat toward the northern end of this portion of the valley.

While an examination of the distribution of archaeological sites dating to the Mississippian period in general is instructive, temporal variation within this period can only be evaluated by subdividing Mississippian occupation into the three phases defined in Chapter Five. Settlement distribution during each phase will be described below in order to address such variation.

Smith (1978:492-3) notes that temporal variation in Mississippian settlement distribution is an important

dimension to an understanding of Mississippian societies. His argument for fine-grained Mississippian chronologies has bearing on the present study; although it is possible, based on the ceramic chronology constructed in Chapter Five, to subdivide Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint River into three phases ranging in length from 75 to 125 years, this chronology is neither fine-grained enough nor sufficiently well defined to permit evaluations of the actual contemporaneity of occupations at Mississippian sites in the region. At best, an evaluation of the settlement distribution during each phase will permit generalizations regarding broad-scale settlement systems during each phase. A more detailed evaluation of the specific Mississippian settlement strategy at any point in time must await extensive future research.

THE BRUNSON PHASE

Figure 7.1 maps the locations of all archaeological sites with evidence of occupation during the Brunson Phase. Of the 29 Mississippian sites in the survey area, 23 were occupied during this earliest Mississippian phase. The great majority of these sites witnessed only minor occupation during the Brunson Phase, but five sites, including the two mound sites, were the location of major Brunson Phase occupations. There is no direct evidence of mound construction during this phase, although the possibility cannot be ruled out based on the limited nature

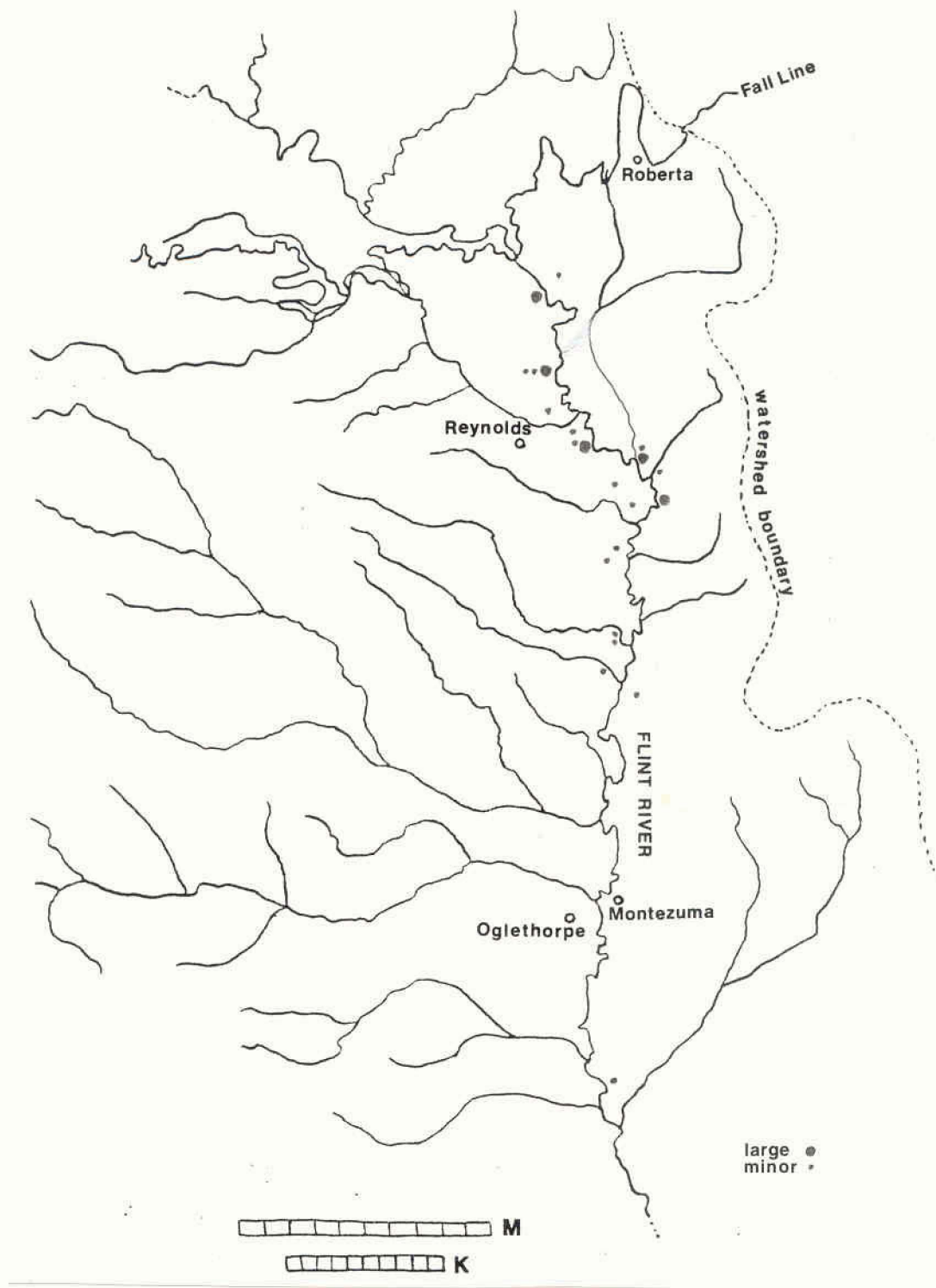


Figure 7.1
Brunson Phase Sites

of excavations in each mound. Interestingly, the five largest Brunson Phase occupations appear to be regularly spaced; each site is three miles distant from the nearest major site, with the exception of the southernmost site, 9Pe5, which is only two and a half miles south of 9Cd2. These sites are also notable in that all are located less than 2000 feet from the Flint River. Although few interpretations may be offered due to the limited and unsystematic nature of the survey which produced these results, it is possible to speculate that this regular spacing of more important villages may have been an intentional dimension of the settlement strategy of the Brunson Phase society, perhaps geared toward the facilitation of the collection and transportation of goods, possibly tributary in nature, within a simple chiefdom. This suggestion must be regarded as a testable hypothesis for the present.

The geographic distribution of aboriginal occupation during the Brunson Phase seems to reflect a comparatively dispersed settlement system, with a large number of minor occupations dispersed around several evenly spaced major villages. While some sites clearly display evidence of intensive occupation, there is no evidence of mound construction as an indicator of centralized authority. In general, while it might be suggested that the Brunson Phase society represented a simple chiefdom on the Middle Flint River, its degree of centralized administration is unclear.

This Brunson Phase population appears to have been largely confined to the major sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion, but at least one isolated site appears far to the south (M2), and one very intensively occupied site was located at the Bivens Bend Site (9Up1) within the Piedmont. This site, located and described by Gordy (1966), comprises a remarkably dense concentration of artifacts which date primarily to the Late Etowah period, contemporaneous with the Brunson Phase as defined in this study. Among the other sites surveyed by Gordy along this lower portion of the Upper Flint, no evidence of further Late Etowah occupation was discovered. Bivens Bend may thus represent a separate Late Etowah society, or might have been an isolated northern extension of Brunson Phase occupation associated with the moderate expanse of floodplain at this point above the Fall Line.

It should be noted here that no evidence for occupation during the large part of the Savannah Period has been recognized as a result of this survey. As indicated before, the entire Middle Flint River region appears to have been abandoned for a period of at least one hundred years (A.D. 1225 - 1325) between the Brunson and Thornton Phases. The only potential evidence of occupation during this period may exist at the Bivens Bend Site, which includes some ceramics which may date to this period of abandonment on the Middle Flint. Since this possible evidence is confined to a

single site, and appears to have no correlate along the Middle Flint, no Savannah phase was defined for the region.

THORNTON PHASE

After an apparent abandonment of the Middle Flint River, a number of archaeological sites which were occupied during the Brunson Phase were reoccupied by Mississippian groups during the Thornton Phase, beginning perhaps as early as A.D. 1325. Although at least six sites which were occupied during the Brunson Phase were reoccupied during the Thornton Phase, fourteen of the Brunson Phase sites, including two with major Brunson Phase occupations, were never occupied again by Mississippian groups (Figure 7.2). Three new sites were occupied during the Thornton Phase, but the total number of sites exhibiting Thornton Phase occupation was only nine, well under half the number of Brunson Phase components. Furthermore, six of these sites displayed only minor Thornton Phase occupation. Only three sites show evidence of substantial occupation during the Thornton Phase. Two of these were intensively occupied population centers, at least one of which (9Tr12) witnessed mound construction. The third, 9Tr19, was a small but intensive occupation. Once again, these major sites appear to be evenly spaced at a regular distance of three miles apart, a feature which once again suggests an organized settlement strategy of Thornton Phase populations.

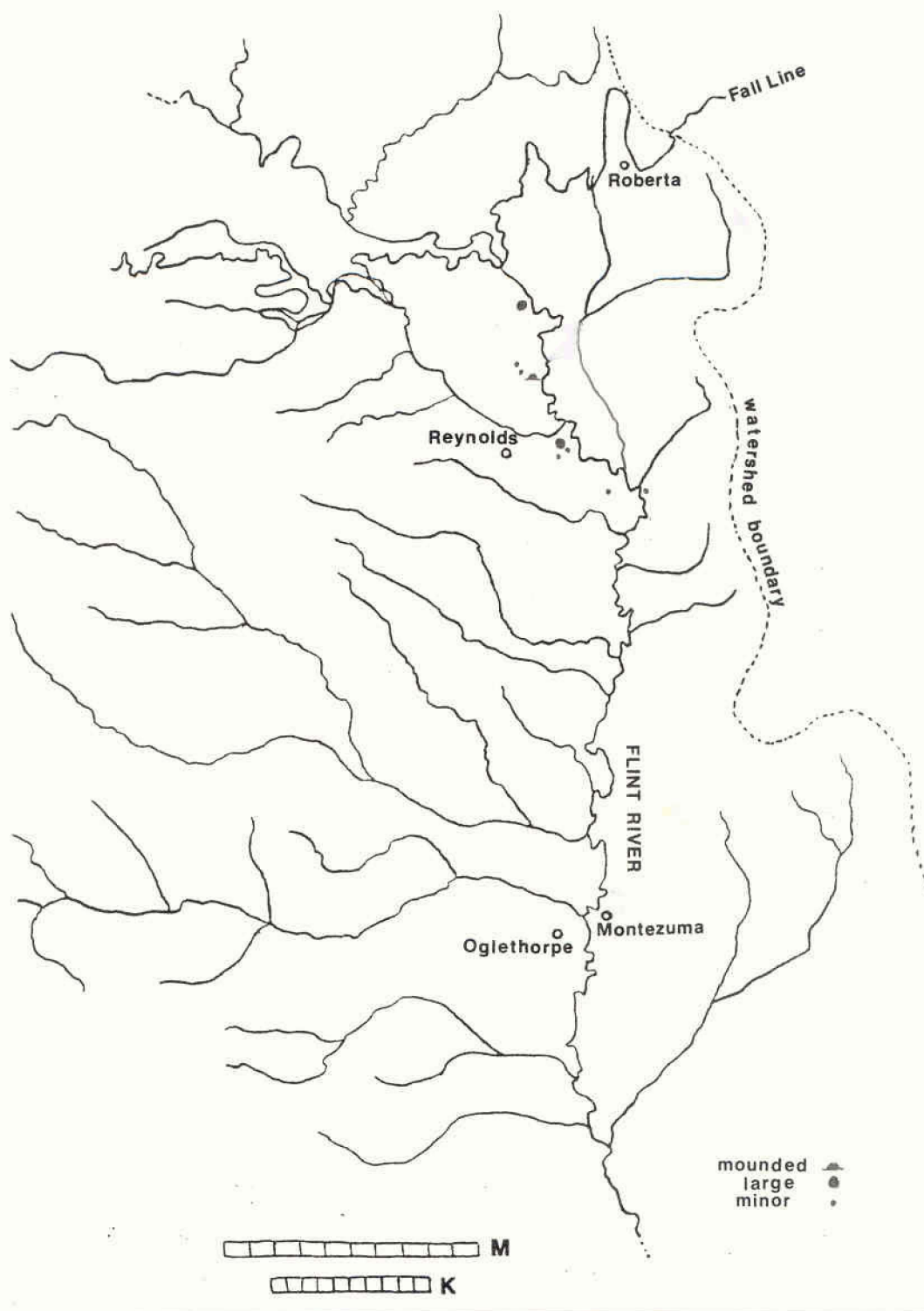


Figure 7.2
Thornton Phase Sites

Thornton Phase settlement distribution thus embodies an apparent paradox: although far fewer sites were occupied during the phase, it is nevertheless characterized by mound construction, implying a greater degree of centralized authority within a population presumably large enough to support a chiefly redistributive system. Thornton Phase populations seem to have been concentrated in two or three larger sites; the phase appears to be marked by a far less geographically extensive settlement system than was evidenced for the Brunson Phase. Not only are there less sites occupied during this Phase, but they do not extend as far south as Brunson Phase occupation. The southernmost Thornton Phase occupation appears at the Gin House Ridge Site (9Tr20), which is only just south of the midpoint of the sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion. A pattern of fewer, larger villages with mound construction, then, appears to best characterize the Thornton Phase along the Middle Flint.

Gordy (1966) reports at least ten archaeological sites between Bivens Bend and the mouth of Auchumpkee Creek to the south which produced evidence of Lamar period occupation. Collections from most of these sites were examined by the author, and although most of these occupations seem to be minor ones, they do appear to have been contemporaneous with the Thornton Phase and its successor, the Lockett Phase. It is difficult to estimate on the basis of this evidence whether Lamar occupation of the Piedmont region immediately above the Fall Line was

greater than that along the Middle Flint, since the surveys are in many ways not comparable in terms of survey coverage. In general, Gordy's evidence does not significantly alter the conclusion that the major population centers during the Thornton Phase were at the northern end of the floodplain expansion along the Middle Flint.

LOCKETT PHASE

Settlement distribution during the succeeding Lockett Phase is marked by a similar centralization of occupation (Figure 7.3). The three major Thornton Phase sites maintained a high level of occupation, but four of the minor Thornton Phase occupations were not reoccupied during the Lockett Phase. Four new sites show evidence of minor occupation during the Lockett Phase, but in general, the Lockett Phase is apparently characterized by the same lack of dispersion as in the Thornton Phase, with only four minor sites beyond the three larger occupations. Both mounds witnessed extensive construction during this phase, and achieved their present height and volume at this time. These two sites were the location of large, permanent villages which evidently comprised a large resident population. Neisler may have reached an area of 9 hectares during the Lockett Phase.

Although it is evident that substantial mound construction occurred at both Neisler and Hartley-Posey Mounds during the Lockett Phase, it is impossible to discern

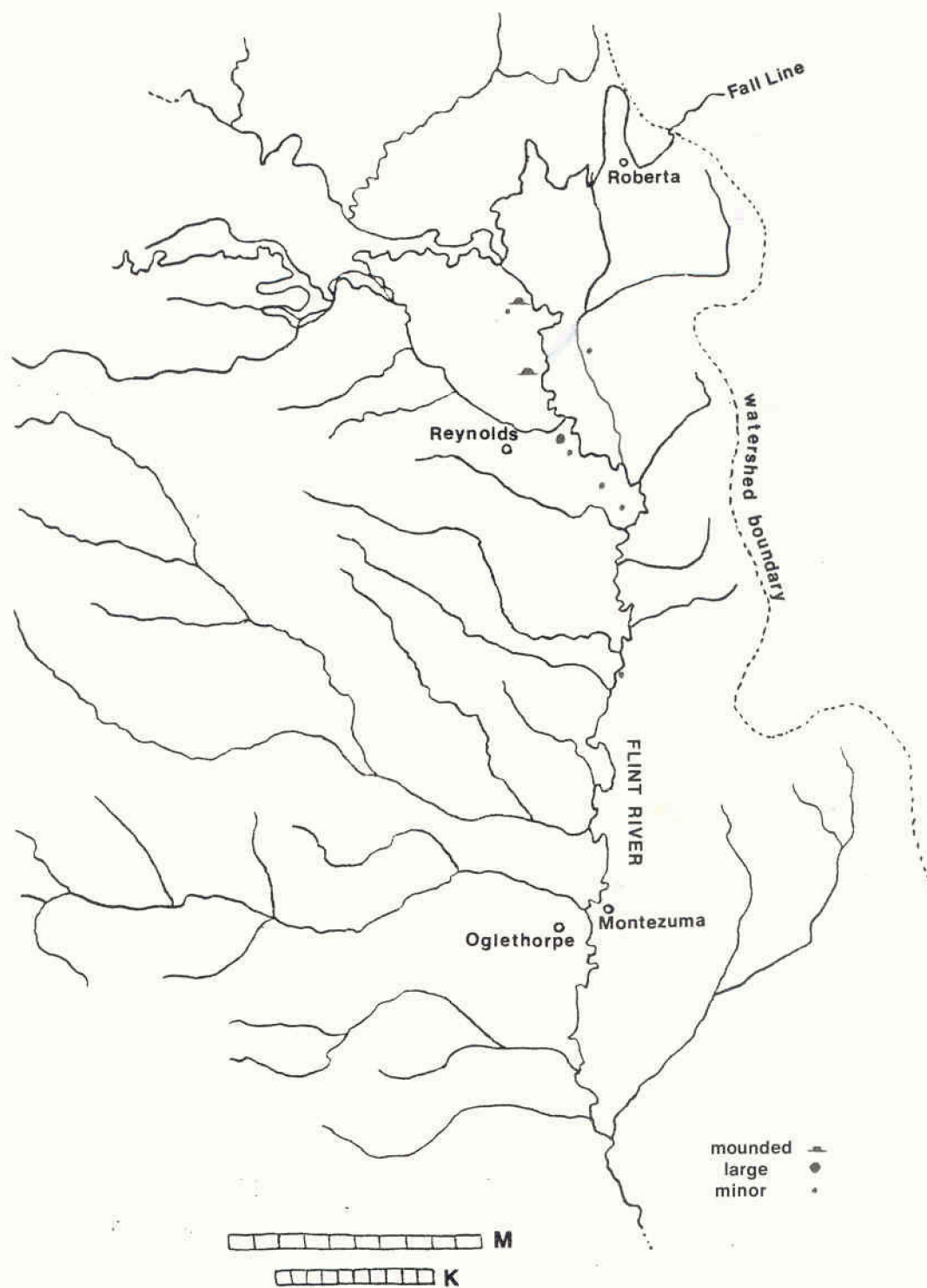


Figure 7.3
Lockett Phase Sites

whether these mounds were utilized contemporaneously. The two sites are located only three miles apart, and thus it seems almost certain that, if contemporaneous, the mounds would have served as a pair of administrative centers for a single chiefdom. One of the two (perhaps Neisler due to its size) may have served as a major center, with the other functioning as a minor center subordinate to the first. This situation would fit Steponaitus' (1978) characterization of major and minor centers at Moundville, although the Middle Flint River chiefdom was undoubtedly far less complex.

These mound centers may not have been contemporaneous, however. Williams and Shapiro (1986) propose that a pattern of paired alternating mound centers may characterize several Mississippian societies in Georgia. Utilizing archaeological evidence from the Oconee Valley, they suggest that only one of a pair of mounds in close proximity may have been occupied at a single point in time, and that these mound centers may alternate back and forth over a period of decades or centuries. While the ceramic chronology for the Middle Flint is incapable of determining dates of occupation within the defined phases, there is no doubt that both mounds were utilized during the Lockett Phase, and that any alternation must have occurred within this century-long period of time. If such alternation did occur, it seems doubtful that any of the environmental factors suggested by Williams and Shapiro (1986) would have

served as the impetus for such movement on the Middle Flint, primarily due to the close proximity of these mounds. Alternation would be more likely the result of political or social factors, perhaps related to patterns of chiefly succession. Until the ceramic chronology for this region is further refined, the question of contemporaneity of mound utilization must remain unanswered.

It seems evident that both the Thornton and Lockett Phases most likely represent the existence of a centralized chiefdom on the Middle Flint River, characterized by a settlement system of large mound centers with only a small number of minor occupations in the surrounding region. Gordy's (1966) survey indicates that there was occupation of the lower Piedmont along the Upper Flint during both Lamar Phases, but there is no evidence of large or important population centers above the Fall Line during this time. The administrative centers of this hypothesized chiefdom were located immediately below the Fall Line, in the northern portion of the floodplain expansion on the Middle Flint, and populations seem to have been largely restricted to this northern segment.

There is evidence, however, that there was Lockett Phase occupation in the southern portion of this floodplain. Site 9Ma50, while it has yet to be located, displays the southernmost evidence of Lockett Phase occupation, and as such, has bearing on the identification of this chiefdom as

the Province of Toa visited by the expedition of Hernando DeSoto in March of 1540.

As noted in Chapter One, in their reconstruction of the route of the DeSoto expedition, Hudson, et al. (1984) proposed that DeSoto crossed the Flint River south of Montezuma, Ga., where they encountered a large town of the Province of Toa, which these authors suggest extended north to the Fall Line as a small chiefdom. Their placement of the southern tip of this chiefdom, visited by DeSoto on his route to the northeast, was based on Hays' (1933) mention of several "Indian mounds" in this vicinity, which had never been located or archaeologically tested before the present study. Based on the results of this project, it is clear that there is no evidence of sixteenth century aboriginal occupation in the segment of the Middle Flint south of Montezuma, nor in fact along the entire Middle Flint River south of the floodplain expanse just below the Fall Line. Several of the "mounds" mentioned by Hays (1933) were located by this author, and all turned out to be natural sand hills or topographic rises within the modern floodplain, not only without evidence of man-made earthworks, but also lacking any occupation later than the Brunson Phase, terminating three centuries before DeSoto's expedition.

It is clear, however, that there was sixteenth century Lockett Phase occupation as far south as seventeen miles below the Fall Line (represented by the Lamar Incised

bowl found in the river), and Hudson (personal communication) agrees that it is possible that DeSoto's crossing of the Flint River as the River of Toa may have occurred as far north as this point, implying that the southernmost Lockett Phase village, somewhere within the southern end of the sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion, may have been the town visited by DeSoto in 1540. Since this site has not been examined (presuming some portion of the site remains), its size or importance cannot be evaluated. If it was, however, the site visited by DeSoto, it would indicate that the Lockett Phase chiefdom delineated within this study was in fact the Province of Toa of the DeSoto expedition chronicles.

Is there other evidence to support this conclusion ? An examination of the physical environment of the entire Flint River valley, presented in Chapter Two, suggests that there were two locales which could have provided an optimal floodplain habitat for Mississippian populations on the Flint River. One of these, the major sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion, is within the survey area, and has been empirically demonstrated to have been the site of concentrated Mississippian occupation, and most likely constituted a simple Mississippian chiefdom, at least during the Thornton and Lockett Phases. The other likely area is the region west of present-day Albany, Ga., where several large creeks form relatively extensive floodplains within a fairly well-defined region. Once again, archaeological

data, although insufficient in this area, indicates that this was most likely the location of another Mississippian society. Hudson, et al. (1984) propose that the Pine Island Site (9Dul) may have been the village of Capachequi, and a cursory examination of collections at the University of Georgia reveal that a number of archaeological sites in this general region, several including one or more mounds, display clear evidence of sixteenth-century Fort Walton occupation.

The portions of the Flint River between these two Mississippian societies have not been surveyed extensively, but it is apparent that there was little or no sixteenth century Mississippian occupation outside these two areas. This conforms quite well with the placement of the two chiefdoms which DeSoto visited, Capachequi and Toa, within the two areas demonstrated to have been occupied during the sixteenth century. In addition, Elvas' (1866) perception of a cultural distinction between Capachequi and Toa, apparently tied to climatic differences (Toa was described as the first Province in the cold country of the north), equates well with the archaeologically demonstrable division between the Fort Walton ceramic region, of which the Lower Flint Mississippian groups formed a part, and the Lamar ceramic region, which includes the Middle Flint River society described in this study. Although there is some overlap in the ceramics of each region, a major dividing

line may be placed between the southern and northern Mississippian societies on the Flint River.

One further tantalizing bit of evidence for sixteenth century Spanish contact with the Middle Flint River region as Toa appears in the form of a fragment of a crystalline quartz bead fragment recovered from Level 4 of Test Trench #1 at Hartley- Posey Mound (noted in Chapter Three). The bead was sifted out of secure moundfill context, and most likely originates in Stratum A of Mound Stage III, the debris layer preceding the terminal moundfill deposit at the mound. It thus dates to the latter part of the Lockett Phase, placing its deposition in the mound sometime during the early or mid-sixteenth century, sometime before ca. A.D. 1550.

The bead is highly fragmented, and thus only suggestions regarding its original shape may be offered (Figure 7.4). It was oblong in shape, and its dimensions in a direction perpendicular to the drilled hole were 9 mm. in width and over 19 mm. in length. The surface is frosted, either as a product of manufacture or erosive use, and is relatively even and rounded, although natural facets resulting from crystalline imperfections do appear. The hole is 4 mm. in diameter and over 9 mm. long (the thickness of the bead cannot be determined), and shows extremely faint striations on its interior due to drilling action. Significantly, the hole is parrallel-sided, as opposed to the typical biconical form of southeastern aboriginal



Figure 7.4
Crystalline Quartz Bead Fragment
Hartley-Posey Mound (9Tr12)

drillwork. This fact, along with the apparent absence of crystalline quartz beads from a clearly prehistoric aboriginal context anywhere in Georgia, suggests that this bead may be a product of European manufacture (Marvin Smith, personal communication), almost certainly Spanish due to its age.

The bead is definitely not of the Florida Cut Crystal variety, described by Fairbanks (1968) as dating to the latter half of the sixteenth century (Jeff Mitchem, personal communication). In size and overall shape this bead seems much more similar to two crystalline beads recovered along with a Clarksdale bell from a burial at the Oliver Site in Mississippi, which may well have witnessed direct or indirect contact with the DeSoto expedition (Brain 1975). The early to mid-sixteenth century date of the Hartley-Posey bead implies one of two possible Spanish sources. The bead may represent shipwreck salvage from the coast, and thus may have been traded to the deep interior of Georgia. In light of the previous proposition that DeSoto actually made contact with this society on the Middle Flint River, perhaps passing only twelve miles to the south, it seems far more likely, therefore, that this bead represents contact with the DeSoto expedition. If the Oliver site artifacts have been interpreted correctly, the expedition was in fact carrying crystal beads, and thus the recovery of this bead appears to fit well with all available evidence.

In conclusion, it is suggested here that the late Lockett Phase represents the historically documented Province of Toa visited by the DeSoto expedition in March of 1540. Only with extensive survey and testing along the entire Flint River in order to determine the precise locations of sixteenth century Mississippian populations will this suggestion be supported or refuted. What is clear, however, is that sometime within only a very few years after the DeSoto expedition passed through South Georgia, the entire Middle Flint River region was abandoned by Mississippian populations, never to witness substantial occupation again until the latter half of the eighteenth century, over two centuries later. Marvin Smith's (1987) study of the effects of the depopulation of the interior southeast as a result of European contact reveals that epidemic diseases introduced by direct or indirect contact with Europeans may have devastated aboriginal southeastern populations. Smith documents several instances of population movement or migration as a possible response to such disease, and it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that this may have occurred on the Middle Flint. The fact that the entire region was abandoned almost immediately after a possible direct contact with DeSoto's army can hardly be explained by coincidence. Whether or not DeSoto actually visited the region, the total abandonment of the Middle Flint River immediately subsequent to this expedition seems most likely to have been prompted by some consequence,

direct or indirect, of this journey. Without further evidence, however, disease remains but one possible explanation for this abandonment, and at present, no suggestions can be offered regarding the ultimate fate of this group.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As an effort to construct an initial data base for the geographical and chronological distribution of Mississippian occupation along the Middle Flint River, this study has been comparatively successful. It has provided a ceramic chronology for the region based on archeological testing in both platform mounds and a geographically extensive regional survey which permits the integration of a number of non-mound Mississippian sites into the temporal framework of the established ceramic chronology. This data base in its present form additionally allows a number of inferences to be made regarding the specific nature of the Mississippian society on the Middle Flint, and thus demonstrates the interpretive potential of such data bases.

Test excavations at Neisler (9Tr1) and Hartley-Posey (9Tr12) Mounds produced stratified ceramic samples spanning several stages of mound construction and premound activity. These collections, upon analysis, not only aided in the construction of a Mississippian period ceramic chronology for the Middle Flint River, but also permitted the dating of stages of mound construction and use as an indicator of the existence of centralized authority during each phase of the

Mississippian period. Three Mississippian phases were defined on the basis of this testing.

Regional archaeological survey, while limited and somewhat biased by the use of an informant survey strategy, resulted in the discovery of 113 previously undocumented archaeological sites along the Middle Flint River valley. Of this total number of sites, 27 revealed some evidence of occupation during the Mississippian period. Including the two mounds, then, 29 Mississippian sites are now known to exist along this portion of the Flint River. These sites are all either directly adjacent to or in very close proximity to the active floodplain of the river valley, and virtually all are associated with the major sub-Fall Line expansion of the Middle Flint River floodplain, which seems to have been an optimal habitat for local Mississippian populations. Mississippian sites additionally tend to be situated in very close proximity to the modern river channel itself; all but one are within a mile of the Flint. The sites are typically located on the bluff edges of relic Pleistocene alluvial terraces or on terrace remnants within the active floodplain.

The Mississippian societies represented by these sites were probably characterized by a ranked form of social and political organization, and almost certainly attained the status of chiefdom. Larger and more intensive occupations appear to be preferentially located along the northern reaches of the sub-Fall Line floodplain expansion,

perhaps as a result of soil characteristics immediately adjacent to the Piedmont. Larger sites appear to be regularly spaced along the course of the river, and as such may reflect an organizational pattern in settlement distribution. The existence of mound construction is evidence of centralized authority during the Mississippian period, but this may not have been the case throughout the entire Mississippian occupation of the Middle Flint River.

It is this temporal variation which may be specifically addressed by the integration of the regional survey results with the ceramic chronology constructed on the basis of test excavations in the mound centers. It is evident that Mississippian occupation originates during the Late Etowah period, around A.D. 1150. While Mississippian occupation during the Brunson Phase appears to concentrate on the sub-Fall Line floodplain expanse, and although there is evidence for the regular spacing of larger population centers, no firm evidence for mound construction was obtained. The degree to which this Brunson Phase society may have been politically centralized, perhaps organized into a simple chiefdom, can therefore only be guessed at. It is clear, however, that the Brunson Phase is characterized by a somewhat more extensive settlement distribution than that which characterizes the later phases.

Between A.D. 1225 and A.D. 1325, the Middle Flint River appears to have been largely abandoned, for reasons which are unclear at this time. There is no evidence of

Mississippian occupation during the Savannah period in any archaeological sites discovered in the survey area, including the two mound centers. Although this may be due to an inability to recognize Savannah ceramics, based on present data, abandonment seems the most likely explanation.

At roughly A.D. 1325, Mississippian occupation reappears on the Middle Flint, although in a somewhat different form than evidenced for the Brunson Phase. This Early Lamar occupation, defined as the Thornton Phase, is marked by only a few large population centers, at least one of which, Hartley-Posey, exhibited mound construction during the phase. Minor occupations outside these population centers appear to have been reduced both in number and distance from the mound centers, and thus it is suggested that the Thornton Phase represents a simple chiefdom with a more centralized settlement distribution than was the case during the Brunson Phase.

This chiefdom-level occupation extended into the Late Lamar period, beginning at A.D. 1450. This final period of Mississippian occupation of the Middle Flint, defined as the Lockett Phase, seems to be marked by a similar centralization of both the settlement distribution and administrative authority. Mound centers seem to have been at their peak of occupation, with large volumes of moundfill added to both mounds during the phase. Minor Lockett Phase occupations, however, are generally small both in number and distance from the mounds. It is probable that

a population center on the southern end of this chiefdom was visited by the expedition of Hernando DeSoto in March of 1540, and if this is, in fact, the case, the Lockett Phase chiefdom may have been known as Toa during the early sixteenth century. Soon after this Spanish contact, mound construction ceased, and the entire Middle Flint River valley appears to have been abandoned. Whether this abandonment was a direct or indirect result of the DeSoto visit is unclear at this time.

Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint River is characterized by a number of variations through time. Occupation does not seem to have been continuous, but was punctuated by at least a century of abandonment. Political centralization, while present during the last two centuries of occupation, may not have been as pronounced during the earlier occupation. Explanations for these temporal variations are unclear at present. It is apparent, however, that the Fall Line zone of the Flint River was the location of a large Mississippian society centered on the two mounds which have been recognized for many years by archaeologists.

It is abundantly evident that there is immense potential for future research along the Middle Flint River, and not just within the Mississippian period. Although the data base assembled as a result of this project permitted a number of inferences to be made, much more work remains to be done before significant conclusions may be proposed. A thorough examination of the specific characteristics of the

physical environment of the Middle Flint River region, including variations in soils, vegetation, etc., is a necessary preface for an evaluation of Mississippian settlement distribution. In addition to the obvious goals of further refining the regional Mississippian ceramic chronology and obtaining more thorough survey coverage for the region, particularly in upland locations and within the modern swamp bottoms, more directed research may proceed on the basis of conclusions offered in this report.

In particular, aspects of temporal variation identified in this study should be pursued. The most obvious problem is the gap in the ceramic chronology: does it reflect an abandonment of the region, or merely an inadequate sequence or site survey? Also, what are the origins of this Mississippian society? While a very few Woodstock and Napier sherds were recovered in the survey, there is little evidence of aboriginal occupation immediately preceding the Brunson Phase. Is this again a result of flaws in the Late Woodland ceramic chronology, or does it reflect a real lack of occupation?

Further research should also concentrate on an evaluation of the degree of political centralization within this Mississippian society through all phases of occupation. Further subsurface testing within each mound could be carried out in order to more precisely identify the dates of mound construction, and regional survey should incorporate intensive collection and test excavations in order to more

adequately evaluate the periods and degree of Mississippian occupation at all sites. With more complete survey coverage of the region, statistical tests might be applied to evaluate models of central place or hierarchical settlement distribution.

Additionally, future research should delve into the question of DeSoto's journey through the region, and the southernmost large Lockett Phase site occupied during this expedition should be tested for evidence of Spanish contact. Clarification of the DeSoto route will also be accomplished by extensive survey along the portion of the Middle and Lower Flint downriver from this polity in order to evaluate whether this is, in fact, the most likely candidate for the Province of Toa.

In conclusion, the present study has offered a number of conclusions regarding the Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint River. Many of these are based on adequate data, but most are hindered by the limited nature of the data recovered during this project. These conclusions, then, should at present be regarded as testable hypotheses which must be subjected to critical evaluation by future research. It is evident, however, that this study provides a rudimentary data base which now permits informed questions to be asked about the nature of Mississippian occupation on the Middle Flint River, thus providing a basis for directed future research in the region.

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