City of Hawkinsville

Archaeological Assessment

11-Feburary, 2000 to 12-Feburary, 2000

Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
and Florida State University's Program in Underwater Archaeology

Research Reports No. 10

Christopher E. Horrell

Edited by Michael Faught

City of Hawkinsville

Archaeological Assessment
2000

Table of Contents

Page

City of Hawkinsville

Archaeological Assessment
2000

List of Figures

Figure *Page*

Acknowledgements

This project could not have been possible without the guidance of state officials from the Bureau of Archaeological Research, Dr. Roger Smith, Jim Dunbar, and Della Scott-Ireton. Additionally, to Dr. Michael Faught for his efforts and interest in conducting work on this project. To Melanie Damour and Thadra Palmer for their patience and attention to detail that made this project possible as well as Chuck Meide for his suggestions and advice. Finally, the successful completion of this project is owed in large part to the able and hard working field crew and divers of the anthropology 4131 class that contributed their time and energy. These people include, Amanda Daws. Laura Horgan, Rachel Horlings, Katie McClure, Jennifer McKinnon, Tyler Cremeens, Marc Galloway, Chris Horrell, Steve Lambert, Jason Raupp, and Takeshi Shiromaru.

Abstract

Working in concert, the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research and Florida State University's Program in Underwater Archaeology conducted an archaeological survey and assessment of the submerged remains of the late 19th century steamship, *City of Hawkinsville.* The reassessment of this wreck is the second year such a project has been carried out at this site. Work conducted at the site included the removal of refuse and snags from the wreck, an attempt to relocate the anchor eyebolt of the middle buoy off the starboard beam of the wreck, establish a guide chain through the eyebolts of the buoys located around the perimeter of the wreck, observe and record any missing planking on the deck of the wreck, clean the plaque that identifies the vessels located in the boiler room, and check the slope of the starboard gunwale against a previous map. Other tasks were also accomplished as time permitted. The following report is a summary of these all of these activities.

Historic Background

As a major waterway in Central Florida, the Suwannee River provided transportation of people, cotton, and lumber via steamboats down to Cedar Key where cargo could be offloaded onto larger oceangoing vessels. Steamboats were ideal vessels because of their flat bottomed construction and their ability to make the shallow water runs up to riverside towns such as Columbus. These vessels were instrumental in tying these small communities to the larger economic framework of the south in the mid and late 19th century (Dunbar 1991 :1). As a result of this interaction, the loss of several vessels occurred as they worked the river. As early as 1847 the *Orpheus,* a 136 foot steamer was lost, possibly due to a navigational error somewhere in the waters of the Suwannee. Steamboats would also play an important role as blockade runners during the Civil War. As the war raged, the port at Cedar Key fell into Union hands and blockade runners were forced to run up into the shallow water inlets and rivers such as the Suwannee for safety. Vessels such as the *Madison* were instrumental in running the blockade and capturing union vessels. However, as the war continued the *Madison* was scuttled in Troy Springs Run, a spring along the Suwannee, in an effort to prevent her from falling into Union hands (Dunbar 1991:1-2).

After the war there was a hiatus in the steamboat activity upon the Suwannee. In 1872 the steamboat *Wawenock* ran cargo from New Troy (near New Troy Springs) to Cedar Key. Steamboat commerce on the Suwannee would continue to thrive with the establishment of towns and steamboat landings (Dunbar 1991:1-2). In the mid 1880's the town of Branford was established by Captin Bob Ivey. Ivey was instrumental in constructing a steamboat landing next to a rail line in Branford thereby articulating the shipping and rail industry in Florida. Ivey was also responsible for the construction of a boat yard which led to the production of numerous steamboats including the famous *Belle of Suwannee*. Steamboats would continue to play a major role on the Suwannee until the hurricane of 1896 and the subsequent establishment of a network of railroads that would eventually replace water transportation. Steamboats continued to operate until the early 20th century but not to the degree they had during the previous decades. *City of Hawkinsville* was one of these last vessels (Dunbar 1991:1-2).

The *City of Hawkinsville,* a coastal steamboat, was the largest and last steamboat to run the Suwannee River. Constructed in 1896 in Abberville Georgia, the *Hawkinsville* was a 141 foot long with a square stern, single stack, and two decks. Originally constructed for the *Hawkinsville* Deepwater Boat Line, of *Hawkinsville* Georgia ,she was sold in 1900 to the Gulf Transportation Company for use on the Suwannee (Dunbar 1991:1-2). She was stationed on the river and traveled a route that stretched from Branford to Clays Landing, Old Town, and on to Cedar Key. At the turn of the century new steamboats such as the *Hawkinsville* served to move lumber from inland communities down to Cedar Key for oceanic transit. She may have served in other capacities as well and contemporary accounts suggest that she may have even aided in the construction of the rail bridge that spans the Suwannee at Old Town (Dunbar 1991:1-2). New rail connections across the river would eventually lead to the obsolescence of these vessels and lead to the extinction of this form of transportation on the river. According to the official registry records the *Hawkinsville* was in service until May 19, 1922. Her captain, Mr. Currie, abandoned her

at the old steamboat landing near Old Town ending forever the steamboat era on the Suwannee River (Dunbar 1991:1-2).

Today *City of Hawkinsville* rests on the bottom of the Suwannee River on the Dixie county side of the river. The upper deck of the vessel was removed sometime after she sank. Lying on her starboard side, her main deck and planking are exposed. In addition, her engine components still remain on board providing an excellent example of the technology of the late 19th century. This vessel provides SCUBA divers an excellent dive in the proper conditions. The vessel and her components are best viewed when water stages and tannic levels are relatively low. *City of Hawkinsville* was nominated as a state underwater preserve by Mike McCaskill in 1989 and given that status in 1991 She remains an attraction for many divers who visit the Suwannee year round (Dunbar 1991:1-2).

Field Work

The following describes the work conducted during the project 11, February, 2000 - 13, February, 2000. Because of the nature of the work and the logistics involved, it was not necessary to bring all of the participants to the site until Saturday, 12, February, 2000. As a result it was possible to examine other wrecks in the Suwannee that had previously been investigated by state officials and representatives of Florida State University's Program in Underwater Archaeology.

Friday 11 February 2000

Tasks Accomplished:

Gear loaded and prepared for the trip to Branford.
Inspection of the *Madison* in Troy Springs.
Inspection of a natural spring along the banks of the Suwannee River.
Inspection of the *Orpheus* in the Suwannee River.
Prepared for the inspection and maintenance of the *City of Hawkinsville.*

The principal investigators on for this project include Jim Dunbar and Della Scott-Ireton. Passengers on boat include Chris Horrell, Melanie Damour, Chuck Meide, and Tyler Creemens. The skies were partly cloudy with an air temperature at approximately 75°. A light wind blew from the north.

The BAR's boat is an 18' outboard skiff and can hold up to six people. The launching of the boat was accomplished with some difficulty due to the recent drought. However, because the water levels in the Suwannee were quite low the visibility was improved for our investigations.

Upon arrival to the site of what is thought to be the *Madison,* the crew observed that the framing components of the vessel were exposed on the river bed. The vessel appeared to be constructed of iron/steel and was resting in approximately 3-5 feet of water (again the water level was very low). Upon a quick visual inspection from the boat the team continued on upstream. Another stop was made at the site of a small spring that has been exposed due to the low water levels. The water emanating from spring was quite warm and is probably part of the larger system of springs that feed the Suwannee.

The team arrived at the site of the *Orpheus* and got ready to examine the wreck. First the team placed the anchor upstream from the wreck in order to drift back over the top of the vessel (ideally on top of her bow section). However, the current was running ½ knot to 1 knot and made this difficult. Next, the team took a GPS reading and recorded the location of the wreck. The position of the *Orpheus* is 30xx.xx° N and 83xx.xx° W. The team would utilize both snorkle and SCUBA gear to dive the wreck. During the dive a one investigator remained on the boat to act as a safety diver. The water temperature at the site was in the mid 60's. The visibility ranged from two to five feet.

Once on the wreck the team made an attempt to determine the dimensions of the vessel. Upon locating the stem and stern it was possible to make out portions of the hull structure. In order to delineate the area of the wreck, investigators placed buoys at the bow and stern sections of the vessel. Next, attempts were made to locate certain features on the wreck. Because portions of the vessel are covered by sediments, some light hand fanning of sediments from the structure was necessary.

Within the hull structure several pieces of brick were noted. The brick was fragmented and non-diagnostic. The brick appeared to be hand made and from the mid to late 19th century. In addition to the brick, several fragments of wood appeared to be burned. Some of the wood is associated with the brick. Several fasteners are visible and protrude out of the planking These features were recorded and several photographs were taken of this portion of the wreck.

The condition of the sternpost was also noted. After some hand fanning, the bottom of the stern post was exposed revealing that it is rabbeted to the keel of the vessel. The sternpost of the vessel is in good condition and the fasteners that would have held the gudgeon in place are still in place. Measurements of the vessel were also recorded. The vessels length is approximately 34.20 meters with a beam of 5.2 meters. Mapping of a small section of the hull was also accomplished (Figure 1). The first futtock is still articulated with the bottom planking and held together with iron fasteners and treenails. Additionally, the hard chine or angular joint of the hull indicates that this vessel is flat bottomed (Figure 2).

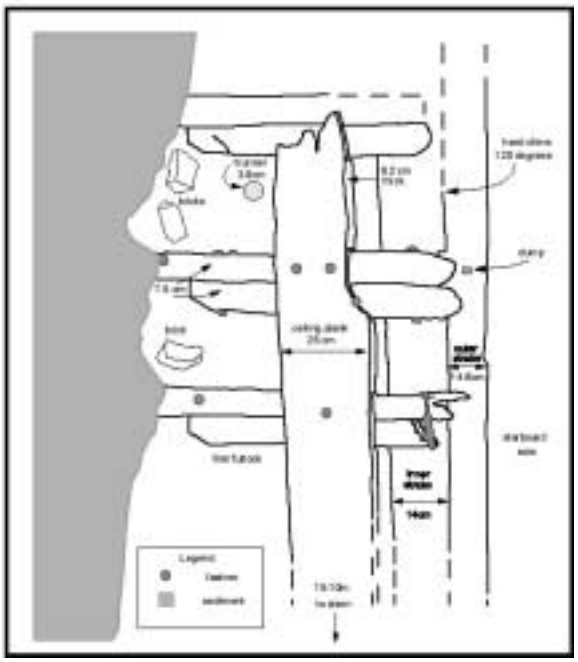

Figure 1. *Orpheus* planking at amidships

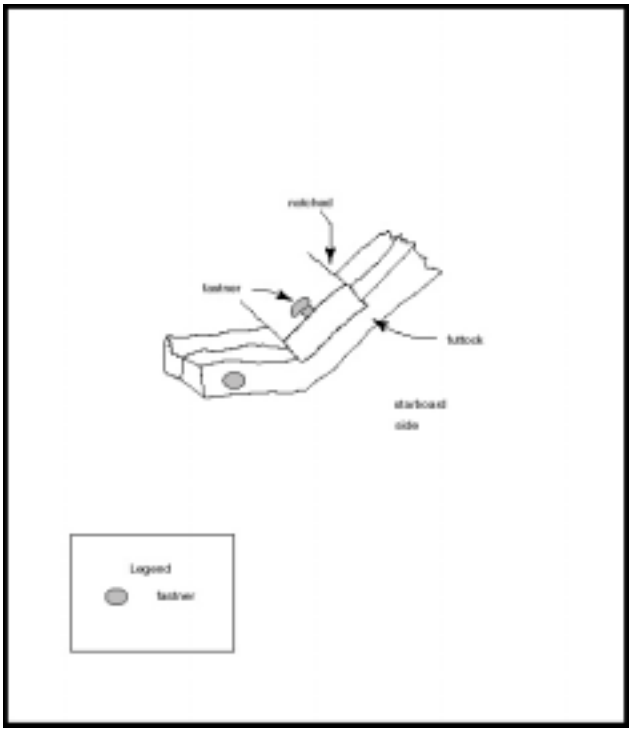

Figure 2. Drawing of Hard Chine of the *Orpheus* (not to scale).

Suggestions and Recommendations for the Site of the *Orpheus*

1. Continued examination and survey of this wreck. A mapping program should be implemented in order to determine the actual size of the vessel as well as the extent of the artifact distribution around the site.

2. Continued historical research should also be conducted in order to determine if this vessel is the *Madison* or the *Orpheus.*

3. Encourage graduate students interested in river boats to pursue as a possible research topic.

4. Test excavations may also provide diagnostic artifacts which may help in dating determining the origin of this vessel.

Saturday February 12, 2000

Tasks Accomplished:

Removal of refuse and snags from the *Hawkinsville*.

An attempt to relocate the anchor eye of the middle buoy off the starboard beam of the vessel.
Establish a guide chain through the anchor eyes of the buoys located around the perimeter of the wreck.
Observe and record any missing planking on the deck of the wreck.
Clean the plaques that identify the ship located in the boiler room
Check the slope of the starboard gunwale against a previous map.

Principle investigators during this operation were Jim Dunbar and Della Scott-Ireton. The crew consisted of 14 volunteer divers from the ANT 4131 course taught at Florida State University. The group followed a park ranger to the wreck site to establish a staging area to the site. Dr. Michael Faught and Dr. Roger Smith also arrived at the site shortly afterward. The BAR's 18 foot outboard skiff was on site to deploy divers. A dive orientation was held and the divers were paired up and given specific jobs to accomplish. Dives followed the Standard Operating Procedure established by the Academic Diving Program at Florida State University. All dives were to last 1 hour or 500 psi. Skies were partly cloudy with little or no wind. The air temperature was around 70° and the water was a cool 64°.

The dive one on the *Hawkinsville* was an orientation and cleaning dive. An attempt was also made to relocate a lost buoy anchor (eye bolt anchored in the river bed to hold a buoy). The dive began with divers examining the wreck and clearing any loose debris. With the water levels as low as they were the visibility was relatively good (between 5-7 feet). However, silt outs were frequent and the presence of many divers made these tasks somewhat difficult. The maximum depth was 25 feet.

The goals of the second dive included the removal of additional snags and work a chain from the bow to the stern through eyebolts that are anchored into the bedrock. The chain is to act as a guide for future visitors to the site as well as an aide should any of the buoys ever become lost again. The chain is stainless steel and was attached to the eyebolts using plastic zip ties. The chain was placed through the eyebolts and attached with the zip ties. The chain did reach the length of the vessel and was attached to the last eyebolt along the stern section. While some additional chain was available it could not reach the anchors behind the stern of the vessel. The excess chain was removed at this point. As a preventive measure the chain was worked underneath the large debris that has accumulated on the site over the years.

Dive three focused on taking pictures of the condition of the vessel. To provide the best environment for taking pictures only Dr. Smith and Dr. Faught made this dive.

Dive four consisted of many different tasks including the remapping of the bow section, an examination of the boiler room, cleaning the plaques located in the boiler room, cleaning the buoys and their line and placing a chain to some eyebolt anchors located directly astern of the vessel. Two divers immediately set to work cleaning the buoys and line. The buoys were only cleaned with scrubber sponges and water. No chemicals were used during this process. Other divers examined the boiler room and cleaned the plaque.

Upon completion of this task, the divers helped in the mapping of the bow section. Divers were also busy trying to attach a bright yellow chain which would act as a guide to the stern section of the vessel. However, this was not possible due to the buoy was not in a convent spot to tie off the chain, as it led over the starboard side of the wreck and might lead divers to hit their heads on the protruding spikes of the paddle wheel. It was determined that it might be possible to attach the chain to some eyebolts further astern of the vessel in order to prevent possible accidents. In order to do so would require additional chain. Divers attached a measuring tape through the chain and swam it through the eyebolts to determine the additional length of chain that was needed. It was determined that five more meters of chain would be sufficient for connecting the stern of the vessel to the eyebolts anchored in the bedrock.

Dive five consisted of a reassessment of sudden upward slope located directly under the missing gunwale on the starboard side of the vessel. There was concern for the integrity of the hull structure because the bow and stern are supported by limestone outcrops. Because the outcrops support the bow and stern, and the presence of soft sediments located amidships, it was believed that the vessel might be sagging. This sagging is recorded on the site map drawn in 1991, however, it was not possible to determine to what degree this curve extended downward from these maps. In order to investigate this curve of the hull structure a buoy (inflated BC) was attached to the end of a measuring tape and the depth measurements taken from the surface to the top of the wreck. This was done in intervals of 1 foot 8 inches which corresponded to the regular placement of the fasteners holding the outer planking to the ribs. The data recorded during this process indicates that the original map is correct and the curve does exist. Divers also investigated the boiler room and engine equipment for a class project that one of the ANT 4131 students was working on.

The re-mapping of the bow demonstrates the changes that have occurred to the structure of the vessel over time. Figure 3 is the deck and bow planking as it appeared in 1991. Figure 4 is the current condition of the starboard side of the deck and bow planking in 2000.

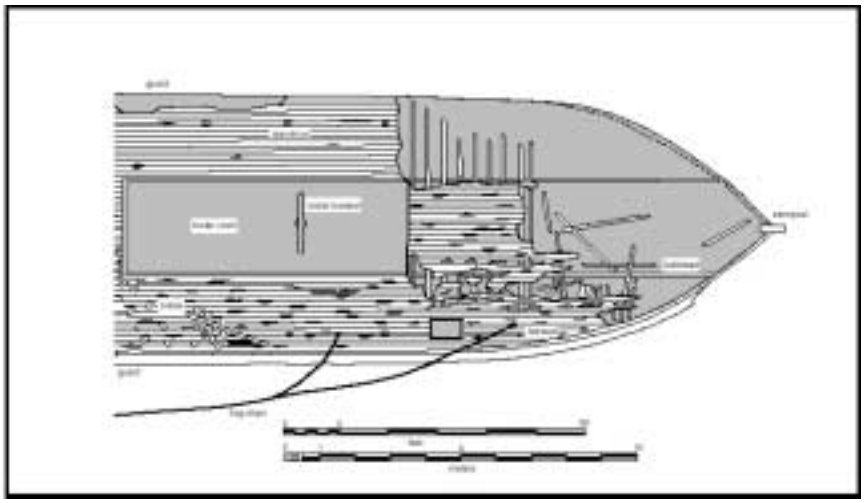

Figure 3. Condition of deck and planking of the bow in 1991.

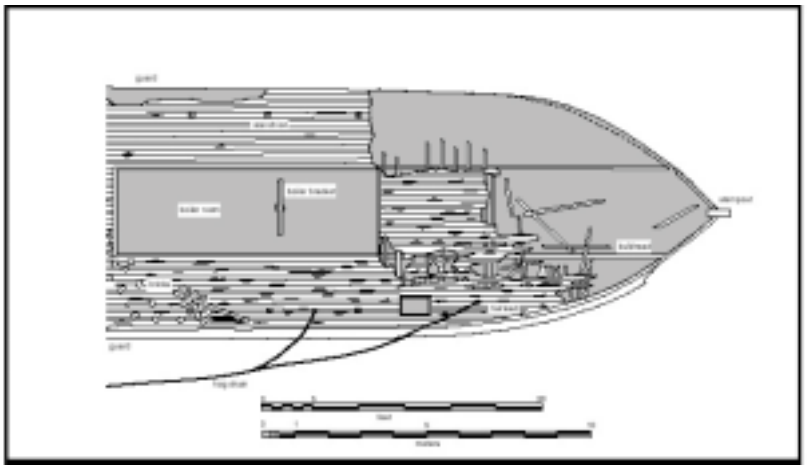

Figure 4. Deck and planking of the bow in 2000.

This last dive was made to take photographs of the vessel after the work was complete. Photographs were taken of the plaque, eroding deck planking, divers in the boiler room, on the stern, and near engine equipment (Figures 5, 6, 7).

Figure 5. Plaque in boiler room of *Hawkinsville*.

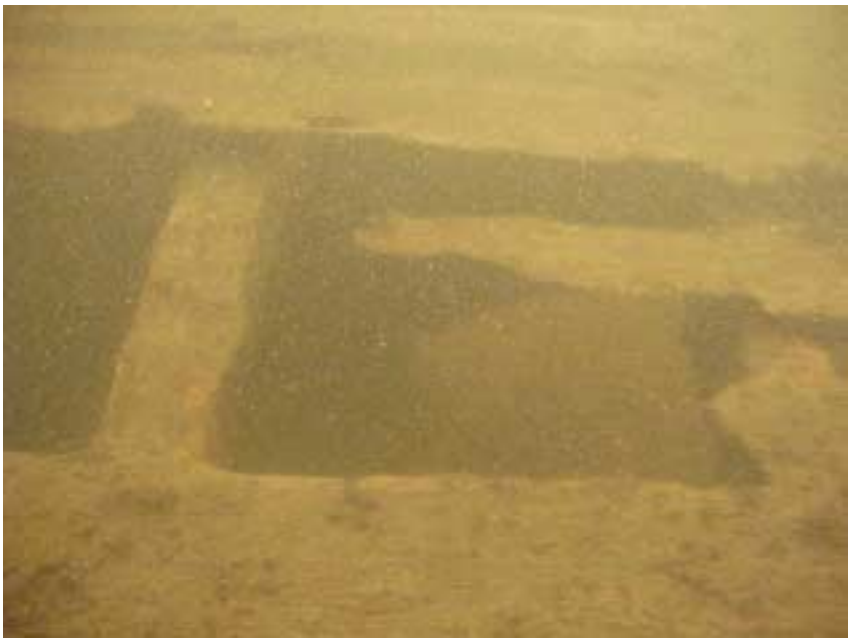

Figure 6. Eroding deck planking near bow.

Figure 7. Eroding deck planking near bow with hogging truss attached.

Suggestions and Recommendations for the *City of Hawkinsville* Underwater Archaeological Preserve

1. While an attempt to place rigging down for easier access to the wreck for divers, further work is necessary to complete this job. Extra chain is should be used in order to attach a line between the stern and the eyebolts imbedded in the bedrock. Additionally, it may be necessary to reexamine the chain that was placed along side the vessel for the mooring buoys. This chain may need to be repaired and rerun through the eyebolts. Once this is done a series of rock pitons might be hammered through the chain into the bedrock in order to prevent slack or the possible loss of one of the eyebolts and thereby providing additional security for the mooring buoys as well as the rigging for visiting divers. When this is complete it will be possible to attach leads extending off of this chain to the vessel making it easier for divers to access this site during strong currents or poor visibility.

2. **Snag Clearance**
   Because of the nature of the river and the snags that occur on the wreck it will be necessary to continuously clear the vessel of snags. This includes tree limbs and trunks, trash accumulation on the vessel, and the removal of monofilament lines. This not only protects the wreck but will also make the site safer for visiting divers.

3. **Protection for the bow**
   Continued monitoring is also necessary in order to access the condition of the bow. The current state of the bow is poor and added protection is desperately needed. Some suggestions include constructing a current deflecting device to protect the vessel from snags and other debris as well as the strong currents that occur during age waters (Meide 1999:13). However, until something can be done the bow should be continuously checked and secured so that it does not fall completely apart.

4. **Florida State University Student participation with the Bureau of Archaeological Research**
   Work with the Bureau of Archaeological Research and Florida State University's Anthropology class ANT 4131 should continue. Goals should include 1. Continued mapping of exposed features on the bow section including missing planks and the shifting sediments; 2. Continued removal of snags from the vessel; 3. Checking on the existing chains and buoy markers; 4. Clean buoys and buoy lines; 5. Place a guide chain for visiting divers that runs from the eyebolts to the stern of the vessel; 6. Continued cleaning of the dive access area of trash and large debris. All of these objectives must continue to be addressed in order to provide a safe and educational Underwater Archaeological Preserve for sport divers and students. Additionally, this could represent an inexpensive way for the Bureau of Archaeological research to accomplish its objectives while providing the University with funds and a worthwhile cultural resource management experience for the students.

5. **Cooperation with the Department of Environmental Protection**
   Continued effort should be made to including the *Hawkinsville* as an interpreted site along the Greenways Trail. The trail system might include a series of signs and brochures for sport divers advertising it as one of Florida's Underwater Archaeological Preserves.

6. **Continued Removal of Graffiti**
   Monitor and remove any graffiti near the dive site or on the railroad bridge overlooking the site.

7. **Continued Monitoring of the Mooring Buoys and Site for Theft**.
   An effort should be made to make sure the mooring buoys as well as other state owned materials are not stolen from the site. Placement of the State Seal decal may discourage this behavior.

References Cited

Dunbar, James

1991 *City of Hawkinsville*: Recommendations for the Establishment of a State Underwater Archaeological preserve in the Suwannee River Near Old Town, Florida. Unpublished paper on file of Bureau of Archaeological Research.

Scott-Ireton, Della and Chuck Meide

1999 *City of Hawkinsville* Archaeological Assessment 08-March to 11-March, 1999 Suwannee River, Old Town, Florida. Unpublished paper on file Bureau of Archaeological Research.