

Section A – Summary Reports

I. INITIAL REPORT ON THE SITE INVESTIGATION AT THE RIDGE MACON COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT INTERPRETIVE CENTER WARRIOR STAND, ALABAMA¹

Date: August 26, 2013

Site Location: 10735 Co. Rd. 10, Union Springs, Alabama 36089 [Section 4, Township 15N, Range 25E]

Site Name: The Ridge

Principals: Dana R. Chandler, Robert Perry and Glenn Drummond

ABSTRACT

"The Ridge" is a name that describes a particular portion of the topography found in southeastern Macon County, Alabama, that divides the drainage basins of the Chattahoochee and Tallapoosa Rivers. Archaeological evidence reveals that as early as Archaic times Native Americans took advantage of this terrain feature as a link in one of their major east/west trade routes. Early European explorers followed this path to make contact with the Native Americans living along the upper Alabama, Coosa, and Tallapoosa Rivers.

The pathway began to be known as the "Lower Trading Path" soon after contact and especially during the deerskin trading era (circa 1700 to the outbreak of the Creek Indian Civil War). It is estimated that tens of thousands of deerskins were carried first as individual back packs and later by mule train annually over the path to the ports of Charles Town and Savannah. Evidence found to date suggests that the Creek Indians and the traders established hunting and processing camps along the path during these times. Soon after the Louisiana Purchase the United States government found it expedient to establish an overland mail route between Washington City and New Orleans. The Creek Indians agreed to the Treaty of Washington City to the clearing of a postal path generally following the Lower Trading Path in 1805.

Georgia and "Carolina" militia forces used this route during their adventures into the Mississippi Territory to do battle with the Red Stick faction of the Creek Nation during the Creek Indian War of 1813-14. During the period of Alabama Fever, weary travelers encountered stage coach inns of the "Old Southwest" as they journey westward from the Carolinas through Georgia into Alabama. Three inns were located in the Ridge communities of Boromville (aka, Fort Bainbridge), Creek Stand and Warrior Stand respectively.

The mission of The Ridge, Macon County Archaeology Project is to collect, display and interpret the artifacts and historical records of the cultural/ethnic transition from Native Americans to European Americans to African Americans travelers and settlers in order to educate residents, students and visitors about the contributions of The Ridge communities to state and national history.

¹ Final report to be made after evaluation of artifacts.

SPECIFICS

Students from Tuskegee University's history classes, HIST 210 and HIST 419, under the tutelage of Dana R. Chandler, worked for two summers at "The Ridge" archaeological site in an attempt to uncover specific information about the original inhabitants and subsequent settlers to this part of Alabama. The original site survey consisted of visiting several locations along and adjoining the historic Federal Road.² One site, in particular stood out, and, fortunately, it was in close proximity to The Ridge Interpretive Center. Found in a drainage ditch, adjacent to existing county Macon County Road 10, was a large amount of debitage from lithic material dating to the Early Archaic period. Also found were a stone axe dating to the Archaic period (approximately 5,000 BCE), several early Woodland period (approximately 1000 BCE) points, and a number of lithic tools such as stone knives and scrapers of an indeterminate age. This prompted the team to consider beginning the dig at the top of the road cut, adjacent to the drainage ditch. Assuming that the material had eroded out of the cut, then the material's point of origin should be above the ditch line. Our assumption proved to be correct. We decided to start 3 meters from the Southwest corner of said property. This placed the initial dig site to within one meter of the top edge of the road cut.

Robert "Rob" Perry, a registered land surveyor in Alabama, provided the corners for our dig site. Working from four sections of two meter by two meter grids, the site was laid out in a North/South, East/West pattern. Points were shot in at one meter intervals around the site. A level and rod were used to set elevations throughout. The students were then able to properly locate each artifact in space by measuring from these control points. Perry determined the HI at the Southwest corner. Perry worked diligently as the co-archaeologist on site, as well as the site surveyor.

Generally, students were instructed during class time from 11:00 a.m. until noon. Their instruction included proper excavation methods. After class, students drove to the site, some 15 miles south of Tuskegee University. Onsite instruction was given regarding proper use of equipment. Onsite safety techniques were emphasized. Due to the high temperatures and humidity, students were prepared for the type of clothing and shoes to be worn during the time of work. A worksite medical kit and plenty of water were made available at all times. The safety of the students was always at the fore front of our work. They would work on the site from 1:00 to 4:00. During the summer of 2012 we had 15 students and this past summer we had 13. Most of the students had zero days tardy or missing.

During the dig, Glenn Drummond, Managing Director of The Ridge Project and a former Macon County engineer, acted as photographer, quality control coordinator, and on-site historian. At regular intervals, Drummond took photographs of the techniques involved and of any artifacts that were found. He would then photograph the artifacts using a scale. Finally, Drummond worked to give the students an overview of the site, using his extensive knowledge of the area.

² The Federal Road through the territory of the Creek people was a project that started in 1805 when the [Creek Indians](#) gave permission for the development of a "horse path" through their nation for more efficient mail delivery between Washington City ([D.C.](#)) and New Orleans, Louisiana. This section started at [Fort Wilkinson](#) near [Milledgeville, Georgia](#) and ended at [Fort Stoddert](#) near [Mobile, Alabama](#). By the time of the War of 1812, the Federal Road began in [Augusta, Georgia](#), ran through [Fort Hawkins](#) (Macon, Georgia), on to [Fort Mitchell, Alabama](#) (near modern [Phenix City, Alabama](#)), and finally terminated at New Orleans, Louisiana. For further information see: Southerland, Henry DeLeon Jr. and Brown, Jerry Elijah, *"The Federal Road: Through [Georgia](#), Creek Nation, and [Alabama](#)."* The [University of Alabama](#), 1989.

The dig commenced by removing the grass and topsoil from the site. Students utilized flat pointed shovels to remove the material which was subsequently carried to screens. During this time a variety of materials were found including a stemmed point, a bronze duck, a handful of coins from the 1940s and a great amount of debitage.

Within the first ten centimeters, metal objects were found that we assume were parts of wagons and included many drop forged nails. Other items included pottery sherds, i.e. potsherds, dating from the Mississippian period (approximately 900 CE); red ocher;³ lithic debitage and charcoal. This led the team to the conclusion that this site had been used over many centuries as a camp by a variety of people. Further investigation led us to the discovery of at least three different fresh water springs within close proximity to the dig site. Coupled with the higher elevation of the ridge, this provided a great location for travelers, but Native American and Colonial.

As we continued to expand from our original dig site, artifacts became more numerous and important. During our second season, as we continued to work to the northeast of our beginning, we found many items pointing to a possible colonial dwelling site. Although we continued to find more potsherds and lithic materials, such as a large, Late Mississippian potsherd and an Archaic stemmed point, we also found daub⁴ which was a great indicator of a dwelling. We continued to question whether the construction was Native American or Colonial; the issue being further confused by the last objects found. Those objects included a white kaolin pipe, from Bristol, England, ca. 1680-1710. Likewise, we found a French gun flint, ca. 1800. These artifacts were probably used by Native Americans of the time.

Further digging is required in order to understand the relationship of the items listed above. Have we found a Muscogee Creek site? Was it the site of a trading post which eventually became a tavern? Will the site reveal an area which was a camp site for a variety of travelers? Who were those travelers and how affluent were they? These and other questions are in dire need of being answered.

Overall, students dug to a depth of approximately 30 centimeters within the Northeast corner. The site has been documented and all artifacts have been properly stored and tagged. The team is interested in maintaining opportunities to continue digging at the site.

By Dana R. Chandler

³ Ochre (also spelled ocher) is a natural earth [pigment](#) containing [hydrated iron oxide](#), which ranges in color from yellow to deep orange or brown. It was often used as a pigment for painting on pottery or skin. Native American peoples used this material throughout the different periods.

⁴ Daub is a sticky material usually made of some combination of wet [soil](#), [clay](#), [sand](#), [animal dung](#) and straw. It is then applied between logs of a dwelling as an insulation and filler.