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A SURVEY LEVEL REPORT
OF THE
JOHNS CREEK DRAINAGE CANAL.
WETLANDS PERMIT AREA
SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE
ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY, AND ARCHITECTURE

PREPARED FOR
E. H. CRIMP AND COMPANY
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

BY
SHERRY GAYLE BROWN
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
MEMPHIS DISTRICT

March 1981
ABSTRACT

An intensive survey for prehistoric, historic, and architectural properties was conducted on 20 February, 1981 along Johns Creek in Shelby County, Tennessee. The study methods included a review of published literature, a review of state and Federal archival sources, a cartographic review, and intensive field examination. The results of these investigations were negative, with no cultural properties inventories for the project area.
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INTRODUCTION

An intensive survey for cultural resources was conducted by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District, personnel within the boundaries described in the permit application submitted by Wilson Fly of E. H. Crump and Company, Memphis, Tennessee. This study was performed as required by the following regulation: Processing of Department of the Army Permits: Procedures for the Protection of Cultural Resources (33CFR Part 325, Appendix C). The primary purpose of this study is to identify the presence of significant archaeological, historical, architectural cultural resources and to assess the adverse impacts upon these resources which may result from the planned activities within the permit area.

The permit area is located in southeastern Shelby County, Tennessee within the Memphis Metropolitan area. The planned activities will effect an estimated 11.4 acre parcel of land adjacent to the Johns Creek Drainage Canal approximately 1000 feet (311 meters) south of Winchester Road. The project design features include (1) depositing 4.7 feet (1.5 meters) of excavated fill over 6.6 acres of wetlands and (2) utilizing a 5.8 acre wooded tract adjacent to Johns Creek Drainage Canal as a borrow area.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The study area is located in the uplands east of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley which are capped by loess deposits ranging in thickness from about 80 feet (24.9 meters) in the bluffs to about 5 feet (1.5 meters) at the eastern edge of Shelby County (Saucier 1974; USDA 1970). The area is generally characterized by moderate topographic relief with level areas occurring along streams that meander through the rolling uplands (USDA 1970).

The Johns Creek drainage basin encompasses the Falaya-Waverly-Collins soil association. Soil within the study area is characterized as Falaya silt loam. This is a somewhat poorly drained, very silty, nearly level soil on first bottoms. The water table is generally close to the surface (within a few feet). Flooding is frequent during the winter and spring months. Excess water is the main limitation to development (USDA 1970).

The project area ecosystem is a mix of grassy wetlands and woodlands. Generally, the woodland is comprised of bottomland oaks, sweetgums, cottonwood and other bottomland hardwoods (USDA 1970; COE 1973). This general species configuration has been present for the past 5000 years and is a result of gradual changes in flora from the mixed spruce-pine forest of approximately 20,000 years ago. Minor fluctuations in the trend toward today's mixed deciduous forest, due to glacial advances and retreats, have been documented for the past 20,000 years in the nearby Nonconnah Basin by Delcourt et al. (1978).
1. Majority of site determined as wetlands.
2. Elevation Datum, M.S.L.
3. Filled land to be used for Commercial Office Park.
4. Approximately 60,000 C.Y. of fill material will be placed using overland rolling equipment.
5. Ordinary high water 265.0 ft.
6. 100 Year is 286 @ N.L., 287 @ S.L.
7. The area within the cut area subject to overflow to be seeded with long rooted grass or other ground cover recommended by the State Tennessee Agr. Dept., Corp. of Engineers or some recognized professional Botanist or Landscape Architect. Area not subject to overflow will be seeded with ground cover as recommended by one of the above sources.
In early periods the study area would have supported various forms of fauna including waterfowl, large and medium-sized game animals such as deer, elk, bear, wolf, mountain lion, and bobcat, and small game (Shelford 1963). Modern development surrounding the study area has limited the faunal inventory to several varieties of small game (squirrel, possum, and raccoon) and a varied population of reptiles, amphibians, fish, and birds (USDA 1970: COE 1975). The study area probably would have been amenable to the hunting and gathering activities of earlier prehistoric populations but not particularly suited to the agriculture practiced by later prehistoric peoples.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

Previous Research

The archaeological record of the study area and of West Tennessee in general is incomplete at this time. It hasn't been until the last ten to fifteen years that archaeological surveys within West Tennessee have been conducted to any extent (Smith 1979; Peterson 1979a, 1979b). Data gained from these surveys in addition to that available from studies conducted in Northeastern Arkansas serves as a base from which to construct the regional archaeological sequence.

One of the first investigations of the area surrounding the study area is that of Phillips, Ford and Griffin (1951). Their survey of the Lower Mississippi Valley from 1940 through 1947 covered many highly visible sites in the area. Phillips (1970) also includes a discussion of the surrounding area in his survey of the Lower Yazoo River of Mississippi from 1949 through 1955. Both of these volumes were primarily concerned with the establishment of cultural chronologies for the Mississippi Valley and focused upon the Woodland and Mississippian period sites with their highly visible mounds. Examination of these two seminal works resulted in a basic understanding of the ceramic technology for the area and the establishment of a cultural chronology for the sites (Table 1).

One of the major archaeological sites within West Tennessee is found at Chucalissa (40SY1). This prehistoric site was discovered during the initial steps in the development of a state park just south of Memphis, on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. The University of Tennessee conducted exploratory excavations at the site in 1940. This project encouraged the inclusion of the site as an integral part of the development of the park (Nash 1972). The clearing of the site area and further investigation of the deposits present revealed that the site was comprised of two flat topped temple mounds, a central plaza and an embankment surrounding the plaza (Nash 1972). There are also extensive surrounding cultural deposits which appear to be the remains of the habitations of the population which supported the large town complex. Additional work by various local groups continued during the 1950s and, since 1962, with the ongoing involvement of Memphis State University (Smith 1969). Today the
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site is nationally known and serves as a reconstructed village, museum, and teaching facility for Memphis State University. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Chucalissa is somewhat unusual for such a large Mississippian site because of its physiographic location. It is located on a 100 foot (30.5m) bluff and not on the lower bottomlands which were so favored by the heavily agricultural Mississippian period people. The site was occupied during four phases of the Mississippian period. The occupational history began with the Ensley Phase, radiocarbon dated to 1020 AD (+ 200 years), continued during the Mitchell Phase, with a date of 1210 AD (+ 95 years) and the Boxtown Phase, with dates of 1440 AD (+ 200 years) and 1410 (+ 90 years). Final evidence of Mississippian period occupation dates to the Walls Phase, during the late 1400s and early 1500s (Nash 1972).

The Nonconnah Basin, as a whole, has been subject to intensive but unsystematic surveys since the 1960s. Previous surveys of the area have been primarily the work of Memphis State University, but have resulted in no published materials to date. There is a summarization of existing data for all the sites in the basin (Anonymous, n.d.) but this provides little data concerning the artifactual content or the occupations of sites which now have been destroyed by urban growth.

Recently completed work in the Wolf and Loosahatchie basins (Peterson 1979a, 1979b) has resulted in the discovery of 247 new sites for the two basins. This study, which was conducted for the Soil Conservation Service, has served to further document the lack of Mississippian period sites for the western Tennessee area, particularly in the upstream areas of the basins. The occupations of these areas consist primarily of Archaic through Middle Woodland components at small sites found on terraces (Peterson 1979b).

There has been survey work done farther north of the shady area, in the Obion, Forked Deer, Reelfoot and Indian Creek areas (Smith 1979). Smith's report is the result of ten years of work performed under contract with the Soil Conservation Service. One hundred and eight new sites for the Obion and Forked Deer basin and 69 sites for the Reelfoot and Indian Creek basin area were recorded in these surveys. Of major importance in this report is the presentation, for the first time, of a localized projectile point typology (Smith 1979:97-124).

Across the Mississippi River, northeastern Arkansas has been the center for intensive archaeological investigation in recent years. Numerous archaeological surveys in the St. Francis River Basin have documented an intensive prehistoric occupation for the area (Iroquois Research Institute 1978a, 1978b, 1979c, 1979a, 1979b, 1979c, 1980a, 1980b; Smith 1978; Edwin Jackson and L. H. Heartfield 1979; P. Morse 1976). Major contributions to the prehistoric record in this area have been made by Morse and Morse at the Zebree Site (1977), Goodyear at the Brand Site (1974), Morse, in terms of the overall cultural sequence for the area...
(1969) and Klinger in the study of the St. Francis River Basin (1977). The last study was followed by an archaeological overview and research design for the St. Francis Basin by Iroquois Research Institute (1978d).

Perhaps one of the most important developments of the St. Francis River Basin projects was the development of the Central Place Model for Mississippian communities (Klinger 1975). Klinger postulated the specialized ceremonial center, large village, intermediate village, hamlets and farmsteads as an occupational hierarchy. The larger Mississippian site of Chucalissa (40SY1) in western Tennessee is apparently a combined ceremonial and village center and could be an element of the "hierarchy" proposed by Klinger (1975). Morse (1973) describes the sites of the Walls Phase located in the northwestern Mississippi and the southwestern Tennessee area as "vassal provinces" to the Late Mississippian Nodena culture of northeastern Arkansas.

Chronological Summary

The general archaeological sequence applicable for the study area should correlate with the sequence established for the surrounding areas of western Tennessee, northern Mississippi and eastern Arkansas.

Occupation of the area is known to extend from the Paleo-Indian period (before 7500 BC) through the Mississippian period and into the historic period. Paleo-Indian evidence in southwestern Tennessee is limited to a single site with Clovis material (40SY7). Most of what Peterson (1979a) has defined as Paleo for this area is actually best considered to be affiliated with the late Paleo to Early Archaic transition, i.e. the Dalton Culture (Goodyear 1974), dated to the 8500 to 7000 BC period in northeast Arkansas. There are two Dalton period sites recorded for the Nonconnah Basin area, with one seeming to be a major campsite (40SY40) according to Smith (1971). This site is believed to have been buried under landfill.

The Early Archaic (circa 7500 to 5500 BC) and Middle Archaic (circa 5500 to 2200 BC) occupations show a slight increase over earlier occupations. Three Early Archaic and two Middle Archaic components are reported for Nonconnah Basin. There have been no single component campsites excavated for these periods. To the north, on the Wolf, Obion, and Loosahatchie Rivers, Early Archaic sites are recognized on the basis of such diagnostic projectile points as Cypress Creek, Kirk Corner Notched and Stemmed, Palmer, Ecusta, Big Sandy Side Notched, St. Alabans and Plevna, as well as chisel endscrapers (Peterson 1979a). The Middle Archaic is represented by point types such as Benton, Opossum Bayou, Stanley, Nonconnah, Morrow Mountain and Big Slough (Smith 1979; Peterson 1979a).

Peterson (1979a) lists dates for the Late Archaic from 2200 BC to 1200 BC and gives the Transitional or Poverty Point Period as being from 1200 BC to 500 BC. The late Archaic Period site occurrence for the area shows an impressive...
increase over those of the preceding periods. Sites dating to the Late Archaic period are recognized by such diagnostic point types as Pickwick, Ledbetter, Bartlett, Cotaco Creek and Kays (Peterson 1979a).

Transitional period or Poverty Point sites are recognized on the basis of Lambert, Ponchartrain, Motley, Pickwick (Peterson 1979a) Harriss Island, Arlinton, and Flint Creek points (Smith 1979), as well as the presence of baked clay objects (Poverty Point objects) which have spherical to cylindrical shapes and plain surfaces (Peterson 1979a). In this period again, there is an increase in the occurrence of components. Smith (1971) reports that Sites 40SY40 and 40SY56 are major Poverty Point base camps, but SY40 is apparently buried under fill and SY56 is likely to have been destroyed during construction.

The appearance of ceramics in the archaeological record is the usual marker for the beginning of the Woodland period. Western Tennessee is no exception to this convention. The Early Woodland sites dating to between 500 BC and 100 AD (Peterson 1979a) are recognized by their ceramic wares, such as the Tchula variety of Tchunfuctate (Phillips 1970) and Thomas ware, which occurs later in the period. Also indicative of Early Woodland is the Comorant Cord Impressed occasionally occurs in Arkansas (Phillips 1970) as well as in the Wolf River area, as reported by Peterson (1979a). These Early Woodland sites are relatively rare in the Wolf River area and are even more rare in the Nonconnah Basin, where only one component has been identified. Middle Woodland sites are equally rare in the western Tennessee area and no specific Middle Woodland component is recorded for the Nonconnah Basin. There are a few insufficiently documented sites which may be attributable to this period. Sites for this period are reported for the Wolf River area and classified as Middle Woodland on the basis of Baldwin types and Knob Creek ceramics. The Middle Woodland was a period of Hopewellian influence from the north and Marksville influences from the south, resulting in the occurrence of burial mounds, Marksville stamped and Incised ceramics, pan pipes and copper spools in surrounding areas. There is yet to be a clearly established tool assemblage for this period in the western Tennessee area (Smith 1979).

The subsequent Late Woodland (500 to 900 AD) is also a rather poorly known period in Tennessee though it is well identified in northeastern Arkansas (Horse 1969; 1977a). Only one site (40ST740) is identified for this period in the Nonconnah watershed. There is a complete lack of Late Woodland sites in the Wolf River area (Peterson 1979a) and a limited occurrence in the Loosahatchie River drainage (Peterson 1979b). These sites are known from their Baytown paste ceramics, such as Baytown Plain, Mulberry Creek Cord Marked, Larto Red Filmed and others. The Baytown culture is poorly known in west Tennessee and the period awaits extensive analysis of single component sites. The Baytown ceramics are better known in Arkansas because of the work of Phillips (1970) in his overview of the Lower Yazoo Basin, of Scholtz (1965 at the Derossitt site and Horse (1977b).
The Early Mississippian period, circa 900 to 1200 AD, is a poorly defined period during which Baytown ceramics continue (Peterson 1979a). The Early Mississippian occupation is identified on the basis of changes in the frequency of the ware, as well as changes in site size and ceramic styles. These changes were the result of the spread of Mississippian influences into the area as evidenced by the work at the Zebree Site (Morse and Morse 1977) in northeast Arkansas and at the Toltec site (Phillips 1970 and Rollington 1977) in central Arkansas.

The Middle Mississippian period is not commonly referred to in western Tennessee, as Peterson (1979a) and Smith (1979) both divide the Mississippian period into only the Early and Late periods. In Arkansas, the Middle Mississippian period is dated between AD 1050 and 1400 AD and includes the Lawhorn and Cherry Valley phases. The period is known exclusively from stylistic changes although a single village site has yet to be recorded for the period (Iroquois Research Institute 1978d).

Late Mississippian (1200 - 1541, AD) is a period of highly developed and complex societies with a hierarchic community structure (Klinger 1975) and including the development of large ceremonial complexes. The Period has been divided into phases such as the Nodena Phase of northeast Arkansas (Morse 1973), the Parkin Phase just south and west of Nodena and the Walls Phase of northwestern Mississippi and southwestern Tennessee (Phillips, Ford and Griffin 1951). It is possible that these phases correspond to the chiefdoms observed by De Soto's men during their 1541 expedition in this area. The Walls phase is represented in the Nonconnah Basin by the later occupations at the Chucalissa Site (40SY1). The characteristic artifacts of this period are the typical shell tempered ceramics known as Neeley's Ferry and Bell wares.

HISTORIC

Background Research

In the spring of 1539, Hernando De Soto, a wealthy Spanish colonial officer, began an expedition which brought the first Europeans to the vicinity of the Chickasaw Bluffs and the area now encompassed by Metropolitan Memphis. After wintering in the northern portion of the Florida peninsula, De Soto and his party of 600 men headed northeast to the Savannah River, traveled up the Savannah, down the Coosa and the Alabama, journeyed overland to the Yazoo, and encamped there for the winter of 1540-1541. Sometime in the spring of 1541, De Soto's expedition reached the Mississippi River south of Memphis and paused there to build barges for crossing the river. A year later, De Soto died near the confluence of the Arkansas and the Mississippi. The 300 survivors of De Soto's exploration party finally reached the Spanish outpost of Panuco on the Gulf of Mexico in 1543 (Billington 1960; Nash 1962).
French contact along the Chickasaw Bluffs was initiated 130 years later, in 1673, when Jesuit Missionary Father Jacques Marquette and trader Louis Jolliet started from the Great Lakes at St. Ignace, traveled southwest along the Fox and the Wisconsin, then south along the Mississippi to the mouth of the Arkansas. A decade later, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, floated down the Kankakee, the Illinois and the Mississippi, to the Gulf of Mexico. La Salle built a crude fort of logs on one of the Chickasaw Bluffs during that expedition (Klutts 1950). From La Salle's expedition until the mid-1700s, France was the principal European force along the entire expanse of the Mississippi River (Crawford 1976).

In the 1690s, a few adventurous British traders from Charleston, South Carolina reached the Mississippi via overland trails, and, by 1704, had made alliances with the Chickasaws who previously resisted French intrusion upon their lands. The Charleston English, however, could not sustain an attack upon the Lower Mississippi French and their Choctaw allies, nor could they forestall the French establishment of New Orleans in 1718. Without effective British support, the Chickasaw were forced to sue for peace in 1739, when confronted by a large expedition of French and Indians who assembled at the site of Memphis (Folmsbee et al. 1969). British interest in control of the Lower Mississippi was revived in the 1750s by Edmond Atkin, Charleston trader and South Carolina Councillor, who prepared an extensive report on Indian affairs for England's Board of Trade (Jacobs 1967). Atkin's treatise coincided with the completion of the first accurate British maps of the lands now contained by western Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and eastern Arkansas.

French control of the region ended in 1763, at the close of the Seven Years War, when the Treaty of Paris gave England all lands east of the Mississippi, and Spain received all territory west of the river. After the American Revolution and the peace negotiations of 1783, the United States obtained jurisdiction over the region formerly controlled by the British (Billington 1960). Spain briefly sought to extend her authority to the eastern shore of the Mississippi by constructing Fort San Fernando on the Chickasaw Bluffs in 1793 (Crawford 1976). This outpost was soon abandoned for Fort Esperanza on the western shore, but Spain continued to hold the mouth of the Mississippi until 1796. Four years later, Spain surrendered her Louisiana colony to France, who, in turn, ceded those lands to the United States in 1803 when President Jefferson and Robert Livingston negotiated the Louisiana Purchase (Billington 1960). With the extension of American rule over both shores of the Mississippi, the way was prepared for the agricultural settlement and economic development of the region now known as Metropolitan Memphis.

Pioneer settlement, along the Mississippi in western Tennessee lagged until the Chickasaw Purchase of 1818, which was accomplished by Andrew Jackson. Jackson persuaded the Indians that the land between the Tennessee and the Mississippi had already been granted to veterans of the Revolutionary War. With Judge John Overton and General James Winchester, Jackson seized the opportunity of this Indian removal to establish the town of Memphis and the County of Shelby in 1819.
They advertised that Memphis was "destined to become a populous city." Growth was slow, however, until the 1830s, when steamboat traffic became the predominant means of transportation on the Mississippi (Folmsbee et. al. 1969).

Steamboats and cotton combined to make Memphis the shipping center and supply depot for western Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and eastern Arkansas by 1860.

Captured without seige, Memphis suffered little physical destruction during the Civil War, and one of her residents, Nathan Bedford Forrest, became a famous Confederate cavalry commander. But the city did not emerge from the conflict unscathed. Freed blacks migrated to Memphis as the war ended, and their presence was resented by local whites. Hostilities increased until the late spring of 1866, when a three-day race riot resulted in the death of more than 40 blacks and the destruction of more than 100 black-owned buildings, including 12 freedmen schools which had been educating newly emancipated blacks (Crawford 1976).

Torn by racial conflict in the late 1860s, Memphis was decimated by yellow fever during the 1870s, and economic recovery did not occur until the final two decades of the nineteenth century. The city's population dropped from 40,200 in 1870 to 33,600 in 1880. The Memphis Board of Health began to provide much needed sanitation services during the 1880s, however, and health and prosperity had returned by 1900, when the city's number of inhabitants had grown to 102,000 (U. S. Census 1960). The economy of the community also benefitted from completion of railroad lines in the 1880s and 1890s and from the promotion of navigational improvements under the auspices of the Engineer Corps of the Army (Clay 1976). By the later 1890s, Memphis had become a major distribution center and one of the largest wholesale grocery centers in the country (Crawford 1976).

The population of Memphis has continued to double every two or three decades during the twentieth century. The city contained one quarter of a million residents in 1930. Lumber and cotton provided the basis for growth through the 1920s, an era which also marked the emergence of Edward Hall "Boss" Crump, who effectively controlled Memphis and Shelby County politics from 1909 until his death in 1954. Crump's rise to political power coincided with the arrival in Memphis of William C. Handy and with the origins of the Beale Street blues. Though her population would continue to expand, to one-half million in 1960 and two-thirds of a million in 1970, by the early twentieth century, Memphis already had become the big city for Crump, for Handy, for William Faulkner, and for thousands and thousands of other residents of the rural Lower Mississippi Valley South (Crawford 1976).

Shelby County, exclusive of Memphis, has maintained a relatively constant population throughout the twentieth century. Fifty thousand non-Memphians lived in the county in 1900. Though some were in small communities, most resided on the 6900 farms in the county which produced 35,000 bales of cotton.
Of the 6000 farms in operation fifty years later, over half grew cotton. By 1970, however, twice as many Shelby County acres of cropland were planted in soybeans as were planted in cotton. This agricultural crop change between 1950 and 1970 was accompanied by a fourfold reduction of the number of farms in operation (U. S. Census 1900; 1950; 1970).

ARCHIVAL AND CARTOGRAPHIC REVIEW

A review of the National Register of Historic Places and site survey files located at Memphis State University resulted in no listings of prehistoric, historic or architectural cultural resources for the study area.

In addition, the 1941 Bartlett, Tennessee 15' quadrangle and 1965 (revised 1973) Southeast Memphis, Tennessee 7.5' quadrangle maps were reviewed for evidence of historic structures within the shady area. No historic resources were noted. USDA Soil Conservation Service soil maps were also consulted (USDA 1970).

FIELD METHODOLOGY

The actual field examination of the project area was accomplished by two methods: (1) In areas where the ground surface was readily visible it was visually inspected for evidence of cultural activities and; (2) cutbank mobile examination. A large portion of the project was active wetlands which precluded shovel test pitting of the study area.

The areas forming the north, south, and west boundaries of the designated wetlands area had been disturbed by ditch digging or grading. These activities had exposed sufficient ground surface for examination to determine the presence or absence of cultural resources in the area. In addition, two transects were walked in a meandering fashion through the wetlands area. Sufficient ground surface was exposed for through examination for cultural resources. A drainage ditch had recently been excavated across the north boundary of the study area. A cutbank inspection was conducted along its entire length to the ditch's intersection with the Johns Creek Drainage Canal. Several cutbank inspections were made of the Johns Creek Drainage Canal also.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An intensive pedestrian survey and cutbank examination of the disturbed and undisturbed portions of the study area did not inventory cultural resources of
any nature. Therefore, it is recommended to the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer that granting the required "404" permit for development of the study area will not cause any adverse impacts to significant cultural resources.

There remains a possibility that a deeply buried site may be encountered during construction. Should this occur, it is requested that the Tennessee Office of Historic Preservation and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers be contacted immediately.
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