

THE QUEEN MOUND (8DU110)

Arthur A. Lafond and Keith H. Ashley

The Queen Mound (8DU110) was a low, sand burial mound located about 16 km (10 miles) east of Jacksonville, Florida. Test excavations at the mound took place between 1966 and 1970, revealing the bones of at least 10 people and the burned remains of a possible submound structure (Lafond 1983). In addition, an assortment of local and exotic artifacts was uncovered, of which the most unique include bits of graphite, cut carnivore mandibles, a galena cube, and a zoomorphic effigy made of lead (Lafond 1972). The presence of Yent-related mortuary items suggests exchange networks directly linking the local coastal peoples with Gulf Coast Florida, and possibly indirectly with Midwestern Hopewellian centers via a series of trade alliances. In the absence of chronometric dates, artifacts from the mound suggest a Deptford or St. Johns I date (500 B.C. - A.D. 100) for mound construction.

Site Description and Discovery

The mound was located along the eastern edge of a sand ridge (9.1 m AMSL) that overlooked Mud Flat Creek, about 60 meters to the east (Figure 1). This tidal creek meanders through an estuarine marsh and flows into Chicopit Bay, which in turn opens into the St. Johns River to the northeast. From this point, the river's mouth is less than 8 km (5 mi) to the east. The upland area now supports a diverse hammock, containing live oak, red bay, magnolia, and hickory trees. The mound itself was covered with several large trees and dense brush prior to excavation. Today, residential development has claimed much of the land in the vicinity of the Queen Mound, although the Theodore Roosevelt Area, part of the larger Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, lies a very short distance to the west.

The Queen Mound stood about 1.8 m (5.8 ft) high and measured 19.8 m (65 ft) in diameter at its base. On the north side, the circular mound was approached by what had been previously interpreted as a ramp (Lafond 1983), although its formation may have been the result of slope erosion. A circular depression to the west and another to the southeast seemingly represent borrow pits from where sand was taken to construct the mound. Local residents had attributed construction of the mound to past tar-extracting endeavors (ca. 1800), owing to the area's history of Naval Stores activities (see Jones 1973, 1986). A surface inspection of the mound by Arthur Lafond in 1966 resulted in the recovery of aboriginal

sherds, however, leading him to speculate that the earthwork was of native American origin and that it would contain human burials.

Soon after Lafond's surface reconnaissance, the late Harry E. Queen allowed the excavation of the suspected burial mound, which was located on his property. Test excavations were undertaken on weekends by a local archaeology class under the direction of Lafond. Later that year, however, the class disbanded and Lafond was left to continue excavations on his own. In 1970, the Queen property was sold, resulting in the withdrawal of permission to dig. A recent pedestrian search for the Queen Mound was unsuccessful, and it is suspected that 8DU110 may have been destroyed sometime during the 1970s by suburban development.

Field Methodology

The project began by clearing all underbrush from atop the mound; all mature trees were left in place. A grid system was established, and a series of 5 foot (1.52 m) squares were laid over the mound (Figure 2). From south to north grid lines were assigned letter designations from A through N (omitting "I"), and from east to west the grid lines were numbered consecutively, 1 through 11. Vertical control was maintained by measuring down from a temporary bench mark using an assumed datum of elevation 10 ft (3.05 m) above mean sea level. Excavations began by opening a 5 foot wide trench through the center of the mound from south to north. An east-west trench was subsequently dug and additional 5 foot square units were opened as deemed necessary. Each test unit was excavated in 6 in. (15 cm) levels, and soil was sifted through 1/2 in. (1.27 cm) hardware cloth. Artifacts were bagged by unit and level.

Test Excavation Results

A total of 43 test units was excavated, focusing primarily on the center of the mound. Because the mound was only partially excavated, our analysis and interpretation of the Queen Mound site are somewhat constrained. Moreover, several acts of intentional vandalism that occurred during a break in fieldwork further confound efforts to fully interpret a few significant mound features. Most importantly, the layout of what appears to have been a submound structure was destroyed before a detailed examination could be undertaken.

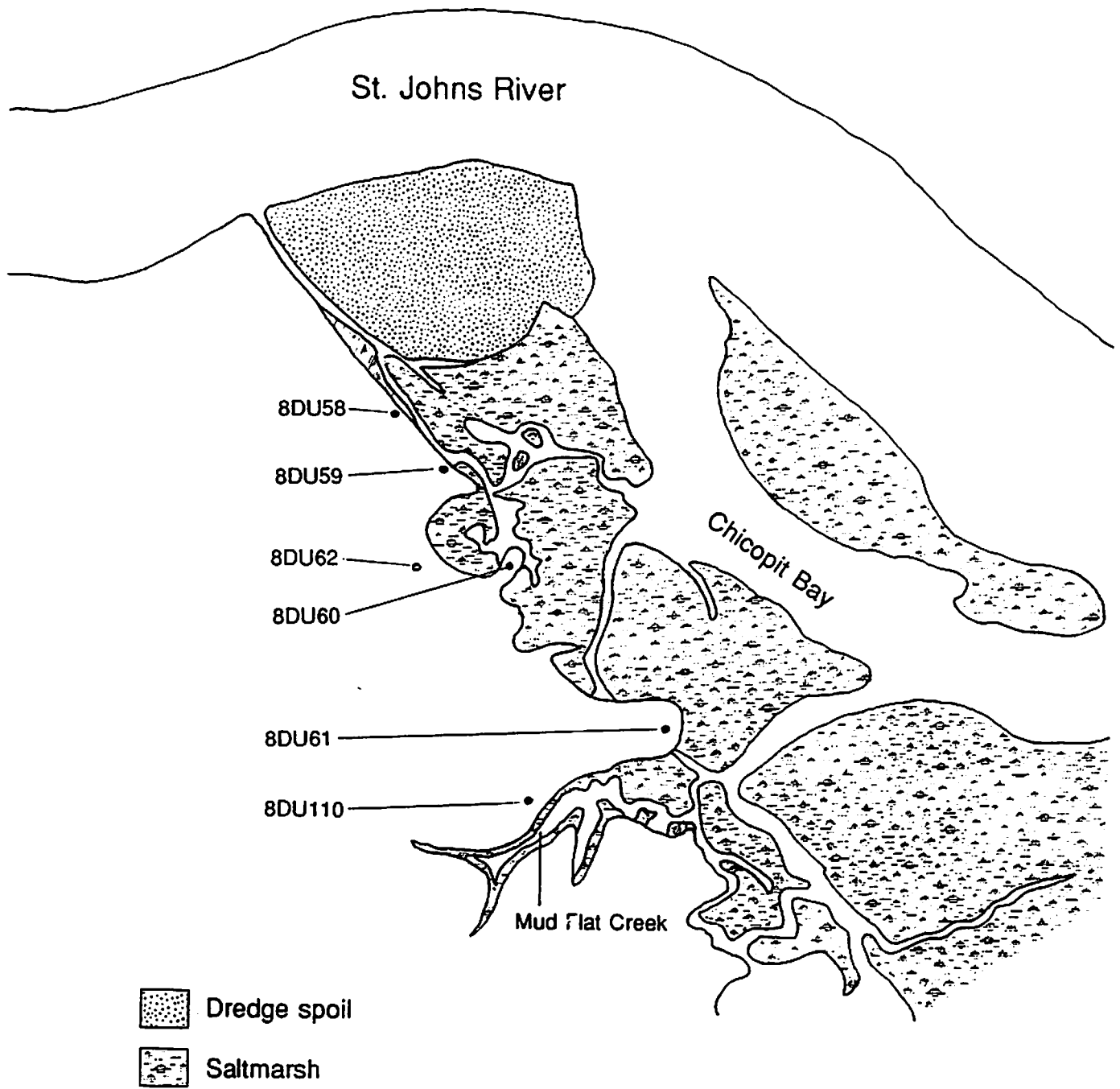


Figure 1. Location of Queen Mound, 8DU110.

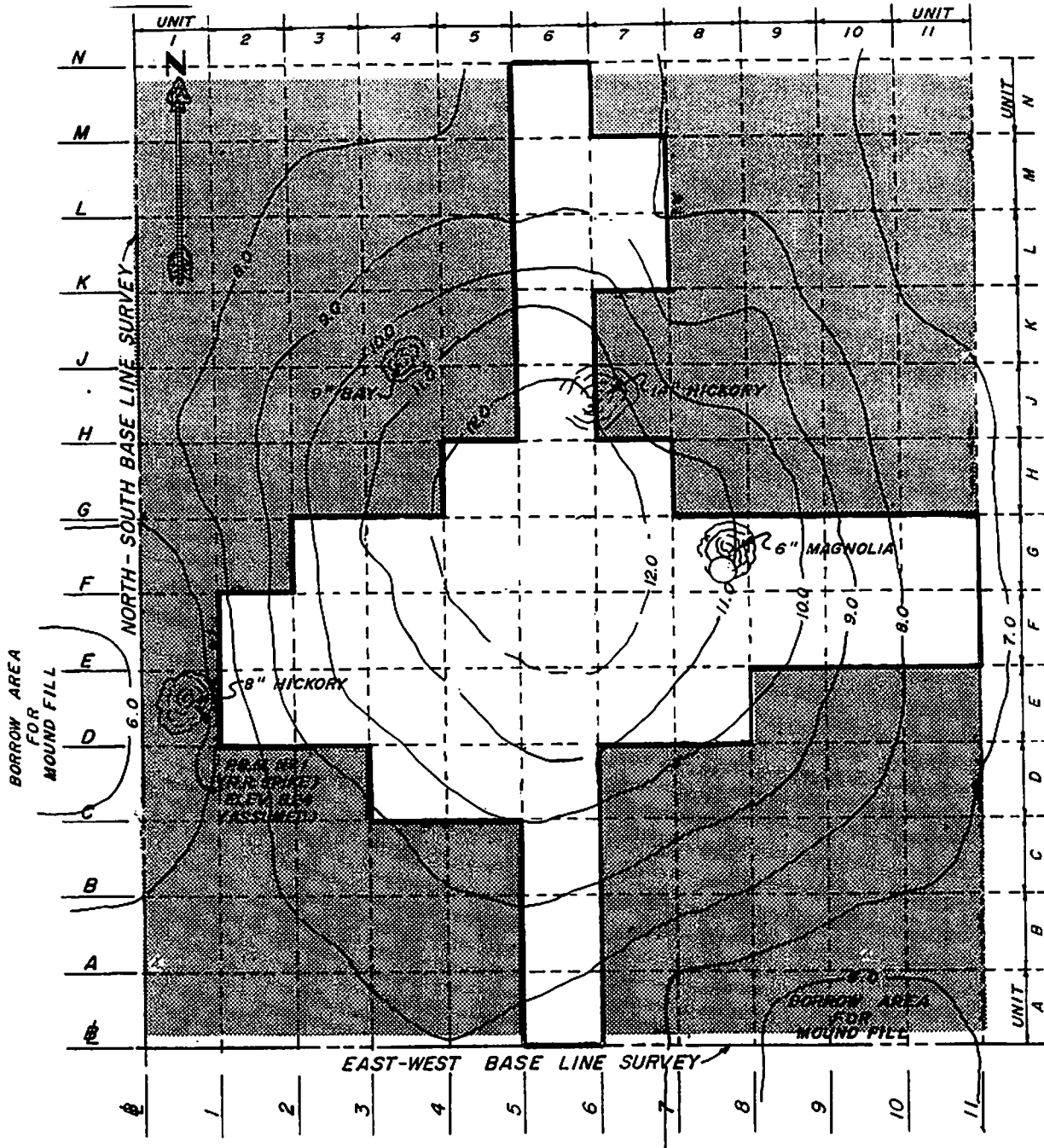


Figure 2. Plan and contour map, Queen Mound, 8DU110.

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Nevertheless, enough charred debris was exposed and recorded to allow several inferences to be made on the relationship between submound burning and the burial mound. As a consequence of the present study, several interpretations presented in Lafond's (1983) initial report have been amended. Aside from minor changes in artifact analysis results, the most notable revision centers on a reevaluation of the presumed submound structure, emphasizing that its configuration was not as definitive as previously suggested.

Stratigraphy

Four stratigraphic zones were revealed during mound excavations. Zone A was a 15 to 20 cm thick humic layer of dark gray to black sand. Beneath this was Zone B, a yellow to tan sand, which represented the mound fill. Aside from artifacts, a few small chunks of charcoal, and a handful of marine shell fragments, Zone B was composed almost exclusively of sand. Zone C was an approximately 18 cm thick premound humus layer (i.e., original ground surface), containing a large quantity of scattered and concentrated charcoal. In mounds throughout Florida layers of charcoal-impregnated sand have been found immediately beneath burials, and invariably have been interpreted by excavators as evidence for prepared mound floors. No premound midden or refuse materials were recovered during excavation. Zone D, an archaeologically sterile yellow sand, was revealed beneath Zone C.

Features

Lafond (1983:1) reports that "a charred hut at the bottom of the mound, ...seven [ten] burials, several animal and human mandibles, several possible post holes, [and] a number of fire pits" were discovered during excavations. Interpretation of these features, particularly fire pits, is hampered by the lack of narrative descriptions in the field records. In most cases, it is difficult to ascertain actually what many of the charred features represented (e.g., fire pits, burned posts, etc.). What is evident from the field notes, however, is that a tremendous amount of charcoal was found at the base of the mound. Based on the patterned occurrence of some of the burned debris, the existence of a submound structure (e.g., building, enclosure, or platform) is suggested, although its precise shape and dimensions were not determined.

Submound contexts associated with the original ground surface demonstrated considerable evidence of burning, particularly in units 6D, 6E, 5-7F, 6-7G, and 6J (Figure 3). Presumed structural elements uncovered at the base of the mound include charred logs lying on their sides and postmolds. An alignment seems to depict a section of a square or rectangular structure, with a possible small opening or entrance facing east, but this is purely speculative. The exposed section of the possible structure or enclosure floor was humic sand,

stained black to gray with bits of charcoal on the surface. No human remains were found in association with the submound feature. Any chance of a more detailed examination was lost when intruders destroyed this feature during a short hiatus in fieldwork. The disturbed fill from this section of the mound floor was later screened, but no artifacts were found.

Although not reported in Lafond's (1983) earlier report, indistinct and amorphous concentrations of burned debris were common, particularly northeast of the presumed structure near the approximate center of the mound. A narrow trench-like feature containing the remains of three burned posts extended east to west across Unit 6J in the northern part of the mound. What this represents and how it relates to the centralized concentration of charred debris is not known, because adjacent test units were not excavated. That the majority of the evidence for burning was revealed near the center of the mound suggests that the premound ground surface was intentionally burned, perhaps ceremonially, to purify the area in preparation for the construction of the mound.

Human Remains

Concentrations of human bone were encountered at 10 distinct loci during excavations, including various levels within the mound fill (Burials 1-2, 5-8) and at or very near the base of the mound (Burials 3-4, 9-10). Lafond (1983) recorded 7 burials and 3 human mandible artifacts, but herein all 10 have been recorded as human burials (Table 1). Due to the exceedingly poor condition of the skeletal remains, it was difficult to discern the posture of individual burials. One of the burials, Burial 5, was only partially exposed before it was destroyed by vandals. Amongst the obvious human bones comprising Burial 1 were a number of small calcined bone fragments. Whether or not these charred pieces of bone are human is problematic, because none of the osteological remains from the Queen Mound was subjected to bioarchaeological analysis. However, the teeth associated with a small mandible (Burial 8) were examined by a local doctor and dentist, both of whom suggested that they belonged to a child about 3 years of age at death (W.J. Cakmis, D.D.S., and M.A. Magos, D.M.D., personal communication, 1970).

Definitive correlations between mound features and/or artifacts and human burials remain undetermined, although two burials may have been associated with intentional grave offerings. A small grouping of undecorated sherds (probable vessel) was found 23 cm above and slightly northeast of Burial 4. Burial 7 was seemingly associated with a partial vessel (not reconstructed to date) and a Columbia projectile point, while a circular fire pit (measuring 28 cm in diameter and 15 cm deep) also occurred next to the human bones. While not considered an artifact, an oval concentration of dried marsh mud (0.635 to 1.27 cm thick) was found 25 cm north of Burial 10 at the same level. Lafond (1983:5-6) previously had noted that the mud

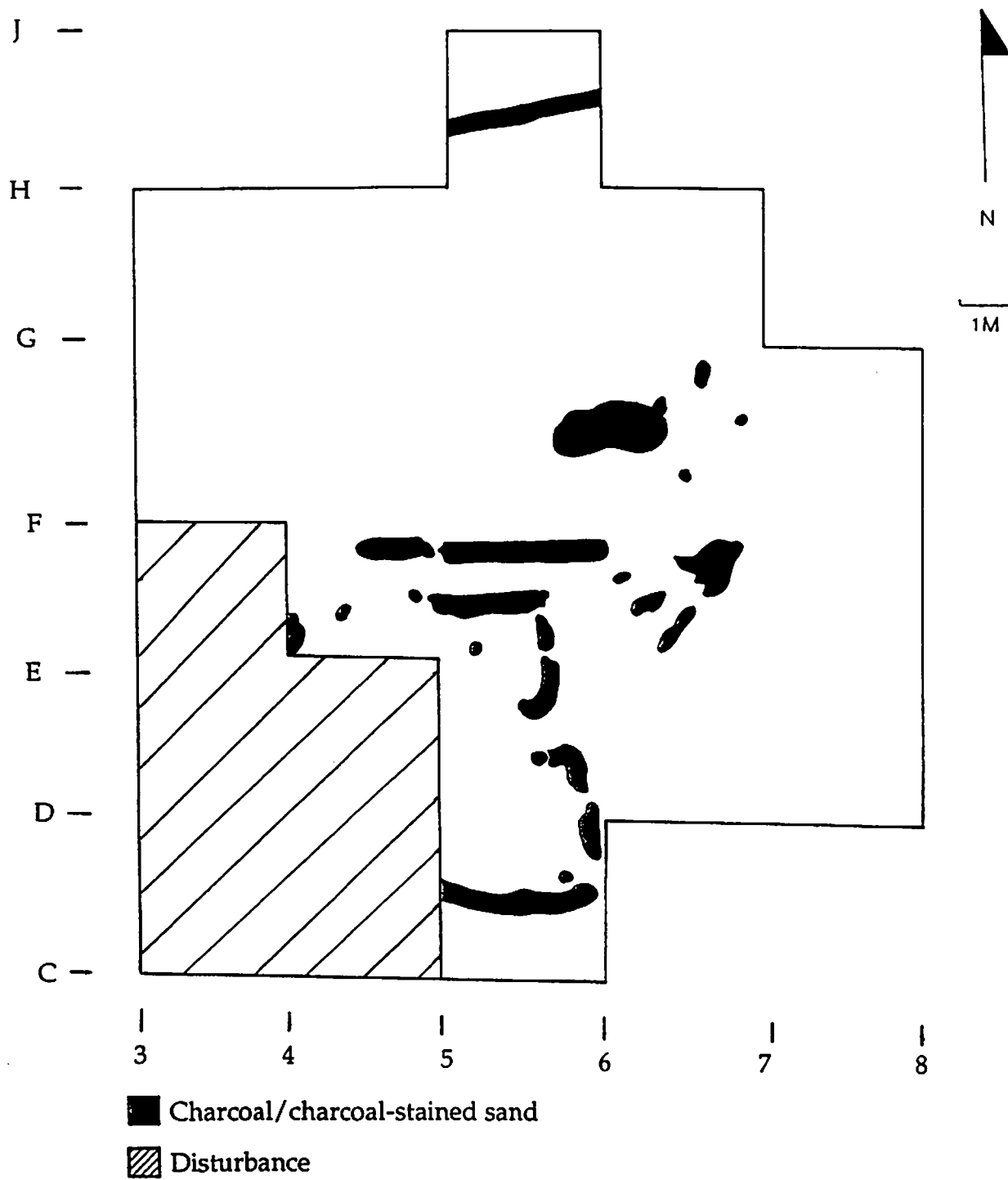


Figure 3. Section of floor plan, base of Queen Mound.

resembled a human face in profile; however, any semblance to a human face is probably coincidental.

Table 1. Burial Data, Queen Mound, 8DU110.

Burial	Unit/Level	Association	Comments
1	7G/L-1	None	Mostly skull and long bones; some burned bone; cremation?
2	6J/L-6	None	Two long bones
3	9F/L-7	None	Mostly skull & long bones; probable bundle burial
4	7L/L-7	Pile of sherds (probable vessel)	Mostly skull & pelvic bones, possible flexed burial
5	8E/L-2	Unknown	Burial disturbed by intruders
6	8G/L-3	None	Mostly skull & long bones; probable bundle burial
7	9G/L-3	Partial vessel (not restored), Columbia Point, fire pit	Mostly skull & long bones, probable bundle burial
8	6F/L-8	None	Child mandible and teeth
9	6C/L-6	None	Adult mandible and teeth
10	4F/L-8	Marsh mud/clay	Mandible, maxillary and teeth

Ceramics

Test excavations at the Queen Mound site yielded a local Woodland ceramic assemblage composed mostly of plain wares (Table 2). Of the 829 recovered aboriginal vessel fragments, 795 (96%) were undecorated. These plain ware sherds fit into one of four broad temper categories: sand-tempered (n=572), chalky or St. Johns (n=112), grog-tempered (n=107), and shell-tempered (n=2). In light of recent claims by Russo (1992), suggesting that the grog-tempered sherds from the mound may be Colorinda, a distinct local sherd-tempered ware, a ceramic reanalysis was undertaken, but no Colorinda sherds were identified. Colorinda is an easily identifiable ware tempered with grog that contains sponge spicules (i.e., crushed St. Johns sherds). Surface decorated sherds are few and consist of 1 check stamped (Deptford), 1 complicated stamped (Swift Creek), 1 net impressed, 4 roughened, 10 simple stamped (Deptford), and 19 dual-stamped ware fragments. No tetrapodal vessels or podal sherds were found.

Table 2. Ceramic Sherd Data, Queen Mound.

	count	percent
Sand-tempered plain	572	69.0
St. Johns Plain	112	13.5
Grog-tempered plain	107	12.9
Sand-tempered dual stamped	19	2.3
Deptford Simple Stamped	10	1.2
Shell-tempered plain	2	0.2
Sherd-tempered roughened	2	0.2
Shell-tempered roughened	2	0.2
Deptford Check Stamped	1	0.1
Grog-tempered complicated stamped	1	0.1
Sand-tempered net-impressed	1	0.1
Total	829	99.8

All sherds were recovered from the mound fill, and none was found below the base of the mound. Except for several sherd concentrations, most of which represented whole or nearly complete vessels, sherds were scattered vertically throughout the mound fill. Regarding the horizontal dispersal of sherds, 397 (48%) sherds were recovered from the five northernmost test units. The remaining sherds were uniformly distributed across the remainder of the mound. It is uncertain why sherds were seemingly more concentrated in the north part of the mound. Additional mound excavations would have provided more complete pottery sherd and vessel distributional data.

Because no pottery was found below the original ground surface, it is suggested that the mound was not erected over a former habitation area. Furthermore, a single 5 ft square test unit placed about 5 meters northeast of the mound failed to yield any artifacts. The absence of artifacts from nonmound contexts suggests that the mound sherds were part of vessels intentionally deposited in the mound rather than incidental inclusions in the mound fill. Owing to the lack of testing in nonmound areas, however, it is not conclusively improbable that some sherds were inadvertently removed from previous refuse contexts during mound construction. The only potsherd that seems temporally out of place is the net-impressed specimen, because along the Georgia coast this mode of decoration is generally considered a post-A.D. 800 style (cf. DePratter 1979). Because sand-tempered wares dominate both reconstructed vessel and sherd inventories, we can assume that if not all ceramics were intentionally placed in the mound, then they are at least generally contemporaneous.

In addition to the 829 sherds, 5 vessels representing intentional mound deposits were reconstructed by Lafond (Table 3). All five vessels are undecorated, although Vessel 1 exhibits a ticked or notched rim. Vessels 1 and 2 are typical size ceramic containers, whereas Vessels 3, 4, and 5 are all miniature bowls. Vessel 5 was found intact inside Vessel 4. Miniature ceramic vessels commonly occur in Deptford or Yent mounds on the northwest Florida coast (Milanich and Fairbanks 1980:86). These unusually small bowls may represent special use containers for medicines, pigments, or other concoctions. Due to their small size and crude appearance, however, Vessels 4 and 5, which are hand molded, may have been manufactured by children mimicking the work of adult potters. Except for Vessels 1 and 3, the pottery vessels from the mound are poorly made. Examples of the reconstructed vessels are shown in Figures 4-7.

A partial bowl was reconstructed from 19 sherds found in Unit 6L (Von Burger [1974] reports 47 sherds, but only 19 are currently in Lafond's possession). This incomplete pot displayed a combination surface decoration of combing and large rectangular stamping. Von Burger (1974) introduced the pottery type Chicopit Dual Stamped to describe this unique ware, although the validity of such a designation based on the recovery of only one partial vessel is questionable. Parts of at

least three other plain bowls have been assembled from the Queen Mound sherd collection. The sherds belonging to one of these partial bowls, possessing a notched rim, were recovered from four different test units, suggesting that pots may have been intentionally broken and incorporated into the fill during mound construction. Thus, sorting and cross-mending of the abundant plain sherds in the Queen Mound sample may result in additional vessel reconstructions.

Table 3. Ceramic Vessel Data, Queen Mound, 8DU110.

Vessel #	Type	Form	Size	Provenience (ht. x dia.)
1	Sand-tempered plain	Pot	147 x 112 mm	6F/L-2
2	Sand-tempered plain	Bowl	99 x 102 mm	7M/L-2
3	St. Johns Plain	Cup	20 x 45 mm	6B/L-4
4	St. Johns Plain	Bowl	34 x 72 mm	5G/L-3
5	Grog-tempered plain	Bowl	23 x 35 mm	5G/L-3

Nonceramic artifacts recovered from the mound are dominated by lithics, with few artifacts of fossil, bone, and shell also recovered. Chipped stone tools are the most prevalent lithic artifact, and include 9 projectile points, 10 bifacial knives, 8 scrapers, and 3 drills. The projectile points were categorized according to published type descriptions whenever possible (cf. Bullen 1975); the projectile point types in Table 4 differ slightly from the type designations presented in Lafond (1983). Most of the lithic artifacts were recovered singularly, although a cache of 7 bifaces, 3 drills, 3 scrapers, 3 fossil crinoidea (sea lilies) stem fragments, a modified piece of fossil bone (possible potter's or knapper's tool), and a Duval projectile point (Unit 6H, Levels 7-8) was recovered.

Table 4. Projectile Point Data, Queen Mound, 8DU110.

Point #	Type	Size (l x w)	Provenience	Comment
1	Untyped	40x21 mm	5F/L-1	Very crude
2	Broward	58x33 mm	5G/L-1	Found w/ Pt. 3
3	Broward	50x34 mm	5G/L-1	Found w/ Pt. 2
4	Duval	35x17 mm	6H/L-7	Missing tip
5	O'Leno	28x22 mm	6G/L-8	Triangular
6	Westo-like	no data	8G/L-1	Triangular
7	Triangular blade	58x33 mm	7L/L-7	Incomplete
8	Archaic Stemmed	18x25 mm	5E/L-5	Reworked
9	Columbia	100x30 mm	9G/L-3	Very well made

More exotic stone or mineral artifacts include a fragment or cube of oxidized galena, pieces of graphite (all found



Figure 4. Reconstructed vessel 1.



Figure 5. Reconstructed vessel 3.

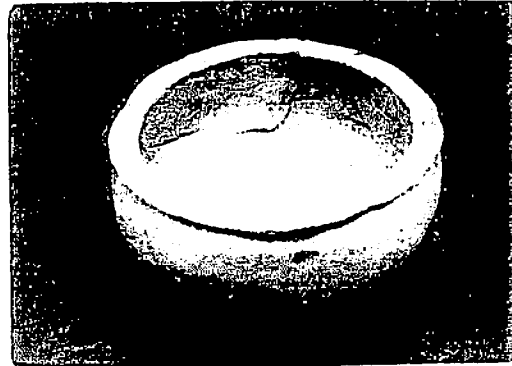


Figure 6. Reconstructed vessel 4.



Figure 7. Reconstructed vessel 5.



Figure 8. Vulture effigy made of lead. Length is 5 cm.

together), fossil crinoidea stems, 3 miscellaneous rocks (probably steatite, quartz, and granite?), a modified fossil bone, and a lead effigy shaped like the head of a vulture (Figure 8). An emission spectrographic analysis, performed on a small sample of the bird effigy, identified almost pure lead as the major chemical element, with traces of copper, iron, silica, aluminum tin, magnesium, manganese and chromium (Lafond 1972:84-85). Additional chemical testing is needed to provide more data on the raw material source. Galena and graphite presumably were used for silver and black pigmentation, respectively. These materials, along with the miscellaneous rocks and fossils, may have been brought in from sources as far as the Georgia Piedmont or Southern Appalachians, but the exact route from source to the Queen Mound is unknown.

A group of three whelk shell implements, two celts or adzes and a modified cutting edge tool, were found in Unit 5G, Level 1. The only other shell artifact was a small oval piece of modified whelk columella found in association with the lead effigy pendant. Other than these shell artifacts, fewer than 10 scattered oyster and/or mussel shell fragments were found during excavations. Artifacts of bone were limited and include a poorly preserved bone awl fragment, three cut carnivore mandibles, and a deer astragalus.

The latter specimen displayed two well-smoothed or polished sides, indicating intentional modification. It may have been used as some sort of abrader, or possibly as a gaming piece.

Discussion and Summary

What facts have we learned by reexamining the results of the Queen Mound excavation? First, the tumulus was a prehistoric burial mound and not a historical Naval Stores construct as originally thought. Second, the area immediately beneath the mound was burned prior to its construction. Third, the mound was constructed primarily of sand taken from two presumed borrow pits located nearby. We also have learned that artifacts were intentionally deposited into the mound, and in some instances in direct association with human burials. In addition, not all artifacts were of local origin, some may have originally derived from sources in northern Georgia or beyond.

Other mound interpretations are of a more speculative nature, but still exist within the realm of possibility. It should be remembered that only about 40 percent of the mound was excavated, so definitive statements on internal mound structure and burial patterning are lacking. Although it seems certain that the mound was built on a prepared base by burning the pre-mound ground surface, it is less conclusive that this was a purposeful ceremonial undertaking. An alternative explanation for the pre-mound fire is that it was ignited to eliminate vegetation prior to mound construction and had no ritual significance.

Based on the partial exposure of a patterning of burned postmolds and charred horizontal-lying logs near the basal center of the mound, it is suggested that some type of small structure, tomb, or platform also was burned during the pre-mound conflagration. That no artifacts or other evidence of previous habitation was recovered from sub-mound contexts suggests that the arrangement of sub-mound burning and the mound are intricately related. We can only speculate that the presumed structure had some type of mortuary function (e.g., charnel facility).

No discrete construction stages were defined, nor were any grave pits identified during excavations. Except for a few scattered mollusc shells and infrequent charcoal inclusions, the mound fill was composed of unstratified sand. A few burials appeared to lie on the supposed mound floor, whereas others were included in the mound fill. Except for a possible flexed burial (Burial 4) all exposed mound interments were of a secondary nature, including three (Burials 8, 9, and 10) that were perhaps only skull burials. Burial 1, found just below the modern duff layer, may have been partially cremated prior to interment.

Lafond (1983) has suggested previously that, because no distinct mound strata were encountered, the mound was completely constructed during a single episode. But it seems just as likely that the mound could have grown by accretion over a relatively short duration (e.g., several generations). Any evidence of such distinct burial events probably would have leached away due to the porosity of the sandy mound fill. Whatever the manner of construction, fill for the mound was apparently removed from borrow pits on the western and southeastern margins of the mound.

Determining the precise temporal placement of the Queen Mound within the regional chronology presents a challenge, due to the lack of diagnostic ceramics and the absence of radiocarbon dates. That neither St. Johns Check Stamped nor Savannah period cord-marked sherds were recovered indicates that the mound predates the St. Johns II period, ca. A.D. 800. Furthermore, the dearth of Dunns Creek, Swift Creek, and Weeden Island wares strongly suggests that the Queen Mound is not a Swift Creek-related burial mound (cf. Ashley 1993), and thus probably predates A.D. 200. There is also no indication that the mound was constructed during the Late Archaic or Orange period, ca. 2000-1000 B.C. Therefore, on the basis of recovered vessel sherds we suggest that the Queen Mound was constructed sometime between 500 B.C. and A.D. 200. The projectile points from the mound (e.g., Broward, Columbia, O'Leno, and Duval) also fall within this general time frame.

Russo (1992:115) has questioned the relevancy of designating sites in northeast Florida and southeast Georgia as St. Johns, owing to the lack of dominance by chalky ware sherds (i.e., St. Johns) in local ceramic assemblages. Furthermore, following the lead of Sears (1957), he has shown that sand-tempered plain wares are generally the preeminent

pottery type in the region. The results of testing at the Queen Mound agree with their findings, with non-chalky plain sherds (n=681) accounting for 82% of the mound fill pottery assemblage. Although the Queen Mound can be dated to the Deptford or St. Johns I (500 B.C. - A.D. 100) or early Ia (A.D. 100-300) period, the cultural identity of its builders was purely local, or what Russo (1992) has referred to as St. Marys.

At present, it is unknown where the populations who utilized the Queen Mound lived, because only one small test, which yielded no artifacts, was excavated away from the mound. In addition, no obvious accumulations of shell refuse were identified during a walkover survey of the general mound vicinity. William Sears (1957) identified and tested several shell midden sites north of the Queen Mound, however. Of particular interest is the Spanish Point site, 8DU61, which is located about one-half kilometer to the northeast, along a sandy bluff that borders the Mud Flat Creek salt marshes (Sears 1957:14). Limited excavations at this multicomponent shell midden yielded appreciable quantities of Deptford and sand-tempered plain wares. Similar pottery sherds have been found at other multicomponent shell middens (e.g., 8DU58-8DU60, and 8DU62) nearby as well (Sears 1957; Russo et al. 1993:37- 39, 53-54). How the Woodland populations represented at these habitation sites articulated with the Queen Mound is uncertain, but a relationship is possible.

Exotic artifacts (e.g., galena, graphite, etc.) from the Queen Mound suggest trade or contact with peoples beyond the immediate area. Coeval Deptford populations residing along the northwest Florida Gulf Coast were involved in a ceremonial complex that has been termed Yent by archaeologists (Sears 1962; Milanich and Fairbanks 1980:83-88). Distinct mortuary paraphernalia associated with Yent ceremonialism resembles those sacred artifacts circulated throughout various Hopewellian interaction spheres across the southeastern and midwestern United States (cf. Caldwell and Hall 1964; Seeman 1979; Brose and Greber 1979). It seems that the local Queen Mound peoples were involved in social networks that brought such materials, in limited amounts, to the lower St. Johns region, possibly through trading alliances with northwest Florida groups, who themselves were involved (either directly or indirectly) in exchange systems with more northerly Hopewell groups. Regardless of the precise route these materials followed, their presence indicates that the local Woodland peoples maintained dynamic exchange alliances that extended beyond the boundaries of present-day Florida.

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Arthur A. Lafond
 Middleburg, Florida

Keith H. Ashley
 Environmental Services, Inc.
 8711 Perimeter Park Blvd. Suite 11
 Jacksonville, Florida 32216



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