

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON A MIDDEN MOUND AND BURIAL MOUND OF THE BOYNTON MOUND COMPLEX (8/PB56)

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These two mounds, presently being excavated by the Palm Beach Archaeological Society, are situated about 10 miles west of Boynton Beach and are only two of a complex of at least 8 mounds and associated ridges or walkways. The last could have been used for ceremonial purposes or perhaps for agriculture. The midden mound (named for the large amount of trash and rubbish found on and in it) is a Lat. 26° 32' 13" N and 80° 13' 21" W, Township 45 S, Range 41 E. It is west of Route 441 near where it meets Boynton Road. The burial mound is southeast of the midden mound about 150 yards. Before the area was drained and trees sprang up, these mounds stood out on the skyline and were visible for miles. We believe some mounds were bull-dozed flat when the access road and the highline were put in. The land is now included in the Central and South Florida Flood Control District and over the years thick underbrush and some good-sized trees have grown up.

Both mounds are composed of a white sand not noted in the immediate area. The midden mound is quite large, shaped like a kidney bean 455 feet from northeast to southwest. The width varies from 150 feet to 225 feet the height from 6 feet 8 inches to 1 foot 6 inches (average height is about four feet).

Growing on it are oak trees (Quercus laurifolia), banyan or strangler trees, sabal palmetto, red maple, Carolina willow, wild citrus, and persimmon. Many ferns, including Boston, giant leatherleaf, resurrection fern, and others. Also Virginia creeper, wild grape, beauty berry (Cali carpa American), dogfennel, and poison oak. Growing on the trees are many bromeliads, tilandsia, and the epidendron, tampensii, a common Florida orchid. On the muck floor of what is now almost forest are a good number of deciduous cypress (bald cypress) and the paths to the mounds are studded with cypress "knees".

The burial mound is much smaller, an oval 100 feet by 90 feet and in the center about 6 feet high. When the Society first came to the burial mound it was completely covered with saw palmetto (Serena repens), an extremely difficult plant to handle.

Underlying everything is the water table and a sandy limestone, the Anastasia formation, which, in the area of the mounds, are approximately at an equal depth. It has been suggested that Indians lived here when the water table was lower, before the mounds had been built. As the waters rose the mounds were raised to keep the inhabitants out of the wet. The upper crust of the limestone is pocked and eroded and has shells and other organic matter buried in it, although we have found no bones or artifacts there. While the surface is

Table 1. Sherds from midden mound.

depth to:	12"	24"	36"	42"	60"	72"	85"	TOTAL
St. Johns Check Stamped	260	171	7	2				440
St. Johns Plain	341	244	15	28	1			629
Belle Glade Plain	258	140	61	5		6		470
Glades Plain	545	572	56	45	9	11	10	1248
Glades Red	36	10	7					53
Goodland Plain	132	78	27	7	7			242
Broward Plain	2	1						3
unclassified	303	277	34	37	5	5	1	662
TOTAL	1875	1493	207	124	15	22	11	3747

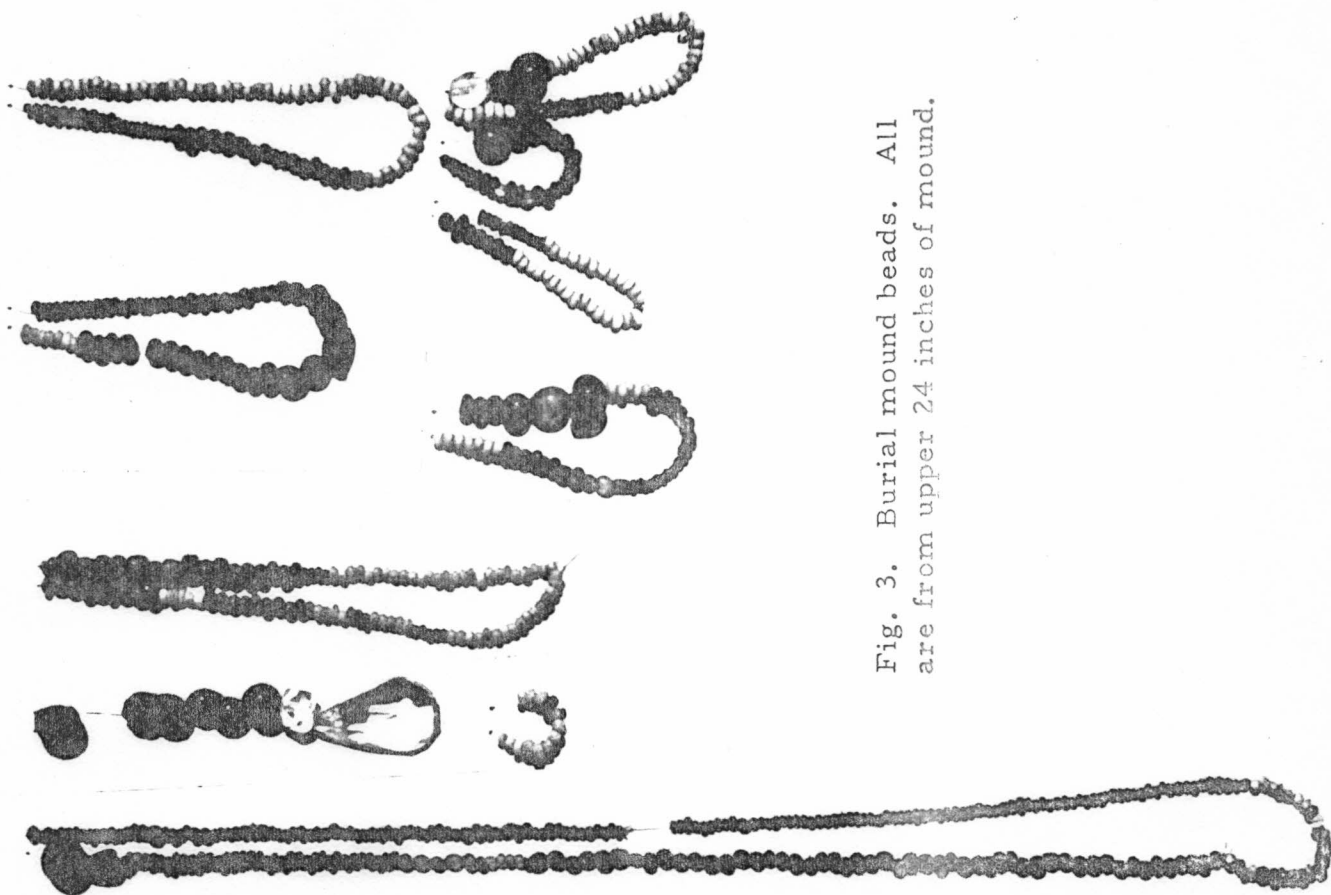


Fig. 3. Burial mound beads. All are from upper 24 inches of mound.

Digging in sand creates special problems. Things fall into the square more easily from the sides. A sharp rain shower will bury or uncover an artifact. Wet sand is very difficult to sieve; nothing is visible in damp sand unless sieved. Anything will filter down to a lower level more easily in sand. Walls cave in if diggers step heavily or if passers-by are too close. Hereafter we experiment covering the squares with agricultural plastic to keep out the rains.

In our first square we found what appeared to be a post hole with adjoining smaller post holes. It was approximately round and was visible because of its darker color. We brushed sand away from around it to a depth of about 4 inches. As it was growing late we photographed it, covered it with a supported piece of plastic and a pail over all. By the next week it had disappeared leaving no trace. We will excavate the square to the south and at the proper depth seek to discern traces of the smaller associated posts.

In many squares we have found pieces of clay or stones roughly rounded in the shape of a fist, 4-5 inches in diameter (Fig. 2). Two of the stones seem to have flint embedded in them and most are blackened as if having been in a fire. They usually appear at the deeper levels from 20 inches down.

Food Remains

Digging has brought up many animal bones some of which have been identified. These people ate alligator: there are many scutes, phalanges, vertebrae, skull bones, dermal plates and jaws. There have been identified at least three kinds of fresh-water turtles, softshell, pond turtle and musk turtle and indication of salt water turtles. There are deer bones (Virginianus), antler cores, long bones, astragalus bones. There are skull fragments, vertebrae, bones and scales of catfish, bowfin, Florida gar, bass and others. Raccoon teeth and humeri were found as well as medium sized unidentified animal bones. Vertebrae from two species of snakes are identified, Crotalus, rattlesnake and Natrix a watersnake. Very few bird bones have been found and these from the 12-24 inch level. The two are both large, a king rail (Rallus elegans) and a turkey vulture (Cathartes aura). We don't know with certainly what else they ate with the possible exception of palmetto berries, two of which were found in a recently opened square (S1E10) at a depth of 62 inches.

The Burial Mound

The burial mound is smaller and higher than the midden.. The longer axis running east-west 100 feet and 90 feet from north to south. Its highest point is almost 10 feet above ground level and its sand is purer, whiter, containing much less charcoal. Yet there are also some darker strata visible.

After much of the saw palmetto which covered the mound was removed,

depressions became visible; there has been digging before us. Pieces of skulls and long bones were on the surface and fragments become exposed after a heavy rain. There were supposed to have been a ring of smaller mounds before the area was drained; they are not discernible today.

It was decided to begin at the easterly end of the mound and move west down the middle portion. Near the center at about 4 inches depth we found a skull and other bones. Apparently bones were thrown down in jumbled piles and only two extended burials have been found. One, from the pelvis down, minus patellae and feet, was excavated by Dr. Audry Sublett of Florida Atlantic University Boca Raton, on 19 December 1973. Dr. Sublett noted the burial was of a female and had been "...Put down in the flesh." The woman had been fairly tall, measuring 36 inches from the top of the pelvis to the ankle bone. The other extended burial was composed of skull, arms, some vertebrae and leg bones, but no ribs, hands or feet. The two were too far apart and lay in differing directions to belong to the same individual. In that area we intend to go down to the water table or limestone base. However, for the last 24 inches the trench has been sterile.

Found in great quantity in the burial mound are beads. Identical to the 9 found in the midden mound, there were over seven hundred (Fig. 3). They have been identified by Robert Carr as 16th century Spanish manufacture. In the area of the burials where we have dug, they have been found at every level from 4 to 20 inches. They are glass and are colored white, brown, green, black, light and dark blue and an amber tan. Most are tiny, less than an 1/8 inch in diameter, all are pierced with small holes. Some holes are so tiny the best "string" to hold them is 6 lb. test monofilament fishing line. On May 1974 a small, thin, rolled, sheet of gold 3/4 inch long and 1/4 inch diameter, weighing .874 gram. It is practically pure gold with a trace (.05) of nickel. It was found practically at the center of the mound. It could have been worn as an ornament and can be seen in Photo 3 in the lower left corner of the central black sheet.

Two other silver beads were found in the burial mound but they also do not fit any coin weight from which they could have been beaten. Both are smaller than the two beads mentioned, one weighs 2.56 grams with traces of zinc and iron, the other weighs 2.1 gram with traces of zinc. From the same area came some other beads: some larger, dark blue beads, most of them round, two are many-sided. There are also two clear crystal faceted beads which look as if they could have belonged to a candelabra or lustre.

Acknowledgements

All excavations are team efforts and perhaps 60 members of the Palm Beach County Archaeological Society gave of their time and efforts to bring us