

AN HISTORIC SEMINOLE BURIAL IN A HIALEAH MIDDEN

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Realizing the rapid encroachment of the dragline and bulldozer into possible midden sites, the author has thought it advantageous to excavate test pits in as many hammocks as possible in the fast growing communities north and west of Hialeah, Dade County, Florida. The midden discussed in this paper is roughly a mile northeast of the sites excavated in 1952 and 1953 and previously reported in *The Florida Anthropologist* (Vol. VI, Nos. 1 and 3; Vol. VII, No. 3).

It is located in an irregular oval-shaped hammock, 155 feet wide and 140 feet long, 140 feet north of Gratigny Road and 1.1 miles west of its intersection with Red Road (Fig. 2). This area falls in the SE quarter of the SE quarter of Section 26, Township 52 south, Range 40 east. Land to the west and north is used for truck farming, and there are also some abandoned rock pits. To the east is farm and pasture land; to the south, the Gemere Dairy. The west end of the hammock is occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Long. The portion containing the midden is on property belonging to Ernest R. Graham.

Vegetation is typical: ficus, trema, paw-paw, groundsel, elderberry, and clematis bush, etc.

A cursory surface examination of the area turned up numerous Glades sherds, bleached by exposure to the sun (probably exposed by the droppings of chickens roosting in the hammock). A shallow layer of dark organic soil blended with sand at depths of less than a foot. Underneath the sand were pockets of calcified marl. There were a good many bone and shell fragments in the marl, but they were too small to be identifiable. The base seemed to be creamy limestone, which could be seen exposed on the surface in the western part of the hammock.

Part of the midden area had been bulldozed. A deep semi-circular ditch had been cut into the eastern end of the hammock. No material was

Fourth Row: Brass wood-screws, patch-box cover, and hinge.
Fifth Row: Trigger-guard assembly, iron of basket, iron and cap.
Sixth Row: Gunner's knife, iron of basket, iron and cap.

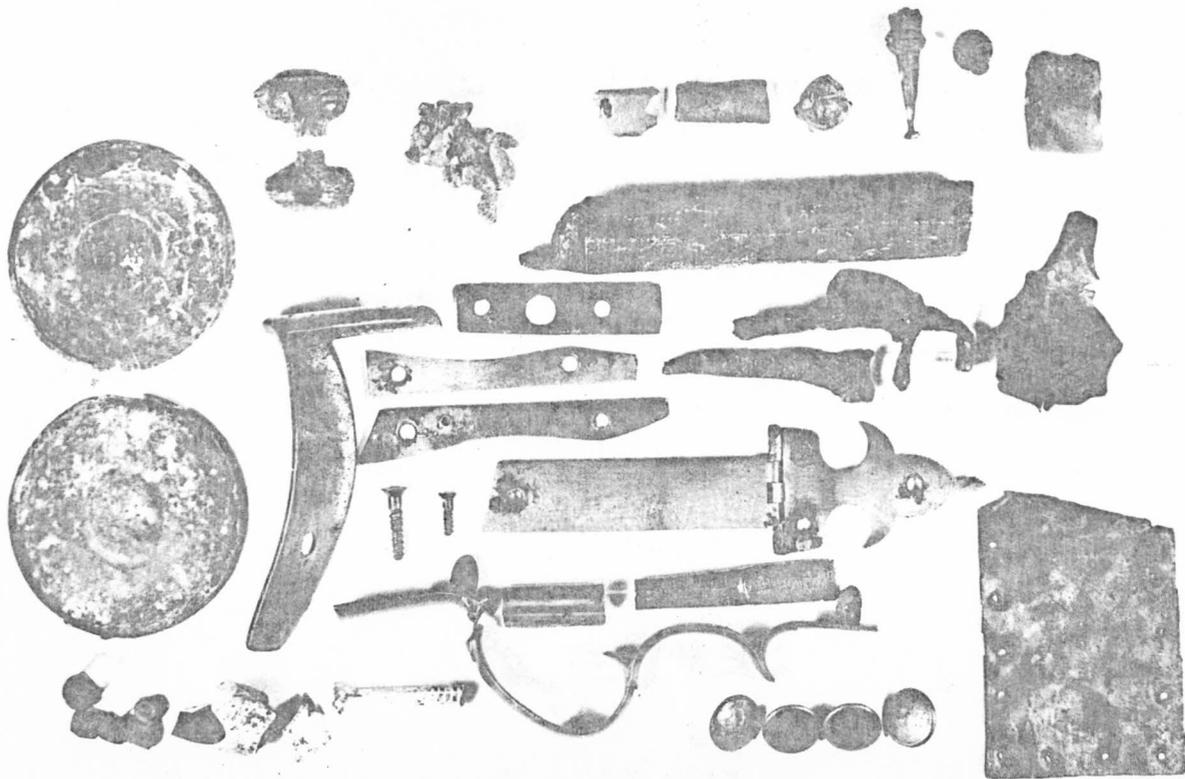
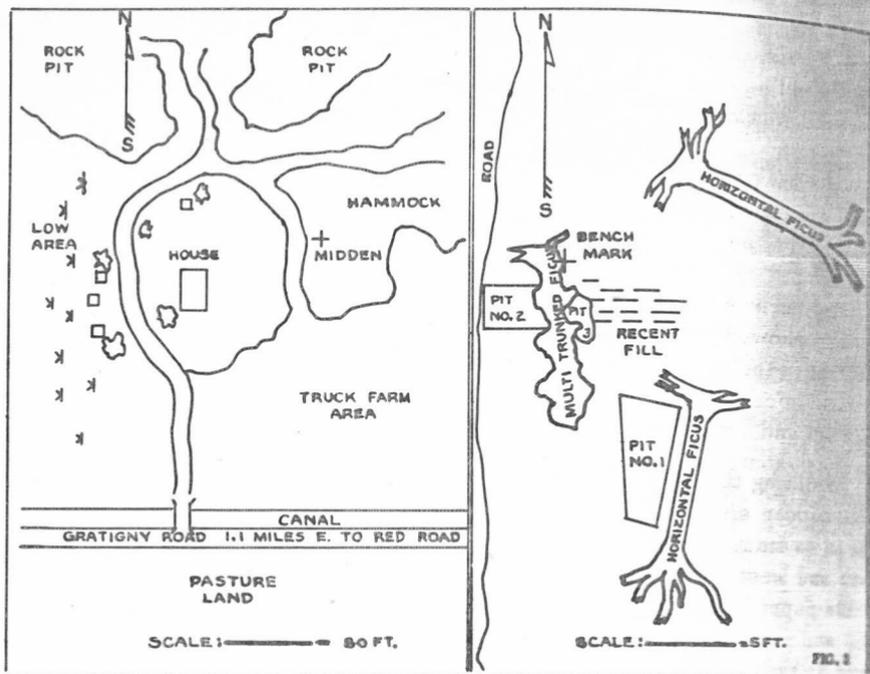


Fig. 1. Top Row: Bullet mold, lead fragments, two pieces of stag or bone knife-handle, bullet resembling Minnie ball, silver cone and bangle, gun flint.
 Second Row: Glass section of circular mirror, six-inch section of rifle barrel (breach end), ladle.
 Third Row: Top part of circular mirror, brass butt-plate, brass lock-plates, trigger plate, iron trigger-assembly.
 Fourth Row: Brass wood-screws, patch-box cover and hinge.
 Fifth Row: Trigger-guard assembly, mirror hanger, fore-end cap.
 Sixth Row: Glass beads, pipe bowl and fragments, buttons, copper plate.



found in this recently-turned sandy soil. A road had been cut through from north to south; as it crossed the central portion of the hammock, a sharp rise in the ground was evident. This location seemed to be 30 or more inches above the surrounding land. It was marked by a large multi-trunked ficus. A metal disk was inserted in the trunk of the large tree to be used as a bench mark. With a transit, all measurements were made from this point. Work was carried on close to the large trees because it was thought improbable the tractors and bulldozers could get close to that area.

TEST PITS

Three test pits were dug; their location is shown in Figure 2. Pit 1 was dug parallel to a large horizontal ficus on its west side. Excavation was carried downward a foot to a hard breccia of bone and shell fragments. In the upper 6 inches of the test were found a unique incised sherd, 3 Glades Red, 9 Glades Tooled, and 67 Glades Plain sherds, a lead bullet, and 2 faceted blue-glass beads. The lower 6 inches produced only 15 Glades Plain sherds and fragments of 2 bone awls.

Pit 2 was dug on the west side of the midden, about 20 feet northwest of Pit 1, adjoining the bisecting road through the midden (Fig. 2). This pit was also shallow. Fifty-three Glades Plain and 2 St. Johns Plain sherds were found. One St. Johns Plain sherd was in both the 0-6 and 6-12

each level. Several *Macrocallista* shell fragments were noted, also a rabbit and an otter dentary. A considerable portion of the excavated material was charred and numerous limestone particles were noted.

Pit 3 was dug on the eastern side of the multi-trunked ficus (Fig. 2). It were found a total of 73 pieces of Glades Plain, a single Glades Colored rim, and a sherd each of Key Largo and of Matecumbe Incised.

As can be seen, after excavating these three test pits, stratigraphic results showed nothing unusual in this small midden. It is typical of several in the immediate vicinity to the north and south. The site was probably occupied by a small family group or groups, governed autonomously, and linked by common technological and economic traits with their neighbors. Bones found in the upper zones of the midden were those of deer, turtle, alligator, bird, and fish. All these are characteristic Glades area subsistence.

SEMINOLE BURIAL

The tests finished, plans were made to abandon the site. At this point, an object was seen protruding from the central trunk of the large ficus that dominated the midden. It was at first thought to be a piece of pipe.

Several hours of work finally resulted in the removal of the object, in pieces. It was found to be an octagon-shaped rifle barrel, badly pitted and rusted. A greased stick, possibly the ramrod, had been jammed into the barrel. This proved beneficial as the bore had been kept in excellent shape.

In the course of the removal of the gun barrel, faceted blue-glass beads and brass buttons came to light. Plans were then made to cut away some of the roots and continue digging. In a very short time, and at a shallow depth, were uncovered brass gun-parts, consisting of butt plate, trigger-guard assembly, fore-end cap, ramrod keeper, patch-box cover, patch-box cover hinge in Fleur-de-Lis shape, and two brass lock-wasps. At this point the site was covered up and plans made to continue digging next day.

The artifacts seemed concentrated in a narrow rectangular area among the roots. (See Figure 3 for horizontal distribution of objects.) Working with a small trowel the second day, digging also proved fruitful. Two iron hook parts, numerous beads, brass buttons, a pipe stem, a trapezoidal copper plate with small holes punched around its edge, a trigger

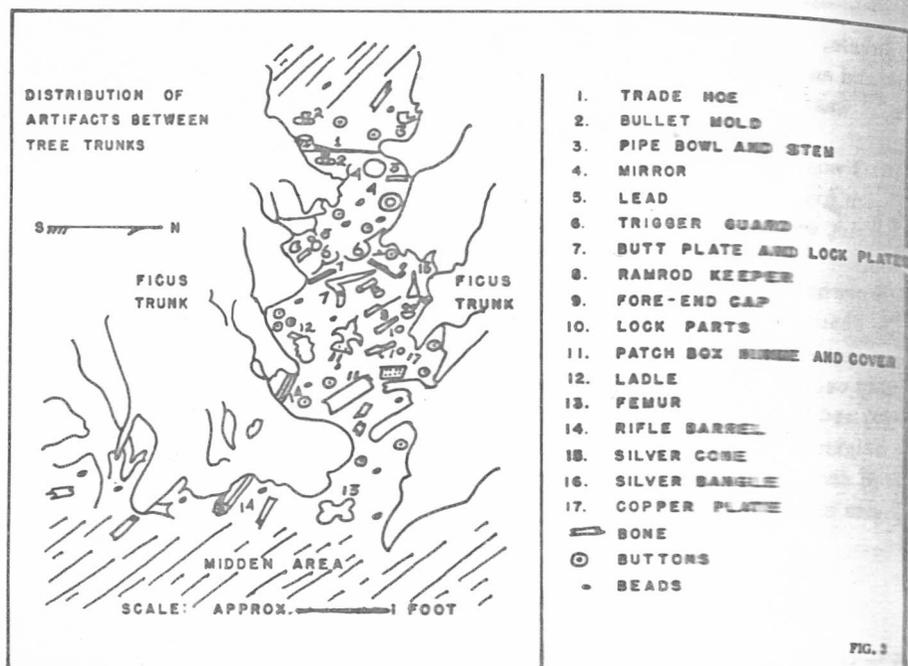


plate marked with the number 3, and some bone fragments were found.

An hour's work on the third day disclosed lead fragments; more beads and buttons; a brass wood-screw; 2 pieces of stag or bone knife-handle; a small, notched shark's tooth; and a single gun flint.

Findings on the fourth day proved interesting. First uncovered were both parts of a single-ball bullet mold. The two sections were separated 12 inches from one another. A crude copper-ladle, iron knife-blade fragments, a large hoe blade, remnants of a white-clay pipe bowl, and a circular mirror were among the day's findings.

Numerous limestone rocks, averaging somewhat smaller than a man's fist, were interlaced among the artifacts. It is not known whether these represented the remains of a cairn of some sort or not. Several small iron objects, too badly rusted to be identified, but probably gun parts, were also found.

At this point it became impossible to extricate anything more from amongst the root system unless the tree was uprooted or blown over. Plans are now being made to use a metal locator in an effort to localize the position of any other artifacts buried under the tree.

IDENTIFICATION OF OBJECTS

Specimens are illustrated in Figure 1 (frontispiece). They have been given to the Florida State Museum, Gainesville, Florida, where they are available for future research (Accession No. 3897). Some of the most important items are currently on display in the museum.

The small single-ball bullet mold was made of soapstone. This rock is composed of talc and chlorite, has a satiny luster, and is heat resistant. Closest deposits of soapstone to the Florida area are located in Georgia and North Carolina. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Delaware Indians were known to have constructed stone molds. This tribe was also among the Indians enlisted by the United States against the Seminoles at one stage of the war.

The large hoe blade, 9 inches wide and 9 inches high, was the type used in cotton cultivation throughout the 19th century. It was a common trade item.

Lead fragments were probably sprue, cut from the edge of the mold and saved for recasting. One lead object resembled the conical bullet known as the "Minnie" ball.

Over 50 faceted trade beads were found, mostly blue in color. However, there were a few white and green beads. A single spherical black bead, 12 mm. outside diameter with a 3 mm. hole, was uncovered. There is the possibility they may have been part of a pouch or catchall bag.

The ladle was too crudely curved around the rim to be used for eating. It was probably used to pour lead into the bullet mold.

The circular mirror, 3 1/8 inches in diameter, somewhat resembled a modern compact, without the extra compartment. It was unmarked except for a raised circle, 1 3/16 inches in diameter, made by pressing upward from the inside of the front cover. Silvering had worn off the glass, and it was cracked. The mirror was found in two pieces, separated about 8 inches. It appeared to have been broken in two. The possibility that it might have been a part of a signalling device or heliograph was considered. The only information available seemed to discount this theory. *Instructions for Using The Heliograph Of The Signal Corps*, United States Army, authorized by General Orders No. 99, 1888, Headquarters of The Army, Adjutant-General's Office, and as amended, lists no shape other than square for heliograph mirrors; nor is there any record of circular mirrors being used.

Fragmentary material included 5 pieces of an iron knife-blade. When

assembled, the pieces made a blade 8 inches long and 1 1/2 inches wide with a beveled point. The fragments were in poor shape and crumbled when handled. A small silver cone, resembling piping, and a silver bangle were found close together. The white-clay pipe stem was marked with the words, *Peter* on one side of the stem and *Dorn* on the other. The bowl was milled around the rim. The angle between the stem and the bowl approximated a right angle. The two pieces were close together but appeared deliberately broken.

The buttons, totaling 20 in number, were given a thorough examination by the manufacturer, Scovill Manufacturing Co., Waterbury, Conn., who dated them as having been made between 1830 and 1840. The following is taken from their report: "Corrosion had gone too far to determine face design. The mark indicates a Uniform or Insignia button: dress buttons of the period bore Quality marks only. The obvious parallel lines indicate a 'lined field' behind the design and are to be taken as horizontal. There is a bare suggestion of two figures (originally embossed) at left and right, and there is in the lower left quadrant a suggestion of vertical lines, as on a shield. This would suggest a State seal, with no legend." The date was established at Scovill by the shell structure and by the markings on the back. There is a possibility that the buttons were originally gilded, but no spectro-analysis was made to prove this.

It was not too difficult to reconstruct the rifle. It was found to be a trading grade, brass mounted, Kentucky 36-caliber, percussion-fired rifle. The barrel length was 43 inches; rifling, 8 grooves; twisting, left. A wooden stock extended one half to three quarters of the barrel length. The gun was equipped with open front-and-rear sights and probably equipped with a cane ramrod.

Despite the presence of a single gun flint of imported Irish or English flint, examination of the lock parts and plates showed the gun was percussion-fired. No markings, other than the number 3 stamped on the trigger plate and rear section of the trigger guard, were found. This number was probably a proof mark denoting the gun had been tested by firing a triple charge of powder, a common proofing method at that time.

As would be expected, expanding roots caused some deviation from the original position of the gun parts in the ground. However, their approximate location, the sheared-off condition of the breach end of the barrel, the trigger support's having been bent sharply at right angles and the rear portion of the trigger guard's having been broken off — all suggest the rifle had been held by the muzzle and smashed.

The few human bones found were identified as a femur and a fourth

metatarsal. It is possible the root system had damaged the rest of the bones or that they are beneath the large roots.

Tentative dating of the burial may be made from six of the articles found:

1. The gun
—Armories started producing percussion arms around 1842. However, civilians had converted many flintlocks before this time.
2. The buttons
—These were dated by the manufacturer as after 1830 and no later than 1840.
3. The hoe
—19th century.
4. The white-clay pipe
—Later than 1700, probably 19th century.
5. The mirror
—19th century.
6. The beads
—If part of a pouch or catchall bag, 1830-60.

The collection is typical of the personal belongings of an Indian. Considering the dating, evidence of deliberate destruction of grave goods, obvious shallow interment, profusion of beads, and the human bones, it is reasonable to presume a mid-19th-century Seminole burial is represented.

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