

# Two Historic Island Sites in the Coosa River

L. Ross Morrell  
University of Alabama

During a three-month period in the summer of 1962, two sites, Ogeltree Island and Woods Island, were explored under the Alabama Power Company-University of Alabama cooperative archaeological salvage program.

Excavations were completed in the Ogeltree Island site, situated in the Coosa River opposite the mouth of Choccolocco Creek in the Logan Martin Basin. Additional extensive test excavations were accomplished on Woods Island, future site of Lock No. 3 Dam.

A preliminary study of the material from these excavations indicated that the Ogeltree Island site was occupied by Indians of the early historic period, probably around 1540, the time of De Soto's expedition through the Southeast. The sites on Woods Island were occupied by Indians of the middle historic period, around 1675 to 1750.

Preliminary excavations at Ogeltree Island during the summer of 1961 revealed a somewhat eroded, early historic, village site and exposed the floor area, central fire basin and adjacent refuse areas of an aboriginal dwelling.

The most important of the artifacts removed from this house area was a European glass trade bead known to date from the first half of the 16th century. This bead, identified by Dr. John M. Goggin of the University of Florida as a Spanish Nevao Cadiz Plain bead dating not later than 1560 A.D., possibly represents the only artifact thus far excavated in Alabama that could have been left by the De Soto expedition in 1540.

During the 1962 excavations at the Ogletree Island site, removal of the house floor exposed a second floor containing material contemporary with that of the first floor. An adjacent area, 20 feet by 20 feet, was excavated and a third rectangular structure found. The ceramic count consisted primarily of Moundville Incised and Moundville Plain, with Lamar Bold Incised showing as a minority.

A surface survey was undertaken when it was learned that work on the Lock 3 Dam had begun on Woods Island. Here three

sites of aboriginal occupation were located, the largest of which appeared to be the remains of a rather extensive historic village. The first excavation at this site revealed the remains of a burned, rectangular structure, whose roof beams had collapsed over the floor area and crushed several ceramic vessels. The predominant pottery type was of the McKee Island series; an Etowah component was present as a minority.

A second test area, 35 feet by 50 feet, revealed scattered post molds, refuse areas and nine burials with associated aboriginal and European artifacts. The burials tended to be primarily the shaft-and chamber variety. Associated trade material consisted of a brass hilted sword; two iron hoes; three iron axes; brass belt buckle; gun flints; musket lock parts; brass bells; sheet brass ornaments; approximately 40 glass bead types, and a great number of other iron and brass items.

The above suggested date of 1675-1750 is based strickly on a preliminary glance at the trade items, and it is hoped that a more thorough analysis will confine the date more accurately.