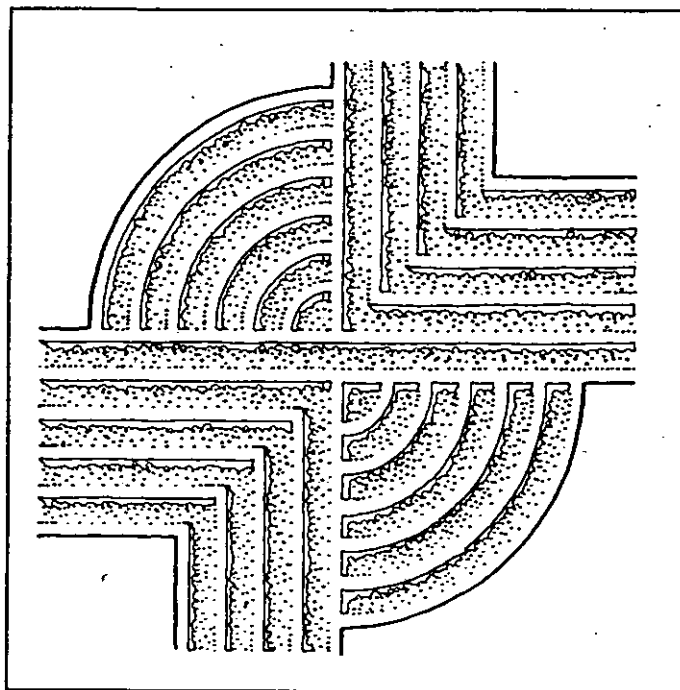


MANAGEMENT SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL
DATA RECOVERY EXCAVATIONS AT 38CH124,
KIAWAH ISLAND, CHARLESTON COUNTY, SOUTH
CAROLINA



RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 56

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA RECOVERY
EXCAVATIONS AT 38CH124,
KIAWAH ISLAND, CHARLESTON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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Chicora Research Contribution 56

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Introduction

Kiawah Island is situated in Charleston County, south of the City of Charleston, and is bordered to north and west by the Kiawah River, to the east by the Stono River and Inlet, and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. The island is separated from neighboring Folly Island to the east by the Stono Inlet, from Seabrook Island to the west by the Kiawah River, and Johns Island to the north by the Kiawah River and the associated marshes (Figure 1).

The 3,300 acre (highland) island measures about 9 miles in length and 2 miles in width. The island represents a Holocene beach ridge barrier island which, unlike many others, is prograding with a gradual seaward growth (Mathews et al. 1980:149). Prior to development the area was in maritime forest modified by fairly intensive agricultural activity (concentrated in recent times in the north central portion of the island). Elevations on the island range from sea level to 25 feet above mean sea level (MSL). The soils are typical of the area and consist of the Crevasse-Dawhoo complex (mixed drainage), the Dawhoo series (poorly drained), Kiawah series (poorly drained), Seabrook series (well drained), and Wando series (excessively drained) (Miller 1971).

Large portions of the island have been developed as a residential resort community. As a result of an intensive archaeological survey conducted by Brockington and Associates on a section of the undeveloped portion of the island called Rhett's Bluff (Poplin 1989), six of the eight identified sites archaeological sites were determined by the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer (SC SHPO) as eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. A Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement between the SC SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Kiawah Resort Associates (dated September 6, 1990), requires that these eligible sites be green spaced or receive data recovery excavations. In discussions with the SC SHPO, Kiawah Resort Associates determined that three sites (38CH124, 38CH125/126, and 38CH129) would require data recovery excavations. At the present time the remaining sites are being avoided by development activities (Ray Pantlik, personal communication 1990).

Chicora Foundation was requested by the developer's representative, Mr. Ray Pantlik, to prepare a budget proposal based on a scope of work previously submitted to and approved by the S.C. SHPO (dated August 23, 1990). A proposal for those investigations was submitted by Chicora on August 28, 1990 (with an addendum dated September 7, 1990) and the work was approved by the developer on September 12, 1990. The work was approved by the SC SHPO on

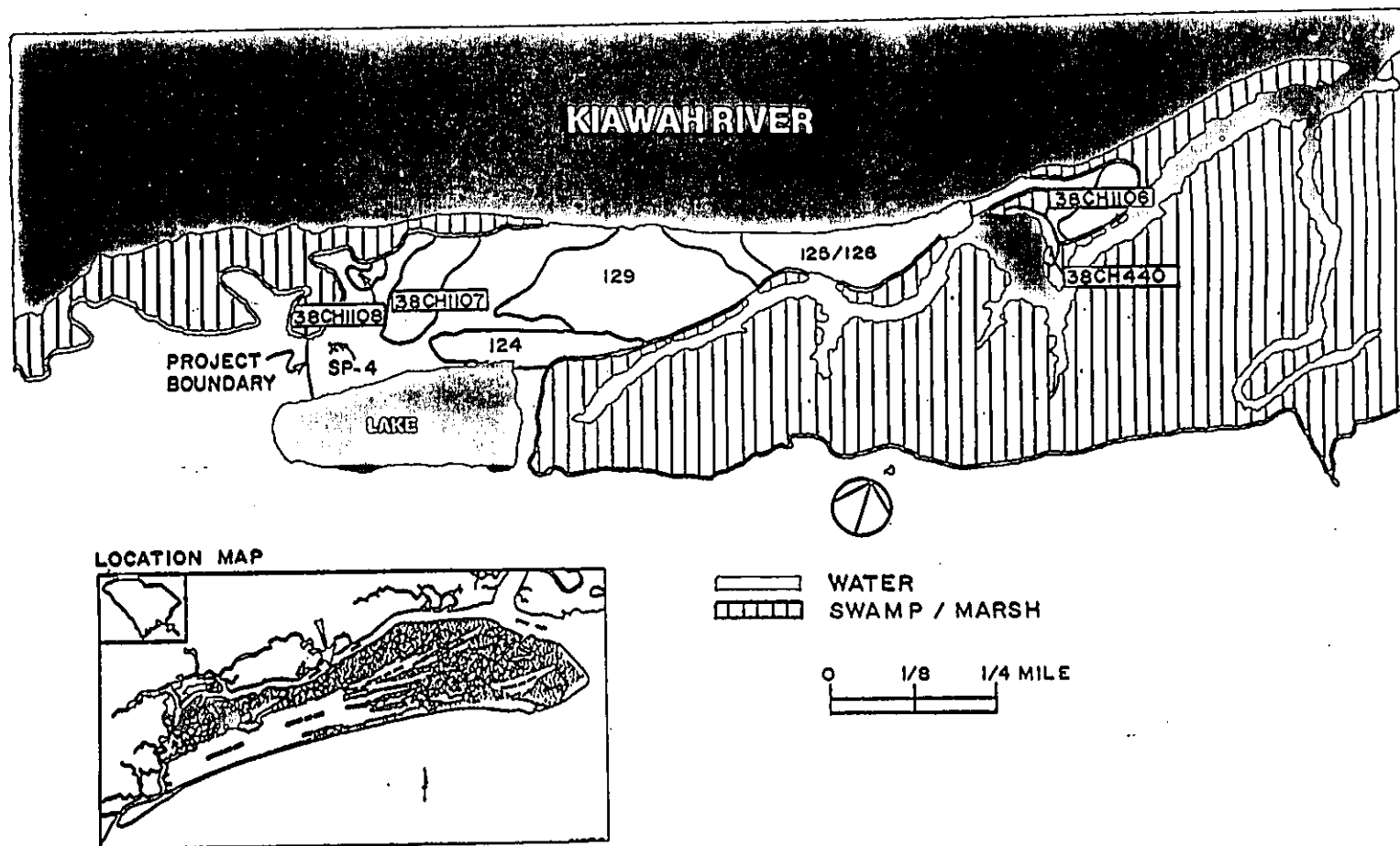


Figure 3. A portion of Kiawah Island showing the location of 38CH124. Adapted from Poplin 1989:Figure 6).

September 28, 1990 (letter from Dr. Linda Stine to Dr. Michael Trinkley). The proposal was forwarded to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for submittal to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation on October 6, 1990. No comments were received from either the Army Corps or the Advisory Council. An agreement to perform the work was signed by Kiawah Resort Associates on October 18, 1990.

This management summary has been prepared immediately upon completion of the fieldwork at 38CH124 and does not contain information on artifact or subsistence analyses, or any detailed midden evaluations. It is intended solely to provide a brief descriptive statement of the work conducted by Chicora and to allow the SC SHPO, Advisory Council and the Army Corps to verify that the proposed work has actually been accomplished. The management summary is minimally necessary for Kiawah Resort Associates to continue with the development of the land encompassing 38CH124. This construction will destroy portions of the site and, of course, created the need for archaeological mitigation activities initially.

Archaeological investigations were begun at 38CH124 by a crew of five (including the principal investigator) on January 7, 1991 and continued through January 25, 1991. A total of 488.0 person hours were spent in the field and an additional 131.0 person hours were spent on laboratory analysis and field processing (with approximately 40.0 person hours of the processing time spent sorting fine screenings). As a result of this work 775 square feet of site area were opened. This resulted in the excavation of 1261 cubic feet of soil, all either dry screened through 1/4 or 1/8-inch mesh, or waterscreened through 1/8-inch mesh (depending on the site locus).

The proposed investigations at 38CH124 were to include the excavation of approximately 200 square feet in locus 1, approximately 400 square feet in locus 2, approximately 200 square feet in locus 3, and approximately 300 square feet in locus 4. At the conclusion of the work, loci 3 and 4 were to be mechanically stripped in order to reveal, plot, and excavate any additional features which might be identified. The scope of work for the project defined by Kiawah Resort Associates and accepted by the S.C. SHPO was based on the survey conducted by Brockington and Associates (Poplin 1989). This survey included only very limited shovel testing in loci 2 and 3 (a total of eight tests), with no tests placed in either loci 1 or 4. (Poplin 1989).

The work conducted by Chicora at 38CH124 meet the proposed data recovery requirements, although only 75 square feet were excavated in locus 2. The preliminary Chicora survey of the site and the various loci failed to reveal any evidence of the dense Thom's Creek shell middens reported by Poplin (1989:44) for locus 2 on the ground surface. The survey, however, did locate a

Brockington and Associates shovel test identified on flagging tape as Transect 31, Shovel Test 2, although this test was only 30 meters from locus 1, rather than 60 meters as it is shown by Poplin (1989:Figure 14). In order to more fully examine this area a series of four transects were laid out at 30 foot intervals, with two oriented north-south and two oriented east-west, bisecting the supposed area of locus 2. Shovel tests were excavated at 30 foot intervals with all soil screened through 1/4-inch mesh. These tests identified several small Middle Woodland shell middens, but failed to identify any evidence of dense Early Woodland midden. Our investigations suggest that the Brockington and Associates survey began shovel testing with Transect 30 on the edge of locus 1, rather than 30 meters to the west as shown by Poplin (1989:Figure 14). This resulted in "duplicating" the Thom's Creek midden defined as locus 1 and reporting it as locus 2. Through consultations with the S.C. SHPO and Kiawah Resort Associates, Chicora reduced the level of investigations in the area of locus 2.

The stripping proposed in the data recovery plan for loci 3 and 4 is in areas of hardwood vegetation. Under these circumstances, Chicora consulted with the SC SHPO and Kiawah Resort Associates, proposing that the stripping be limited to areas with no tree cover. This proposal was accepted by both parties and a series of four 20 foot transects were stripped, three in locus 3 (totaling 500 linear feet or 10,000 square feet) and one in locus 4 (totaling 150 linear feet or 3000 square feet).

Previous Investigations

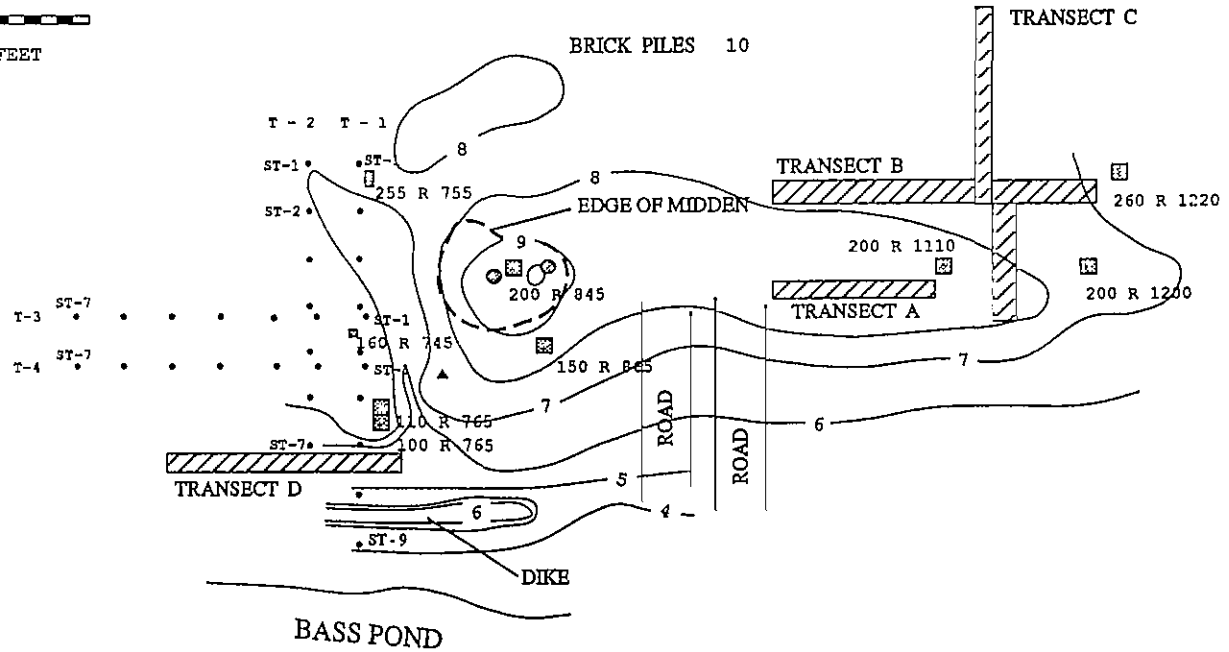
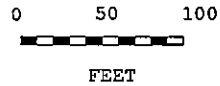
Site 38CH124 was originally reported by Combes (1975), based on a reconnaissance survey. Combes' investigations revealed the presence of "Awendaw" (i.e., Thom's Creek), Middle Woodland, and historic materials (Combes 1975:A-15) with stratigraphic deposition to 4 feet.

Michie (1979) conducted test excavations at 38CH124, finding considerable evidence of historic occupation and associating it with the Shoolbred occupation, although not specifically relating it with previously identified site 38CH129. Likewise, Michie briefly notes that Middle Woodland "Cape Fear" pottery (i.e., Deptford) is present at the site. The bulk of Michie's attention, however, was directed toward the Thom's Creek occupation.

Michie's (1979:33) investigations consisted of excavating a series of 25 1-meter (3 foot) units across the site, spaced at 15 meters (45 feet). There is, however, some confusion concerning the location of these tests; Michie's Figure 5 shows 28 tests (numbered 2 through 29) and there is no reference to unit 1. The grid established by Michie was never tied into any permanent points and therefore cannot be recreated. In addition, Poplin (1989:41-43, Figure 12) discusses the difference between the site map shown in Michie (1979:Figure 5) and the coordinates used for the National

38CH124

KIAWAH ISLAND, S.C.



- ▲ DATUM 132 R 799 847' MSL
- ⊙ POTHOLE
- SHOVEL TESTS
- ▣ EXCAVATION UNITS
- ▨ GRADED TRANSECTS

Figure 2. Excavations at 38CH124.

Register Nomination.

Regardless, the excavations revealed a very dense Early Woodland occupation which incorporated worked bone, Thom's Creek sherds, projectile points, flakes, and soapstone fragments (Michie 1979). Michie also proposed, based on the types of artifacts recovered, that the site represented a "base camp." This view was discussed at length by the author (Trinkley 1980:309-313), with the conclusion that there seemed to be little support for the base camp hypothesis. The current excavations, however, provide an opportunity for a fresh analysis of the data and interpretations.

During the intensive survey of the Rhett's Bluff tract by Brockington and Associates, the site boundaries for 38CH124 were enlarged (Poplin 1989:Figure 8). In general the site was divided into four loci - locus 1 representing the site area originally defined by Michie (1979), locus 2 representing an area to the west (although as previously discussed, this newly identified loci represents a duplication of the previously identified locus 1), locus 3 to the east, and locus 4 in an area between locus 1 and 2. The Brockington and Associates survey did not attempt to further refine or distinguish between the prehistoric occupation and the historic remains which we now realize are structural and relate to 38CH129.

As discussed by Trinkley (1991), the dense concentration of historic materials found in 38CH124 by Michie (1979:80-83) are designated 38CH129-4 and probably represent an overseer's occupation. In addition, another concentration of brick rubble which probably represents a historic structure was identified on the northern edge of 38CH124 and is designated 38CH129-5. Neither of these structures, however, have been investigated in this study since such work was not incorporated in the data recovery plan approved by the SC SHPO.

Excavations at 38CH124

After 38CH124 had been cleared of vegetation by Kiawah Resort Associates the site grid was laid out to incorporate all four loci reported by Brockington and Associates (1989). This grid was established using a magnetic east-west base line and has been tied into the development plan for the site area. Units were established using the modified Chicago 10-foot grid, with each square designated by its southeast corner, from a 0R0 point at the southwest corner of the site. Thus, the southeast corner of square 10R20 would be located north 10 feet and right (or east) 20 feet from the 0R0 point. Vertical control was maintained through the use of a nearby temporary benchmark (a nail in the base of a palmetto tree situated at 132R799) with a mean sea level (MSL) elevation of 8.47 feet.

The excavations throughout the site used gross natural

stratigraphic zones. Zone 1 consisted of brown humic sand varying in depth from about 0.3 to 1.9 foot. Zone 1 was typically divided into from two to three levels of about 0.5 to 0.6 foot in depth in order to better control cultural stratigraphy. Generally, historic and Middle Woodland materials were found in Zone 1, Level 1, while Thom's Creek material increased in density into Zone 1, Level 2 and 3. Zone 1A was used to designate shell midden deposits underlying Zone 1 soils, regardless of their cultural affiliation. Zone 1A varied from 0.5 to 2.0 feet in depth, with the densest midden, of course, associated with locus 1. Zone 1A was also divided into levels of about 0.5 foot where appropriate. Underlying Zone 1A is a reddish-tan soil which is designated Zone 2. This zone, up to 1.0 foot in depth, tended to become sterile within the upper 0.5 foot, but was divided into 0.5 foot levels.

Zone 1 and 2 soil from the various units in locus 2, 3, and 4 was dry screened through 1/4-inch mesh using mechanical sifters. Zone 1A soil, regardless of locus, was either waterscreened or dry screened through 1/8 inch mesh. Shell was routinely separated out and weighed prior to being discarded in the field (hand picked samples, however, were collected, and a column sample of shell was retained from each area where Zone 1A was present). Units were usually troweled at the base of Zone 2 (or Zone 1A), photographed in b/w and color slides, and plotted. Plotting of units at the base of Zone 1 was found to be impossible because of the dark soils.

Field notes were prepared on pH neutral, alkaline buffered paper and photographic materials are being processed to archival standards. All original field notes, with archival copies, will be curated at a repository agreed on by Kiawah Resort Associates and the S.C. SHPO. We are currently recommending The Charleston Museum and have approached that institution for permission to curate the materials. All specimens will be evaluated for conservation needs and will be treated prior to curation, although the prehistoric specimens (including bone and shell items) appear to be stable.

A total of two 10-foot units were excavated by Chicora at locus 1 (Figure 2). Unit 200R845 was placed to sample the dense shell midden reported by Michie. The excavation revealed a midden which incorporated rather large amounts of soil (soil:shell ratios by weight range from 1:0.7 in level 2 to 1:1.7 in level 3). Shellfish remains are dominated by oyster, although both periwinkle and ribbed mussel are locally dense. Minor species included whelks, moon snails, stout tagelus, and cockles. Radiocarbon samples were collected from Zone 1A, level 2 and Zone 1A, level 4 in order to provide some indication of occupation duration. Faunal remains were found to be dense. The 1/8-inch waterscreening has resulted in the recovery of large quantities of fish remains, although larger mammals are also present. Coprolites, tentatively identified as human, were recovered from this midden.

Examination of the unit profiles reveals evidence of at least two distinct periods of occupation. The first is evidenced by a level band of crushed shell about 0.4 foot in depth. This level indicates the presence of a "sheet" midden which has been disrupted by pedestrian traffic. The second episode is revealed by overlying dumping of shell and includes evidence of periwinkle and ribbed mussel pockets. At the base of 200R845 evidence was found for an even earlier occupation episode. A series of five post holes were discovered which form approximately one-quarter of a circular structure estimated to be 17 feet in diameter. At the center of this structure (and in the northwest corner of 200R845) was found a dense lens of ash (Feature 1) which appears to represent a hearth. This structure is second reported Thom's Creek house from the South Carolina coastal area (see also Trinkley 1984:18).

Unit 150R865 was excavated off the midden toward Bass Pond and revealed the presence of a small Middle Woodland shell lens or pit overlying a dense Thom's Creek non-shell midden occupation. This unit was virtually identical to the remains uncovered in units 200R1100 and 200R1200 from locus 3. In each case later remains (historic and/or Middle Woodland prehistoric) were found in Zone 1, level 1, but level 2 and 3 tended to exhibit dense Thom's Creek occupation. No evidence, however, of Thom's Creek features were found in any of the units. Unit 260R1220 in locus 3 revealed less dense cultural material with a greater mixture of historic remains. At the base of Zone 1, level 2 two bisecting ditches were discovered which appear to be related to historic cultivation. Unit 260R1220 also yielded a thin lens of Middle Woodland shell midden.

Locus ~~3~~⁴ was examined by the excavation of two 10-foot units, 100-110R165. Both revealed a very thin (ca. 0.5 foot) Zone 1 overlying sterile Zone 2 soils. Artifact density was very low and included a mixture of Early and Middle Woodland materials. These excavation units yielded no evidence of any occupation or structures in this site area.

As previously discussed, locus 4 does not represent a second Thom's Creek midden, although shovel tests and the excavation of 75 square feet (units 255R755 and 160R745) did reveal several Middle Woodland shell middens. These scattered, thin middens appear to be found within the entire area of the Thom's Creek occupation and samples of subsistence and pollen were obtained for comparison with the denser and earlier Thom's Creek occupation.

Interpretations

These investigations have explored a relatively small percentage of site 38CH124, although the excavations have been carefully selected to maximize the data return. It should be emphasized, however, that these investigations have provided very little additional information concerning the historic occupation associated with the Shoolbred Plantation (38CH129) or the Middle

Woodland occupation at Bass Pond. The excavations have been almost entirely oriented toward further exploration of the Early Woodland Thom's Creek occupation as directed by the SC SHPO approved data recovery plan. The historic occupation at 38CH124 is certainly associated with 38CH129 and appears to represent two additional structures, one previously identified by Michie (1979) and the other not previously reported. The Middle Woodland occupation, while mentioned by Michie, appears denser and more common than previously thought.

The excavations at 38CH124 reveal a Thom's Creek occupation which incorporates both shell debris (essentially a small area of locus 1) and a large area of non-shell midden area (parts of locus 1 and all of locus 3). The presence of dense, non-shell Stallings sites has been documented best at Fish Haul (38BU805) where the site appears to have been seasonally occupied in order to take advantage of the nut masts (Trinkley 1986). At the current level of analysis it is not possible, however, to offer any explanation for these two occupation areas at 38CH124. The shell midden at 38CH124 is rather sparse compared to other excavated Thom's Creek middens (such as Lighthouse Point and Stratton Place, see Trinkley 1980). Likewise, the density and diversity of artifacts appears to be greater at the shell ring sites than at 38CH124. It is anticipated that a careful examination of the shellfish, faunal, and pollen samples may provide additional information, although faunal and pollen preservation in non-shell areas is poor.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the work at 38CH124 has been the collection of a small, but very detailed, faunal sample suitable for intensive investigation. This work should allow statements to be made concerning both subsistence strategies and seasonality of the collections. In addition, the examination of the midden by relatively thin levels may allow statements to be made concerning changes in subsistence strategy through time. The faunal study, combined with the examination of the shellfish at 38CH124, is expected to provide significant insight on Early Woodland dietary patterns.

A detailed examination of the artifact types and patterns at 38CH124 may also more fully address the questions raised by Michie's (1979) earlier study and "base camp" hypothesis. We now have detailed artifact studies available from several South Carolina shell rings (Trinkley 1980), unavailable during Michie's earlier work.

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