

# Field Notes

by Vernon Lamme

An unpublished manuscript

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Sunday June 24 1934

11th Captain Karl Squires and his car we motored to the West Coast and visited again the shell heap at Gordon's river near Naples in Collier county. We were prepared to bring back many artifacts and we were not disappointed. This heap at one time according to tales told by the natives covered an area of at least ten acres and at the deepest point the shell is approximately eight feet in depth. (We will make accurate measurements and photographs of this mound at a later date.) Between the stratas of shell are found stratas of black dirt and ash in which can be found many fine specimens of tools of deer bone. Many unusual designs on the potsherds marked this mound as of particular interest. We found many of the potsherds smeared without design with yellow and red paint. A very good conch shell dipper was found as well as dozens of artifacts in shell such as scrapers in the preparing of hides and skins. It is necessary to wade in tide water almost to the knees because of the extensive hauling away of this shell in former years for maintenance on county roads. This heap is merely a shell of its former self but still with a great amount of deposit there of extreme interest. The pottery designs are of unusual interest. Also the fact that such a large former habitation at this date shows no evidence within a mile or more, of a burial mound. There is a burial across the Gordon's river however, visited by Dr M W Stirling and myself ~~xxxxxxx~~ this year. This burial mound is located on the western tip of a long range of sanddune. The sand for the mound was taken from the dune itself and the cavity is still evident. Digging here on a previous date I located several burials and made little attempt at that time to remove them as the rainy season was on and the bones were water soaked as well as the sand. Two skulls however were brought back to land at that time; both of them so filled with the roots of scrub palmetto that it was only with the greatest of difficulty that they could be saved for exhibition.

Mangrove is growing abundantly north of the Gordon river mound and there is a possibility that a burial mound may be located somewhere in this growth which now extends from the highway to the river. Maybe this could be located from the air as the mangrove-thicket is almost impenetrable.

Many interesting sea shells are found in the Gordon's river mound.

*Lanimo*

Sunday July 1 1934

Attempting to locate a mound in the Everglades areas west of Hallandale, Captain Karl Aquires of Miami and the writer noticing a change in the vegetation stopped our car and with a screen and shovel immediately unearthed several potsheards, many of unique designs, heretofore unknown to the Miami area. Little work was done this day as we had traveled many miles searching for a mound which none of the natives seemed to know much about although most of them had heard of it. After collecting several more potsheards from the surface we determined to come back to this section July 4, which we did. This was found ~~on~~ on south line of Sect 20-51-41 about one quarter mile from corner of section.

Wednesday July 4 1934

Prepared to excavate quite extensively at the same site as discovered on last Sunday we soon attacked the mound which was only about one and a half foot above the surface. The screening revealed an unusual strata; the entire site seemed to be composed of minute particles of bones of fish, birds and deer. Small bits of skulls of possums and coons and many potsheards. A shovel full of material would contain almost 80 of this bone debris. No indications of human burials and little except potsheards as evidence of human occupancy except for the refuse of bones, etc. It could be possible from the location that the Indians on the coast used this "camp" as a half-way or over night rendezvous on their many hunting trips into the Everglades. This would account for the broken bits of pottery as they probably brought their women that far to take care of the skinning of the game brought back by the hunters and food was prepared there over a period of years. This also would account for the fact that no other artifacts usually found in the kitchen middens were unearthed here.

Lammé

Laurie

Sunday July 8 1934

Looking for a mound which Squires and I had heard was near the Hillsborough light house, we met the bridge tender near the inlet at Pompano and he informed us that bones of men had been unearthed near there but he was sure they were white men because the bones were white. We searched the vicinity and met a Mr West a taxidermist who showed us a sand mound near Pompano which it was said contained many skeletons. The mound is approximately eight feet high and 60 feet in diameter and circular in shape. We look into this, more, later, as West wanted us at that time to go with him to a shell heap north of Boca Raton at Yamato. We located where this heap once was and discovered that it had been entirely leveled by highway builders but upon searching in the spoil bank of a canal which runs through the eastern end of the ancient pile we found seven celts of conch shell, beautifully made and much more work was shown than on any previous finds we had made on the east coast of Florida. The points were straight instead of the usual rounded edges of the celts found farther south and on the west coast in Collier county. We found absolutely no other evidence of early habitation; no potsherds-nothing. West told us that he believed that thousands of these celts had been found there. Gates a regulator living near there said later that he himself had picked up as many as twenty a day when he would visit the mound.

The ignorance of the natives in this section regarding the earlier races who once lived in this section is amazing- consider the bridge tender who has lived here for 32 years and he knew nothing but that some white (bleached bones were found near there and he presumed that they were of white people. Do you suppose that he believes that negroes have black bones? While standing in a mound at Gordon's river in Collier county recently we enquired of a native if he knew of any Indian mounds in that section and he replied, "I have never heard of any." And he was standing in that shell heap near Naples at the time.

Laurie

Lamme

Sunday July 15 1934

Hearing of the finding of a conch shell hoe or maddock on an island near Fulford, Captain Karl Squires picked up two men who had previously promised to direct us to the spot, early in the morning and armed with a stout machete we boarded a small skiff boat and rowed approximately 1000 feet from the first bridge east of Fulford to the northward and with the machete Squires cut a way through the dense mangrove thicket which surrounds the island and we were able to wade ashore. The land began to rise immediately from the shore line on the west side of the island and we cut our way through to the highest point which was approximately five feet above the shore line. At the first shovel of dirt thrown into the quarter inch screen we found several potsherds of extremely hard material. Several pieces of rim were found. We dug to the rock (18 to 24 inches below surface) in five different locations on the island and in every instance we found evidences of habitation; such as are usually found, potsherds, bones of fish and birds, etc. On the eastern shore the rock formation was very interesting and it appears that there was a spring here at one time. The rocks were of unique shape and we could not discover whether there was human work on them or merely the effects of erosion made the odd shapes. This area is worthy of much more study. Very few people have visited this place because of its almost inaccessibility.

We also visited an island to the south of the bridge just mentioned, hearing that bones had been taken from there fifteen or more years ago but we could find nothing but trouble. Here it was that Squires was attacked by five indignant wasps and I had the misfortune to step upon a rusty old nail which was in a plank buried for many years under two or three inches of leaf mold. There was a fertilizer factory on this island many years ago, it was learned. I do not believe that there is anything of interest on this island.

Lamme

Sunday 22 1934

With a Mr. Gates a real estate man who lives at Boca Raton, Captain Squires and I visited a large ceremonial mound north of Yamato; a high white sand mound approximately 25 feet in height and covering nearly two acres. Sand had been hauled away from here for years and there was no evidence of artifacts or bleached bones and the natives had never heard of any finds here. We ~~journeyed~~ journeyed back over an old shell pond to the old shell mound at Yamato which has been leveled for many years, the shell being used for highways and on a spoil bank where a canal had been dredged we picked up three conch shell celts of the straight edge type usually found in this section. Mr. Gates told of a burial mound south of Boca Raton inlet and we discovered this after some little exploration through what is known locally as the 'jungle trail' near the cabanas. A cone shaped burial of white beach sand near a large rubber tree on the southern tip of what appeared to be an old habitation. Several potsherds were picked up and a little delving in the earth revealed bits of deer bone, shark's vertebrae, etc. Evidence of early excavation was seen and Gates said that he himself had taken several skeletons from the mound here. He gave us the skull and mandible of one of them taken in 1926-7; it was noted that two holes were in the frontal areas of the skull and Gates said that all the skulls were so drilled; this of course must be discounted. The habitation and burial mound together is approximately one hundred feet across at the longest part.

After letting Gates out at his home in Boca Raton, where he also has a real estate office, Captain Squires and I visited a burial mound which we had previously located near Pompano, in fact it is within the old town limits of Pompano and the site is at present in possession of the town. Here is a sand mound in which we unearthed several human vertebrae, two femurs and portions of skull, and a bit of pelvis. This mound had been entered several months before, we learned by workmen in mosquito control work and several burials disturbed and then re-buried. This mound is approximately eight feet in height and possibly sixty feet in diameter, and almost circular in shape. We looked for the habitation area and while we did not discover any village site we found evidence of early habitation in potsherds, old bits of conch shell, celts, etc. in an area covering nearly a half mile both north and south of the burial mound and one particularly fine specimen of conch adze near the bank of a stream nearly a half mile from the mound. Digging near the mound we unearthed within a foot of the surface, several large conch shells, shark vertebrae, potsherds, bones of sea turtle and bones of many fish and wading birds including beaks which appeared to have had some work. We will visit this area again when the mosquitoes are less unfriendly.

*Lammie*

Sunday July 29 1934

Heading of a mound on the Beach near the inlet north of Palm Beach, Cap'n. Karl Squires and I made the trip to the inlet and approximately one half mile south of the inlet on the Lake Worth side we found where workmen had made an excavation while constructing a dwelling house and here and in refuse which the workmen had collected in clearing the ground we discovered several potsheards and stones of foreign composition which we thought showed evidence of work. We screened with a half inch screen several shovels full of earth in different locations around the house and found bits of deer bone, bones of herons etc as well as vertebrae of sharks. This showed habitation by the early Calusas. The mound itself had been pretty well leveled by workmen. We were told of a burial mound of sand approximately 200 feet north east of this point but a thorough examination could discover no trace; a citrus Grove had been planted here. Word was received here from a native telling of a shell heap on the other side of the lake and we traveled around by West Palm Beach and a half mile from the north boundary of the city over near the lake shore we found the remains of a vast shell heap which we estimated was seven feet above the surface of the lake at high tide. We spent about an hour here and found on the surface scores of potshards, a stone pendant, a conch hoe or maddock, the best specimen of conch drinking cup I have ever seen showing the mark of the grinding tool where it was used to break the edges of the cup. The cup was much worn and showed usage. This heap was approximately 400 feet long (stepped off) and possibly from 35 to fifty feet wide. Two streams in earlier days seemed to have passed through this heap. We spent little time looking for the burial mound but believe that we located it due west of the centre of the shell heap. This area we believe will prove very productive.

Laird



Sunday Aug. 5 1934

With Captain Karl Squires I visited the mound at Flagami hammock in the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec 2-Twp 54 R. 40 north of Flagler street in Miami. This mound is in a dense hammock growth and appears to have been dug completely through and screened all except a small bit under a large rubber tree. We unearthed a few fragments of human skeletal material but of little worth. The mound was possibly 100 feet ~~xxx~~ in diameter and composed entirely of black hammock loam. We found natural rock at a depth of about three feet. We were told that quite a number of flint arrow heads had been taken from this mound as well as several celts of shell.

Later in the afternoon we visited a mound one mile north of the Tropical radio station at Opaocka. In Sec 5, SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  Twp 52 R. 41. It is a large midden approximately 150 feet by 125 and about four feet above the level of the surrounding ~~prairie~~ prairie. We dug with our trowels for just a few minutes and unearthed several bits of old pottery of different designs, sharks vertebrae and other fish and bird bones. This mound has never been entered and I expect to see the local FIRA about working in it for a week or two. This mound is practically three ~~xx~~ miles south of the mound west of Hallendale and a straight line through these two ~~xx~~ sites and eight miles south we find the Flagami mound.



Sunday Aug. 26- Looking back over these notes you will find where Capt. Squires and I visited a mound west of Hallendale in Broward county and we presumed that this mound was used only as a camp while on hunts for game in the 'Glades. Not satisfied with this explanation we again visited this mound on this date and found that what we had at first thought was base rock was in reality a sort of hard pan that could be broken with a hand axe. This hard pan is at a depth of around 16 inches and today we penetrated this strata with some difficulty and in one shovel full of debris taken from BELOW the hard pan we found a beautifully turned needle of deer bone, a shark's tooth with a hole in it which appeared to be cut in rather than drilled as were all others found in Dade county. Several points highly polished were found in this same shovel full and a deer bone arrow head also highly polished with the tip burned and hardened. On the surface near this hole I picked up a glass bead (rather large) of blue glass and very inexpertly cut or welded. This mound has wonderful possibilities.

Sunday Sept. 2- After considerable delay we visited the Arch Creek section in search of an Indian mound near the Natural bridge on the old Dixie Highway north of Miami. With Capt Squires we stopped at Natural bridge and finding that there was a house which served beer to picnic parties near where we thought the mound to be we did not enquire but rather advanced alone and about 150 feet from the highway we discovered many pieces of conch and other marine shell mixed with the earth and back of the house the land appeared to raise a bit and upon closer examination we found petsherds and after about fifteen minutes of intense search on the surface we collected fifteen whole and broken celts of shell, some of them of entirely different shape than any we had found in Dade county. Also three shell hoes or axes and three shell axes or tomakawks. All these were found on the surface and we did no excavating because of the fear of a crowd collecting and we did not want them to know that this was a village site. At the pump in the back yard I picked up the largest sherd which had been kicked around presumably for years. This is undoubtedly a rich site for specimens and steps have been taken to get in touch with the owners with the idea in mind that we may fence the mound and keep trespassers off while we level it. The site is about 300 feet long and possibly 150 feet wide lying north and south from the creek bank on the north side. The highest part of the mound is probably three feet above the surrounding terrain.

MIAMI FLORIDA  
August 16t  
1934

Bureau American Ethnology
1904 AUG 18 1934
Ref. to -----

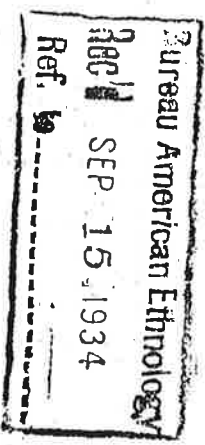
Dear Matt:

You didn't tell me whether you received the photos I sent you or not; I hope that you did. We are shut down again until September 1st.; no money. They tell me that I can start up again at that time. Can you tell me if the Smithsonian will open up ~~again~~ in the same manner as they did last winter when the winter schedule is in force again. You see this is Emergency relief during the summer but a program such as we had last winter will go into effect again Sept. 1st. I wish you would let me know if possible. About the middle of September I will go on Green Fruit inspection for the State which will last until Dec. 1st.; then the Racing commission job if my political 'pull' is still strong enough; but if you are going to work in Florida I want to be with you even if it is less money. I have gone terribly in the hole here because of these periodical 'shut downs' and owe the Hotel plenty. I will work three weeks and then shut down two or three. They are paying me but \$30 per week. But I am glad to get it nevertheless.

Captain Squires and I have been making quite a survey of this south Florida area; he is an engineer and has all the instruments necessary; we have made quite a number of levels on the Miami Beach mound and will make you a contour map of it. I dug up most of the street which ran through the burial but found that the steam roller which was used broke all the skeletal material in small bits; all except one skull down in the bottom in the creek bottom marl which has hardened into stone. There are three distinct stratas in this mound. The lowest strata is beach sand and you can see where it was covered with creek bottom clay-marl almost six inches thick on an average; then higher a sandy loam with quite a number of burials and then more sand with burials and next to the road a darker sand. Old-timers tell me that this mound was at least three feet higher before they leveled it for the road and over two hundred burials were taken from the top in 1923 when the road was put in. I suppose that Gene told you that vandals had broken or stolen all the skeletal material we excavated during the time he was in charge; there were approximately 50 skulls and many long bones.

Very few people here know we are working on the beach; I give no one the location but every day some one digs in it after we leave and I can not catch them. I am afraid that after I leave they will screen more out of the midden section. This area is much richer than we had supposed and Captain Squires promised that if you would write him a letter which would show that he had some authority from the Smithsonian, he would endeavor to keep the amateur archeologists and pothunters away. Of course he expects no pay but wishes to represent you if possible until some one in authority ~~next~~ arrives to carry on the work. I think this would be an excellent

MIAMI FLORIDA  
September 13  
1934



M W Stirling, chief  
Bureau of Ethnology  
WASHINGTON

Dear Matt:

Want to thank you for the money you sent me; I would not have wired you but my wife was down in bed with the dangue fever and Labor day holidays were upon me and I needed money badly. Thanks again.

Will send you what I have collected for you the latter part of the week. You realize that I have not been working regularly since I started and have had but a few weeks at the most and have had to make a collection of the stuff for the Regional director (Mr Green) for exhibition of what he has done for us, and all that sort of thing. Of course I gave him only second rate stuff but it cuts down the bulk which I wished to send you. I have some very nice specimens for you however and I knew they will interest you. When Gene left he said that he didn't think that you would want a great amount of potsherds (general run-of-the-mound) so I am sending only those of rims or special design.

Enclosed you will find further notes of our investigations made each week other than at the beach mound. I am closing the project Saturday Sept. 15. Mr Green said that he would gladly re-open the project some time the latter part of November if I wanted to. If Gene comes down possibly something good could be had as I have merely scratched the surface of the Miami Beach mound. I have procured permission to dig in the burial at Boca Raton (see notes).

I am leaving Sunday for Arcadia Florida so address me until further notice at that place and I will receive it all right as I am known there. I am on work for the state until Dec 1 in Arcadia with Ohlinger. Gene never said anything to me either about coming to Florida and as I have not seen nor heard from him I presume that he is in Cambridge and will hear from him soon.

Am counting the days until you come down this winter.

*As ever  
Merrill*

M W Stirling.....(2)

Idea and he said that he would make drawings and photos of all the material he digs up in other locations and send them to you. Of course all his material here will be available to you for study at any time. He has a nice collection gathered over a period of six or seven years. He has done very little at Miami Beach, not knowing of the mound until we got on the job. I have worked altogether 5½ weeks with an average of four men. I think I have quite a bit of stuff that will interest you.

It is always a treat to hear from you and I wish to again thank you for the books and by the way I let Stanley Hanson read the one of Swanton's on the Choctaw ceremonials and tried to impress it upon him that he should write for you all the myths and tales of the Seminoles; he is the only man alive today who can do this and the younger generation of Seminoles are a 'sorry' lot and the tales will soon be lost if they are not put in print before long. He was much impressed with the words "Nanne Wayeh" (this isn't the correct spelling but I cannot lay my hands on the account of it at this time) Stanley said that the name rings in his ears for days after the Green Corn Dance as the Seminoles sing it continually the first day of the dance and he never knew before that there was a connection between the Choctaws and the Seminoles although he has long suspected that there is two distinct bloods in the tribes today. He said the words were used similar to our 'heaven' " a home where you came from'.

I will talk here all night if I am not careful and as tomorrow is my last day for two weeks I must work hard and get out all I can before the vandals descend upon us again.

My best to you and yours from both Corinne and I. I am writing Gene. Would you believe it if I told you that he has written me twice since he left? Isn't that a world's record or something for him? Usually when you go to visit him you will find your letter still in his pocket unopened. I don't know when I have known anyone I like to be with as well as I do your brotne Gene. I wish you were here and I could talk over some of this plunder I have but I am looking forward to seeing you this winter. We can arrange the blimp trip alright. But I suspect that the Goodyear people will want a lot of publicity to go with it. You know the Pan American Airways people have made a lot over Lindbergh and his trip over the Maya diggings. But you can get the information you want and it will hurt nothing. I would like to see if there really is a mound or pyramid southeast of San Jones Oldtown made of stones and that square stone wall filled with sand and bones should be investigated and one could best do this from the air. The Miami Daily News wants a story about the work at Miami Beach but I will give them nothing because the crowds in an area this large would soon spoil the diggings for us. They said that they could interest Doherty ( City Service Oil) to the tune of \$25,000. for excavation in mounds in south Florida. He is a great publicity seeker. He will be here this winter and you can see him if you want. But in the meantime Capt. Squires is making a map showing all the mounds I know of in Florida. Write me soon

Your friend Lammé

*Lammé*