

REFERENCE

ARCHEOLOGICAL WORK IN FLORIDA

by M. W. Stirling

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ARCHEOLOGICAL WORK IN FLORIDA

By M. W. STIRLING

Chief, Bureau of American Ethnology

Under the relief program for the winter of 1933-34, opportunity was afforded for the Smithsonian Institution to conduct archeological work in cooperation with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. After assisting in the preparation of plans for such work in five States, the writer left Washington on December 11, 1933, to supervise the several projects to be carried on in Florida.

After conferences with State relief officials in Tallahassee and Jacksonville, excavations were begun in Manatee and Sarasota Counties on the west coast, in Palm Beach County near Lake Okeechobee, and in Dade, Brevard, and Volusia Counties on the east coast.

The writer was occupied principally with administrative duties, but opportunity was taken whenever possible to watch the progress of the work at all sites. During the winter two visits were made to Macon Ga., to view the work being done there in cooperation with the Society for Georgia Archaeology, under direction of Dr. Arthur Kelly.

At Canaveral Island, work was conducted in the region occupied in early historic times by the Saturque Indians, and the mounds excavated undoubtedly belonged to this group or their immediate ancestors. Articles representing material culture proved to be very scarce, but an excellent series of skeletal material was recovered as well as a quantity of data concerning burial customs. Burials occurred with the bodies fully extended, the heads pointing toward the center of the mound and the feet toward the periphery. Some of the mounds excavated by Dr. George Woodbury and Erik Reed appeared to be prehistoric, others historic. Little difference between these groups was noticeable either with regard to physical type or burial methods.

A comparatively small sand burial mound was excavated on the banks of the Halifax River in Ormond Beach by J. D. Jennings. Complete excavation of the site revealed that beneath the mound a group of burials had been arranged in two concentric circles. A collection of pottery, stone, and shell specimens was obtained.

A badly mutilated refuse and burial site was excavated in the northern part of the city of Miami Beach by G. M. Stirling assisted by Vernon Lanme. This site yielded a representative collection of both skeletal material and objects of material culture.

At Belle Glade, under the direction of G. M. Stirling, a habitation mound was excavated. Adjoining this site was a sand burial mound



FIG. 50.—Cross-section of Ormond Beach mound, showing old soil line and a fire pit in the middle.



FIG. 51.—Trench at the edge of the Belle Glade burial mound. The latest sand mound is visible in the upper left corner. Below the black muck may be seen the remains of the earlier sand mound. Under this is the early muck mound.

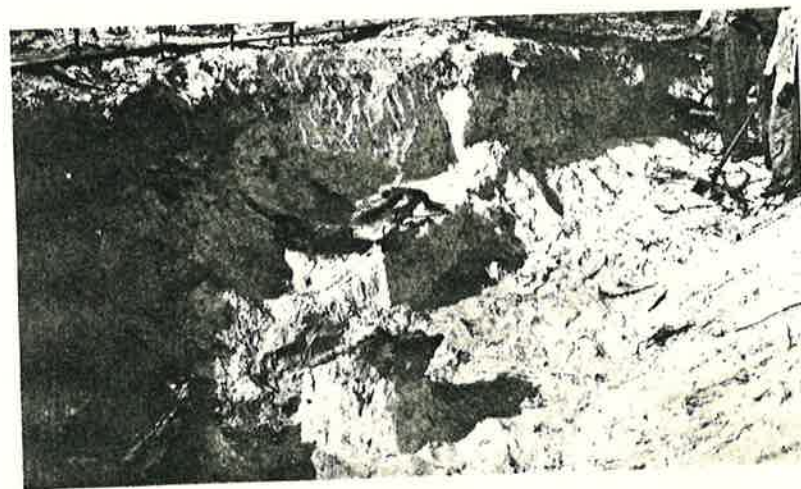


FIG. 52.—Cremated burials in a mound near the Little Manatee River in Manatee County.



FIG. 53.—Cross-section in the shell burial mound on Perico Island.

Excavations yielded a large and representative collection including objects of shell, bone, stone, and wood. Fragments of black undecorated pottery were abundant. Excavations at the burial site revealed that originally a muck burial mound had been erected, and later a sand mound built above this was destroyed by a hurricane. Subsequently a third mound was erected on the same site. A limestone pavement had been built between the edge of the first sand mound and the bank of the river. Objects of European manufacture were found on the surface of the last sand mound, but not in the two previous structures. Although the skeletal material was badly disturbed, a very large series of bones was obtained. In the remains of the first sand mound were recovered a large number of carved wooden specimens, which had been preserved when buried by the flood which had destroyed the mound. These show an unmistakable affinity with the wooden objects recovered many years ago by Cushing at Key Marco.

In Manatee County, D. L. Reichard excavated four small sand mounds. These present a puzzling archeological problem because of the variety of burial customs exhibited. In one mound was found the foundation of a mortuary temple containing a cremation pyre, and in the mound itself all of the burials had been cremated. In another mound of this section all of the burials were secondary bundle burials. A third mound contained both bundled and flexed burials, and the fourth mound of the region contained secondary burials, the exact nature of which was difficult to determine because of their almost complete disintegration. Two of these mounds were post-Spanish.

On Perico Island in the same county a shell burial mound, excavated by Marshall Newman, yielded an excellent collection of skeletal material, although it contained very few objects of material culture. The burials in this mound were all flexed interments, differing from the four sand mounds excavated in this region by Mr. Reichard.

Near Englewood in Sarasota County Mr. Newman excavated a large sand burial mound. Structural details of this site were of more than usual interest. A small sterile sand mound had been built over a large rectangular pit containing more than a hundred burials. Over this primary mound a secondary mound was later erected which contained numerous burials scattered throughout. No noticeable difference was observable in the pottery types obtained throughout.

The final results of the season's work in Florida were very satisfactory. Sites were selected in regions from which little information was available. With the new data obtained as a result of these relief projects, we now have a fairly complete cross-section of the archeology of this State.

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