

Stratigraphy at a Hialeah Midden

by D. D. Laxson

Journal Article in
The Florida Anthropologist

Volume 6
1953

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THE FLORIDA ANTHROPOLOGIST

Vol. VI

March, 1953

No. 1

CONTENTS

Stratigraphy at a Hialeah Midden	D. D. Laxson	1
The Famous Crystal River Site	Ripley P. Bullen	9
Editor's Notes		38
Pace and Time Perspective in Northern St. Johns Archeology, Florida, by John M. Goggin	John W. Griffin	39
Contributors to this Issue		41

*Editorial Office at the Florida State University, Tallahassee
Published at the University of Florida, Gainesville, for the
Florida Anthropological Society*

March, 1953

STRATIGRAPHY AT A HIALEAH MIDDEN

D. D. Laxson

A quarter of a mile south of the junction of Gragny Road and Peters Pike in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 35, Township 52 South, Range 40 East, Dade County, Florida, is a cluster of three small hammocks. They are strung out in a general WNW-ESE direction with distances between them varying from three hundred to six hundred feet. A narrow ridge connects two of the hammocks. A road and canal, north of the hammocks, runs westward connecting rock pit operations in the vicinity of Peters Pike. The area lies a mile and eight-tenths north of the Miami River.

The middle hammock (Site Dd-75, U. of F. records), eleven hundred feet east of Peters Pike and fifteen hundred feet south of the rockpit road, was the scene of test pit excavations reported in this article. Land surface near the midden is about five feet above sea level. Rockpit operations are carried on to the north-east and east. Small truck farms and pasture lands are to the north and south.

The soil is thick over a calcareous marl. Underneath this is the gray quartz sand of the Pamlico formation. Bedrock is a creamy pot-holed oolite. Shallow water covers most of the area approaching the midden a considerable part of the year.

The midden is located in the center of the hammock and is roughly circular. Dense vegetation prevents ascertaining its exact shape. Distances across the midden are 170 feet north and south and 131 feet east and west. The slope is gradual with the exception of a small area to the north where a rock ledge drops off sharply.

The highest point in the hammock is three feet, eight inches above the terrain. Several measurements were taken in this respect and an average height of 3.3 feet was obtained.

A base line running north and south was established parallel to a large dead tree and all distances were measured from this line. A test or exploratory trench of sixty feet in the form of a cross was first dug, and results warranted further excavation. The test pits were all five feet square and only in one instance, Pit 4, was it necessary to gradually reduce this distance on account of loose soil and material falling in from the sides. These test pits were excavated and the material screened by four-inch arbitrary levels except for Pit 4 where six-inch levels were used because of the looseness of the debris. Relationship's between tests and the base line are shown in the excavation plan (Fig. 1).

All pits were relatively shallow, the deepest being approximately two feet

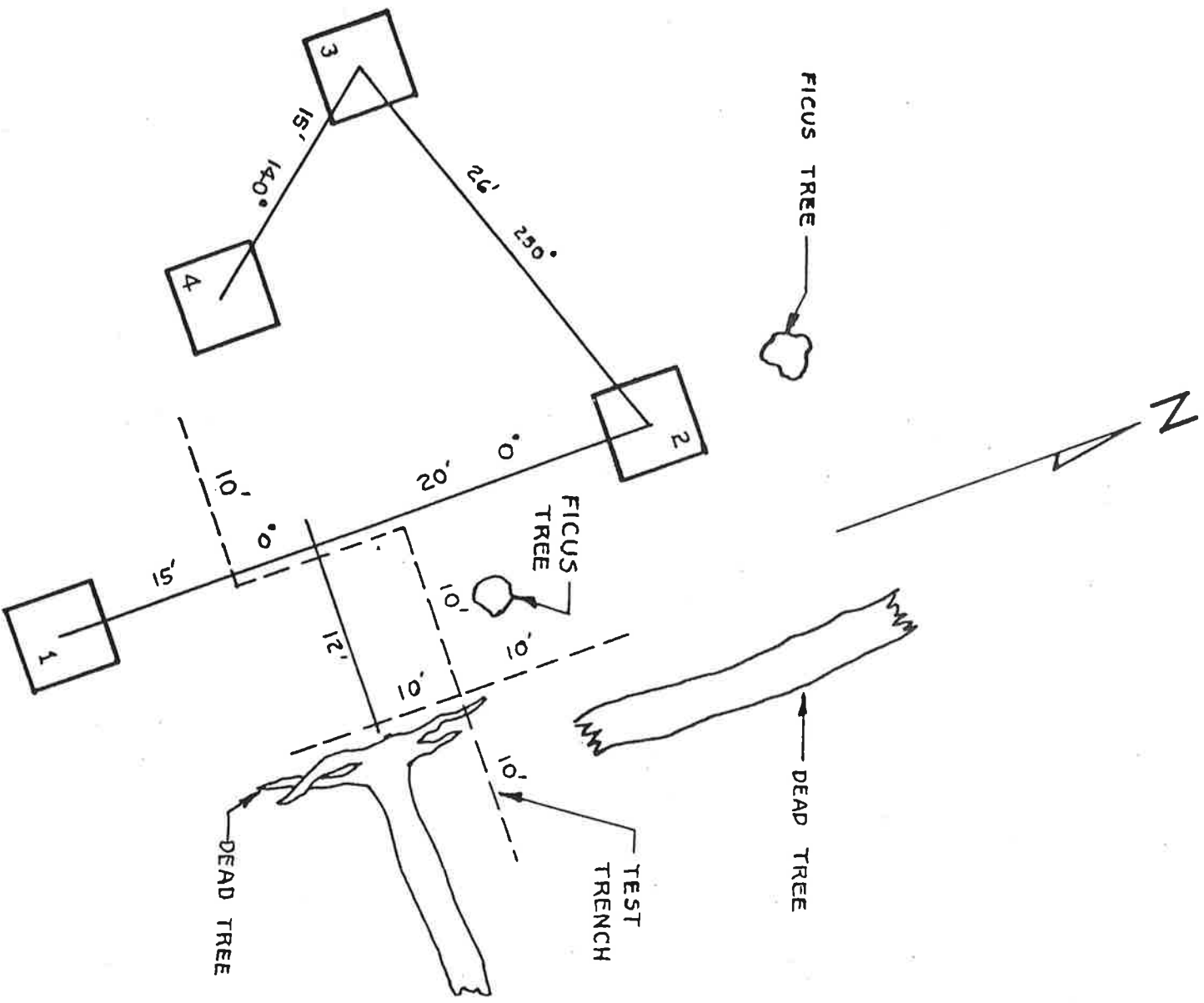


Fig. 1. Excavation plan of Hialeah No. 1 midden site. Distances across mound: N.-S., 170 feet; E.-W., 131.5 feet. Slope: N.-S., gradual, E.-W., abrupt. Height of mound above surrounding terrain, 3.25 feet. Scale of above drawing, one-eighth inch equals one foot.

before bedrock or a hard calcified deposit of bone and shell was reached. Stratigraphic results are given in Table 1 and discussed below.

As conditions probably have not changed much since Indians inhabited this spot, the following notes on our observations of wild life may be of interest. Birds such as the hawk, vulture, cara cara, and whippoorwill were seen in the hammocks. Water birds were well represented by the heron, egret, coot, and bittern.

Several small animals were observed in the late afternoons, including coon, opossum, rabbit, and swamp rat. Only two reptiles were encountered, the alert and speedy Florida skink and the arboreal chicken snake. Several specimens of the latter were seen. They varied in length from three to six feet and were in the trees at heights of from six to twenty feet.

By far the most numerous insects were the small black mosquito and the yellow and black striped butterfly known as the "zebra".

Vegetation was profuse and varied. The list of water plants and grasses would include arrowhead, Boston fern, swamp fern, para grass, sawgrass, and bladderworts. The only known trees and scrubs were wax myrtle, dahoon holly, willow, mastic, scrub oak, and strangler fig.

Exploration of the midden began in February, 1952. The excavation of stratigraphic pits started in May, 1952 and ended the latter part of January, 1953. Work was done on convenient weekends when weather permitted and other engagements did not interfere with the presence of a full crew.

Specimens are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 and their provenience given in the discussion. Typology follows that used in reports listed later under References.

The 60-foot exploratory trench produced seven shell- or coquina-tempered, nine St. Johns Plain, thirteen St. Johns Check Stamped, 266 Glades Plain, Seven Glades Tooled, and three Key Largo Incised sherds. This result presented an archaeological problem, as St. Johns Check Stamped and Glades Tooled are recognized as Glades III B and C types dating between 1400 and 1700 A.D. and Key Largo Incised should represent Glades II times or some time between 100 and 1100 A.D. (Goggin, 1950, a and b), while the shell- or coquina-tempered sherds were previously unreported in the literature of the Miami area.

Shell- or coquina-tempered sherds refers to pottery fragments containing finely crushed white material which may be either ground shells or ground rock formed from shells. The tempering material is too fine for identification. These sherds represent an unnamed pottery type known previously only from surface collections. Until more information is obtained, it would not seem advisable

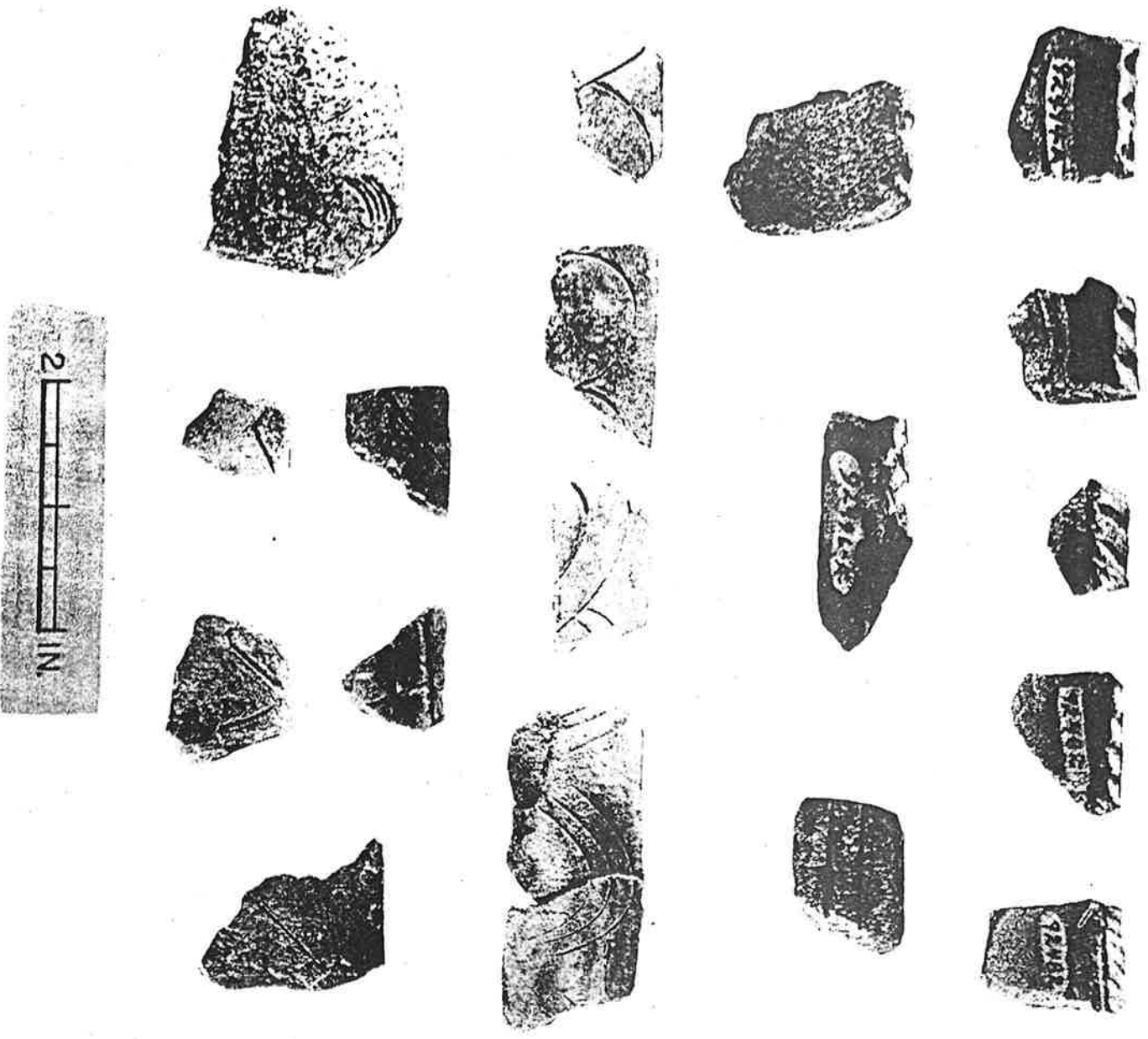


Fig. 2. Sherds from Hialeah midden. First row, and first two sherds of second row, Glades Tooled variations. Last sherd, second row, Surfside Incised. Third row, first three sherds, Key Largo Incised; last sherd, Opa Locka Incised. Fourth row, first sherd, Opa Locka Incised; upper two, Matecumbe Incised variant; lower two, unique incised; lower right, Miami Incised.

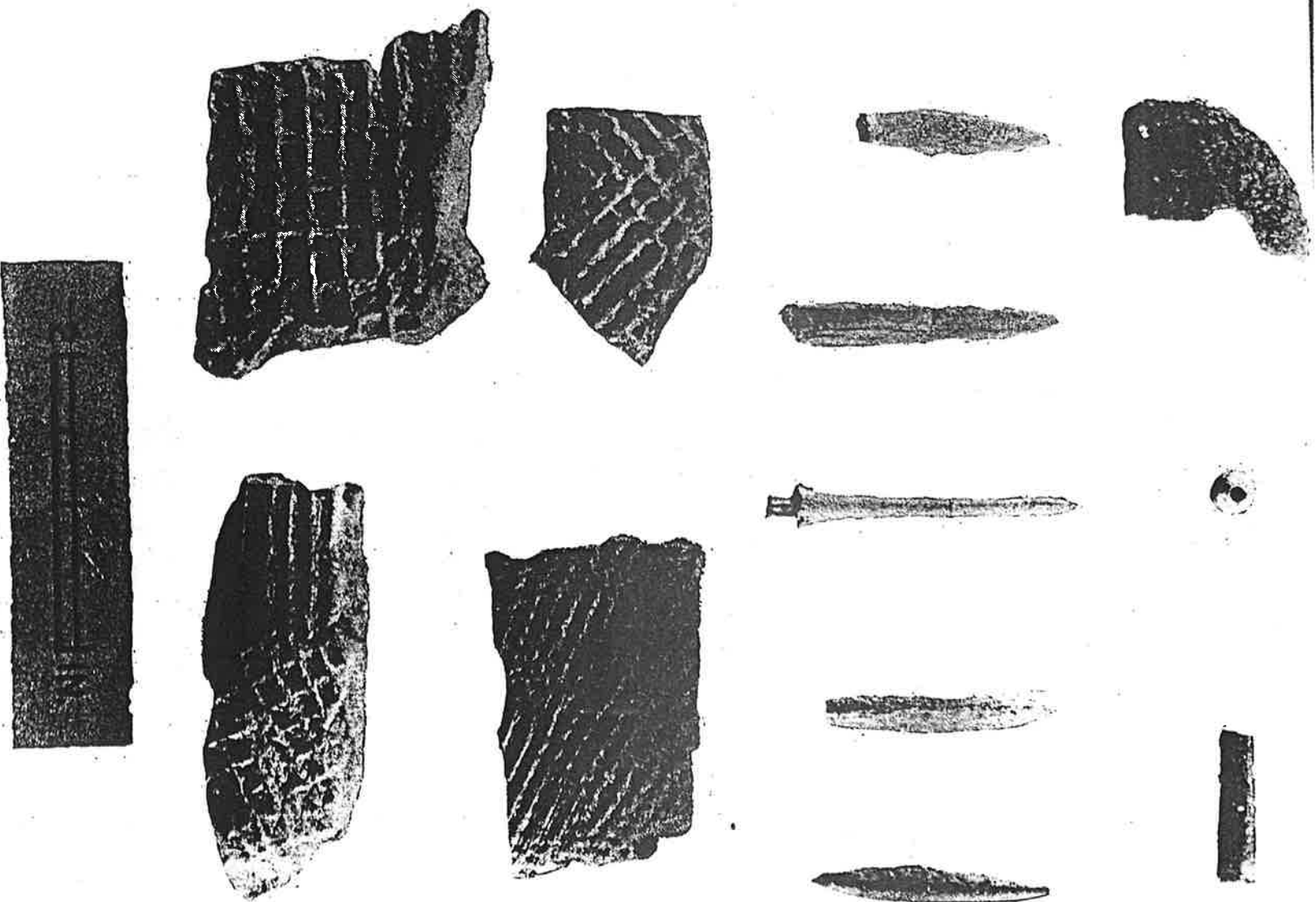


Fig. 3. Miscellaneous artifacts from Hialeah midden. First row, fragment of cut shell ornament, blue glass bead, and bone bead. Second row, two fragments of bone awls or pins, a "peg-topped" bone pin, and two bone points. Sherds are variations of St. Johns Check Stamped pottery.

TABLE 1. VERTICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SHERD TYPES.

TYPES	PIT 1			PIT 2				PIT 3				PIT 4		
	0-4	4-8	8-12	0-4	4-8	8-12	12-16	0-4	4-8	8-12	12-16	0-6	6-12	12-18
Shell-coquina-tempered, plain				15	8	1	1	4	1			3		
St. Johns Check Stamped	1			1	1			4				1		
St. Johns Plain		1		7	3		1	4	1	1		3	2	
Glades Tooled	1			1	1			3				4	1	
Glades Red				1	2			1						
Glades paste, black paint								1	1					
Glades Plain	100	8		90	98	18	25	127	97	40	6	65	87	7
Belle Glades Plain				1	1			2	4			1		
Surfside Incised	1											1	2	
Key Largo Incised	3								8				1	
Matecumbe Incised													2	
Opa Locka Incised														
Unique Incised									1					
Miami Incised					1				1	1				

to give them a type name, although Hialeah Plain might be suggested.

As the site seemed to represent two time periods, stratigraphic excavations were made to determine local relationships between these pottery types and to extend to the Miami area, if possible, the ceramic sequence determined by Goggin for Matecumbe Key to the South (Goggin, 1949) and for the Everglades to the west (1950a), for the later periods. It was also thought it would supplement, very well, Goggin's work at Fisheating Creek (Goggin, 1950a), also in the Miami area, as the Fisheating Creek site pertained chiefly to relatively early pottery times and the one at Hialeah represented the later end of the sequence. As will be seen below, this proved to be the case.

Pit 1, unfortunately, was located where the deposit was not very thick and the results were not very good. Pit 2 was much more encouraging, as St. Johns Check Stamped, Glades Tooled, and shell-coquina-tempered sherds were found to be limited to upper zones. However, decorated pottery, such as Key Largo Incised, was not found in lower zones and a Miami Incised sherd seemed out of place.

Pits 3 and 4 were very satisfactory stratigraphically. As shown in the Pottery Distribution Table, St. Johns Check Stamped, shell-coquina-tempered, and Glades Tooled sherds were well concentrated in the uppermost zone to represent Glades III B times. Surfside Incised very nicely spanned this zone and the one below to indicate the presence of Glades III A occupation. Glades II types, Key Largo Incised, Matecumbe Incised, Opa Locka Incised, and a unique incised type (Fig. 2, fourteenth through seventeenth) were located only in a lower (or intermediate) zone.

The thirteen Glades Plain sherds from the lowest zones of these pits were found among the crushed food bones and shells (sometimes cemented into a breccia) which formed the basal portion of the midden. They are substantially lighter in color than sherds from higher up in these pits. Presence of these lowest sherds is suggestive of a Glades I, predominantly undecorated, period but the quantity is inconclusive.

Presence of Belle Glade Plain sherds in upper zones should be noted. Presumably, these represent "trade sherds" from the Lake Okeechobee area.

Non-ceramic specimens are illustrated in Figure 3. The glass bead came from the top zone of Pit 2. Some pieces of iron were also found in the very top of the midden. Presumably these indicate post-Indian use of the hammock, but the glass bead probably indicates early European contact or Glades III C times.

A fragment of a cut shell ornament (Fig. 3, first) was found in the middle

zone of Pit 1. The small but very nice "peg-topped" bone pin is Glades III B as it was in the highest zone of Pit 3. The small, short bone points (Fig. 3, second row, last two) are clearly Glades II as they came from the second zones of Pit 3 and 4, as did the tip of a *Busycon* pick and a fragment of worked conumella (not illustrated). Of the fragmentary bone points or pins, one came from Pit 1 and the other from the second zone of Pit 3. A *Busycon* pick, Type A, was found in the exploratory trench.

Food remains are represented by deer, turtle, rodent, snake, fish including shark teeth and vertebrae, and bird bones, crab claws, and alligator teeth as well as snail, clam, oyster, *Strombus*, *Busycon*, and fresh water mussel shells. No significant trends were noted with depth in respect to food remains. Indians, living at Hialeah many hundreds of years ago, enjoyed a varied diet of land and sea foods.

Appreciation is expressed to Mr. Jack Christiansen, owner of the land, for permitting us to dig, to Bob Masters and Noel Hermann for helping with the digging and screening and for the map of the area and last but not least, for the generous portions of time, patience, and advice, to Mr. Ripley P. Bullen, Curator of Social Sciences, Florida State Museum, Gainesville.

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Hialeah, Florida