

# THE SNAPPER CREEK SITE

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## REFERENCE

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Snapper Creek was formerly one of the few streams draining the Everglades south of Miami, Florida. In contrast to similar streams which cut through the rock ridge bordering the glades, this flowed much of its course underground emerging in a rock pothole near the eastern edge of the ridge. From there it flowed in a narrow channel through the rock and thence through the mangroves to Biscayne Bay.

The spot where the creek appeared was locally strategic to man since fresh water was not conveniently found for some distance to the north or south. It apparently appealed to the early Indians for a refuse midden is now found here (NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 7, T.55 S, R.41 E). Because of interesting material found on its surface and in view of the steadily increasing disturbance of the site by modern occupancy some limited excavations were carried out in September, 1950.<sup>1</sup>

### PREVIOUS ARCHEOLOGICAL WORK

The site (Da 9) appears to have escaped archeological attention until visited by the writer and Charles M. Brookfield in June, 1947.<sup>2</sup> At that time a series of artifacts were collected which are now in Yale Peabody Museum.

Another small collection, made by H. H. Brix in 1903, was purported to have come from Snapper Creek, and is now in the American Museum of Natural History (cat. no. 20/138—40). Inasmuch as this collection contains as the dominant type Biscayne Check Stamped pottery, it is doubtful if this is the site from which it came. None was found in our work and all of our material was considerably earlier. Perhaps there is another, as yet unlocated site in this region.

### THE SITE

A number of years ago in the course of the Everglades drainage program a canal was cut through the rock ridge following in part the old course of Snapper Creek. This cut through the refuse deposit leaving a small section

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<sup>2</sup>Da 9 is the site designation in the University of Florida—Florida State University archeological site survey (Goggin, 1950c).

on the north bank and a larger on the south. The southern part now measures approximately 100 feet (NE-SW) from the canal to its end at the now dry bed of old Snapper Creek. The width is from 50 to 75 feet. Sherds are found over a much wider area particularly in the rocks around the old stream bed.

Where not cleared the vegetation is a thick tropical hammock on the three landward sides. Soil is virtually non-existent except for pockets in the uneven eroded oolitic limestone which appears at the surface of the ground everywhere, except when covered by Indian refuse deposits.

The long axis (NE-SW) of the midden is parallel to, and on the very edge of the rock ridge and is built on its sloping face. To the eastward is an extensive mangrove swamp. However, directly in front of the center of the midden is a deep hole in the rocks which was formerly a spring. Even now it holds water but its salinity varies with the rains.

At the present time the midden is the backyard of the caretaker's house. It is partially occupied with poultry yards and shelters and the remainder has been cultivated as a garden in years past. The site then has been subjected to a greater or less disturbance in most parts.

#### EXCAVATIONS

The highest and least disturbed appearing part of the site was chosen for excavation and an initial five-foot trench (Trench 1) fifteen feet long was staked out parallel to the long axis of the midden. Starting at the south end (0') five-foot squares were marked. Subsequently another square was added to the south end of the trench and designated as 0' to -5'. Trench 2 was immediately adjacent to the No. 1 on the west side; only one section (10'-15') was dug. In all, five squares were excavated. A more extensive excavation had been planned but mosquitoes cut our work short.<sup>3</sup>

Excavation was carried out in arbitrary four-inch levels to bed rock. After the final level reached rock all pockets were included in that level. Thus, due to the uneven rock surface the bottom level varies from 1 to 10 inches deep in places. Four levels were excavated in each square. They are numbered in order 1 to 4 from the bottom up.

The "minus" section of Trench 1 was not extended further because of rising-bed rock. It first appeared in square 0' to -5' at approximately 4" deep, covered a fifth of the square at 8" and more than three-fifths at 12"

<sup>3</sup> All digging was done by voluntary labor. I am very grateful to Charles D. McCormick, Gaines Wilson, Mary Spangenberg, and Nanci Goggin, and to the University of Florida students, Mr. and Mrs. Paul D. Hahn, and Robert Spangenberg. Without their interest and help this project could not have been carried out.