TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

David G. Anderson

To appreciate what we have learned about the prehistoric occupation of South Carolina in the past quarter-century, it helps to remember how little was actually known in 1968, at the time of the founding of both the Archeological Society of South Carolina (ASSC) and the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA). The total published archaeological literature from the state dating prior to 1968 could be fit into a three-ring binder with room to spare. Short papers had appeared from time to time since the late 1930s describing Paleoindian fluted points from the state (e.g., Waddell 1965a; Waring 1961; Wauchope 1939), and a scattering of similarly abbreviated articles covering aspects of later prehistory also occurred sporadically, with high points including Eugene Waddell’s (1965b) recognition of the Late Archaic Awendaw ceramic complex along the coast or James B. Griffin’s (1945) description of ceramics from the Thorn’s Creek site. While professional archaeological investigations had indeed occurred from time to time in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, most of this work was by investigators visiting from other states, and very little of it was published at the time.

It is sobering to realize that, aside from a few scattered articles, some of the best information about South Carolina prehistory compiled prior to 1968 came from reports dating to the 1880s and 1890s, and again in the early teens and twenties of this century. These included synopses of mound exploration activity by Bureau of Ethnology archaeologists (e.g., Thomas 1894), and the lavish reports by C. B. Moore (1898a, 1898b), a wealthy amateur, describing the results of his steamboat survey and mound testing work along the coast and up the Savannah River. For about a decade toward the end of the first quarter of this century, two remarkable women—Anne King Gregory (1925) and Laura Bragg (1918, 1925)—worked at the Charleston Museum and gathered information on archaeological sites across the state. Thanks to their efforts information began to be systematically recorded on archaeological sites, and state site files were started. Their records, in fact, formed the nucleus for the state site files that remain in use to this day.

While it seems hard to believe given the current membership level of the Council of South Carolina Professional Archaeologists (COSCAPA), which stands at almost 100 individuals, it was only a little more than 35 years ago that the first professional archaeologist, Dr. William E. Edwards, came to be employed in the state. Edwards served as state archaeologist for a number of years from the late 1950s to mid-1960s and, while he examined a number of sites, most of this work was never documented or reported (although his report on work at the Sewee Shell Ring is an important exception [Edwards 1966]).

About all that remains of his tenure in South Carolina is colorful folklore about his activities and personality. The first monograph to focus exclusively on South Carolina prehistory was finished in 1964, when James B. Stoltman completed his doctoral dissertation at Harvard on work done at Late Archaic shell middens along the lower Savannah River, although even this study was not formally published until a decade later, in 1974.

Much of what was known or inferred about South Carolina prehistory in those far away days of the late 1960s was thus based on work done in nearby states like North Carolina, where Joffre Coe (1964) and his students had done so much to resolve the Archaic sequence at the Hardaway, Doerschuk, and Gaston sites; or in Georgia, where Woodland and Mississippian sequences had been developed in several areas (e.g., Caldwell 1957; Wauchope 1966). Some of Coe’s students from the 50s and 60s included Stanley South, Bennie Keel, and Leland Ferguson, who continue to make solid contributions to South Carolina archaeology to this day. Only in 1968 did knowledge of the important depression-era work conducted at the mouth of the Savannah became widespread in American archaeology, with the posthumous publication of Antonio J. Waring’s writings (Williams 1968). While this early work around Savannah gave us a ceramic sequence in use to this day over the southern coastal plain, only in recent years, and thanks largely to the efforts of Chester DePratter (1979, 1991), has much detail on the primary fieldwork been reported. While this appraisal about how little we knew about South Carolina archaeology 25 years ago may appear overly dramatic, it was nonetheless true, and accepted by professionals at the time. At the 1970
meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological conference, for example, Charles Fairbanks (1971:41, 42) noted that South Carolinians were "more interested in ancestors than in artifacts" and that cultural sequences had been developed "for every southern state, with the possible exception of South Carolina."

PREHISTORIC RESEARCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA SINCE 1968

Given this perspective, the work of the past 25 years is a resounding anthem of accomplishment, offering much we can be proud of. The number of recorded sites has jumped from less than 200 in the card files at the Charleston Museum to over 17,000 multipage forms on file at SCIAA. The number of reports and papers on South Carolina archaeology has grown tremendously, from under a hundred 25 years ago to over 3000 today, as superbly documented by Derting, Pekrul, and Rhinehart (1991). Finally, the number of people earning a living engaged in archaeology in our state has grown from a handful to almost 100, while the membership of the ASSC has grown from a few founders to several hundred.

A few of what I consider the high points of the past 25 years era follow, arranged in rough chronological order. There is no place better to start than with South's (1970) masterful exposure of the late prehistoric ceremonial center at Charles Towne Landing in 1969, which showed how crucial wide-area stripping is to the discovery and documentation of structures and community plans. An equally sound beginning at the other end of the sequence and framework that South advanced undoubtedly received some of the inspiration that has led him to markedly improve our understanding of Late Archaic settlement, chronology, and typology along the South Carolina coast in the years since (Trinkley 1976, 1980a, 1980b, 1989). About this same time the results of Jim Michie's (1973) examination of the Daw's Island shell midden were published, resulting in a first appreciation for the effects of sea-level fluctuations of the record of early settlement along the coast and in the interior, work that has been followed to great effect in recent years by Mark Brooks and his colleagues (Brooks et al. 1986, 1989).

In 1971 and 1972 ASSC members under the direction of Sammy Lee and Bob Parler conducted excavations at the Cal Smoak site, one of many society excavations that have occurred down through the years. In a personal note, in early 1973 Jim Michie introduced me to Sammy and Bob at a society meeting in Columbia, and soon thereafter I began examining the Cal Smoak collections with them, in my first hands-on exposure to South Carolina archaeology. A year later Dr. Stephenson offered me a job as a Research Assistant at SCIAA, where I started work in February 1974 (one of the best things to happen in my life, marking my first full-time employment in archaeology), and the rest, as they say, is history. My next 18 months at SCIAA were a solid introduction to South Carolina archaeology at the hands of Leland Ferguson, Jim Michie, Stanley South, Robert L. Stephenson, and Mike Trinkley, among many others.

In 1974 an intensive program of archaeological investigations was launched by SCIAA and the ASSC across the river from Columbia along Congaree Creek, work prompted by plans to build the Southeastern Beltway. Over the next few years several proposed highway corridors were surveyed, a number of sites were intensively tested, and extensive excavations were conducted at the Manning site under the auspices of the ASSC (Anderson et al. 1974, Anderson
1974, 1979; Goodyear 1975). Attempts to identify Coastal Plain lithic raw material sources in the state through petrologic and microfossil analysis was one spinoff of the excavations conducted at some of the highway corridor sites in 1978, and similar work was attempted in the Piedmont about the same time (House and Wogaman 1978; Novick 1978).

In 1974 I conducted a distributional study of South Carolina Coastal Plain ceramics based on data from over 300 sites, revealing a number of distributional patterns that have (thankfully!) held up more or less intact to this day (Anderson 1975a). This study helped refute now largely forgotten arguments that the inner Coastal Plain was largely deserted in later prehistory, or that Deptford peoples remained near the coast much of the time (e.g., Larson 1980; Milanich 1971). The insights offered by distributional analyses is the reason I continue to do them to this day, albeit usually with much larger datasets. In early 1975 Al Goodyear (who was hired at SCIAA the year before to head up the highway archaeology program) and I conducted an intensive highway corridor survey near Camden, where some of the first data from nonmound late prehistoric settlements were gathered in the upper Wateree valley.

Mid-1975 saw me shipped off to graduate school at the University of Arkansas, where I spent the next few years working with Dan Morse on Mississippian archaeology at the Zcbree site. John House, who with Mike Schiffer had just finished a major monograph on survey work along the Cache River in northeast Arkansas (Schiffer and House 1975), came in from that same state as my replacement in the highway archaeology program, an exchange that soon lead to a major improvement in our understanding of the archaeology of the South Carolina Piedmont. House's work during the later 1970s, first on the I-77 survey and then in his excavations at Windy Ridge, stand as monuments to careful reporting, and indicate what we can learn from upland Piedmont lithic scatters (House and Ballenger 1976, House and Wogaman 1978). During this same period Al Goodyear, with House and Neal Ackerly, was working on the Laurens-Anderson highway corridor survey, itself a major survey project (Goodyear et al. 1979). The monographs
Some of the many young archaeologists who conducted cultural resource studies and other research at SCIAA in the late 1970s. Clockwise from upper left: John House, Al Goodyear, Paul Brockington, and Leland Ferguson.
resulting from this work in the interriverine Piedmont stand to this day as some of the best technical studies produced on South Carolina prehistory.

In 1977 Jim Michie published his senior honors thesis on Paleoindian occupations in South Carolina, which included an analysis of fluted point finds from across the state, which he had been systematically recording for over a decade. The fluted point survey has continued thanks to the efforts of Michie, Goodyear, and particularly Tommy Charles, and several hundred early points are now known from the state, providing valuable information about where these early populations ranged (Goodyear et al. 1990).

In 1979 extensive work was conducted along the lower Santee River in conjunction with the construction of the Cooper River Rediversion Canal, a corridor surveyed in the early 1970s by Bob Asreen (1974) and myself and later in the 1970s by Paul Brockington (1980). At the Mattassee Lake sites, orthoquartzite quarrying behavior was examined at length, and a detailed Woodland ceramic sequence was proposed, supported by over a dozen radiocarbon dates (Anderson et al. 1982). Excavations at nearby sites directed by Mark Brooks and Val Canouts (1984) found evidence for several later Woodland and Mississippian structures. Brooks, following up on research initiated during survey work conducted with Jim Scurry on the Amoco property along the Cooper River, offered a detailed model of changing Woodland settlement patterns in the lower Coastal Plain (Brooks and Scurry 1978). This model has been appreciably refined in recent years by Jim Scurry (1989), through GIS analyses of site data from the Charleston and Berkeley county area.

The late 1970s saw the initiation of the collector survey by Tommy Charles (1981, 1983, 1986), work that has been of tremendous value to subsequent researchers. Besides markedly expanding the states fluted point inventory, Charles primary typological and raw material data on over 85,000 points has been used to examine research topics as diverse as changing settlement distributions over time, models of Early Archaic settlement, changing raw materials selection strategies, the reduction in hunter-gatherer annual
ranges during the Archaic, and the operation of buffer zones during the Mississippian period (e.g., Anderson and Hanson 1988, Sassaman et al. 1988, Sassaman and Anderson 1994). This dataset is the only such statewide sample from anywhere in the Southeast at present, although it is beginning to be duplicated elsewhere as its value is increasingly perceived.

In 1979 Thomas and Larsen published their monograph on the Refuge-Deptford mortuary complex based on work on St. Catherine's Island, Georgia. While their observations on Woodland burial practices were important, what South Carolina archaeologist's seized upon was Chester DePratter's (1979) refinement of the mouth-of-the-Savannah ceramic sequence, which is used to this day to classify artifacts and date sites in the southern coastal region. That same year also saw the publication of Jim Michie's report on the excavations at the Late Archaic Bass Pond site on Kiawah Island, which included a synthesis of his views on coastal settlement during this period.

In 1979 and 1980, thanks to a great deal of hard work and not a little personal financial support by Wayne Neighbors, two major ASSC publications appeared, the Cal Smoak site report and the volume containing the First Ten Years of South Carolina Antiquities (Anderson et al. 1979; Neighbors, ed., 1980). Anyone who wants a feel for what archaeology was like in the late 1960s and early 1970s in South Carolina, when the archeological record of the state was slowly coming into focus, should read these volumes. Also in 1980 Mike Trinkley's doctoral dissertation on later prehistoric occupations along the central South Carolina coast appeared, summarizing nearly a decade of work on coastal shell and nonshell midden sites, and the same year his detailed analysis and typology for Thom's Creek ceramics was published as an issue of South Carolina Antiquities. This research provided valuable data on the formation, function, and dating of Late Archaic shell rings and midden sites, and included many insights and innovations, including the first serious consideration of paleoethnobotanical remains from the state. Two years later, in 1982, Mike organized a workshop on coastal prehistoric ceramics that helped set in place the typological frameworks used in South Carolina to this day. The results of this workshop were published as
volume 15 of *South Carolina Antiquities* in 1983.

During the later 1970s extensive survey and testing work began in the proposed Richard B. Russell Reservoir along the upper Savannah River, on both the Georgia and South Carolina sides of the river, and from 1980 to 1982 large-scale excavations were conducted at a number of sites in the floodpool spanning every period of prehistory. An extensive series of technical monographs as well as two popular volumes were produced over the next decade, summarizing the results of this work, which provides a benchmark for understanding human occupation in the inner Piedmont (Anderson and Joseph 1988; Kane and Keaton 1993, 1994).

Also in the late 1970s permanent archaeological compliance programs were initiated for the Sumter and Francis Marion National Forests, and on the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site. Investigations on these federal properties have continued at a high level to this day, and have generated a tremendous mass of information, accounting for almost one-quarter of all the sites recorded to date from the state, as well as an appreciable body of technical reports (as partially summarized in Anderson and Logan 1981; Sassaman et al. 1990). The late 1970s also saw the beginnings of the Department of Anthropology's long term research program at the Mulberry Mound site near Camden, work that has led to several technical papers and student theses through the years (Gillam 1993; Grimes 1986; Merry 1982; Sassaman 1984; Wagner 1993). Given the rate at which the primary mound is being destroyed by erosion and looting, and the interpretation of the site as the principal town of the sixteenth-century province of Cofitachequi, this research program may be remembered as the most important archaeological rescue effort undertaken by the state's professional community this century (Anderson 1989; DePrater 1989).

In 1983 Ken Sassaman's M.A. thesis appeared from the Department of Anthropology at the
University of South Carolina. In it he challenged traditional notions of the Middle Archaic as a period of increasing sedentism, beginning a long involvement with Middle and Late Archaic period research that has been the subject of a number of important papers and reports (e.g., Sassaman 1983, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1995, to cite a few of the more comprehensive works that have appeared). Also in 1983 the annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference was held in Columbia, and the papers from a symposium devoted to the archaeology of South Carolina were subsequently organized by Al Goodyear and Glen Hanson into a volume entitled Studies in South Carolina Archaeology: Papers in Honor of Dr. Robert L. Stephenson (Goodyear and Hanson 1989). This volume, honoring South Carolina's distinguished state archaeologist from 1967 to 1984, remains a major source of summary information on historic and prehistoric archaeology in the state.

In the mid-1980s Al Goodyear and Tommy Charles (1984) began a long-term research project in the vicinity of the major chert outcrops in Allendale County, work that continues to this day and that has done much to refine our understanding of the use of this material. About the same time Glen Hanson directed the excavations in the Archaic levels of at G. S. Lewis-East on the Savannah River Site, a project that rivaled the earlier work by Michie at the Taylor site, and that to this day remains one of the largest controlled excavations into Early Archaic deposits conducted in the region. At the 1985 meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference a symposium was held examining the prehistoric archaeology of the Savannah River valley, and a number of papers from this symposium were later published, including a model of Early Archaic settlement in the basin (Anderson and Hanson 1988).

Important work on shell-midden sites continued along the coast through the 1980s, with significant monographs produced on the work at the stratified Minim Island site in Georgetown County by teams lead by Drucker and Jackson (1984) and, later in the decade, Espenshade and Brockington (1989). In 1987 Michael Trinkley published a major monograph on the results of his work at the Stallings period Fish Haul Creek site on Hilton Head Island, where evidence for a structure was found. This was merely one of a number of important excavations projects on (predominantly Late Archaic) shell-midden sites he has conducted and reported over the course of past two decades (e.g., Trinkley 1974, 1980a, 1981, 1983, 1989, 1993a, to cite a few of the many fine reports that have appeared).

During the mid-1980s a major excavation program was conducted by Wetmore and Goodyear (1986; Wetmore 1986) at the Nipper Creek site in the lower Piedmont, documenting Archaic period components in stratified context. Major excavations were also conducted at a Woodland site in Sumter County (Blanton et al. 1986). The mid-1980s saw a flurry of important publications on the Mulberry site, including Sassaman's stratigraphic descriptions (1984), Grime's (1986) descriptions of a mica-processing area, and Judge's (1987) discussion of vessel assemblages. In the late 1980s DePratter and Judge (1990) developed the first detailed ceramic sequence for the Mississippian sites along the Wateree River, and DePratter (1989) prepared an article for the Stephenson festschrift volume on the archaeological and ethnohistoric evidence for Cofitachequi. Also in the late 1980s a program of research on contact period Indian populations was initiated by DePratter, and to date two M.A. theses (Green 1991; McKivergan 1991) have appeared based on this work.

On the Savannah River Site (SRS) in the inner Coastal Plain along the Savannah River, where an extensive research program by SCIAA has been funded by the Department of Energy, major survey and excavation projects have occurred almost every year since in the mid-1980s, and have included work at the L-Lake sites (Brooks and Hanson 1987), at G. S. Lewis West, and a series of excavations by Sassaman (1989, 1993a; Sassaman et al. 1990) at sites both on the Savannah River terraces and in the interior on the Aiken Plateau. The 1990 monograph synthesizing the prehistoric investigations on the SRS by Sassaman and his colleagues represents an outstanding overview of the archaeological record in the inner Coastal Plain.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

While it seems hard to believe, the early 1990s have witnessed a tremendous amount of fieldwork and publication on the prehistoric archaeology of South Carolina. In many ways this recent work equals or exceeds much of what came before, and its implications are only slowly being absorbed. Following Hurricane Hugo, for example, the U.S. Forest Service conducted a massive program of survey and excavation in the Francis Marion, work that is only now being compiled (Morgan 1993). A major survey program has been conducted at Fort Jackson near
Columbia, to the point where almost the entire installation has been intensively surveyed (Poplin et al. 1993). As noted previously, major syntheses of work in the Russell Reservoir, on the Savannah River Site, and at Fort Jackson have appeared, and are in progress for the Francis Marion and Sumter Nationals Forests. Syntheses on Paleoindian and Early Archaic research (Anderson et al. 1992), and Middle and Late Archaic periods research (Sassaman and Anderson 1994) have also been recently produced, and COSCAPA has plans to continue producing syntheses throughout the decade. Books have appeared documenting developments during the Late Archaic and Mississippian periods in and near the Savannah River basin (Anderson 1994; Sassaman 1993b), representing the doctoral dissertation efforts of Ken Sassaman and David Anderson. I am especially encouraged by the increasing appearance of major synthetic site reports, outstanding examples of which include Trinkley's (1993a) work on Kiawah Island, Sassaman's (1993a) excavations at 38AK157, and Gunn and Wilson's (1993) studies in Chesterfield County.

Given the accelerated pace of modern research and compliance, our understanding of South Carolina’s prehistoric inhabitants should continue to improve markedly in the years ahead. That this is the case is due to fine work of a great many people and institutions, not the least of whom was Dr. Robert L. Stephenson, who set in motion much of what we celebrate in this volume. While we are likely to be increasingly hard pressed to make sense of all that is occurring, much less keep track of it, I’d rather be where we are today than go back to the dark days of 25 years ago.
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