
This document has been checked for information on Native American burials. No images considered to be culturally insensitive, including images and drawings of burials, Ancestors, funerary objects, and other NAGPRA material were found.



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

**Franklin College of
Arts and Sciences**

Department of Anthropology

Laboratory of Archaeology

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
LABORATORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY SERIES
REPORT NUMBER 45

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS
AT THE ROCKSHELTER SITE 9GE150**

MARVIN T. SMITH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE
ROCKSHELTER SITE, 9GE150

By

Marvin T. Smith
University of Georgia

WALLACE RESERVOIR PROJECT CONTRIBUTION NUMBER 9

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

1981

PREFACE

This report represents the final report for site Gel50, the excavation of which was provided for in Appendix 9 of the Archaeological Salvage Agreement between the University of Georgia and the Georgia Power Company.

David J. Hally
Principal Investigator

Introduction

Site 9 Ge 150 is a small rockshelter located on a high ridge overlooking the confluence of Richland Creek with the Oconee River (Figures 1 and 2). The Universal Transverse Mercator Grid co-ordinates for the site are N3695504, E297768. The shelter, which is formed by the overhang of a large sloping boulder (Plate 1) is located some 130 feet above the river. It opens facing north away from the river, and thus offers no strategic position from which to view the river or floodplain below. The shelter is 8m long by 3m deep (Figure 3). Head room within the shelter ranges from zero at its southern edge to approximately 1.5 meters at its northern edge (Plate 2). The site was first detected during the 1974-1975 survey, but only one Lamar Burnished Plain sherd and some river mussel shell were recovered at that time (DePratter 1976:387-388).

Research Design and Strategy

Since 9 Ge 150 was one of only 3 human inhabited rockshelters known to exist in the reservoir at the time the mitigation proposal was drafted in 1976, it was recommended for excavation. The proposed investigation would focus on identifying the components present, determining the activities carried out at the site, and fitting the site into a general settlement model for the reservoir.

The site grid was established parallel to the long axis of the shelter so that grid north was 15 degrees west of magnetic North. The site was excavated in 1 x 1m units (Figure 3). An arbitrary datum

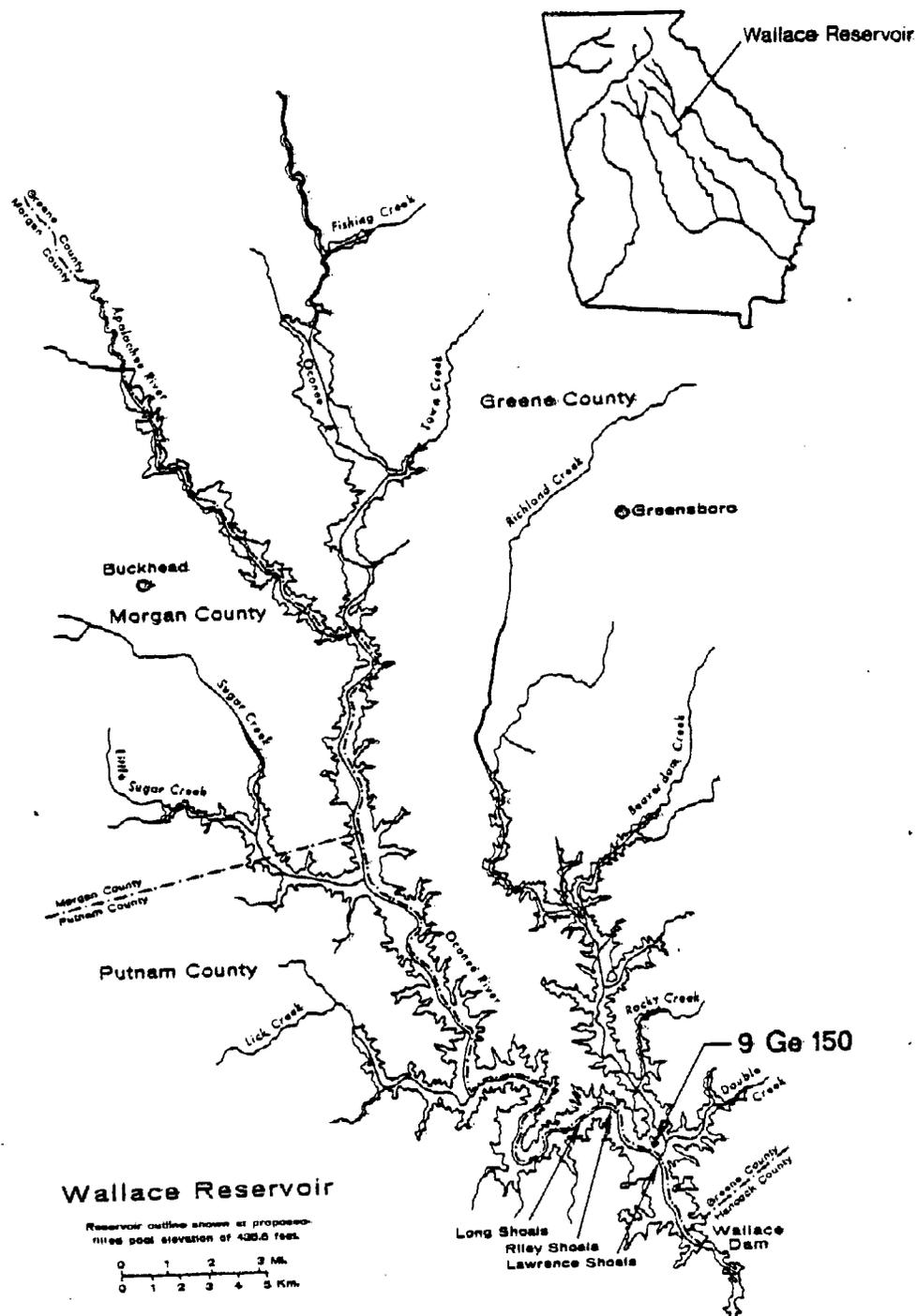


Figure 1. Location of 9Ge150 within the Wallace Reservoir.

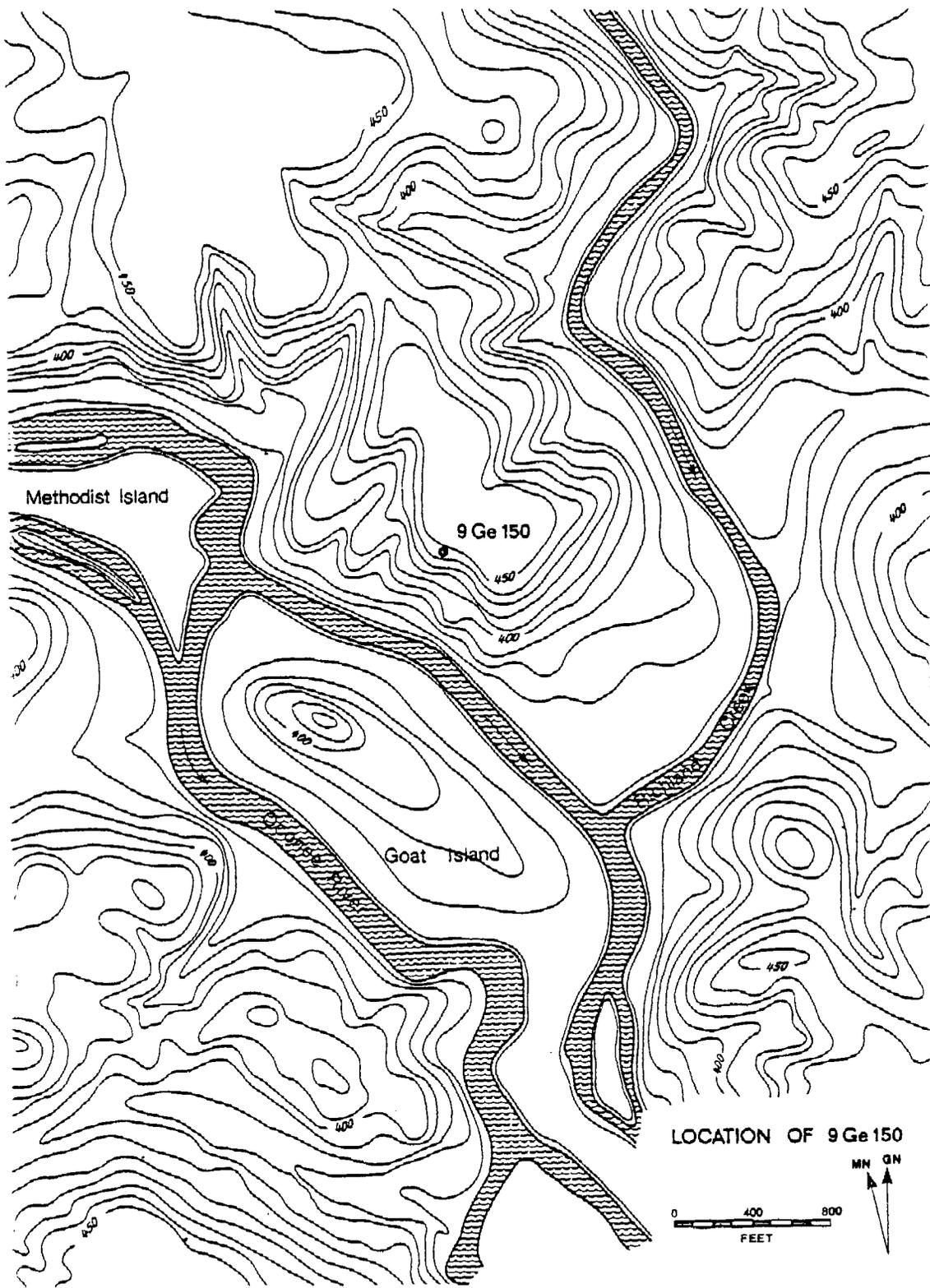


Figure 2. Location of 9Ge150 at junction of Richland Creek and the Oconee River.

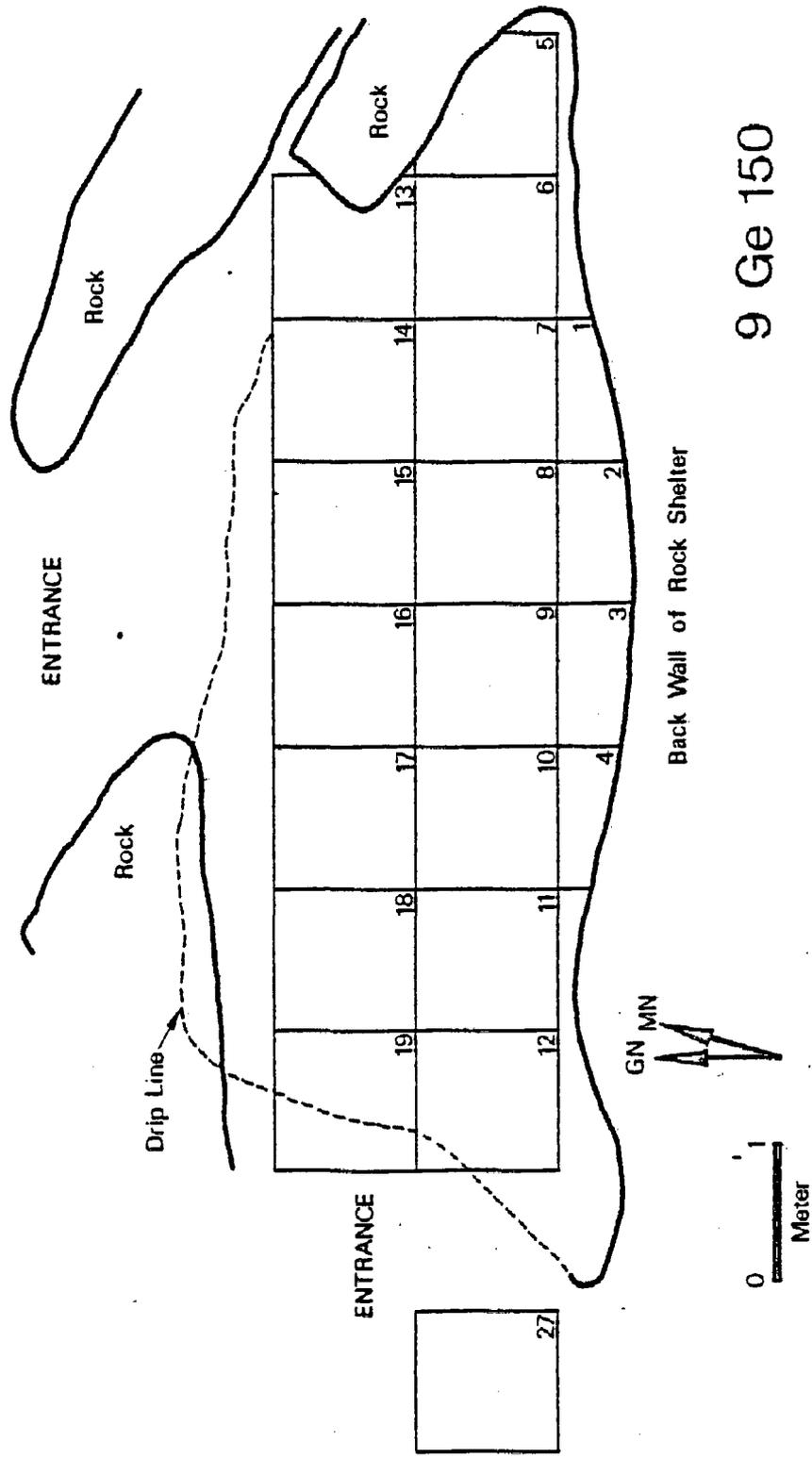


Figure 3. Ground plan of rockshelter, showing layout of excavation grid.

point was established in a nearby tree. Vertical control was maintained by the use of line level and string. All soil was dry screened through quarter inch hardware cloth. Uniform volume flotation samples of approximately 2.5 liters were collected from alternate squares, and several pollen samples were collected.

Although the original research strategy called for the excavation of the shelter in natural levels or arbitrary 10 cm levels, it quickly became apparent that the deposit was thin and that no cultural stratigraphy existed. The majority of the shelter was excavated in one level to subsoil. Eventually approximately 17 square meters were excavated as individual units. A total of 27 man days was devoted to site investigation during the month of March, 1978.

Site Stratigraphy

Stratigraphy at the site consisted of three levels: An upper zone consisting of loose leaves, sticks, animal coprolites and a few artifacts; a dark reddish-brown soil zone which also contained artifacts; and the underlying sterile redish clay subsoil. The presence of animal coprolites, as well as a depression believed to represent a deer bed, indicate probable disturbances by animals. The few artifacts located in the upper soil zone may reflect this disturbance. In general, artifacts of any type were rare at the site.

Artifacts

Artifacts will be described under the following categories: ceramics, lithics, faunal remains, floral remains, and palynological remains.

Most ceramic artifacts reflect a late Lamar, probably Bell Phase, occupation. The lithic assemblages indicate the presence of one or more Archaic components.

Ceramics

Only 27 aboriginal sherds were recovered from site Ge 150. Most sherds (Table 1) reflect a late Lamar, Bell Phase occupation (Smith 1979a). At least one bowl and one jar are definitely represented, and it is possible that all Lamar sherds belong to only two vessels. The use of bowls has been noted from another nearby rockshelter, 9Pm260 (Smith 1979b). It is probable that small bowls were utilized at special purpose, short term campsites since they would be readily transportable. The general lack of artifacts at Ge 150 suggests that it functioned as a short term camp.

One fiber tempered sherd was recovered from Unit 27 located outside the shelter. This sherd indicates late Archaic utilization of the Shelter. Five other nondiagnostic grit or sand tempered plain sherds cannot be definitely assigned to the Lamar Period. These sherds belong to at least three vessels, and may represent a third, Woodland, occupation.

The distribution of sherds is shown in Figure 4. Generally sherds were more common in the central and western portions of the shelter.

Lithics

Lithic remains from Ge 150 were also scarce. Two complete bifaces, a broken biface, and a unifacial tool (Plate 3), as well as 6 pieces of debitage were recovered (Table 2). The distribution of lithic material is shown in Figure 5.

Table 1

CERAMICS AND HISTORIC MATERIALS

Test Unit	Level	ABORIGINAL CERAMICS				HISTORICAL MATERIAL
		Fine Incised	Plain	Burnished Plain	Fiber Tempered Plain	
10	1	2		2		Whiteware, wire Plastic Newspaper Plastic
10	2			3		
8	2			1		
9	1		1			
11	1	2		1		
12	1	1	1			
14	1		1			
15	1		1			
18	1	1	2			
3	1					
17	1				1	
27	1		3			
19	1		2			
4	1		2			
N		6	13	7	1	5

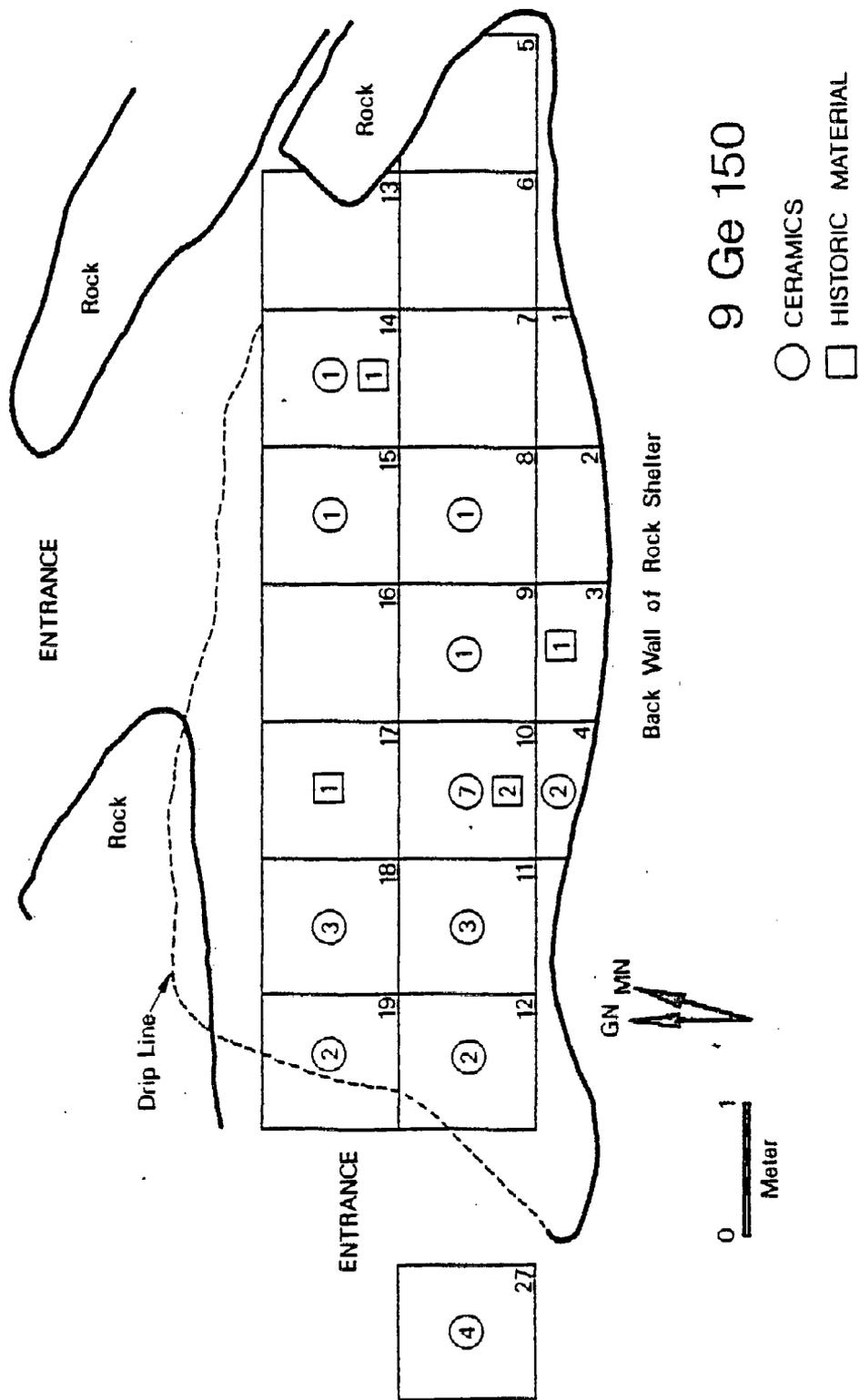


Figure 4. Distribution of aboriginal ceramics and historic artifacts within rockshelter,

9 Ge 150

Table 2

Lithics

Test Unit	Complete Biface	Broken Biface	Unifacial Tool	Retouched Flake	Percussion Flake	Thinning/Retouch Flake	Debris	Ground Stone	Fire Cracked Rock
8									1
10							1		1
11									1
12	1						2		6
13	1								
15					1				
17									1
18								*	2
19		1		1					4
27			1			1		**	10

* Net Sinker or Atlatl weight

** Possible Grinding Slab

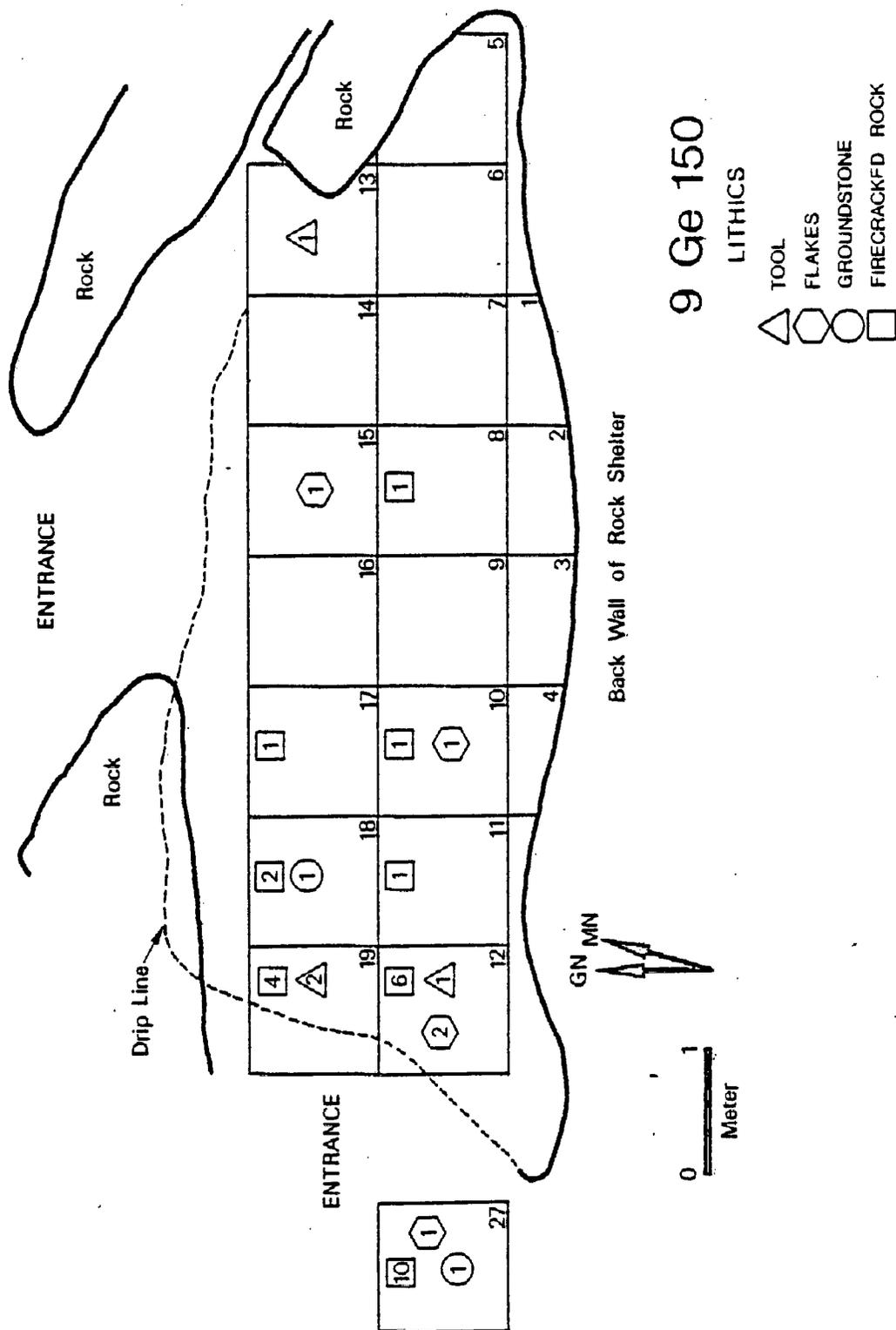


Figure 5. Distribution of lithic artifacts and debris within rockshelter.

A stemmed, chert projectile point or knife was found in Test Unit 12. This tool was badly burned. It probably represents a late Archaic projectile point, although it could be a knife from another occupation.

The broken, basal portion of a quartz Morrow Mountain type projectile point was found in Unit 19. This tool may date to the Middle Archaic.

An irregular, quartz biface of unknown function was found in Test Unit 13 in the extreme eastern end of the shelter, and a quartz unifacial tool was found outside the western entrance in Unit 27. This tool is a fragment of a sidescraper, 20 mm wide, with a present (incomplete) length of 42 mm. It has been retouched along both long edges.

A retouched chert flake, probably the result of sharpening a biface, was found in Unit 19.

This meager assemblage of tools apparently represents repeated, short term use of the site by Archaic groups.

Debitage was recovered only with the one-quarter inch screen. Only one percussion flake, one thinning/retouch flake, and three debris fragments were recovered. Quartz was the only material represented, and all flakes were non-cortical. Flake size was generally small (7 - 17 mm), indicating tool maintenance rather than tool manufacture. Generally the debitage indicates that little flaking took place at the site. The absence of cores and cortical flakes indicates that tools were not manufactured on the site.

Small quantities of fire-cracked rock, mostly quartzite, was found in 8 units (Table 2; Figure 5). Fire cracked rock is not common in any unit, but it clearly clusters around the western entranceway and is most common in Unit 27 outside the shelter.

Ground Stone

Only one definite piece of ground stone was recovered from 9 Ge 150. It is a small fragment of ground steatite (Plate 3). While its use cannot be determined, it may be a fragment of an atlatl weight or "net sinker," perhaps suggesting an Archaic occupation. This artifact is probably contemporaneous with the fiber tempered sherd and the stemmed projectile point. It was found near the western entrance to the shelter.

A possible grinding slab of diabase was reconstructed from four fragments found in Unit 27 outside the shelter. Its weathered surface makes recognition of use impossible. But its general shape (Plate 3) and size (85 x 80 x 40 cm thick) suggests it may have been a tool. Alternately, it may be fire cracked rock.

The distribution of all lithic artifacts is shown in Figure 5. Most lithic artifacts are concentrated near the western entranceway. One quartz biface was found in the extreme eastern end of the shelter, and this tool may well be from an earlier, Archaic component.

Faunal Remains

Faunal remains were also scarce at 9Ge150 (Table 3). No bone was recovered in flotation. Faunal remains recovered from one-quarter inch screen consist of 5 unidentified mammal bones, 1 unidentified fish vertebra, 98.62 grams of bivalve shells, some of which could be definitely identified as Elliptio complonatus, and two Goniabasis sp. shells. Land gastropod shell was found in virtually every unit, and can probably be considered a non-food, naturally occurring resident of the shelter. The minimum number of individuals represented by the bivalve shells is 18, while one fish and one mammal are represented. It is clear that very little animal refuse occurred in the shelter. The distribution of

Table 3

Faunal Remains

Lot No.	Test Unit	No. of Unidentified Mammal	No. of Fish	No. of Gastropod Fragments	Misc. Divalve Fragments (gms)	Unionidae (gms)	Goniobasis (gms)	Eliptio (gms)
1	7			17		1,82		3,73
2	10	3		11		10,37		1,62
3	10					1,60		
4	Feat. 1			1				
5	8	2				4,19		
6	7			8				
7	11			9		1,71		
8	9			7		5,28		
9	11		1	2		14,79		
10	12			4		16,97	0,52	
11	14					18,35		10,87
12	15			2				
13	16			5				
14	18			3		2,01		
15	3			10				
16	1			22				
17	17			4				
18	6			5				
19	13			15				
21	19					0,63		
22	5			6				
23	4			10				0,87

faunal remains is shown in Figure 6. Most remains were located near the rear of the shelter in the central and western area; however, the largest concentration of bivalve shell was found in Unit 14 near the northern entranceway.

Floral Remains

Floral remains were recovered during quarter inch screening and in laboratory processing of flotation samples. It is entirely possible that much of the floral remains recovered were the result of activities by animals; however, most are species commonly utilized by Native Americans in the Southeast. Virtually all of the plant remains were uncharred, suggesting a recent origin; however, the dry nature of the shelter makes it possible that some, if not all of the material is old. The most common floral remain recovered was hickory nut shell. The distribution of hickory shell is shown in Figure 7. Two concentrations are apparent. One is in Unit 7, while the other is around Units 17 and 11. The amount of nutshell recovered from the flotation units is quite small. This suggests that most shell fragments were relatively large, since more was recovered from the quarter inch screen. Apparently hickory nuts were not being pounded to produce hickory milk, since this seems to result in large quantities of minute shell fragments (Hally 1981). Minor amounts of walnut shell were also found in Unit 11 and Feature 1.

Only a few seeds were found in the flotation samples, and none were found in the quarter inch screened material. The distribution of seeds is shown in Figure 8. Perhaps most important is the concentration of Passiflora incarnata found in the western end of the shelter. These seeds indicate the use of the maypop, a commonly collected wild plant

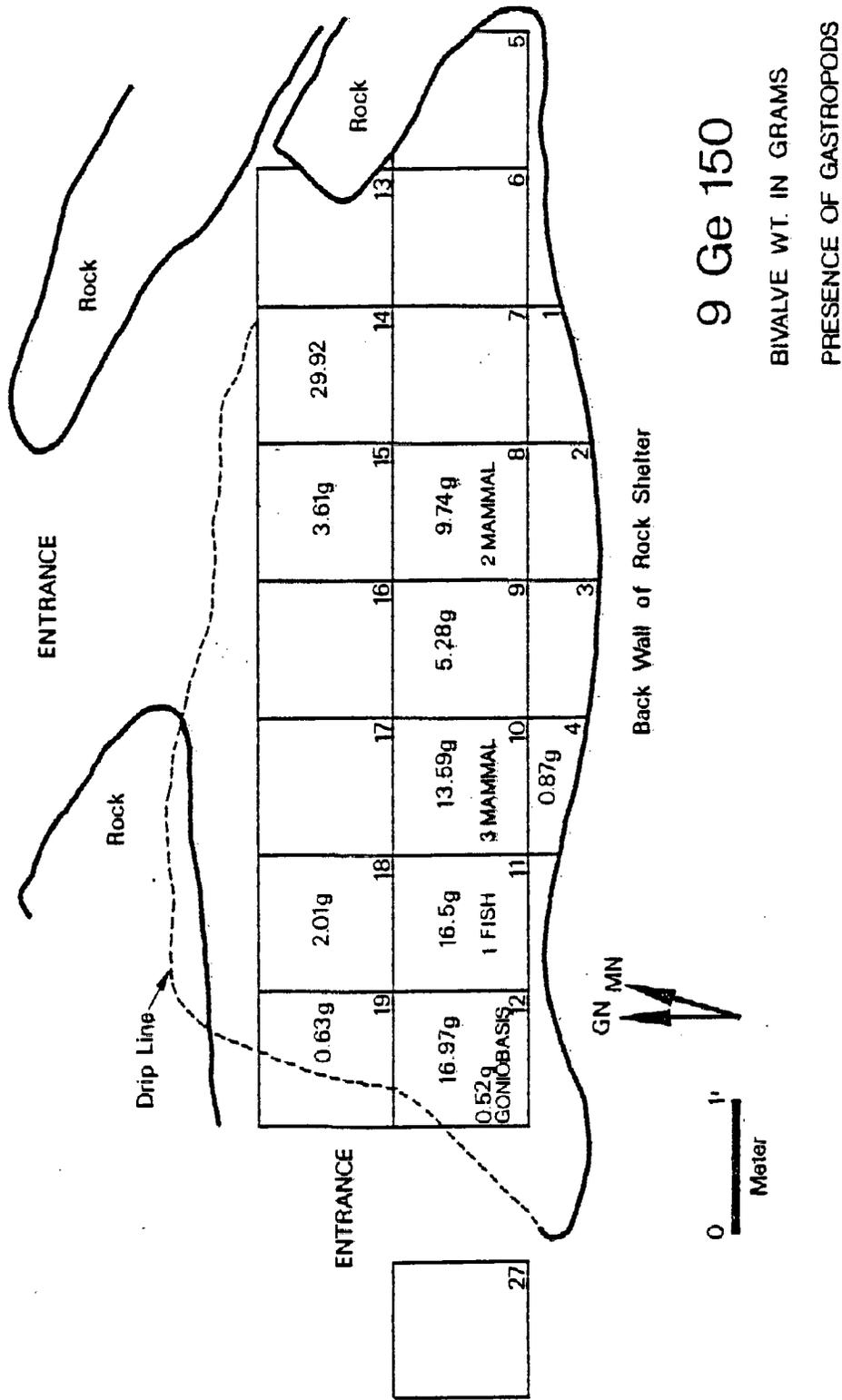


Figure 6. Distribution of faunal remains within rockshelter.

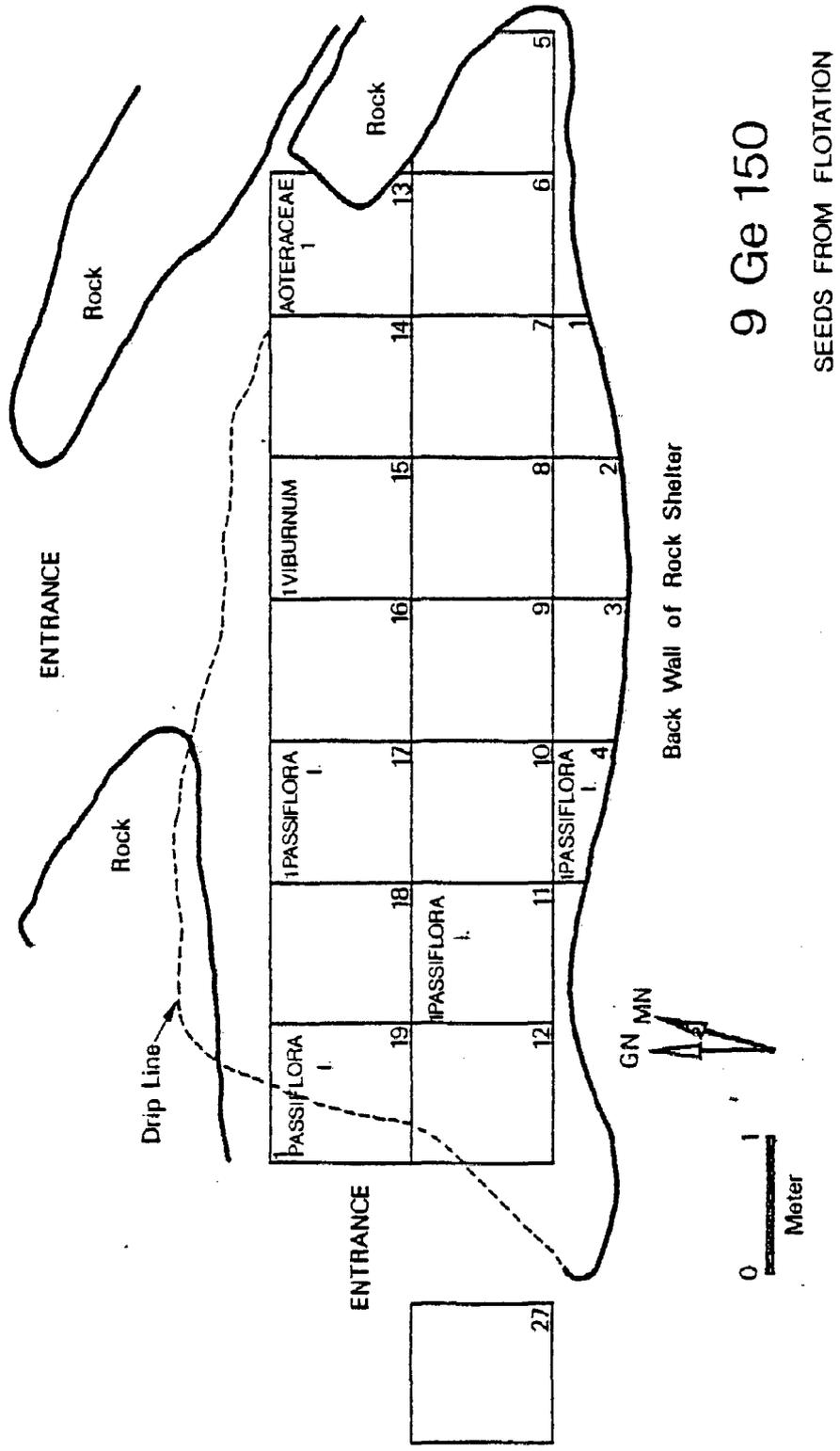


Figure 8. Distribution of seeds within rockshelter.

species. Maypops were eaten fresh, made into a beverage, and made into jelly by Southeastern Indians (Sheldon 1978). One Viburnum sp. seed (perhaps Black Haw) was recovered as well as one Aoteraceae seed. A seed of the Liriodendron tulipifera (Tulip tree) was also located in Feature 1. No remains of cultivated plants were recovered at Ge 150, again showing the short term nature of the occupation.

The distribution of wood charcoal is shown in Figure 9. Unlike the nut fragments, a quick inspection indicated that most wood was indeed charred. A definite concentration occurs in the western entrance-way, matching artifact concentrations. Apparently the charred wood reflects campfire utilization, such as is represented by Feature 1.

Palynological Remains

Although several pollen samples were taken during excavation they have not been processed at this time. The nature of the microenvironment of the shelter makes it likely that pollen would be preserved.

European Materials

A few remains of Euro-American activity in the shelter were found, including one sherd of plain whiteware, one piece of wire, two pieces of plastic, and one minute newspaper fragment. Most, if not all of these artifacts, probably resulted from activity in the twentieth century.

Features

Two archaeological features were identified during excavations at 9 Ge 150 (Figure 10). Feature 1 consisted of a concentration of charcoal 2 cm below the surface of the shelter. The concentration was 34 by 37 cm, oval

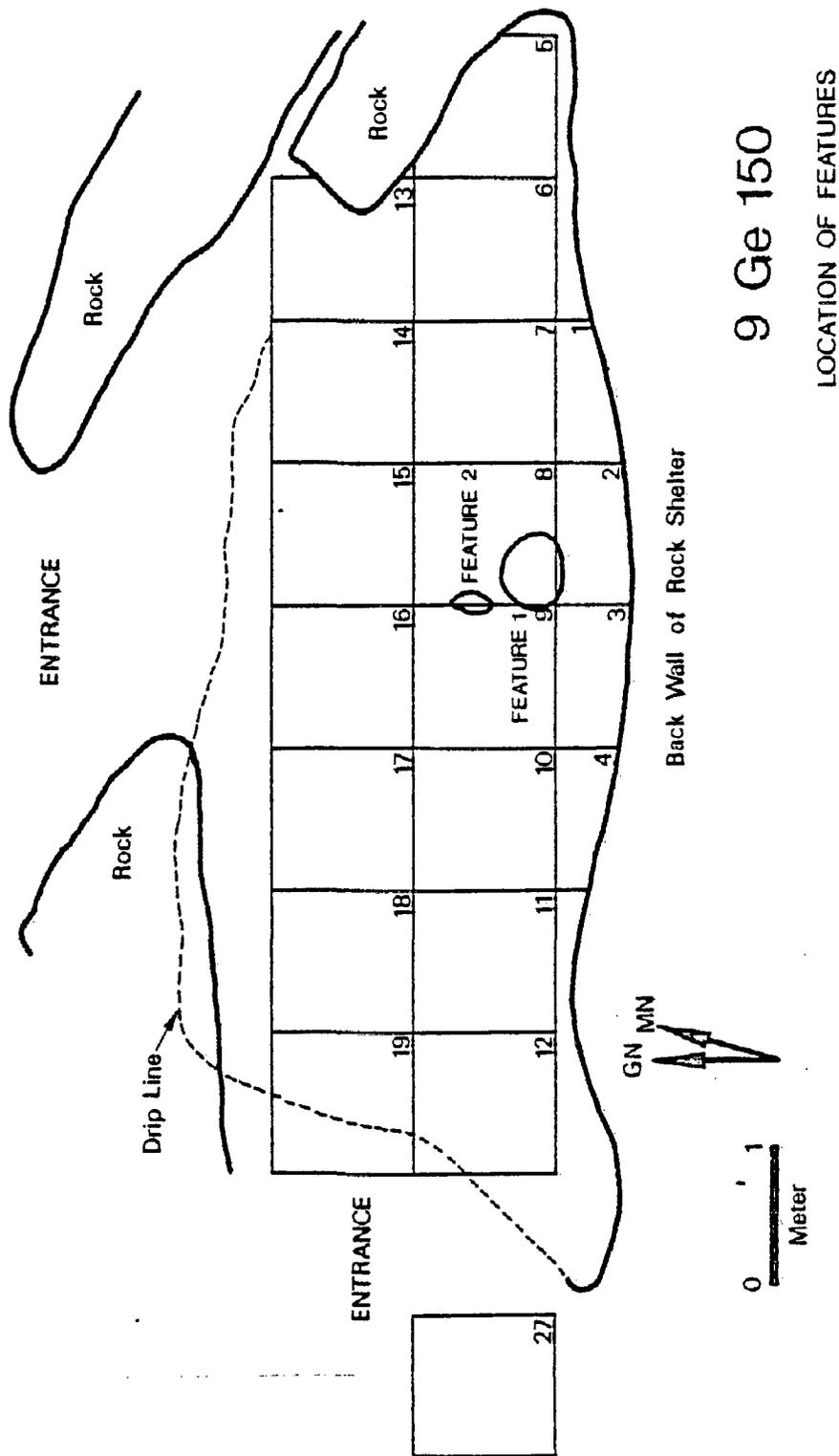


Figure 10. Location of features within rockshelter.

in shape, and 3.5 cm thick. The feature was located in the southwestern corner of Unit 8 near the center of the shelter. Minute quantities of hickory shell (1.6 g) (most uncharred), walnut shell (0.1 g), one uncharred seed of Passiflora incarnata (maypop), and one seed of Liriodendron tulipifera (tulip tree), and one unidentified fruit were found in the flotation sample. Most of the material recovered consisted of wood charcoal (48.05 g). Four land gastropod fragments were recovered, but no aboriginal artifacts were present. It is quite possible that Feature I represents a recent campfire, however, the presence of nutshell and passiflora in the feature, its proximity to a hickory shell concentration in Unit 7, and the presence of two mammal bones in Unit 8 just outside the feature seem to indicate that it was an aboriginal feature. The uncharred nature of the plant remains is disturbing, and may indicate that the plant remains postdate the feature.

Feature 2 consisted of a small, dark stained area located on the border of Units 8 and 9. The feature was 20 by 17 cm and was 2 cm deep. A flotation sample recovered only 0.1 g of hickory shell. No aboriginal artifacts were associated. It was the opinion of the excavator that this feature did not represent the results of aboriginal activity.

Summary and Conclusions

Site 9 Ge 150 was apparently utilized during the Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, Protohistoric (Bell Phase Lamar), and Euro-American (twentieth-century) periods as a short-term campsite. During the Archaic, some tool maintenance was carried out, resulting in minute quantities of debitage. Food remains were quite rare in the shelter, but the presence of Passiflora incarnata suggests a late summer-early fall occupation

by at least one of the aboriginal groups. This small, dry shelter served as a camping spot on several occasions in the past. The most intensive use occurred in the area of the western entrance. The general paucity of artifacts and the lack of ground stone food processing implements argue for an extremely short occupation; the site probably served as an overnight camping spot.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following people for analysis of the 9 Ge 150 materials. Ms. Terry Rudolph and the author analyzed the lithics and ceramics; Ms. Elizabeth Sheldon analyzed the floral remains; Ms. Barbara Ruff analyzed the faunal remains, and Ms. Suzanne K. Fish analyzed the palynological remains. Drs. Paul Fish and David J. Hally served as principal investigators, and the author served as field director. Excavation of site 9 Ge 150 was funded by the Georgia Power Company.

References Cited

- DePratter, Chester B.
1976 The 1974-75 Archaeological Survey in the Wallace Reservoir, Greene, Hancock, Morgan, and Putnam Counties, Georgia. Manuscript on file at the Laboratory of Archaeology, University of Georgia.
- Hally, David J.
1981 Plant Preservation and the Content of Paleobotanical Samples: A Case Study. American Antiquity (in Press).
- Sheldon, Elizabeth S.
1978 Vegetational History of the Wallace Reservoir. Manuscript on file at the Laboratory of Archaeology, University of Georgia.
- Smith, Marvin T.
1979a The Development of Lamar Ceramics in the Wallace Reservoir: The Evidence from the Dyar Site, 9 Ge 5. Manuscript on file at the Laboratory of Archaeology, University of Georgia.
1979b Archaeological Explorations at Site 9 Pm 260, Wallace Reservoir, Georgia. Manuscript on file at the Laboratory of Archaeology, University of Georgia.

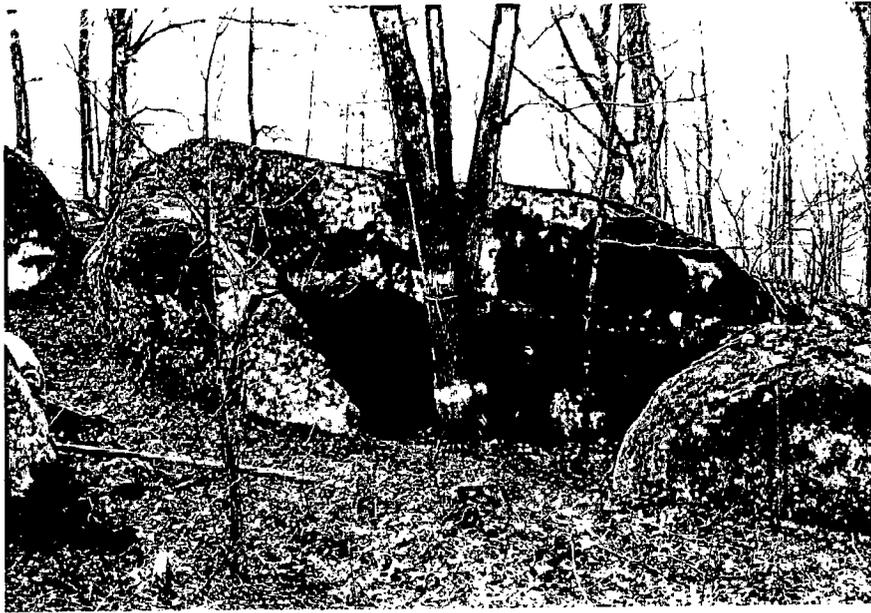


Plate 1. The rockshelter from the north.

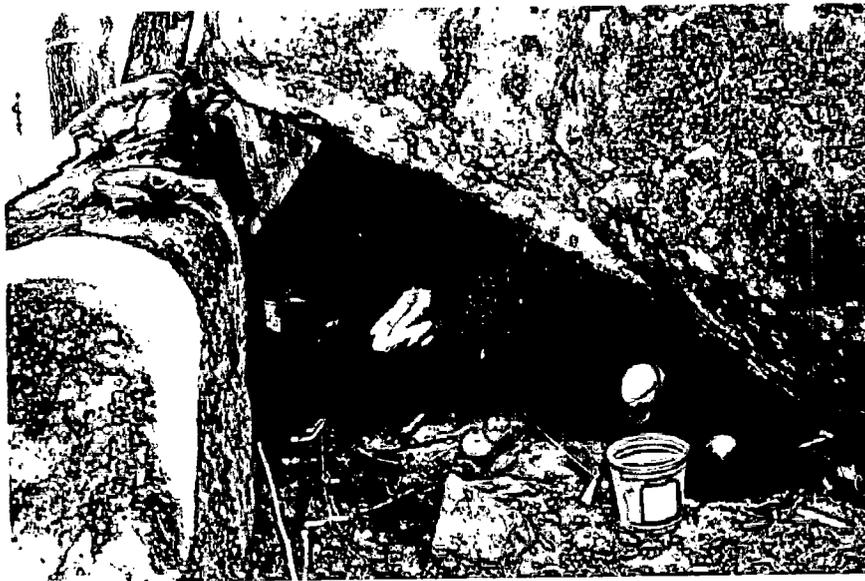


Plate 2. Interior of the rockshelter from the west.

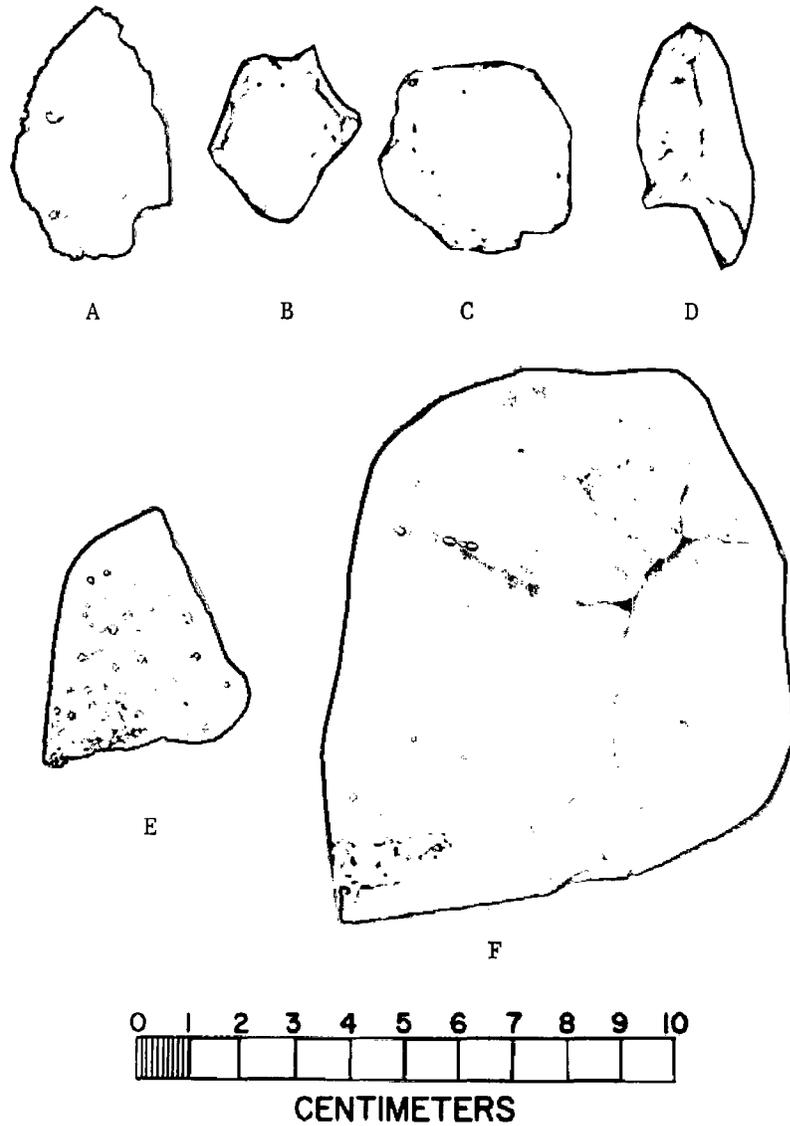


Plate 3. Artifacts from 9Ge150. Chert stemmed point, a; quartz Morrow Mountain point base, b; quartz biface, c; quartz unifacial tool, d; steatite net sinker fragment, e; diabase grinding slab, f.

