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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT 9PM207

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by

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WALLACE RESERVOIR PROJECT CONTRIBUTION NO. 12

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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PREFACE

This report represents the final report for site PM207, the excavation of which was provided for in Appendix 3 of the Archaeological salvage Agreement between the University of Georgia and the Georgia Power Company.

David J. Hally
Principal Investigator

INTRODUCTION

9PM207 was excavated as part of the overall mitigation plan of the Wallace Reservoir Archaeological Project. The site is located approximately 11.3 km north of the dam axis in the lower section of the reservoir (Figure 1). It is situated on an old terrace of the Oconee River in an area known locally as Long Shoals (Figure 2).

9PM207 was first identified during the survey conducted by the University of Georgia in 1975. According to DePratter (1976:305), the site consisted of a surface scatter of artifacts extending 125m along a dirt road. A surface collection was made in the dirt road by the University survey party, but no subsurface testing was undertaken. Artifact representing several components--Early Archaic, Middle Woodland, Late Mississippian and 18th Century and 19th Century Euro-american--were included in the surface collection.

Several criteria--site size, site location and site components--were utilized in the selection of sites for excavation at the time the mitigation plan for the Wallace Reservoir was developed in 1977. The 1975 survey report (DePratter 1976:305) identified 9PM205 as a small site, located in the floodplain of the Oconee River at a shoals and having an Early Archaic component. These characteristics matched the criteria for a type of site that the project wished to investigate, and for this reason, the site was selected for excavation.

9PM207 was of interest to the Wallace Reservoir Project primarily because of its Early Archaic component, represented in the 1975 collection by two chert projectile points--one of which was bevelled and basally ground--and one unifacial scraper (DePratter 1976:306). The Early Archaic

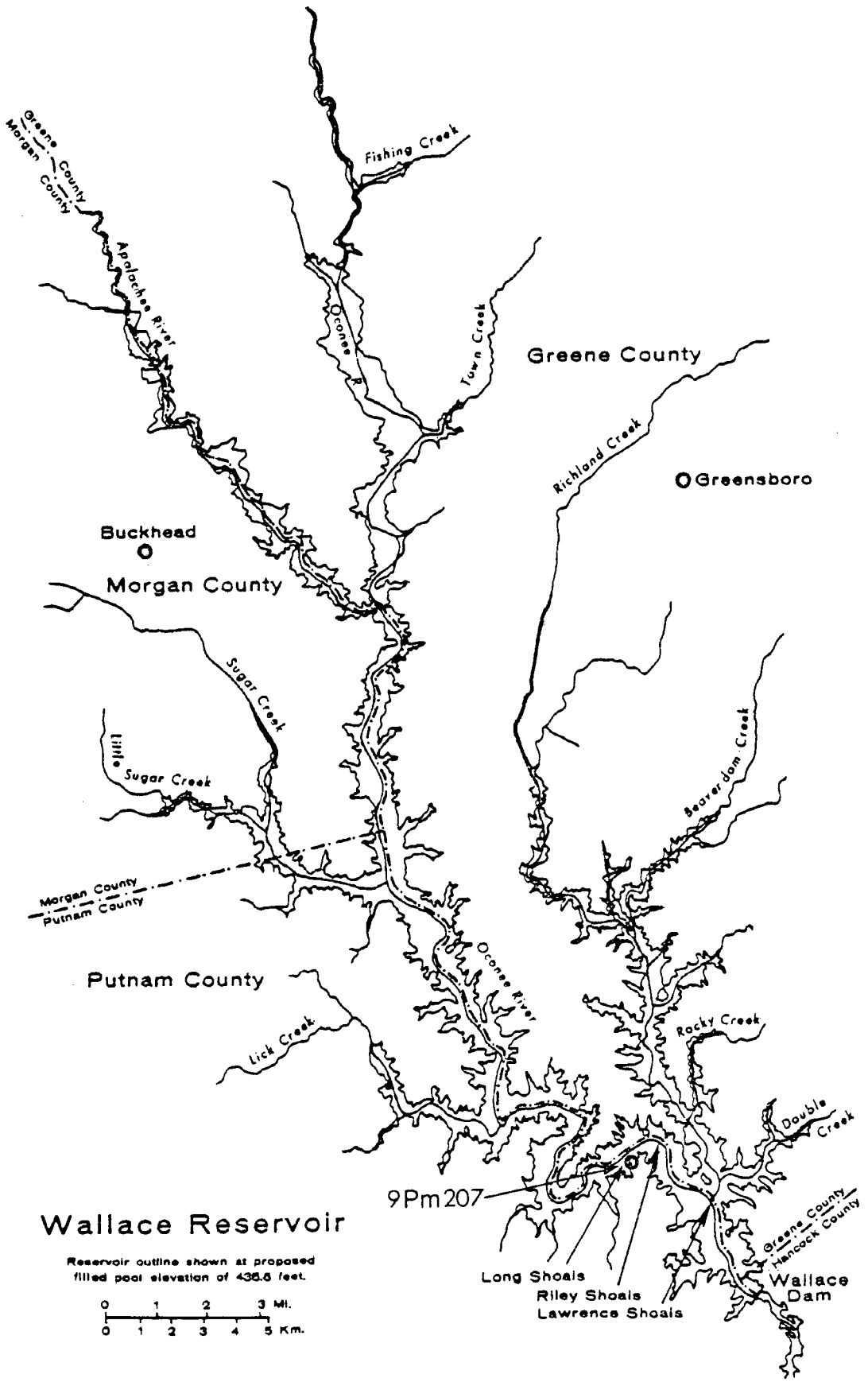

Figure 1. Location of 9PM207 within the Wallace Reservoir.

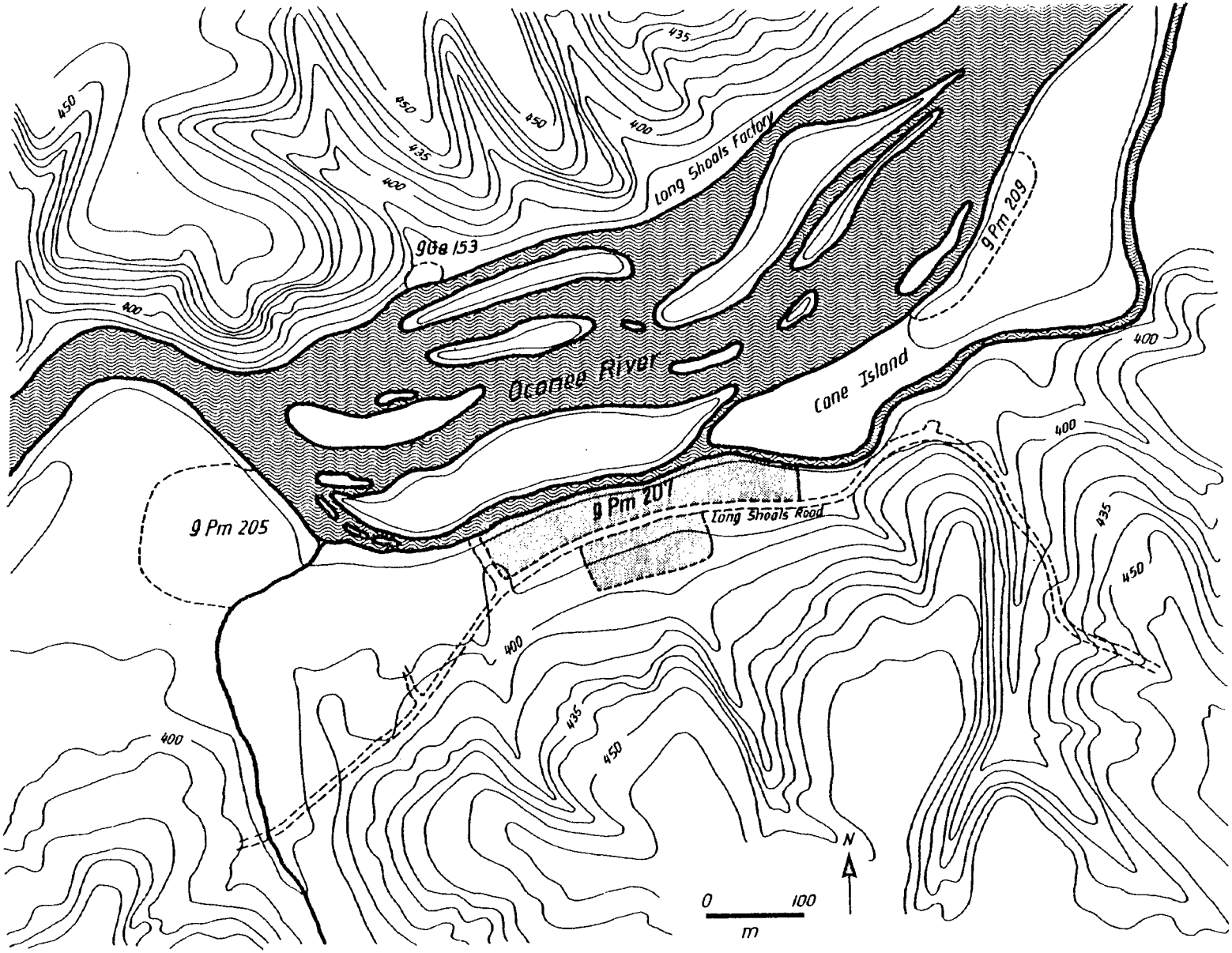

Figure 2. Location of 9PM207 at Long Shoals.

period is poorly known in the Georgia Piedmont since no sites with midden deposits of this age have been investigated and reported on by professional archaeologists. PM207 was one of several sites--GE153, PM205, and PM207--in the reservoir with Early Archaic components that were selected for excavation. It was hoped that investigation of all of these sites would provide useful information on Early Archaic chronology and settlement pattern in the Reservoir area.

During mitigation of the site, a total of 31 man days were spent in the field between October 17, 1977 and October 21, 1977. A preliminary report was completed and filed in January 1978 as required in the contract agreement between Georgia Power Company and the University of Georgia.

Environmental Setting

9PM207 lies on an ancient terrace of the Oconee River in Putnam County, Georgia. Underlying rocks for this section of the county are granite, gneiss, schist and other metamorphic rocks (Payne 1972:71). Elevation of the site varies between 116 meters above sea level near the river channel to 125 meters above sea level at the southern edge of the site. The upland hills begin immediately to the south and attain elevations in excess of 152 meters above sea level.

The river at Long Shoals broadens out into a number of small channels separated by islands (Figure 2). Long Shoals is approximately 1 kilometer long, and the river drops approximately four meters in this distance.

The soil in the area of the site belongs to the Cecil Series. Soils in this series are usually well-drained but low in natural fertility and strongly acidic. The soil map shows the area of 9PM207 as having a Cecil sandy loam (Payne 1976:12).

In recent years commercial pine plantations have flourished in this area because the land is useful for little else. Past land use has had detrimental effects on the area particularly in the form of severe erosion. According to the Georgia Kraft Paper Company, which owned the site prior to its acquisition by the Georgia Power Company, the area was last timbered in 1965. Since the area was to be flooded eventually the paper company allowed the area to grow up in scrub hardwoods and pine subsequent to this harvest. At the time of archaeological investigations in 1977, the site was overgrown with dense vegetation except in the roadbed (Plate 1).

Prior to European settlement of the area the original forest cover was probably an oak-hickory climax type interspersed with yellow poplar, red maple, American chesnut, sweetgum, yellow poplar, American beech and some short leaf and loblolly pine (Brender 1974; Payne 1976:11). By 1825, European settlers had converted the piedmont to farmland (Brender 1974) stripping it of most of its original forest cover and starting the erosional processes that are so evident today in the Georgia Piedmont.

9PM207 is located at the interface of two biotic zones; to the south are the uplands with their hardwood and pine forest cover, while to the north is a riverine area containing shoals, islands, and terraces. Both zones would have offered a variety of food resources to the aboriginal inhabitants of the site. A diversity of wild plants, nut trees, as well as terrestrial and acquatic animals inhabit these zones. The white tail deer is particularly attracted to these interace areas. Other land animals such as the cottontail rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, opposum are well known in the area. In the past wild turkey and probably passenger pigeon flourished

on the uplands (Golley 1962). Waterfowl such as duck and herron inhabit the river today, along with beaver and otter. Many fish species such as American shad, chain pickerel, channel cat, striped bass, brim, carp, black crappie, American Eel, and northern hog sucker, to name a few, live or have lived in the river. Freshwater mussels are still found in the river and their presence in the past is attested to by the many shell midden sites identified by project personnel.

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

No sub-subsurface testing was carried out at PM205 by the 1975 survey party. As a result, the first phase of investigation at the site in 1977 was to be test excavations. If sub-surface tests provided evidence of a buried, intact midden and/or features, a second phase of investigation, consisting of large area excavations, was to be undertaken.

Two areas above the road were intuitively chosen for initial testing (Figure 3). The first test, designated Excavation Unit 1, Provenience 1, was placed in a relatively flat area located on the sloping ground surface characteristic of this part of the site. The Excavation Unit 1 test measured 20 meters long and one meter wide (Plate II). The second trench, Excavation Unit 2, Provenience 2, a 10X1 m trench, was placed approximately 20 meters east of Provenience 1. This second provenience was chosen because of its relative flatness and proximity to a cleared area, which revealed several aboriginal sherds on the surface.

Both excavation units were gridded with a transit with true north and grid north angles recorded. A temporary bench mark with the elevation 100.00 meters was established to which all other elevation points on the

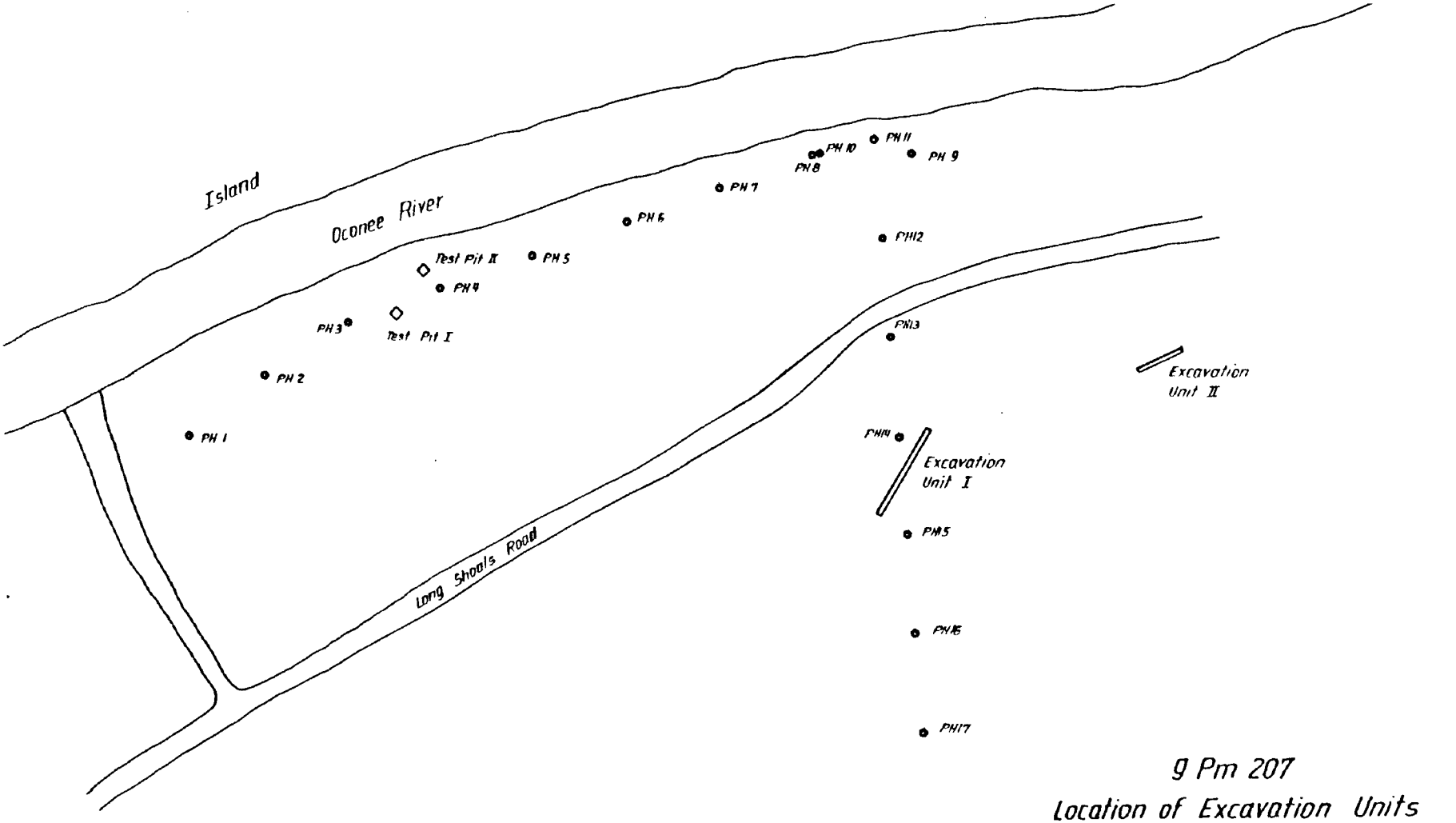

Figure 3. Plan of excavations at 9PM207.

site were referred. Each trench was excavated in 1X1 m squares in arbitrary 10 centimeter levels, except for the first level which varied in thickness due to the uneveness of the ground. Each one meter square at each level was assigned a separate field lot number according to its proper provenience. Diagnostic or significant artifacts were assigned separate lot numbers, and if found in situ their location was plotted and recorded. All material from each square was screened through one-quarter inch mesh hardware cloth.

In excavation Unit 1, a total of five 1 m squares was excavated. Two of these were excavated well into the subsoil to substantiate that the topsoil was very shallow. The humus level ranged from 2 cm to 8 cm deep. Below that lay a yellow/tan sandy loam containing many small pebbles. This second level ranged from 10 cm to 15 cm thick. The soil then changed to a compacted red clay loam that contained many pebbles and manganese nodules. This third level extended down about 10 cm before a definite hardpan was reached. Excavation Unit 2 was almost identical to Provenience 1 in soil stratigraphy. A total of four one meter squares were excavated in this provenience.

In the northern section of the site a small flat terrace located 8 m from the river was next chosen for testing (Figure 3). Two 2X2 m squares were layed out ten meters apart in this area and designated Provenience 3, Test Pit I and Test Pit II. Excavation was by 10 cm level. Some levels were divided into one meter squares and assigned separate lot numbers. All material was screened through one-quarter inch mesh hardware cloth.

The soil stratigraphy in Test Pits I and II exhibited more complexity and depth than was the case in Proveniences 1 and 2. Although the two

test pits were only 10 m apart there existed a fair amount of variability in the strata as can be seen in Figure 4. Two soil samples were taken from Test Pit I near a layer of rocks.

A posthole testing program was implemented to further characterize the site and aid in the location of any undisturbed midden. This was accomplished by establishing two transects at right angles across the site. The first transect line ran from the northwest corner of the site along the river channel in a northeast direction and crossed Test Pits I and II. Posthole tests were spaced 20 meters apart along this transect. All material recovered from the first transect, designated Provenience 4, was screened through one-quarter inch mesh hardware cloth. Each posthole test was assigned a separate lot number. An elevation at ground surface was established for each posthole test.

The second transect, Provenience 5, started four meters south of the river channel and ran southward at a right angle to the first transect. This transect crossed the dirt road, Excavation Unit 1, entered the cleared area and ended at the base of the steep slopes that rise to the uplands. A total of seven postholes, spaced twenty meters apart, were excavated along this transect. All material from each posthole was troweled and assigned a separate lot number. Ground surface elevations were determined for each posthole test. One soil sample was taken from posthole test 4 along with a sample of a black gritty material (found in the test pits as well as many of the posthole tests) that has been tentatively identified as manganese.

The above testing program was completed in five days. The purpose was to look expeditiously for an area that might contain undisburbed midden

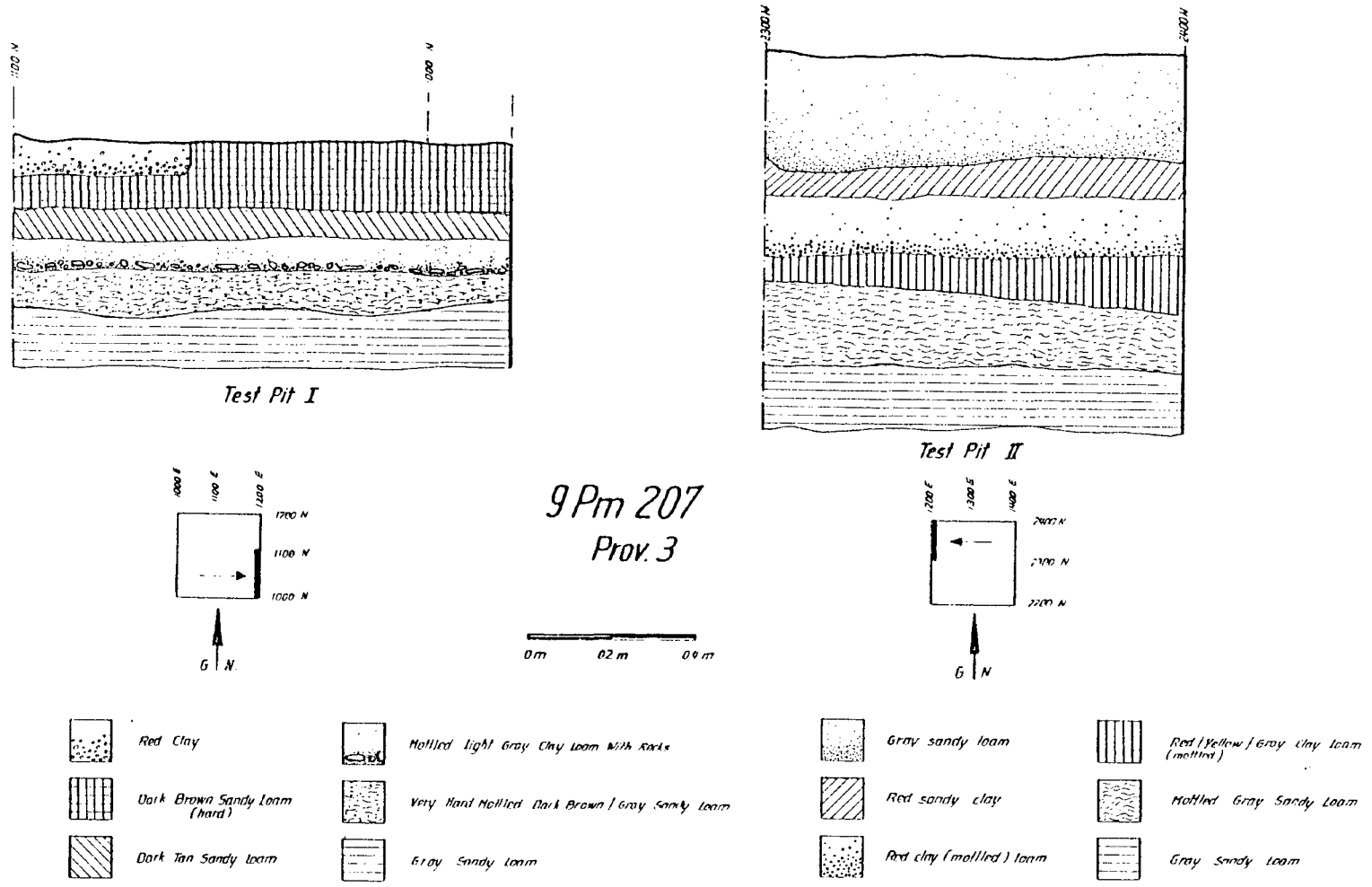

Figure 4. Profiles of Test Pit I and Test Pit II, Provenience 3.

levels. The posthole transects were intended to provide an extensive view of site stratigraphy; the test excavations were intended to provide a more detailed view of site stratigraphy.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

All analysis of the cultural material recovered from PM260 was performed by Wallace Reservoir Project, Laboratory personnel.

In Provenience 1 and 2, almost all artifactual material occurred in the top two levels. Table 1 presents a tabulation of all artifacts recovered from these two proveniences. These artifacts occurred in no apparent cultural patterns and could not be associated with any habitation levels. No sub-surface features were encountered. One check stamped, two simple stamped and one incised sherd were found in Provenience 1 (Table 2). The stamped sherds probably represent an Early Woodland component, while the incised sherd is probably Mississippian in age. The absence of other artifacts identifiable with these two periods, however, means that their cultural assignment can only be tentative. A definite increase in pottery was noted in Provenience 2. However, all of sherds were quite small and unidentifiable with the exception of one corncob marked fragment. The latter is of unknown cultural affiliation.

Excavations in these two proveniences clearly demonstrated that severe erosion had destroyed the southern portion of the site. In the past, this area had been heavily farmed, and in the more recent past it had been in commercial pine plantations. Most often the soil is prepared for planting pine seedlings with a type of plow that furrows deep into the ground and reaches subsoil. Soil survey descriptions of the Cecil

TABLE 1

ARTIFACTS FROM PROVENIENCES I and II

Provenience	Level	Number of Sherds	Quartz Flakes	Chert Flakes	Flaked Stone Tool Fragments	Ground Stone	Metal	Historic Ceramics	Rock
1	1	25	266	65	3	1	3	1	1076 oz.
1	2	2	1	5					73 oz.
2	1	91	178	29	3		2		454 oz.
2	2	2	7	3					28 oz.

TABLE 2

SHERDS FROM TEST EXCAVATIONS

Provenience	Check Stamped	Simple Stamped	Incised	Corncob Marked	Plain Fine Grit	Plain Coarse Grit	Other
1	1	2	1		9	13	1
2				1	77	15	
3						2	
4					3	2	
5					2	1	1
Totals	1	2	1	1	91	33	2

Series of soils, state that these soils are in many areas severely eroded with most if not all topsoil eroded away as well as some of the subsoil layer. During excavation of these proveniences, it appeared that the subsoil had been disturbed and mixed with the overlying thin topsoil layer.

The conclusion reached by excavation in Proveniences 1 and 2 was that the area above the dirt road had been too greatly disturbed to merit further investigation. The total lack of undisturbed soil levels and cultural features offered no means of interpreting the few artifacts recovered.

Both Test Pits I and II exhibited deeper stratigraphy (Figure 4) in Provenience 3, but none of the levels could be attributed to human activity. The stratigraphy appeared to be a result of riverine deposition and soil erosion from the uplands to the south.

A layer of quartzite water-worn rocks were found at about thirty centimeters below surface in Test Pit I in a mottled gray silty loam. The rocks did not appear to be firecracked and there were no associated artifact material. The two soil samples taken from around the rock cluster yielded no organic or cultural material. Artifactual remains recovered from Test Pit I consisted of seven quartz flakes, two chert debris flakes, and two plain sherds, which were found 10-20 cm below ground surface in the dark brown compacted loam (Tables 2 and 3).

Test Pit II revealed a plain grit tempered sherd at 60 cm below the surface in a gray sandy loam in the northwest quadrant. Another plain grit tempered sherd was found in the northeast quadrant approximately 45 cm below the surface near an amorphous area of gritty black sand,

TABLE 3

ARTIFACTS FROM PROVENIENCE III

Test Pit	Level	Sherds	Quartz Flakes	Chert Flakes	Flaked Stone Tool Fragments	Ground Stone	Metal	Rock
1	1	2	7	2				7 oz.
1	2							57 oz.
2	1						1	2 oz.
2	2		1					5 oz.
2	3	1	1					8 oz.
2	4	1						
2	5							10 oz.
2	6							22 oz.

which appears to have been pulverized manganese. The only other artifacts recovered were an unidentifiable iron fragment in the first 10 cm, a rhyolite debris flake (10-20 cm below surface) and one quartz debris flake (40-50 cm below surface).

Excavation of these two test pits offered no substantive evidence of cultural activity in the form of midden deposits or intact subsurface architectural or other cultural features. Probably those few artifacts present were the results of fluvial action by the Oconee River.

The final testing program implemented was the posthole testing along the two transects. Table 4 lists all artifact recovered from the posthole tests. A total of four sherds were found in the first transect (Provenience 4), all occurring in separate posthole tests. A hammerstone in Posthole Test 1 and nine quartz debris flakes scattered in several other posthole tests were the only other artifacts recovered in the first transect. No midden levels were identified during testing.

The second transect (Provenience 5) produced a total of five plain aboriginal sherds all from the same posthole test (14), which was approximately ten meters north of Excavation Unit 1. One blue transfer printed historic sherd was found 2-6 cm below the surface in posthole test 15. These were the only cultural materials recovered other than five quartz and one chert flake. As in the first transect there were no midden deposits or cultural features detected during testing. Heavy soil erosion was more apparent in the posthole tests along this second transect.

In posthole tests south of the road the topsoil was sparse and the subsoil appeared mixed with the topsoil. In posthole tests north of top soil appeared to have been washed in above the original soil levels.

TABLE 4

CULTURAL MATERIAL FROM POSTHOLE TESTS

Posthole Test	Lot Number	Sherds	Quartz Flake Debitage	Chert Flake Debitage	Chipped Stone Tool Fragment	Ground Stone	Metal	Historic Ceramic	Rock
1	001	1	4			1			20 oz.
2									13 oz.
3			1						6 oz.
4									14 oz.
5		1							11 oz.
6			4						2 oz.
7									20 oz.
8		1							16 oz.
9		1							28 oz.
11									3 oz.
12			2						6 oz.
13									11 oz.
14		5							30 oz.
15			3	1					9 oz.
15								1	
16									9 oz.
17									10 oz.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The research methods employed at PM207 are considered adequate for accessing the nature of archaeological resources at the site. The two test trenches placed above the road should have detected midden deposits or sub-surface features if they existed. The test trenches demonstrated the almost complete absence of topsoil, and cultural material. The second posthole transect that crossed the area above the road also indicated that erosion had robbed most of the topsoil and left a paucity of scattered and meaningless cultural debris.

The two test pits placed on a small terrace next to the river channel revealed only a series of naturally deposited strata. There were no occupation deposits or sub-surface features present. Further testing for 180 meters along the channel levee detected no distinct midden deposits. Those few artifacts found could easily have been deposited by the river.

The primary goal of testing of 9PM207 was to determine the site's potential for contributing information on the Early Archaic period. Excavations were ceased after the alloted one week testing period when it had been determined that no further excavation was warranted.

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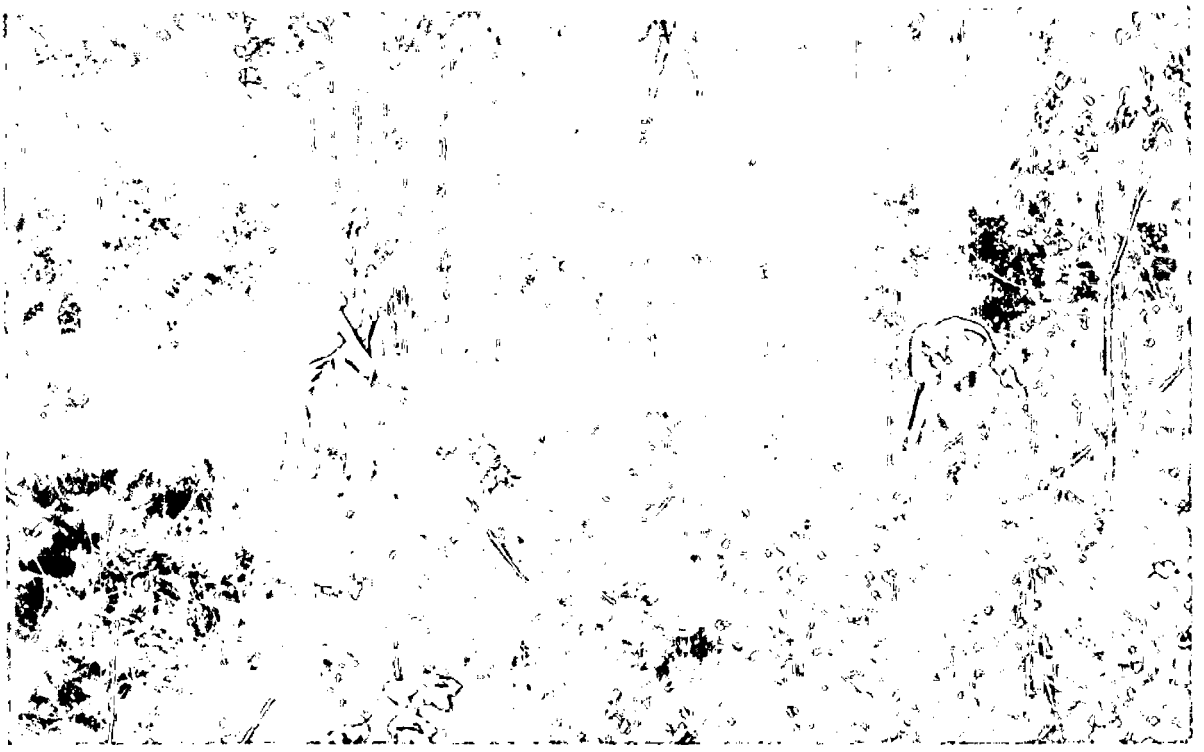

Figure 1. Clearing site prior to excavation.

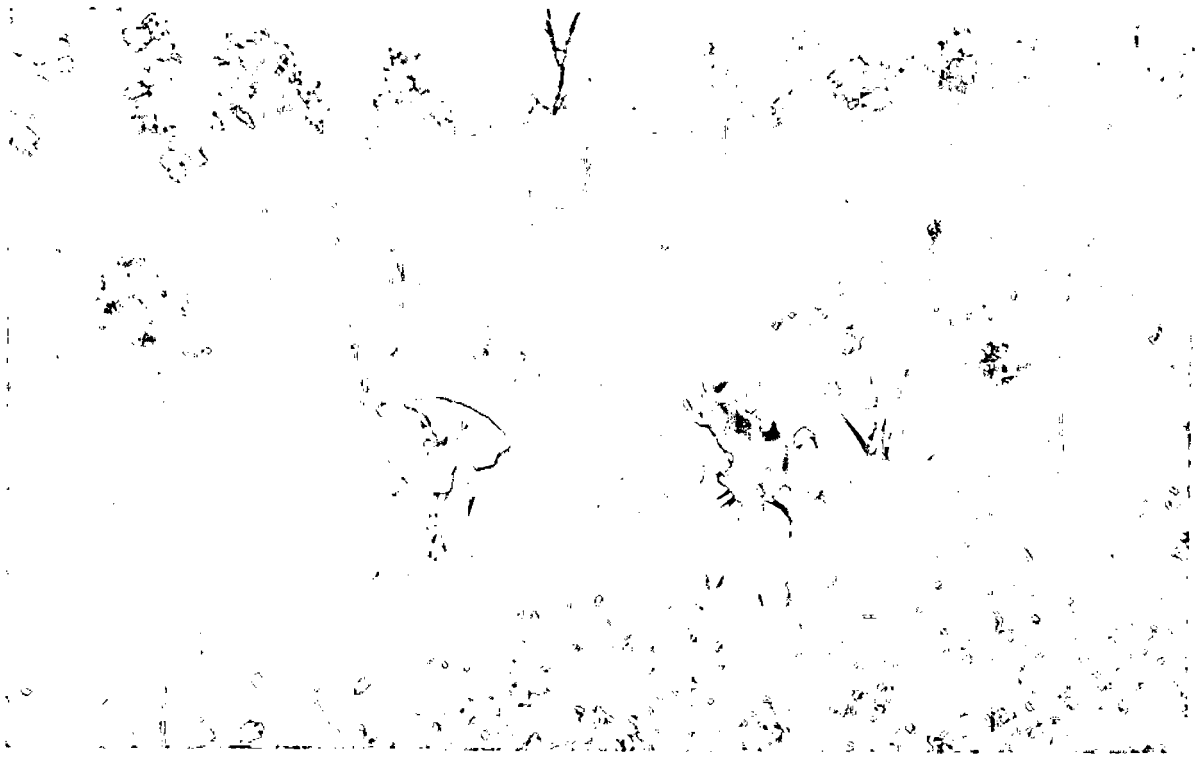

Figure 2. Excavation of Provenience 1 trench.