CONSERVANCY RESEARCH GRANT CONTRIBUTES TO THE RADIOCARBON CHRONOLOGY OF THE POVERTY POINT SITE

Radiocarbon dates have been obtained from features exposed in 1993 during destruction of the southern part of Ridge 6 at Poverty Point. These dates figure nicely with the radiocarbon chronology thus far calculated for the site. Data and figure provided courtesy of Jon Gibson. See page 2 for details.
Poverty Point and Radiocarbon Dates

Most of the archaeological community in Louisiana, as well as many throughout the country, are aware of the destruction that took place at the Poverty Point site in May of 1993. To reiterate, the south end of Ridge 6, which was on private property, was leveled by the landowner to prepare a place to store baled cotton. In the course of the leveling, many archaeological features such as post molds and hearths were uncovered. The silver lining to this dark cloud was that Dr. Jon Gibson was conducting a field school from the University of Southwestern Louisiana at another portion of the site. He, as well as other archaeologists, were on hand to observe the destruction and collect some radiocarbon samples from a number of subsurface features that were exposed.

Before these latest samples, Gibson has noted that the Poverty Point site has provided 21 useable radiocarbon dates from various portions of the site. These dates range from 1730 to 1330 B.C. calibrated and suggest that the occupation of the site before the construction of the ridges sprawled from the northern portion of the site to the south in a fashion that presaged the earthworks. As for the construction of the concentric ridges themselves, one of the most important questions is whether or not they were built in a short term fashion or raised during an extended occupation of the site. The only part of the artificial ridges that have been dated are adjoining sections of W3, W4, and W5 which suggest construction around 1520 B.C. (calibrated). But this is only a small portion of the site and the continued collection of radiocarbon dates from other sections of Poverty Point can fill in the blanks for the developing story of the site's construction and occupation.

The Louisiana Archaeological Conservancy awarded Jon Gibson the funds for dating the three radiocarbon samples that he collected from the destruction of the S6 ridge at Poverty Point. The first sample of charcoal, recently back from Beta Analytic, Inc., rendered a date of 3140 B.P. (+/-80) which would give a date of 1190 B.C. (+/-80). Again, these dates are from features beneath the artificial ridge and thus predate its construction. Furthermore, a check of the other dates from the site (shown on the cover of this newsletter) seem to validate the building and occupational sequence for the radiocarbon dates that has thus far been worked out for the site. It will be most interesting to see how the remaining two samples from the now destroyed ridge will compare to this first sample. We will keep you informed of the results.

New State Archaeologist for Louisiana

After operating for several months without one, the Division of Archaeology finally has a new head: Dr. Thomas Eubanks. He comes to Louisiana with both administrative and field experience. Dr. Eubanks received his Ph.D. from the University of Florida where he specialized in the Historical Archaeology of the Plantation Era. Most recently he has directed or co-directed projects on the Caribbean island of Tobago. The membership of the LAC and the archaeological community in Louisiana welcomes Dr. Eubanks and look forward to working with him.
Preservation Servitude Planned for the Tunica Mounds in West Feliciana Parish

Mr. Tom Willis of Baton Rouge has been contacted by the Louisiana Archaeological Conservancy in order to set up a preservation servitude for a portion of his property in West Feliciana Parish that contains the Tunica Mounds site (16 WF 1). This site contains the remnants of two mounds that are just to the southeast of the gates to Angola Prison. Both mounds have been seriously affected by the construction of Highway 66 and a railroad that both lead to the prison.

The first archaeological report of the site was made by James A. Ford in 1934 while he was conducting pioneering archaeological work in the area around Angola in an attempt to define the cultural remains of the historic Tunica Indian tribe that had moved into the area in the late eighteenth century. The site was initially disturbed by the construction of Highway 66 in 1934 and Ford only made a small collection of both aboriginal and European artifacts from the site. Since then, the site was only occasionally visited by archaeologists who noted the existence of the mounds and verified that they had been partially destroyed during the 1930s.

In 1986, Dennis Jones and Malcolm Shuman visited the mounds as part of a research grant to map mounds in East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, and West Feliciana Parishes. They also found that while the mounds were only remnants, they had not suffered any further destruction since the 30s. They found that Mound A was about 18 ft from base to summit and Mound B was about 5.5 ft high. The original basal dimensions were impossible to determine because of the construction that had taken place around the mounds. Jones and Shuman did find aboriginal ceramic sherds in situ in exposed profiles of Mound A while they were clearing the mounds to map them. This served to diminish their initial doubts about these promontories being artificial mounds in this heavily dissected region known as the Tunica Hills.

With a preservation servitude arranged for these mounds, they will be saved from any further damage by highway expansion or other construction that might eventually be planned. Further research could focus on the place this site has in the prehistory and early history of this area which figure so prominently in the archaeological reconstruction of the Tunica people that was carried out by Jeffrey Brain and others from the Lower Mississippi Survey at Harvard University. Despite the name of the site, the association of the site with the historic Tunica tribe is far from certain.

Doris Stone, LAC Director and Long-Time Archaeological Enthusiast, Dies

Doris Zemurray Stone, most recently of Covington, Louisiana, died on October 21, 1994 at St. Tammany Parish Hospital at the age of 84. Her death was due to a series of strokes that she suffered after she made a trip to Ethiopia in September.

Ms. Stone, originally a New Orleans native, was a well known traveler, philanthropist, and supporter of archaeology in a variety of settings. Her travels took her to a variety of countries from Antarctica to Latin America to Mongolia. Among her many achievements was a comprehensive book entitled Pre-Columbian Man in Costa Rica published by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University.

Her last communication to the Louisiana Archaeological Conservancy was a letter expressing her regrets about not being able to attend the September meeting of the Board of Directors because of her trip to Ethiopia. Her concern and experience will be missed.
The Louisiana Geological Survey (LGS) has recently published the report on the work done at the Kleinpeter site in East Baton Rouge Parish in 1990. This work was funded by grants to the LAC from Ben Kleinpeter and the Greater Baton Rouge Area Foundation. Authored by Dennis Jones, Malcolm Shuman, Carl Kuttruff, and Joe Stevenson, this monograph consists of text, tables, and photographs, as well as several appendices, including a facsimile reproduction of the first scientific report on this important multicomponent site done in 1965. This report of over 300 pages is Number 5 in the Anthropological Series of the Survey’s publications. This series includes some of the pioneering reports on Louisiana archaeology from the 1930s by such authors as James A. Ford and Gordon Willey.

Copies are available for $15.00. Order from the LGS, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 44124, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, or call (504) 388-5320.

Louisiana Archaeology Week - 1994

Nancy Hawkins of the Louisiana Division of Archaeology reports that this year’s program was a big success with over 10,000 people attending or participating in archaeological activities throughout the state. Over 25 archaeologists were involved with lectures, tours, demonstrations, and artifact identification sessions in 37 communities throughout Louisiana.

Programs occurred in communities as widely dispersed as Ruston, Sulphur, Many, and Greensburg, as well as larger cities such as Shreveport, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans. Events were as diverse as tours of excavations at Orange Grove Plantation in Westwego, to demonstrations of prehistoric tools and tool making at Poverty Point, to and information booth at the Wooden Boat Festival in Madisonville.

Archaeology Week 1994 was made possible by through funding from Kisatchie National Forest, U.S.D.A.; the National Park Service, Department of the Interior; and the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of Cultural Development, Division of Archaeology. Nancy has already begun planning for Archaeology Week 1995 and welcomes any suggestions or notice of activities. She can be reached at (504) 342-8170.
LAC Makes Its First Award for a Student Paper

In June of 1994 the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Archaeological Conservancy made its first award for a student paper on the archaeology of Louisiana to Mr. Douglas C. Wells, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at Tulane University.

Well’s paper was entitled "Microregional Settlement Patterns in the Lower Mississippi Valley". This paper was delivered at the 1993 meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference (SEAC) that was held in Raleigh, North Carolina. The paper was presented as part of a general session on Mississippian studies.

Mr. Wells will be awarded a $100 cash prize for this award, as well as a certificate. The LAC encourages other students to apply. The intent of this award is to promote the development of professional archaeology in Louisiana and the surrounding area.

General Meeting of Conservancy Membership in Natchitoches

All members and interested parties are invited to a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Archaeological Conservancy (LAC) at the 6:00 p.m. on Friday, February 3, 1995. The meeting will be held in the Museum Annex in Kyser Hall at Northwestern State University, Natchitoches. This meeting will be the afternoon before the main Saturday and Sunday sessions of the Louisiana Archaeological Society (LAS). The LAC meeting is planned at this time in order to accommodate the greatest number of people and encourage the attendance of all interested in archaeology in Louisiana.

Hello and Goodbye

Mr. David Jeane of Springhill, Louisiana has agreed to serve on the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Archaeological Conservancy. David is well known to many in the archaeological community of Louisiana and surrounding states. Over the years, he has been an avocational archaeologist who had done work in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana with many professionals. He is very familiar with sites in northwestern Louisiana and should be able to help the LAC considerably in that part of the state.

Dr. William G. Haag recently sent a letter of resignation from the Board of Directors of the LAC. Citing poor health and overwork, he has wished us all well and wants to stay informed about our activities.

Mr. Robert Barham of Oak Ridge has also recently resigned from the LAC Board of Directors. Mr. Barham is intending to run for the state senate in northeast Louisiana and felt that his time will soon be taken up by campaign and (it is hoped) legislative duties. In any event, I’m sure all of us will be happy to have someone sympathetic to archaeological preservation in the legislature.