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An Analysis and Interpretation of the Ceramic Remains from
Two Sites near Beaufort, South Carolina

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AN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CERAMIC REMAINS FROM TWO SITES NEAR BEAUFORT, S. C.

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The pottery in this report was obtained during 1933 by a field party under the direction of Dr. W. K. Moorehead. Shortly after the field season was over, the Ceramic Repository received a shipment of sherds from both the Chester Field site and from the Lake Plantation. In January 1941, Dr. Flannery turned over to the Ceramic Repository a series of sherds from the Chester Field site and two sherds from a site on Jones Island. It is assumed that the pottery available for study is representative of the total collections obtained from each site, for the bulk of the pottery is in the Charleston Museum.

CHESTER FIELD

The Chester Field pottery is quite homogeneous in paste, temper, color, surface finish, and shape. It belongs to the fiber-tempered ware, which is apparently the oldest ceramic horizon in the Southeast. The best known site is that on Stalling's Island (Claffin, 1931) and the name of the site has been given to the pottery described in that report as belonging to the lower level. The pottery from the Chester Field site is similar to that illustrated by Claffin and to the sherds from Stalling's Island in the Ceramic Repository. It is also very similar to the ware called Saint Simons Fiber Tempered by Holder during his excavations near Savannah and to pottery from the Bilbo site near Savannah, which will be described by Waring. Since the Stalling's Island site is the only one now fully described in the literature, it is suggested that the names Stallings Plain (pl. 10) and Stallings Punctate (pl. 11) be applied to the pottery ware described below from the Chester Field site with the full recognition that they are essentially the same product. The type description will be headed Stallings Plain, but, with the exception of the decorative techniques described below, the type description applies to both divisions.

TYPE NAME: STALLINGS PLAIN

PASTE

Method of Manufacture.—A suggestion of colling or ring building on some sherds, but it is not too clear.

Temper.—Varying proportions of a fiber which has almost uniformly disappeared in firing, presenting a vesicular appearance. In some examples there is

a very small amount of fiber while in others the sherd is honeycombed. The majority of sherds have nonplastic inclusions very much like fine grains of sand, which were apparently inclusive in the clay. Some of the sherds have rather large (2 to 4 mm.) particles of rock.

Texture.—Cross-sectional appearance is medium fine to medium coarse; granular if fairly large sand particles are present and honeycombed if a large amount of fiber was used.

Hardness.—The exterior surface hardness ranges from 2 to 2.5. The majority can be scratched by the finger nail.

Color.—Almost always a dark grey to black core with narrow, lighter, oxidized surface layer. The exterior surface when oxidized ranges in the yellows and chocolate browns.

SURFACE FINISH

Exterior is roughly smoothed with a porous surface or is compacted due to surface smoothing. Usually both surfaces are treated in the same manner. Some of the sherds have an uneven surface, possibly caused by an impressing technique something like the so-called Simple Stamping found in the Southeast. Those specimens whose surfaces were not well compacted most clearly show the channels left by the disintegration of the fiber temper.

DECORATION

None. Described under companion type Stallings Punctate.

FORM

Vessels are from 15 to 30 centimeters or more in diameter. No whole vessels are known.

Rim.—Vertical to slightly incurving walls.

Lip.—Most commonly narrowed and rounded. Rarely a flattened lip.

Body.—Bowl shape only one known. No angled rims at Chester Field site.

Base.—Somewhat rounded to flattened.

Thickness.—Lip from 3 to 7 millimeters, rim and side wall from 0.6 to 1 centimeter, base 0.6 to 1 centimeter.

Appendages.—None. Examples of crack lacing (?) from Stalling's Island.

USUAL RANGE OF TYPE

Stalling's Island and related sites mentioned by Claffin. At least as far north along the coast as Charleston and south along the Georgia coast toward the St. John's area of Florida. Comparable types described by Holmes, Griffin, and Haag. Also mentioned by Kelly.

CHRONOLOGICAL POSITION OF TYPE IN RANGE

First pottery type at Stalling's Island, and Wheeler and Pickwick Basins in northern Alabama. Found in early levels at Savannah and along the Atlantic coast. Generally thought to be the earliest pottery in the Southeast.

The plain sherds are in the minority in the collection at the Ceramic Repository although this was probably not the case at the site. The accompanying table lists the sherds available for study according to surface treatment and decoration. The proportions would undoubt-

edly be changed with the complete sherd count from an archeological site of this horizon. The tabular presentation of the various decorative styles does serve, however, to indicate the prevalence of different kinds of punctating as the favored decorating technique.

The most prevalent punctating technique I have called linear punctate. The punch marks are placed in a straight incised line and were made at about a 45° angle to the surface. They are usually close together. Sometimes the punctates and the incised line were made as part of a single continuous operation. The size of the individual punctated line varies from 3 to 7 millimeters wide and they are usually 2 to 3 millimeters deep. The linear punctates are most often arranged in closely spaced rows which run parallel to the lip. The next most common orientation is to be placed vertically on the outer surface.

Individual punctates of varying shapes are sometimes arranged in orderly horizontal and vertical rows. While sherds differed as to the type of punctate impression which was used, no sherd carried more than one type of individual punctate. The punctates include small hemispherical depressions; circular with conical base, and many of these have ridges suggesting they were made by small marine gastropods; hemiconical punctates; large semicircles, perhaps made by a split reed; small, circular punctates; finger-nail punctates; and hollow-cylinder punctates.

The individual punctates and the linear punctates are often found on the same sherd. The size of the sherds listed as incised in table 1 offers no guarantee that there were not also punctates on the same vessel. While none of the pottery from Chester Field offers good evidence of the use of incising as a sole decorative technique the sherds illustrated by Claffin (1931) on plate 15 do show such treatment. Most of the sherds on plate 14 of the report on the Stalling's Island mound have a roughened surface similar to that mentioned in the type description given above of Stallings Plain. It is very suggestive of the surface treatment widely called "simple stamping" by Southeastern archeologists. Some advantage was taken of plain areas to separate linear punctated areas from other linear punctates or from groups of individual punctates.

Relatively little use was made of a curvilinear arrangement of linear punctates, or individual punctates in curved lines and nothing quite comparable to some of the patterns illustrated by Claffin (1931) on plates 19 and 20. The fiber-tempered ware at Stalling's Island itself is apparently more complex, i. e., it has more variety in surface treatment and decoration, and in the angled rim possesses a modification of the bowl shape which is apparently absent at the Chester Field site. While Claffin stated that the tempering material of the Stallings

types at Stalling's Island was primarily grit, that does not seem to be the case with the relatively small number of sherds in the Ceramic Repository from that site. All of the sherds belonging to the Stallings types had varying amounts of fiber included in the paste. There are also other kinds of nonplastic material in the clay including small quartz and other grit particles which, because of their rounded edges, were probably waterworn and inclusive in the clay beds. This is also true of the Chester Field sherds.

The two sherds from a site on Jones Island are Stallings Punctate specimens. One of these is a linear punctate and the other is a curious paired punctate such as could have been produced by the distal end of the femur of a small mammal. (See pl. 12.)

LAKE PLANTATION

The pottery in the Ceramic Repository from Lake Plantation is assumed to be characteristic of the site as a whole (pl. 12). It presents a decidedly more complex ceramic picture than did the Chester Field site. The accompanying table presents the variation in surface treatment and decoration found on sherds possessing different types of tempering material.

On the basis of other excavations in the Southeast, particularly those recently made by Holder (1938), Fewkes (1938), and Caldwell and Waring (1939), it can be safely assumed that all of the sherds listed above are not assignable to a single cultural group at a single time period. As has been mentioned above, the four sherds of the fiber-tempered ware belong in the Stalling's Island culture. The tentative sequence presented by Caldwell and Waring (1939) for the area around Savannah, which is contiguous to the Beaufort area, strongly suggests that the sherds called Deptford and perhaps those with simple stamping, belong in the first ceramic period following the fiber-tempered horizon. The majority of the rest of the sherds belong in the Savannah period, but their exact allocation is difficult due to the paucity of the sherds and the absence of rims. The clay-tempered sherds that are probably closely related to Wilmington Heavy Cord Marked apparently belong somewhere in between the Deptford and Savannah periods. One of the plain, sand-tempered sherds has the remains of a red slip which has almost disappeared. It was probably applied after firing. This treatment is found in Florida pottery. The net-impressed sherd is an apparent anomaly in this area.¹

The absence of pottery of the Irene period at this site is noteworthy. The Irene period began during the Lamar Focus period

¹ Holder (1938) reports net-impressed pottery at a mound on the north end of Sea Island.

in central Georgia and continued into the historic period. On the basis of the available ceramic material, we would not expect to find European trade goods at this site.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT

It is unfortunate that the artifacts obtained by Moore along the South Atlantic coast have not been reexamined by students familiar with the current progress in the Southeast. The brief mention in his reports of sites in the Beaufort area which yielded cord-marked sherds, or those with cord-marked and stamped sherds, are tantalizingly indefinite. The sites which appealed to Moore were usually the large, more complex units of the Irene or Savannah periods with the result that the majority of the pottery he illustrates does not belong to the earlier periods from which the pottery described in this report was obtained.

A report on the archeology of a small area near Charleston, S. C., sheds some light on the northern distribution of some of the pottery types.² The illustrations clearly indicate the presence of Stallings Punctate sherds with individual and linear punctates. There are also sherds related to the Deptford horizon and to Wilmington Heavy Cord Marked. The majority of the sherds, however, belong to the complicated-stamp group and range from the early Brewton Hill type down to the Irene Filfol Stamp type which comes into the historic period. This surmise is borne out by the presence of glass beads and European clay pipes on the site. Thus, if this area was occupied by the Sewees alone at the early historic period and the Sewees were Siouan, we would have still another archeological complex to add to the already remarkably diversified material culture remains of that linguistic stock. If the occupants of the Charleston area who left the Irene Complex were Muskhogean, it would agree linguistically with the closely related sites in the central Georgia area.

It would be advantageous to have the archeological material attributed by Claffin to the later period at Stalling's Island reexamined in the light of recent Southeastern developments. As Claffin (1931) pointed out, certain of the types attributed to the later period are found alone on other sites and the great variety of ceramics discussed by him does not indicate cultural contemporaneity for the assemblage in the Augusta area.

Excavations in the Savannah area, the most recent of which has been by Waring, indicates not only that the fiber-tempered ware is the oldest, but that there is strong indication of stratigraphy

²Gregorie (1925). A representative collection of sherds from this site in the Ceramic Repository certify to the accuracy of the drawings in Dr. Gregorie's report.

within that horizon.³ At the Bilbo site, Waring found no pottery in the lower level of a deep refuse midden. His second zone contained fiber-tempered plain ware while the third zone introduced a strong proportion of decorated fiber-tempered ware. In the top and surface zone Waring found sand-tempered pottery of the Deptford horizon with conical to round bases and some tetrapodal supports. The rest of the cultural items from this site fit in well with the Stalling's Island complex.

The excavations by Preston Holder (1938), on and near Saint Simons Island south of the mouth of the Altamaha River, uncovered considerable evidence of different archeological groups. At the Charlie King site, the fiber-tempered ware was predominant. Also present was a cord-marked type and a checked-stamp type. The mound described by Holder for this site was probably not erected by the makers of the fiber-tempered pottery. The Sea Island site yielded a high percent of net-impressed clay-tempered pottery while other sites showed a high proportion of fine cord-marked pottery and still others a dominance of complicated stamped ware of the Irene period.

In the Macon area, Kelly (1938) has mentioned the presence of a fiber-tempered ware at the Swift Creek, One Mile Track, Shell Rock Cave, Macon Plateau, and the Stubb's Mound and Village Site. He suggests that it belongs in the Early Swift Creek period. Unless the central Georgia area sequence and cultural association differs from that to the east and northwest, such a contemporaneous ceramic grouping would not be expected. However, the complete evidence on the sites from the Macon area has not been presented and until that time further speculation is not warranted. Other units of Kelly's early Swift Creek period such as the Mossy Oak Simple Stamp type, the plain plaited fabric pottery, plain-surface sherds, and early check-stamped types have been segregated in contiguous areas into what are apparently more meaningful cultural divisions. Again, full comparative treatment must await more complete publication.

A small collection of pottery from Wilkes County, Ga., in the Ceramic Repository, indicates the presence of the fiber-tempered ware up the Savannah River Valley northwest of Augusta.

The coastal area of Georgia and South Carolina form a significant unit of the fiber-tempered ceramic ware which is different from the St. Johns development on the one hand and the fiber-tempered ware in northwest Alabama on the other. (Griffin, 1939; Haag, 1939.) In this latter area the ware has a plain surface, is simple stamped,

³ Waring, T., verbal report at the Fifth Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Baton Rouge, La., 1940.

punctated, or dentate stamped. The simple stamping is somewhat more common than in the Stallings Island Focus,⁴ while there is a marked absence of the linear punctate in the Tennessee Valley. The individual punctating is not as varied in type nor as regularly applied as in the Stallings Punctate specimens. The dentate stamp impressions form a distinctive Tennessee Valley style which may be related to one style of Deptford Linear Check Stamp. It is certainly related to the dentate stamp of the early Woodland and Hopewellian pottery in the north.

From the illustrations of Wyman (1868) and Holmes (1894), it is probable that the St. Johns area had significantly different fiber-tempered types, which would certainly suggest a different cultural grouping if not a different time horizon. The strong use of incised decoration including the use of a curvilinear scroll is not compatible with the style of decoration in the Stallings Island Focus or in north-west Alabama. This decorative style is usually found at a much later time period. Unfortunately there are no examples of the fiber-tempered ware from east Florida available for direct comparison.

SUMMARY

The pottery from the Chester Field site identifies it as a component of the same cultural division as the Stallings Island complex. This is the oldest ceramic horizon in the Southeast. The pottery from the Lake Plantation indicates greater cultural diversity and a longer time period of aboriginal occupation. It is related on the one hand to the stamped ware of the Southeast and on the other to the cord-marked pottery which is common throughout the entire area east of the Rocky Mountains.

TABLE 1.—*Fiber-tempered ware from the Chester Field site*

| Type | Surface treatment and decoration | Sherds | | |
|-------------------------|--|--------|------|-------|
| | | Rim | Body | Total |
| Stallings plain..... | | 8 | 20 | 28 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Linear punctate, various shapes..... | 22 | 29 | 51 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Linear punctate plus finger punctate..... | | 2 | 2 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Linear punctate plus circular punctate..... | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Linear punctate plus incised..... | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Individual punctates of various shapes..... | 15 | 25 | 40 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Individual punctates—circular to conical punctate..... | 9 | 13 | 22 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Large U-shape punctate..... | | 5 | 5 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Finger pinched..... | | 1 | 1 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Incised..... | 3 | | 3 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Incised plus punctate..... | | 1 | 1 |
| Stallings punctate..... | Heavy cord marked..... | | 1 | 1 |
| Total..... | | 57 | 99 | 156 |

⁴ This term is used as a convenient one to express the close similarity of a group of coastal sites.

TABLE 2.—*Fiber-tempered ware from the Stallings's Island site, from Ceramic Repository Collection*

| Type | Surface treatment and decoration | Sherds | | |
|--------------------|--|--------|------|-------|
| | | Rim | Body | Total |
| Stallings plain | | 1 | 15 | 16 |
| Stallings punctate | Linear punctate | 9 | 29 | 38 |
| Stallings punctate | Individual punctate | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Stallings punctate | Linear punctate plus individual punctate | | 1 | 1 |
| Stallings punctate | Linear punctate plus incised | 1 | | 1 |
| Stallings punctate | Simple stamp | | 1 | 1 |
| Total | | 15 | 48 | 63 |

TABLE 3.—*Pottery from the Lake Plantation in the Ceramic Repository Collection*¹

| Pottery | Sherds | | |
|--|--------|------|-------|
| | Rim | Body | Total |
| Stallings plain | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Stallings punctate | | 2 | 2 |
| Deptford linear stamp | | 1 | 1 |
| Deptford Bold Check Stamp | | 10 | 10 |
| Sandy tempered check stamp related to Savannah check stamp | | 16 | 16 |
| Sandy tempered complicated stamp perhaps related to Savannah Complicated Stamp | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| Sandy to grit tempered plain surface | 5 | 15 | 20 |
| Coarse grit tempered with heavy simple stamping | | 5 | 5 |
| Sandy tempered cord marked, related to Savannah fine cord marked | | 30 | 30 |
| Clay tempered cord marked related to Wilmington Heavy Cord Marked | 1 | 20 | 21 |
| Clay tempered net impressed | | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 10 | 110 | 120 |

¹ 31 of the best sherds from this site were loaned to Joseph Caldwell at Savannah, Ga., for comparative purposes in the summer of 1939.

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EXPLANATION OF PLATES

PLATE 10

Figure 1.—Stallings Plain sherds from the Chester Field site.

- a, b,* Bowl rims with well compacted outer surface.
- c,* Bowl rim with the small channels of burned-out fiber clearly visible.
- d, e,* Body sherds with roughened surface or simple stamping.
- f,* Body sherd with well smoothed surface. (U. M. M. A. 4287.)

Figure 2.—Stallings Punctate sherds from the Chester Field site.

- a-c,* Bowl rims with individual punctates.
- d,* Incised.
- e, f, h-j,* Body sherds with single punctates.
- g,* Pinched style of punctate.
- k, l,* Finger nail individual punctate.
- m,* Cord-marked body sherd which may not belong to the Stalling's Island Focus. (U. M. M. A. 4288.)

PLATE 11

Figure 1.—Stallings Punctate sherds from the Chester Field site.

- a-g,* Bowl rims with various styles of linear punctates.
- h,* Individual punctates placed unusually low on outer rim.
- i,* Body sherd combination of incised and linear punctate.
- j, k, and m,* Various styles of linear punctate on body sherds.
- l,* Finger punctate and linear punctate on same sherd. (U. M. M. A. 4289.)

Figure 2.—Check stamped and Cord Marked sherds from the Lake Plantation.

- a, b,* Deptford Bold Check Stamp.
- c,* Deptford Linear Check Stamp.
- d-f,* Check Stamp sherds probably of Deptford horizon.
- g-k,* Cord-marked body sherds with sand and grit aplastic.
- l-o,* Clay tempered Wilmington Heavy Cord Marked sherds. (U. M. M. A. 4290.)

PLATE 12

Miscellaneous sherds from Lake Plantation and two Stallings Punctate sherds from Jones Island.

- a, b,* Plain surface sand-tempered rims.
- c,* Net impressed.
- d,* Fugitive red, sand-tempered body sherd.
- e-h,* Sand- and grit tempered sherds with simple stamp impressions.
- i-j,* Indistinct complicated stamp sherds with grit temper.
- k, l,* Stallings Punctate sherds from a site on Jones Island. (U. M. M. A. 4291.)