

Nancy Marie White, pp. 1-28. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

Milanich, Jerald T.

1994 *Archaeology of Precolumbian Florida*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

Weisman, Brent R.

1992 *Excavations of the Franciscan Frontier: Archaeology of the Fig Springs Mission*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

Worth, John E.

2012 An Overview of the Suwannee Valley Culture. In *Late Prehistoric Florida: Archaeology at the Edge of the Mississippian World*, edited by Keith Ashley and Nancy Marie White, pp. 149-171. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

### St. Johns Archaeological Field School: Silver Glen Springs Run

Asa R. Randall and Kenneth E. Sassaman

The St. Johns Archaeological Field School in 2012 continued investigations of the precolumbian history of Silver Glen Spring run, one of the most intensively and longest-occupied landforms along the St. Johns River. Fed by the first magnitude Silver Glen Spring, the run issues into Lake George. Prior to shell mining in the 1920s, this landform housed at least four shell mounds in addition to a variety of shell and non-shell bearing deposits. This season brought together students from the University of Florida (UF) and the University of Oklahoma (UO), who conducted separate block excavations at a Mount Taylor shell mound and a St. Johns II village, in addition to reconnaissance survey. They also greatly enjoyed the hospitality of the Juniper Club, who have graciously hosted the field school since 2007.

One area of concentrated investigations is the remnants of a 200-m long shell ridge, referred to as Locus A. Our prior excavations demonstrated that shell mining left intact escarpments on the margins of the mound. When cut back and excavated down to basal deposits these 3-m deep profiles provide windows into the mound's history during the Mount Taylor period. This season, we shifted strategies and excavated five 2-x-2-m units arranged in a 6-x-4-m block with the goal of delineating architecture and affiliated features. These units intercepted 1.5-m thick basal deposits not impacted by the mining process. The search for discrete habitation spaces did



Figure 6. Micah Monés excavates a final level in the excavation block at Parnell Mound alongside a remaining portion of the three meter long profile of Feature 1.



**Figure 7. UF students excavating at the Silver Glen Springs Run site.**

not pan out. Instead, we encountered two episodes of intensive pit digging. The younger pits, lying near the current ground surface, possibly date to approximately 6300 years ago. These tended to be straight-walled with round to flat bottoms and measured 1- to 1.5-m wide and up to 1 m deep. The pit bases were often heavily oxidized suggesting they were initially used for roasting. Most exhibited complex fill sequences composed of alternating shellfish species and contained a diverse faunal assemblage along with objects typical of the Mount Taylor period, such as bone and marine shell tools. These pits intruded into a much older deposit characterized by organically enriched soil with some shell and vertebrate fauna. Continued excavation revealed that this deposit was in fact an amalgam of pits that measured up to 1-m wide and 1-m deep. These are differentiated from the upper pits by containing considerably less shell, no clear evidence for burning, and diffuse margins. Their depth and disposition suggested that they were very old, which is borne out by a radiocarbon assay placing their fill as early as 8800 years ago. This assay is the oldest for a shell-bearing deposit in Florida and fills in a crucial time period otherwise obscured by rising water tables on the St. Johns. Future research will be required to confirm this find, but it highlights how Silver Glen Springs has been an important location for most of the Holocene. In this regard, the results of a vibracore survey of the wetlands fronting Locus A—conducted this season by UF Ph.D. student Jason O’Donoghue whose dissertation research considers the importance of springs and wetlands to inhabitants of the St. Johns—will no doubt be instructive.

The second major project of the 2012 field school was expanded testing at Locus C, a ridge nose overlooking the spring pool of Silver Glen (Figure 7). Prior testing at Locus C established the presence of a well-preserved assemblage of pit

features and middens dating primarily to the St. Johns II period. Block excavation at the north end of the site, overlooking the pool, is aimed at locating definitive evidence for architecture, and beyond that, community patterning. Prior survey across the landform showed that pits and subsurface midden deposits are arranged in circular fashion around an area (plaza?) devoid of shell. Structured by the dissertation research of UF Ph.D. student Elyse Anderson, testing at Locus C this year expanded the north block to follow posthole patterns observed last year, and opened units in east-central portion of the “plaza,” as well as downslope, towards the pool, where a 1.5-m-thick midden extends back into St. Johns I and Orange times. Anderson’s research engages the analytical potential of relational ontologies in explaining patterned variation in faunal remains. Spatial dimensions of the village layout, such as cardinality, are expected to have counterparts in the way animal remains are treated, particularly as deposits. Much fieldwork is needed to sample more broadly across the entire village, but one unusual find this past summer suggests that more surprises may be in store. In a test unit located equidistant between the spring pool and a sand burial mound 250 m to the southeast, the students encountered a large, shallow pit filled with ash and unburned snail shell. An AMS age estimate on charcoal from the pit is pending, and it could prove to be an Orange period pit (two areas of intensive activity during the Orange period lie to the south and east). Either way, its location between the pool and the boil is not likely to be coincidental.

Finally, as part of our dual research and teaching mission, all field school students are trained in reconnaissance techniques. Using LiDAR and aerial imagery, we identified a ca. 400-m long, 3-m high landform deep in cypress swamp to the south of the spring run. This arrangement is consistent with other known Mount Taylor shell mounds in the region, and

we hypothesized that this feature represented an unrecorded mound. Initially with trepidation and then zeal, the survey crew cut a 600-m long transect through the swamp. At the end, the students did not discover a shell mound, but instead something just as interesting. The “mound” is actually a relict sand dune or terrace consisting of well drained sand. Shovel testing recovered a low-density but nonetheless fascinating assemblage of large St. Johns Plain and Check Stamped sherds. Continued testing of this site will be necessary to fully understand its significance, but the social and ecological conditions that brought attention here during St. Johns II times deserve considered thought.