

RESULTS FROM JUNE 20, 2011

The heavy downpour on Saturday overloaded our plywood and left several hundred gallons of water pooled on top of the westernmost units. So, our day began with a bucket brigade removing the water.



With that task out of the way, we continued to excavate the midden deposit from Feature 119. At this point, it appears that this feature was a large “borrow pit” – a pit excavated as a source of clay. Given the size of the pit, this clay was probably used as plaster for structure walls. After the needed clay was mined, the pit was subsequently filled with trash – broken pieces of pottery, fragments of chert or flint from making and repairing stone tools, animals bones discarded after meals, etc. The pit seems to have been filled relatively quickly (a few days or weeks) rather than over a long period of time – the fill in the pit is relatively homogeneous and shows little signs of being exposed on the surface for very long. One item found today was what appears to be a crude chunky stone – basically the “ball” for an important game played by Mississippian peoples throughout the Midwest and Southeast.



We continue to host a number of visitors to the project – today, Mark Norton, archaeologist with the Department of Environment and Conservation, stopped by to inspect the excavations. Below Michael, Mark, and I discuss the progress.



Atop Mound 3, major features have begun to appear at the base of Level 2 (20 cm/10 inches deep). In the photograph below, a prepared clay surface is visible at the upper right of the excavation.



In the westernmost units on Mound 3, we are actually at the very edge of the base of the mound. Here, we have reached a midden (trash) deposit that was put in place before the construction of Mound 3. This deposit is extremely important for us – it represents the trash discarded by the first Mississippian period people who lived at the site – and before the mounds were constructed. Most of this early midden across the site was scooped up as fill for the mounds themselves – the only place it survives is beneath the mounds. In the photo below, the size wall of the excavation unit shows the 10-15 cm thick midden deposit as the black band of soil across the center of the wall (with plowzone above and yellow/brown clay subsoil below).



The ceramics from this pre-mound midden, like that shown at the right, are relatively early – probably AD 1200. This fragment of a large pot exhibits a handle with two peaks on the lip. The shape and form of handles changes over time, so we can tell something about the timing of certain site features by the types of handles that show up. These trends are basically similar to how cars change over time – even if you don't know a great deal about cars, most people can recognize an older car versus a newer car by the general shape and other features.



Back at Feature 119, several interesting ceramic rims were excavated today – including the “head” from a blank-faced hooded bottle shown below.



By the end of the day, more units on Mound 3 were down to the base of Level 2 – revealing more of the yellow-brown clay feature on top of the mound.

