

FACTS AND COMMENTS

ONE FOOT IN A GRAVE

Since the building of the Henry Dam at Ohatchee, Alabama, the Coosa River now covers much land previously used for farming and timberland. This land includes a large portion of the Homer Cooper farm, where in 1963-64 the Nockalula Archaeology Chapter uncovered a large Indian burial site, Woodland and Mississippian periods. A number of trade items were recovered from the burials. Numerous house patterns were apparent from the post molds uncovered.

During the winter months the water is low, making it possible to explore the islands in the river for washed-up burials and other artifacts. A portion of land from which the burials were removed is above water a few months of the year.

My husband and I and my son and his wife were hunting points and other relics one sunny afternoon on this island, when suddenly the ground seemed to drop out from under me. I had stepped on a spot where animals had burrowed underneath, leaving the top soil intact. My foot went through the hole into the water underneath. When we discovered that I had stepped in a grave, we worked carefully to recover everything possible from the mud.

It was an adult burial, containing only a few bones and teeth. Nine copper gorgets, all different sizes, were recovered, along with two shell ear pins, hundreds of glass beads, blue and black colored, shell beads, copper rolled beads, and rattlesnake back-bone worn on the necklace. A portion of the flax string was still in the beads. A knot tied in a rawhide thong was found. A copper buffalo effigy was also recovered.

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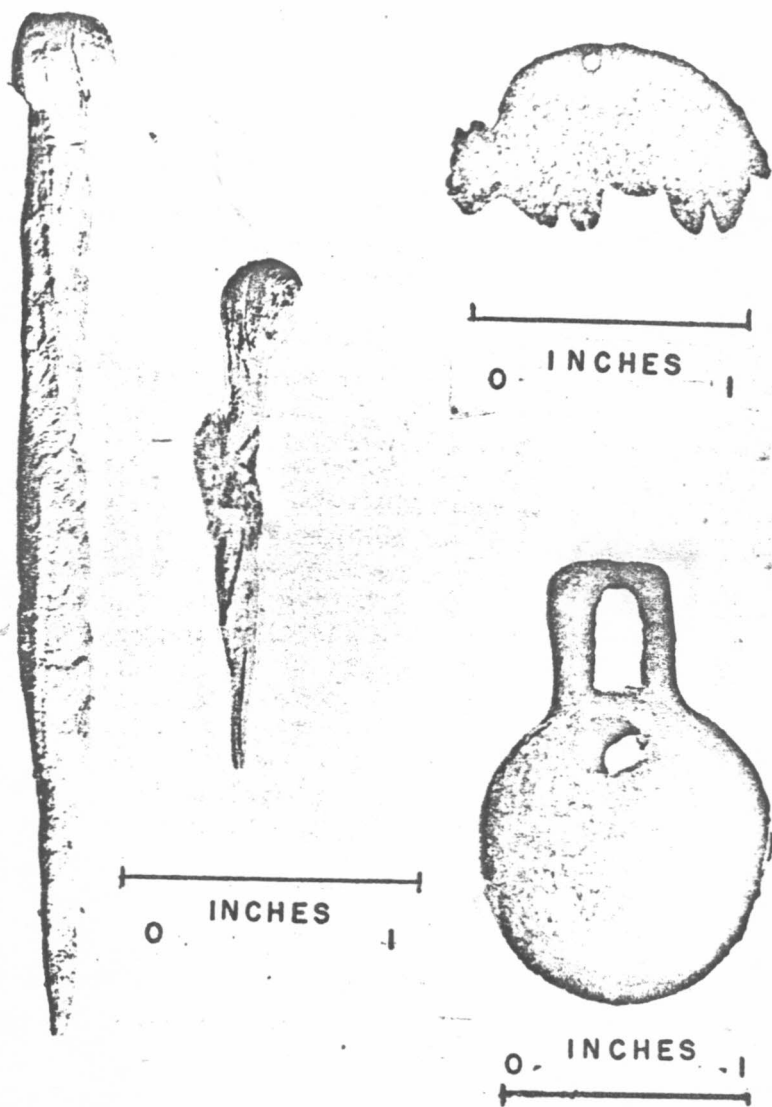


FIG. 1. Copper buffalo effigy, shell pins and brass bell from burial.

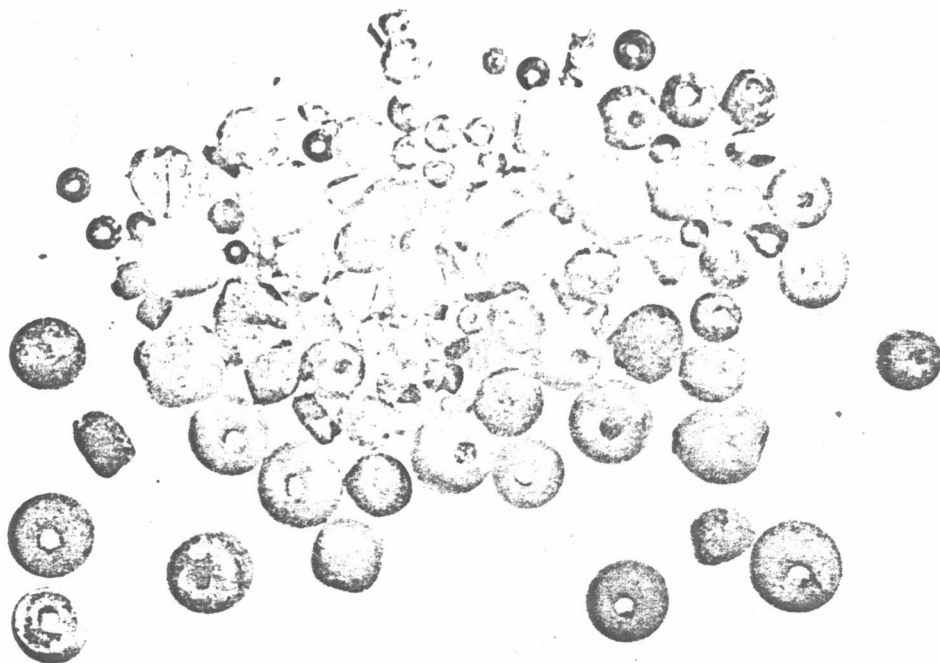


FIG. 2. Blue and black glass beads, found by the hundreds in burial.

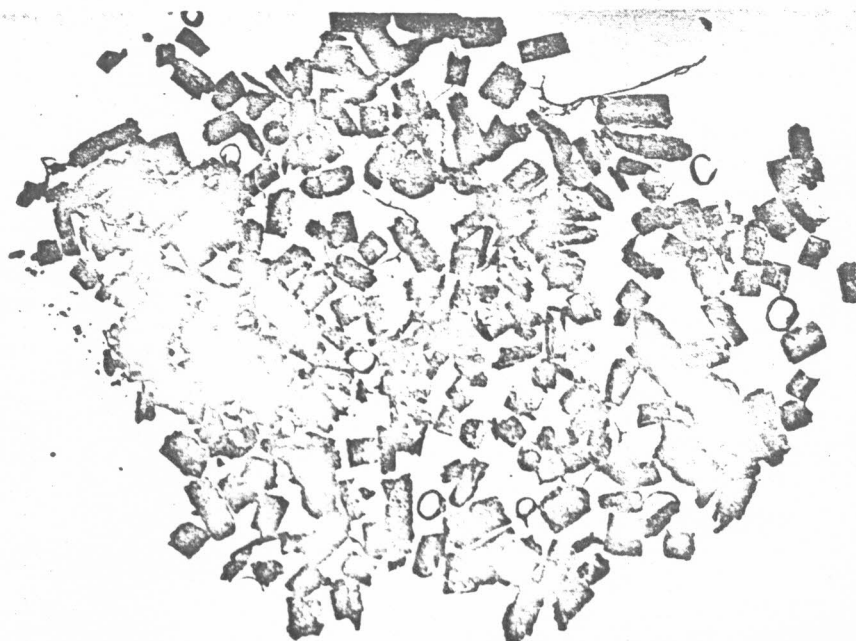


FIG. 3. Copper rolled beads, some still retaining flax string.

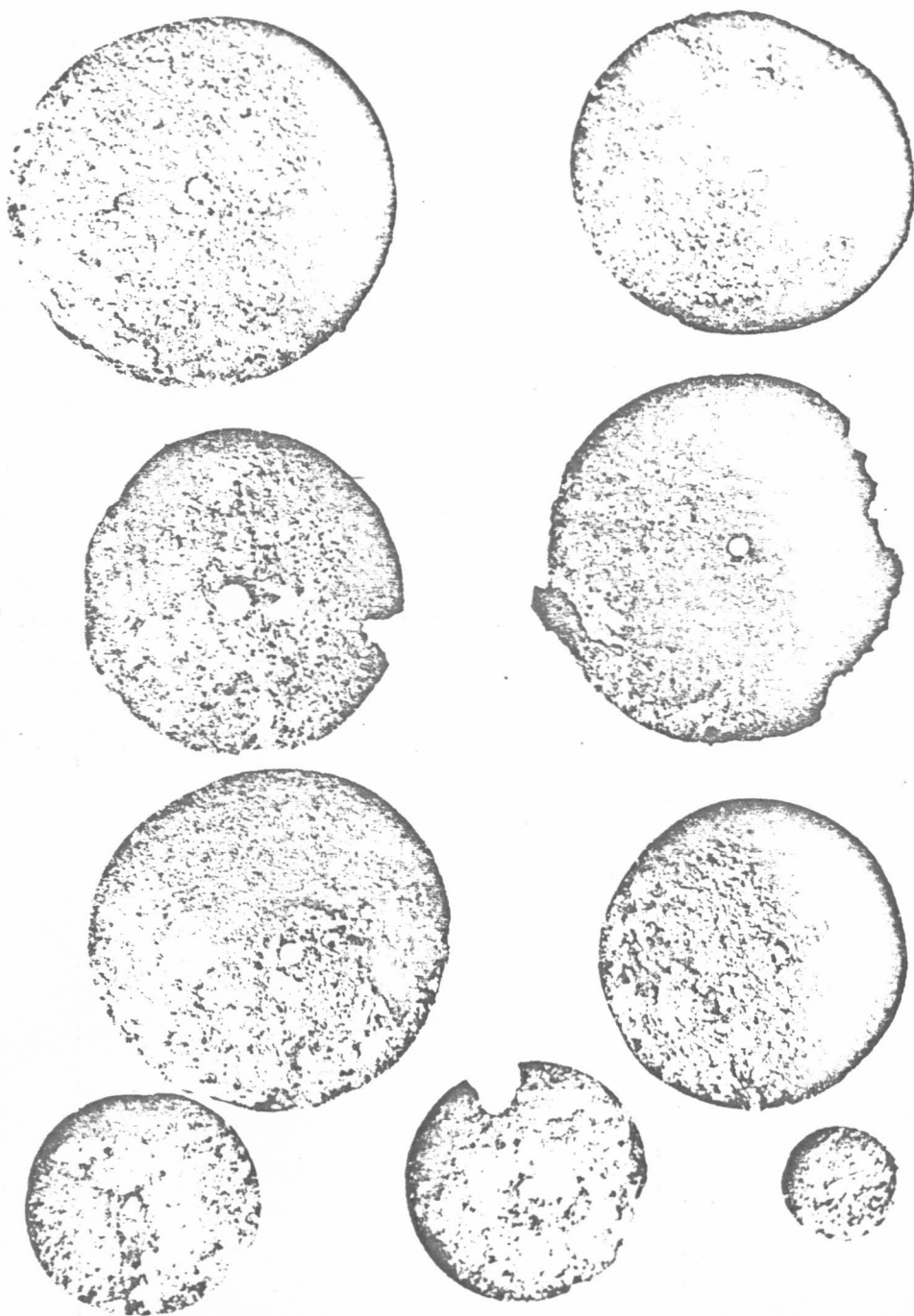


FIG. 4. Copper gorgets of various sizes from Cooper Farm burial.