

Koehler, Thomas H.

1966 Archaeological excavation of the Womack mound (22Yal). *Mississippi Archaeological Association Bulletin* 1.

Phillips, Philip

1970 *Archaeological survey in the lower Yazoo basin, Mississippi, 1949 - 1955.* Peabody Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Rucker, Marc D.

1974 *Archaeological survey and test excavations in the upper-central Tombigbee River valley; Aliceville-Columbus lock and dam and impoundment areas, Alabama and Mississippi.* Department of Anthropology, Mississippi State University, Starkville.

THE RICE SITE: A NATCHEZ INDIAN CEMETERY
by Joseph V. Frank III

ABSTRACT

Rumors of Natchez Indian pottery and French trade goods being recovered near Emerald Mound, Adams County, Mississippi motivated the author to locate and examine the Rice site.

The Rice site is situated on the west bank overlooking a small tributary of Dunbar Bayou on the Rice Estate. Initial reconnaissance revealed an oil tank battery with a small retaining wall (Fig. 1). French and Indian artifacts were strewn about the location. Later it was learned that at least four individuals had made private collections from the site.

THE SITE

The cemetery is approximately 9.5 meters by 5.4 meters. Surface remains have been collected from a larger area, but the landscape has been drastically altered by oilfield operations making it difficult to ascertain the exact boundaries of the original site. The cemetery was under and around the tank batteries and retaining wall. The construction of the retaining wall, tank batteries, and pipeline ditches left no burial undamaged, some even being totally destroyed or completely redeposited. The related village site has not been found.

The cemetery is located on an extended ridge top, roughly 220 feet

pp. 32-41

JACKSON, MISS.

above Mean Sea Level. The soil is fertile with hardwoods being the dominant vegetation. There is an abundance of animal life at the site, and fresh water is readily available from the small spring-fed bayou.

BACKGROUND

The Natchez tribe became officially known to the white man when La-Salle visited them in 1682. Between 1682 and 1732 there were six armed conflicts between the French and the Natchez. There were the Three Natchez Wars in 1716, 1722, and 1722-24 (Albrecht 1944). In 1729, the Natchez massacred the inhabitants of Fort Rosalie (1716-29); then in 1730 the French attacked the two Natchez forts, Farine and Valeur, only to have the Natchez escape. Finally in 1731 a combined force of French and Indians under the command of Governor Perier attacked the Natchez at their fortifications near Sicily Island, Louisiana, and dispersed the Natchez (Green 1936). After 1732, the remaining Natchez were considered fugitives by the French. The period between 1682 and 1732 was a period of decline for the Natchez tribe (Swanton 1911).

An important factor to the archaeologist was the relationship between the Indians and Europeans in trade matters. The Natchez continued their ancestral practices but after 1682 incorporated European trade items with their burial wares, i.e. glass beads in place of shell beads.

Numerous other historic cemeteries along the eastern bluffs of the Mississippi River contain European trade goods. Oak Bend Landing, Trudeau, Ring, and Angola (Brain 1973, 1977; Ford 1936; Moore 1911) possess both Natchez Indian ceramics and trade items. Since several of these sites are identified as Tunica sites, the Fatherland site (Neitzel 1965) was the only documented Natchez village with burials until the Rice site was located. Rice has historic connections with the Pumpkin Lake and Nail sites. These sites are located along Coles Creek and may have been members of the pro-English faction of the Natchez villages (Brown 1972). The Rice site also has historic ties with Fatherland, the pro-French faction of the Natchez villages.

BURIALS

The testing of the Rice site was based on the amount of artifacts on the surface and areas that appeared least disturbed. Time was not sufficient to permit a total excavation. Five burials were located (Fig. 2).

In a short period of time it became obvious that the impact of heavy machinery was more destructive than originally estimated. Bone was scarce, badly crushed or deteriorated, but pit outlines could be clearly delineated, even when grading and oil saturation had been harmful.

simple bowl was found in Burial II. This vessel had a single line below the rim and three lines forming a curvilinear pattern around the vessel.

Shell-tempered square vessel. Type of unknown origin. It was found at the head of Burial I. Small square vessel with incurving rim. Single curved incisions extended from the rim to the base.

Mazique Incised var. Manchac. One vessel. Globular jar with herring-bone pattern from rim to the middle of the vessel. It is from Burial I.

Addis Plain var. Addis. One pedestalled bowl from Burial II. One carinated bowl from Burial I. One simple bowl from Burial V. One simple bowl from Burial III. Two simple bowls from Burial II.

Addis Plain var. Radcliffe. One simple bowl from Burial IV. One simple bowl from Burial V.

Addis Plain var. St. Catherine. One pedestalled bowl. This vessel may have originally been decorated. A single line runs just below the exterior rim and parallels it. Another similar line runs parallel to the base of the vessel. It is from Burial II.

Lithics

Two discoidal chunky stones were the only stone artifacts found with the burials. A tan sandstone chunky stone was associated with Burial IV. The pink chunky stone from Burial II was made from ferruginous quartz.

European Artifacts

European artifacts came in two major classes: metal objects and glass trade beads. Metal artifacts consisted of the following:

Iron. One iron ring 6.5 cm. in diameter was found in Burial I at the neck region (encrusted with three blue and two white seed beads). An iron axe was recovered from the chest region of Burial V. It was constructed by wrapping one long slab of iron around an anvil and forging the two ends to form the blade. The loop end had been broken off prior to deposition with the burial.

Copper. Seven copper beads 6 to 12 mm. long and 5 mm. in diameter were recorded from Burial II.

Glass. Glass beads were abundant and easily identified. These can be sorted into a number of categories:

Large blue. Five beads. Opaque beads which are round and of simple construction. Fine lines run the length of the beads.

Blue seed. 1378 beads. Opaque beads, doughnut-shaped beads of simple construction.

White seed. 115 opaque beads, doughnut-shaped of compound construction.

Purple seed. 17 beads. Opaque beads, doughnut-shaped of simple construction.

Translucent blue seed. Five beads. Translucent beads, doughnut-shaped of simple construction.

Translucent green seed. Three beads. Translucent beads, doughnut-shaped of simple construction.

Miscellaneous Grave and Surface Goods

This category includes all local finds not associated with the five burials. They were sorted into aboriginal artifacts and European trade items.

Aboriginal Artifacts.

Ceramics: possibly 25 aboriginal vessels are in private collections.

Lithics: three thumbnail scrapers (approx. 2 cm in diameter) have been found on the surface of the site.

European Artifacts.

Copper tinklers:	10
Copper bells:	4
Brass bell:	1
Iron axe:	1
Mixed glass beads (mostly seed beads):	20,000

CONCLUSION

The archaeological evidence from the five recorded burials at Rice clearly indicate an historic Natchez cemetery. It is safe to say that the burials occurred during the period between 1682 and 1730.

Proximity to the Natchez Trace and the central location of Rice between the northern historic Natchez sites of Pumpkin Lake and Nall and the southern historic site of Fatherland make Rice a prime location for socio-religious (Burial Area) interaction among the villages. The occurrence of Emerald Engraved pottery with the Rice burials, and the short distance to Emerald Mound suggests a possible link between the two sites.

Unfortunately, for all concerned, the work done at Rice had to be salvage. Each time the site was revisited it had been altered in some way. This is also true at Ben Lomond and Antioch (historic village sites). The former is about to become a subdivision and the latter suffers periodically from blading to clear a powerline.

Field work is desperately needed in the Natchez area where urban expansion