

COOPER FARM SALVAGE PROJECT

pp. 22-29

Mrs. E. M. Lindsey

House sites and burials accompanied by a variety of grave goods have been encountered on the Cooper Farm site near Gadsden in Etowah County, Alabama, in the course of a salvage project by the Noccalula Chapter of the Alabama Archaeological Society. The site is a sand and gravel pit, the materials currently being used for highway construction. Located on the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Homer E. Cooper in Whorton's Bend 6 miles south of Gadsden, the area excavated was some 100 to 300 feet from the Coosa River. The scattering of the burials was apparently due to deep plowing in somewhat eroded sandy ground. The farm was surface collected by Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Barker. The Noccalula chapter began salvage operations in October, 1962, but work was temporarily halted because of curiosity seekers and other interference. A number of house sites were partially uncovered and left. The work area had been graded over by the time work was resumed in February, 1963.

The house patterns were approximately 5.5 by 6 feet and the houses were apparently floored with poles 4 to 5 inches wide placed one to 2 inches apart. Large chunks of charcoal were uniformly present, with the grain of the wood often apparent. Several posts were recovered from the post molds. Most were of heart pine; one was either oak or walnut. Often there was a burned puddled area nearby.

Burial 1 was recovered by Mrs. Richard E. Battles and Mrs. D. L. Gober. Much skeletal material was present, accompanied by a shell tempered pot near the head, several hundred blue beads varying in diameter from one sixteenth to one quarter of an inch, two copper alloy arm bands, and four large copper alloy bells approximately 2.5 inches in diameter.

Burial 2 Ford Willett recovered practically no skeletal material, the burial having been disturbed by the grading equipment. Associated were ochre, a buckskin jacket with two 1-inch brass bells, three points, and several quarter-inch blue beads. Hair and animal fiber from this burial are unidentified.

Burial 3 was dug up by the grading equipment. There were at least 300 quarter-inch beads; most were dark blue transparent, some clear. Bones and human teeth were recovered; Dr. E.M. Lindsey estimated the person to be in his late twenties by the condition of the wisdom teeth. One copper alloy arm band was found.

Burial 4 Ford Willett called "The Hatchet Man". The burial contained two iron axes and a shell tempered pot.

Burial 5 had been partially unearthed by the grader. It contained one very large arm band, a breast plate, very large beads, and a platform sandstone pipe. The next day in the dirtfall taken from this area two large copper alloy bells almost 3 inches in diameter were found. All of this was recovered by Mrs. W. J. Barker. Ochre was present in abundance.

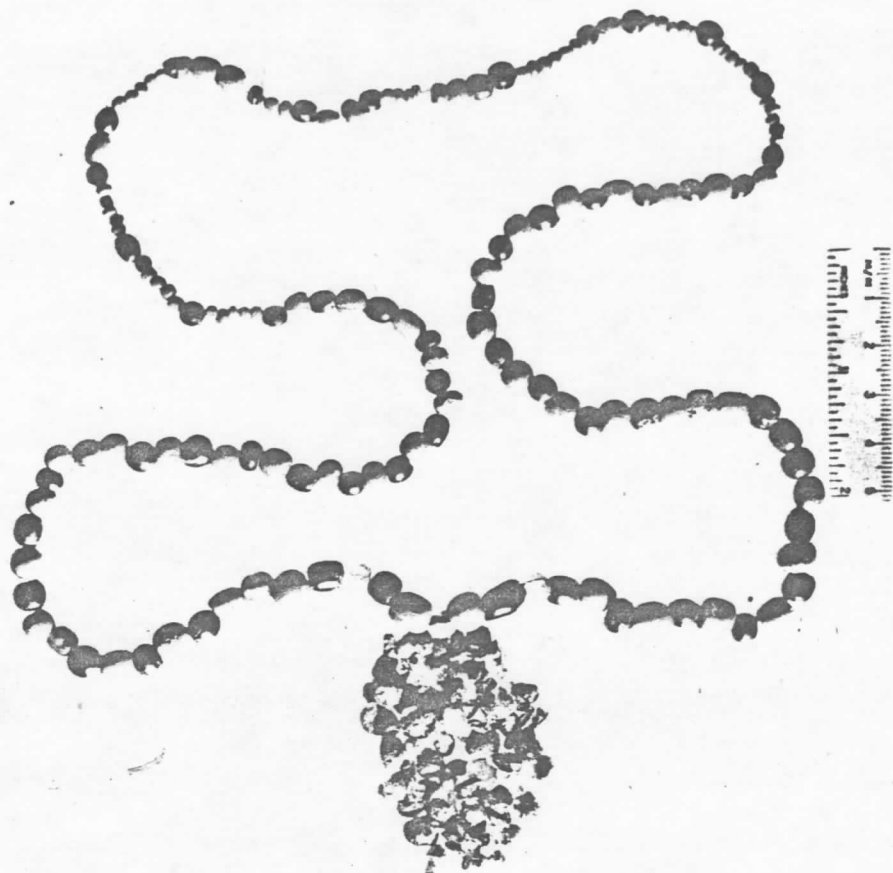


Fig. 5. Trade beads from Burial 6.

➔ *Burial 6* was recovered by Mrs. W. J. Barker and Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Hawkins about 12 inches below the plow zone. The burial was on its back in a semiflexed position. A knife with a 6-inch blade was at the right shoulder, a tomahawk at the right side. Each upper arm had an arm band. Some 400 large beads were recovered. At the knees were 34 well made points identified by Dr. A. G. Long of Guntersville as Guntersville Pentagons. A dark area around the points indicated they had been in a pouch of some kind. Two small bells and buckskin were found in the leg area; some of the buckskin had been worked with copper; some had not. The grave had been puddled and there was a split cane mat underneath. Some of the woven cane mat was recovered intact. The body had seemingly been wrapped in animal skin. Most of the burial was covered with ochre; in places as much as three quarters of an inch deep. This ochre was identified by G. M. O'Mahoney of Decatur and Chemstrand Corporation as similar to C. I. Pigment Red 101 and 102, widely in use today. There were remains of a beaded headband of small sixteenth-inch blue beads. Crushed beads covered the grave area. The leg bones looked as though they had been broken and put in position. The dirt above the burial contained five uniface scrapers.



Fig. 6. Armband with portion of bone recovered from Burial 6.

→ **Burial 7** was that of a small person. Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Barker and Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Hawkins uncovered it. This person was thought by Dr. Lindsey to be about 35 years old, judging from the teeth. Five half-inch blue beads were found in the dirt above the burial, which was semiflexed and lying on the left side. Twelve iron bands were in the left hand or on the left wrist. Both upper arms had copper alloy arm bands, and the right forearm had a copper alloy arm band. A copper alloy collar had rolled copper alloy jingles attached. One thousand or more sixteenth-inch beads were in the neck area. Some beads contained thread, identified by Ross Morrell as natural flax. One shell hair pin or ear plug was recovered, as well as a badly deteriorated metal object which was either a knife or a scissors. The grave had been puddled clay and there was a split cane mat, the cane a quarter inch wide. There was evidence of the skin of some animal.

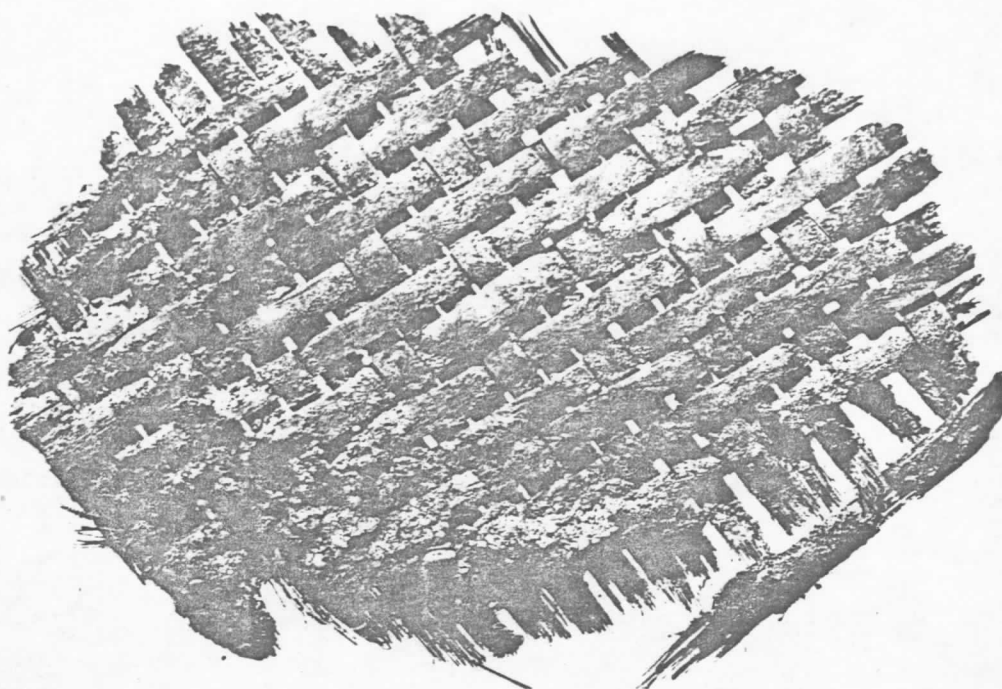


Fig. 7. Woven cane matting from Burial 7.

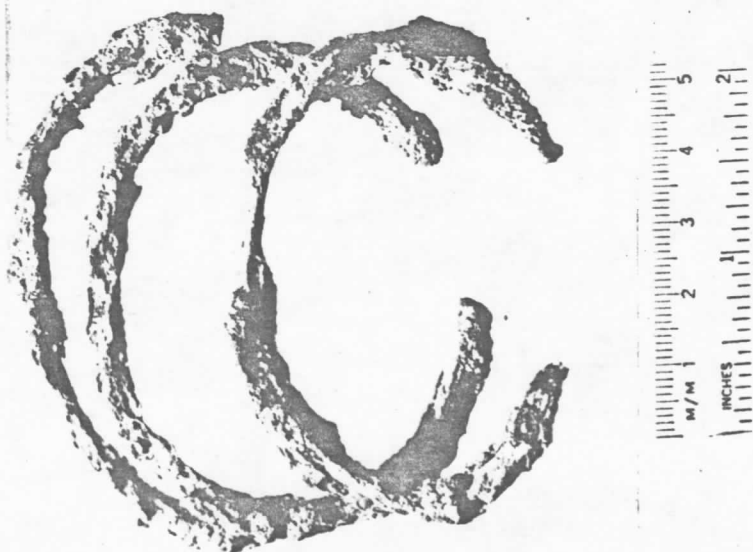


Fig. 8. Iron bracelets at wrist and hand of Burial 7.

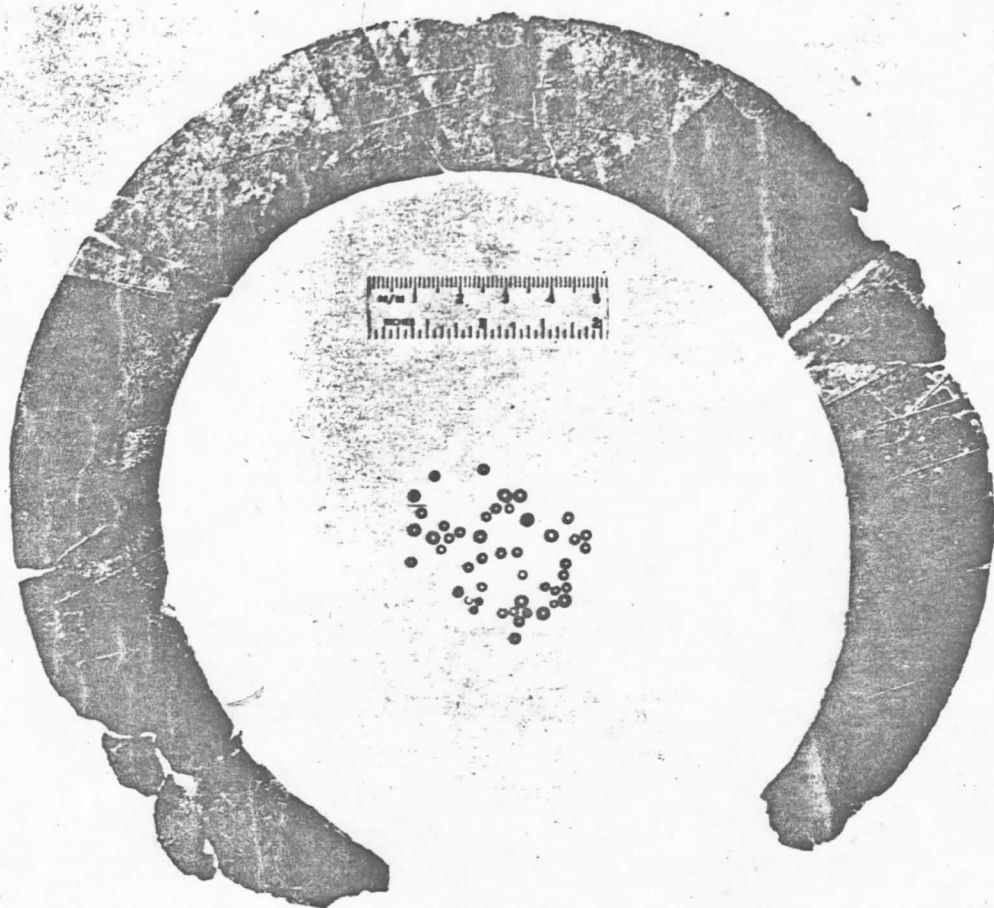


Fig. 9. Copper crescent breast plate and small beads found in neck area of Burial 7.

Burial 8 excavated by Tom Clontz and Dr. Lindsey, was that of a very large person, perhaps six feet tall. The skeleton was face down with absolutely no grave goods. The vault had been puddled clay and there was one large rock to the side of and slightly beneath the head.

Burial 9 uncovered by Ford Willett, was a complete skeleton approximately 5 feet 8 inches tall lying on its back with arms folded across the chest. The lower legs were flexed tightly. Twenty-six well made Gunter'sville Pentagonal points, some as long as 2.5 inches, were near the knees. This skeletal material was the best found; there had been no puddled vault.

Burial 10 excavated by Ford Willett, was a child burial accompanied by two copper alloy disks, one 3 inches and one 5 inches, and four bells about 2 inches in diameter, two of which had been at the wrist and two at the knees.

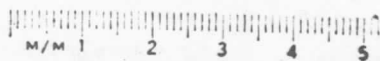
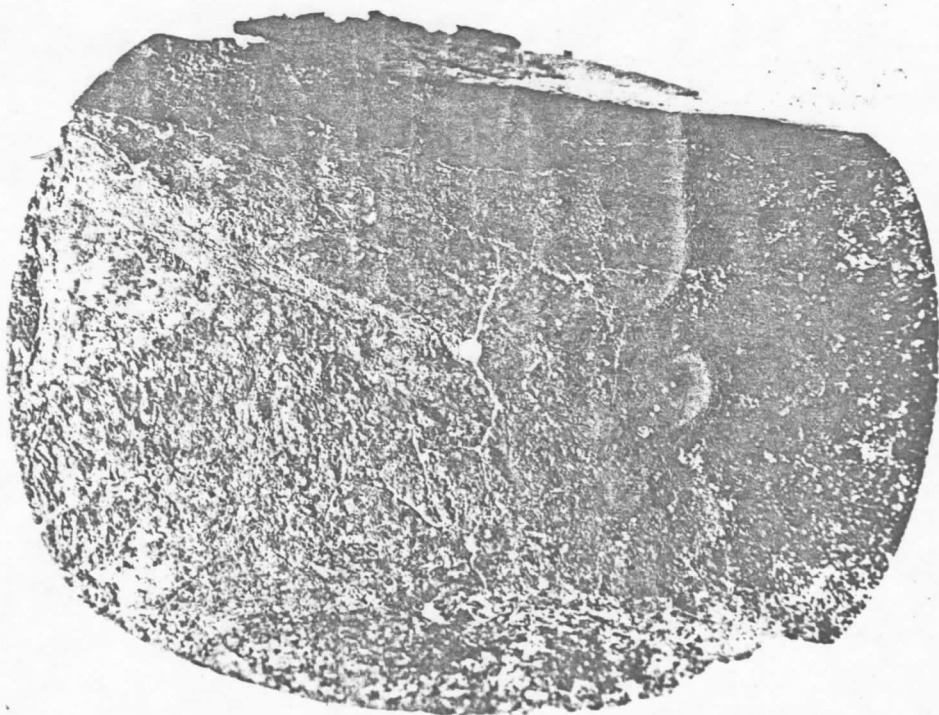
Burial 11 Ford Willett called "The Rock Man," as there were a number of large rocks in the fill dirt. There was an abundance of Ochre, a pot, and six large points.



Fig. 10. Pipe from the refuse pit at Cooper Farm.

Fig. 11. Breast plate found at Cooper Farm, not in association with any burial.

(All photos by Long.)



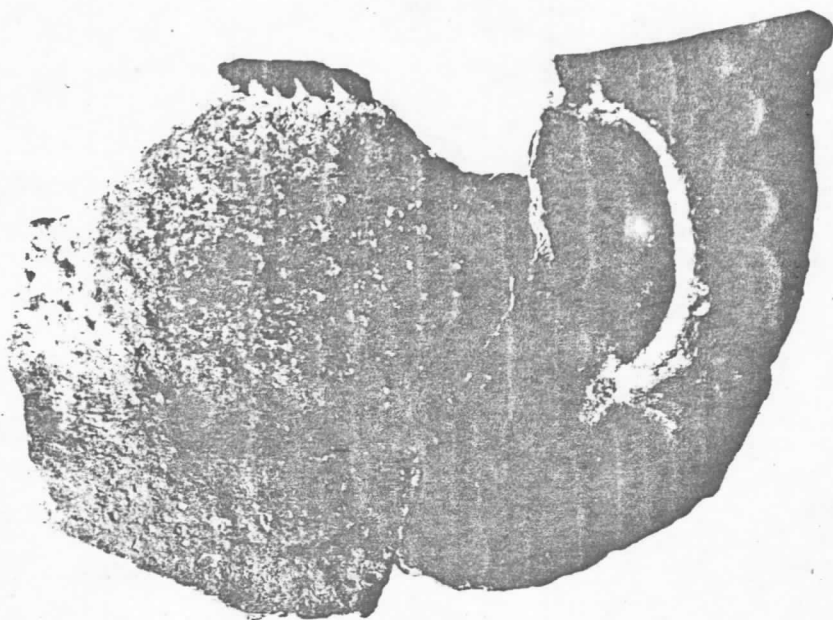


Fig. 12. Plain shell handle and sherd from refuse pit at Cooper Farm.

Burials 12, 13 and 14 badly disturbed, consisted of three skulls and numerous other bones removed from a test trench on a very sandy knoll. Mrs. Barker, Mrs. Battles, Mrs. Gober and Dr. and Mrs. Lindsey cooperated in the dig. A great many beads were found; most were small and light blue, a few were light green. It was reported by an elderly farmer that long years ago he and others had plowed up bones, beads, teeth and pots. This was especially so in the sandy soil where the plow would ride deep in the ground.

Burials 15, 16 and 17, all of which were even more badly disturbed, were located in the same area. They were worked by Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Hawkins and Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Barker. The bones were thought to be those of two adults and one child. Two copper alloy arm bands, two shell hair pins, seven points, and three bells were among the grave goods. There were portions of a black and a white pot as well as a number of amber and clear deep rose beads. Some teeth or claws turned green by copper and a part of a copper alloy collar were found. Six uniface scrapers, some rolled copper alloy beads, and bits of leather were also found.

Burial 20, uncovered by the J. W. Hawkinses and T. L. Clontz, contained one anvil stone, one uniface end scraper, one flaking tool in the area of the right hand, and chips that looked as if they had come from the end scraper. Discolored dirt around the anvil made it appear that it might have been in a carrying pouch.