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INTRODUCTION

The Ruth Smith Mound (8Ci200) is located about 1.2 km southwest of the Withlacoochee River and 0.7 km east of Lake Tsala Apopka in Citrus County (Figure 1). Before the land containing the mound was cleared for pasture, it was covered in dense oak scrub. The soil in the site area consists of excessively drained, very sandy soils of the Candler-Adamsville-Pompano association (Bureau of Comprehensive Planning 1975:11). The site derives its name from the owner of the land upon which it is located, Mrs. Ruth Smith. The mound was discovered around 1955 by two of Mrs. Smith's sons. They came upon the mound, which was then located in an area of dense scrub and live oaks, while searching for stray cattle.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, many local collectors dug in the mound and removed human skeletal remains, aboriginal artifacts, and a number of artifacts of early Spanish origin. In the late 1970s, the mound was destroyed with a bulldozer during clearing of the land for pasture.

Various people who have artifacts from the mound were contacted and have loaned collections to the Florida State Museum for study. These collections include several types of aboriginal pottery, such as sand-tempered plain, Pasco Plain, St. Johns Plain, St. Johns Check Stamped, Safety Harbor Incised, Pinellas Incised, Fort Walton Incised (Willey 1949), and a cord marked sherd. Also included are a large number of shell beads, a steatite bead, and two shark teeth (from Odontaspis taurus, a sand tiger).

European materials in the collections consist of 19 Nueva Cadiz glass

beads, 3 chevron glass beads, 7 silver disc beads, 1 rolled silver bead, and 1 rolled gold bead. A large iron chisel or celt was also recovered from the mound (see Fairbanks 1983:19).

The Nueva Cadiz beads are especially important for dating, because they were only made and used from A.D. 1500 to 1560 (Smith and Good 1982:10-11). The chevron beads were produced and traded over a much longer period, and are found in early sites as well as in many post-1565 contexts (Smith and Good 1982:56). A detailed report, focusing on the European materials in the amateur collections, is in preparation (Mitchem et al. 1984).

CULTURAL AFFILIATIONS

On the basis of the artifacts mentioned above, the site appears to be a burial mound of the Safety Harbor culture. The Safety Harbor culture lasted from at least A.D. 1300 until approximately A.D. 1700 (Milanich and Fairbanks 1980:23), and is the archaeological manifestation of the aboriginal groups (Tocobaga and possibly others) who were present in the Central Gulf Coast area when early Spanish explorers, such as Panfilo de Narvaez and Hernando de Soto, landed along the Florida Gulf coast in the early 1500s.

Bullen (1978:50) suggested that the Tocobaga resided along the coast from about Sarasota to Tarpon Springs at the time of European contact. Recent research, however, has demonstrated that sites with predominately Safety Harbor artifacts occur as far south as Lee County (see Widmer 1983:150; William H. Marquardt, personal communication 1983), and at least as far north as Crystal River. Further, Willey's (1949) Safety Harbor

Apalachicola River Valley in northwest Florida, but there is no evidence other than a superficial resemblance to suggest that the sherd is of Georgia or northwest Florida origin. Alternatively, the sherd could be from the Glades area in southern Florida, as some of the wares from that area contain large inclusions as well (Goggin 1944).

The second anomalous sherd bears surface decoration produced by impressing the wet clay with some type of fabric (Figure 3). There is an Alachua tradition pottery type called Prairie Fabric Impressed (Milanich 1971:35-36), but this particular sherd more closely resembles Dunlap Fabric Marked, an Early Woodland pottery type most commonly encountered in central and northern Georgia (Sears and Griffin 1950:1-3). Dunlap Fabric Marked pottery has only been reported at two peninsular Florida sites. Sears (1982:26, 28) recovered one sherd of the ware at the Fort Center site. Another sherd was surface collected at a site near Lakeland in Polk County (Mitchem 1984). The fact that Dunlap Fabric Marked is an Early Woodland (ca. 700 B.C. - A.D. 1) type argues against assigning the Ruth Smith sherd to this category unless it is intrusive. It most likely represents a variant of Prairie Fabric Impressed.

The third anomalous sherd is sandtempered with an eroded exterior surface. The faint decorations on the sherd are from either fabric marking or stamping with a carved paddle.

Modern Artifacts

The nine modern artifacts from the excavations are listed in Table 1. All of these were found on the surface of the site.

INTERPRETATIONS

Examination of the pre-1984 collections from the Ruth Smith Mound

revealed that the site is a Safety Harbor burial mound which was in use during or shortly after the period of initial European contact (A.D. 1500-1560). The 1984 excavation produced no evidence to contradict this interpretation, and provided data which permit broader inferences to be made about the site and its original occupants.

Differences are evident in the ceramic assemblages present at Ruth Smith and those recovered from Safety Harbor sites in the Tampa Bay area. One major difference is in the types of utilitarian wares recovered. Around Tampa Bay, Pinellas Plain is often found in large quantities in mound and habitation areas (Willey 1949:482; Griffin and Bullen 1950; Bullen 1951:28; Sears 1971:55; Milanich 1972:29; Luer and Almy 1980:211; Widmer 1983:150). At the Ruth Smith Mound, however, the primary wares found are Pasco Plain and sand-tempered plain. These two types are the main utilitarian wares found in the Cove of the Withlacoochee area at earlier, prehistoric sites. Pasco Plain is rarely found from Tampa Bay southward. As noted earlier, one sherd with laminated paste similar to Pinellas Plain was recovered at Ruth Smith, but this is not "typical" Pinellas Plain like that found at sites around Tampa Bay (Willey 1949:482).

In addition to paste composition, vessel forms also exhibit some variation. The bottle and collared jar vessels characteristic of many Safety Harbor sites (Willey 1948:481; Sears 1967) are entirely absent at Ruth Smith. Most of the vessels and sherds examined in the collections and recovered during the excavation represent hemispherical open bowls or variations on globular bowl forms. Rim forms vary from incurved to outflaring (Mitchem et al. 1984).

It appears that most of the vessels interred in the mound are