Uncovering Features: Highlighting Late Woodland to Historic Activity at the Topper Site (38AL23)

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Introduction:
In May of 2015, field schools from the University of Tennessee and Mississippi State University, in conjunction with the Southeastern PaleoAmerican Survey, collaborated on a month long project at the Topper Site (38AL23) in Allendale County, SC (Figure 1).

There were multiple components to this project including an intensive shovel test pit survey, a GPR survey of the immediate area surrounding the previously identified Topper Site, the continuation of block excavations to assist in a Clovis Period lithic refitting project, and the opening of new units associated with older excavations.

The focus of this poster is the preliminary results from new 2m x 2m units that were opened up on the hillside. These units were initially excavated in arbitrary 10 cm levels down to the bottom of the historic Plow Zone, approximately 20-30cm below surface.

Field Methods
Upon removal of the plow zone via shovel skimming, approximately 20-30cm below surface, 95 features and probable features were uncovered and recorded (Figure 2). Plan view maps of the two separate 2m x 2m units were created followed by excavations of each feature or probable feature. Feature fill was bagged for subsequent processing and analysis at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

Laboratory Methods:
Weights and volumes were recorded for all samples prior to processing and all information was recorded in a centralized Access database.

Preliminary Results:
While flotation of features has not been completed yet (10 features remain to be processed), we present here our preliminary results. Of the 95 features, 13 features contain high botanical counts, almost all of which are associated with the large, circular, flat-bottomed features that were excavated (Figure 3), and all but one of these features also possess higher charcoal counts when compared to the rest of the currently processed features.

No large lithic artifacts were found during the flotation of the features, but a large number of smaller flakes and debitage was recovered (Figure 4), with one feature (TSF 143) possessing a significantly larger count than all of the other features combined. TSF 143 is also one of the few non-large, circular features that possessed high botanical counts.

Conclusions and Future Directions:
The artifacts and feature density of the Woodland deposits, as identified from excavated diagnostic ceramics, that were uncovered during the summer 2015 field season at the Topper Site are comparable in age and density to the Late Woodland assemblage that was excavated at the G.S. Lewis-West site a few miles to the north at the confluence of Upper Three Runs Creek and the Savannah River (Sassaman and Hanson 1990; Stephenson and Civitello 2001; Stephenson and Smith 2013). The G.S. Lewis-West site also yielded a massive Deepford assemblage, however, there is not a comparably dense Deepford occupation at Topper in the area examined to date.

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References:


Stephenson, Keith and Jamie Civitello 2001 Recent Analysis from the Woodland Period G. S. Lewis-West Site Along the Middle Savannah River. SCIAA Legacy, 6(2):8-9.