

Newsletter



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A Dated Coles Creek Context with Maize at Greenwood

by C. Andrew Buchner

The Tallahatchie and Yalobusha rivers join at Greenwood, forming the Yazoo River, and the floodplain here contains an impressive array of archaeological sites, ranging from Civil War forts and shipwrecks, to Native American mounds, shell middens, and camps. The majority of the prehistoric sites contain poorly understood Woodland components. During January 2017, a crew from Panamerican Consultants, Inc. conducted Phase II testing of a multi-component prehistoric site (22LF1007) with a substantial Woodland component in advance of the construction of a natural gas pipeline. While the testing was restricted to three small bore pit locations, at Bore 2 intact portions of two Coles Creeks pit features were identified in the subsoil. The larger of these, Feature 1, was a straight-sided, flat-based pit 40-x-70 cm in plan that extended 111 cm below surface (Figure 1). F-1 was lined with mussel shells, and was completely excavated with >50 percent of the fill being processed by flotation. It yielded 320 counted artifacts, principally large well-preserved clay-tempered ceramics, but also including some non-diagnostic lithic artifacts, as well as abundant faunal and floral remains.

The most outstanding trait of the ceramic complex at site 22LF1007 is that it appears almost completely utilitarian, as it consists of largely of Baytown Plain, *var. unsp.* (62.8 percent) and Mulberry Creek Cord Marked, *var. unsp.* (35.0 percent). The predominant vessel form appears to be large jars with recurvate orifices, and square, flat bases. However, the recovery of a burnished Baytown Plain, *var. Vicksburg* vessel from F-1 is significant, because otherwise the assemblage is difficult to precisely place chronologically. Phillips (1970:57) indicates *var. Vicksburg* is a marker type for the late Coles Creek Kings Crossing phase (ca. A.D. 950-1050). Williams and Brain (1983:103-104) note that *var. Vicksburg* vessels are commonly beakers or bowls. The site 22LF1007 *var. Vicksburg* specimen appears to be from a large unrestricted bowl.

Given the absence of these other Vicksburg set marker types, coupled with the low frequency of Baytown Plain, *var. Vicksburg*, the assignment of site 22LF1007 as a King Crossing phase component is tenuous. Additionally, the site location lies beyond the northern limit of the distribution of Kings Crossing phase sites (Phillips 1970:Fig. 446; Williams and Brain 1983:Figure 11.14).

The F-1 ceramic assemblage and its associated AMS date (Beta-458755) of cal. AD 1025 indicates an occupation contemporary with the Kings Crossing phase. F-1 likely reflects the activities of a single family over a short period of time. Faunal and floral remains were well-preserved and revealed that the site inhabitants consumed deer and fish (from both slackwater and

President's Letter

My term as your President is drawing to a close soon. We will have new elections for all officers at our State Meeting that will occur from March 2-4, 2018.

This year's meeting is on the Coast and will be held at the Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum in Biloxi. You can pre-register through the MAA website on the "Meetings" page. This year's banquet will be held at the Seafood Museum and will be buffet style by Bacchus Catering. You can pay for banquet admission through the MAA website, too.

The Margaritaville Resort Biloxi Hotel has a block of rooms reserved for our members at a reduced rate. Be sure and reference the MAA to receive the discounted rate. Contact them for reservations at 228-271-6377. My wife and I stayed there earlier this month and were pleased with the accommodations. The resort is not a casino.

There has been a call for papers and I encourage those interested in presenting to sign up. Both professional and avocational papers are welcome. Contact our meeting organizer Haley Streuding at hstreuding@coastalenv.com to get on the list. The deadline for your abstract is February 16th.

I would like to thank everyone who is a member of the MAA. You are all members of a worthwhile organization. To become a 2018 MAA member go to the "Join" page on our website.

I appreciate everyone who participated in our various committees, events and meetings over the last two years. Thank you all for your valued help. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at this year's State Meeting in March!

Tony Payne
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riverine habitats), as well as a diverse array of plant foods. A large, complete raccoon baculum (penis bone) that was recovered from F-1 may represent an amulet for love or luck, or be a tool, such as a bodkin (a blunt needle), rather than a food item.

The archaeobotanical remains from the site 22LF1007 Bore 2 locus are of considerable interest, as they reveal a reliance on both cultivated and wild plant foods. The profile for carbonized seeds in the flotation sample from F-1 is diverse, indicating both the cultivation of at least two plants other than maize, along with the collection of at least a couple fleshy fruits. The presence of maize (corn) in both F-1 and F-2 suggests it was a foodstuff, although it cannot be regarded as a paramount crop. Brain (1989) suggests that Coles Creek people practiced corn-based, swidden agriculture, and site 22LF1007 data appear to confirm this. Corn agriculture is considered part of the Mississippian influences that began to be incorporated into the local Coles Creek possibly as early as A.D. 1000 (Brain 1989; Williams and Brain 1983). The corn from 22LF1007 is one of the earlier dated maize examples from the lower Yazoo Basin, and is roughly contemporary with the corn from F-12 at the Rock Levee site. Williams and Brain (1983; Brain 1989) suggest that by A.D. 1200 there was direct contact of the indigenous Coles Creek people with Cahokian influences from the north, and that then the Mississippianization of the lower Yazoo Basin began in earnest.

The 22LF1007 Phase II report is final (see MDAH Log #01-064-16, Leflore County), and any MAA members interested in a copy may contact me in Memphis at 901-454-4733 to obtain one.

Spring Events at the Grand Village of the Natchez

11th Moon Storytelling
Saturday, January 27, 5:30 pm.

Native Americans in the pre-contact period relayed their histories and cosmological beliefs through oral history and storytelling. These stories, often described as myths or legends, centered around the natural and supernatural phenomenon that comprised the world around them. Figures and scenes from these stories can be discerned in the iconography of the

network of Native Americans from the southeastern portion of North America. Modern scholars have begun linking these motifs to the tales collected among Native Americans in the post-contact era. Studies have also linked the stories and iconography to celestial bodies thought to have important roles in the cosmological beliefs of American Indians. Everyone is welcome to join local storytellers under the stars

and near a fire to hear a selection of these stories while images of related iconography and celestial bodies are displayed. Representatives from the Natchez National Historical Park will be on hand with telescopes to provide instruction and opportunities to view celestial bodies following the storytelling. Refreshments will be provided. The event is free.

"Middle Archaic Effigy Beads: The Horned Owl Motif" – Sam Brookes
Thursday, February 22, 6 p.m.

Effigy beads are now a documented index artifact of the Middle Archaic time period of 4,000 – 3,000 B.C. Retired archaeologist Sam Brookes will describe and illustrate a recurring motif found on some of these beads, the horned owl motif. The horned owl is interpreted as an iconographic motif, and Brookes will attempt to place this motif in Middle Archaic religion and also tie it to a specific type of owl. Several of the beads described in the talk can be viewed in the newly opened Museum of Mississippi History located in Jackson. The event is free.

30th Annual Natchez Powwow
Saturday, March 24, and Sunday,
March 25

Traditional Native American dancing, singing, and fun comes to the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians for the 30th annual Natchez Powwow on March 24 and 25. This year Damon Roughface of Oklahoma will serve

as master of ceremonies, and Darsh DeSilva of Texas, will be arena director. Head Singer Mike Shawnee of Oklahoma will lead the talented singers. Mason Bighorse of Oklahoma will serve as the head man dancer, while Sukie Monoessy from Oklahoma will be head lady dancer. Craft and food booths will open at 10 a.m. on March 24 and 11 a.m. on March 25. Bring your own seating. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$3 for ages twelve and under.

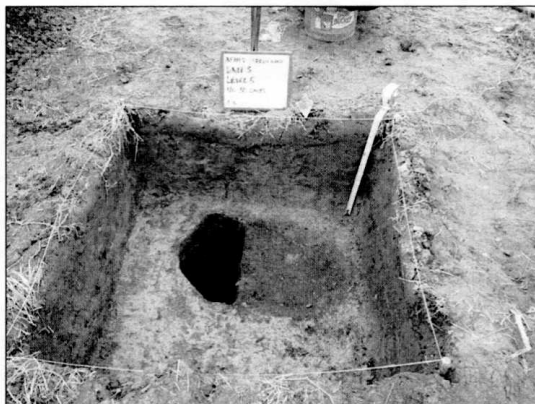


Figure 1. Site 22LF1007 Feature 1 section at 50 cmbs.

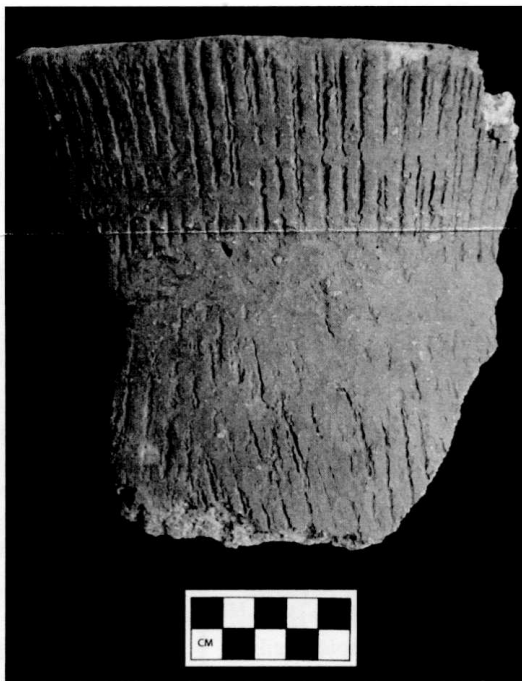


Figure 2. Large Mulberry Creek Cord Marked, var. Unspecified jar rim section from 22LF1007 Feature 1.

Feature 766 from the Austin Site (22TU549): An Unusual Cache of *Megaloniais nervosa*

by William D. Harris,
Mississippi State University

Located near the northern end of the Yazoo Basin, the Austin site (22TU549) represented what was once a moderate to large-sized palisaded village and mound settlement inhabited during the terminal Late Woodland to Early and Middle Mississippian periods (ca.900-1400 A.D.) (Hunt 2017). The integrity of the site has been dramatically altered or destroyed by land-leveling activity in recent years. Fortunately, extensive salvage efforts were undertaken beforehand by John Connaway of the MDAH between 1988 and 1991. This work included large-scale exposure, mapping, and excavation of burial and structural features found beneath the plowzone of the village area. In addition, work included large-scale excavation into the mound remnant itself where, unsurprisingly, numerous architectural features were uncovered (Hunt 2017). As with any settlement-sized mitigation project, this work produced an enormous quantity of artifact material, not all of which has been formally inventoried or studied (John Connaway personal communication 2017). Fortunately, scholarly attention towards these artifacts has renewed in recent years, and the materials are currently undergoing reanalysis. Results of some of this work have been reported elsewhere (see Hunt 2017; Perash et al. 2012).

F-766 Recovery and Context

Here, I report on the contents of a recently-processed feature F-766 (approx. 1 ft. in diam. and 6 in. in depth) from Austin, a small basin-shaped pit (see general description of Austin pit shapes in Hunt 2017:100-103) with a concentration of freshwater mussel (Unionidae) shell. The circumstances of the discovery of F-766 are not certain, plowzone had been mechanically stripped from much of the site, and it is not known whether it had been exposed through these means, or by hand excavation, it is also not known whether it was truncated or significantly disturbed during recovery. Regardless, the feature was removed *in situ*, curated for some time, and was just recently sent for species inventory to Dr. Evan Peacock, an archaeomalacologist at Mississippi State University. On its surface, F-766 appeared to consist of shell, but during processing, it was discovered that the shell was primarily found at the surface of the feature and the underlying mass was composed of dark artifact-rich midden. Unfortunately, because of the initial impression of its composition, no photographs, measurements, or Munsell soil color data were taken before the integrity of the feature was destroyed by processing.

Processing and Contents

First, the feature was allowed to soak in tepid water in order to loosen sediment from the shells and to reduce any breakage that could occur during removal. After the shell was removed, several small ceramic and bone artifacts were noticed in the mass of midden that remained, and it was decided to water-screen the fill through 1 mm mesh. The microartifacts from the fine-screening have not yet been sorted completely, but the chemical environment created by the

shell appears to have allowed for fairly-good preservation of plant and faunal remains. So far, I have noted abundant charcoal, burned and unburned bone including fish elements, a relatively large quantity of fish scales including at least one small gar scale, shell fragments, some small terrestrial snails, and small quantities of microdebitage.

Of the contents of F-766 that were greater than one quarter inch in size, the mussel shells were identified by Dr. Peacock and the bone fragments by Derek Anderson. All other items were analyzed by the author, and are as follows:

- 9 valves (number of umbos) of the freshwater mussel species *Megaloniais nervosa*
 - 7 left valves
 - 2 right valves
- 3 bone fragments
 - 1 Opossum (*Didelphus virginiana*) left ulnar proximal epiphysis
 - 2 long bone fragments, unknown taxa
- 3 potsherds
 - 1 clay/grog-tempered cord-marked sherd
 - 1 clay/grog-tempered eroded sherd
 - 1 clay/grog-tempered plain "discoidal" sherd (diam. 1.5 cm, width .5 cm)
- 1 secondary-stage heat-treated chert flake.
- 1 broken tip of a stainless-steel pocketknife (modern, probably an excavation tool)

The seven left and two right valves of *M. nervosa* (Figure 1) suggest an MNI of seven for the feature. None of the shells were articulated, and none seemed to be burned or directly modified in any obvious way. Dr. Peacock (personal communication 2018) believes that *M. nervosa* is one of the few mussel species in the Southeast whose representativeness in archaeological shell assemblages is affected by human selection for secondary uses (see also Peacock 2000). He notes that due to its shell structure, this species appears to have been widely used for shell "hoes," or shells with hafting holes cut through them, a relatively common artifact at later prehistoric sites in the Yazoo Basin (see Williams and Brain 1983:282-284; Connaway and McGahey 1971).

The size of the ceramic discoidal from F-766 is at the lower end of their known size range (1.5 cm), and is slightly smaller than the smallest of the hundreds excavated from Moundville (Potter and Brown 2011) (Figure 2). It is neither concave nor convex, although there is a slight angle near the edge on the exterior-facing side, likely attributable to the shape of the vessel it was originally part of. Furthermore, its edge is ground smooth, and not chipped into shape as has been commonly seen elsewhere (Potter and Brown 2011). This does not appear to be the only discoidal known from Austin, as two clay/grog-tempered, perforated, and apparently larger examples were described in previous work (Hunt 2017:98). One each was found in F-1428 and F-2290, one was made from a plain sherd, the other was red-slipped (Hunt 2017:98).

The opossum ulnar epiphysis was found in conjunction with the two other unidentified bone fragments, but they do not appear to articulate with one another. Furthermore, no obvious human modification was detected on any of the remains. Portions of the epiphysis appeared to be missing in addition

to some cracking, likely due to taphonomic factors, or post-soak drying.

Dating

There are no absolute dates from F-766 and the relative dating cannot be precise due to the sparse ceramic assemblage, but because the sherds were solely clay/grog-tempered, I suspect that F-766 may originate from the later Woodland period (ca. 500 – 1000 A.D.). Austin is believed to have an extensive Late Woodland period component (Hunt 2017), so the tentative early date of F-766 would not at all be unfounded. Maize (*Zea mays*) kernels or cob cupules, which are commonly found in the midden of Mississippian period sites, have not yet been noted in the fine-screened material from F-766. It should again be noted that the shell appeared to enhance the preservation of the remains deposited beneath them, so there's less reason to believe that maize, if originally present, would have not preserved (see also Theler 1990:1).

Function and Use

It is doubtful that F-766 functioned as a “clambake” or a small earth-oven in which mussels were heated to extract the meat for consumption. There appeared to be no fire-hardened or oxidized soil associated with the feature, nor did any of the shell appear to be burned or articulated, and only a couple of the shells appeared “nested” with one another (see Theler 1990:1-2). While charcoal was present in the fill, this alone does not indicate the presence of a fire, as midden is generally saturated with charcoal and burned plant material, meaning that it could very likely be the redeposited remains of unrelated fires. Baker (1941:54) describes two pits from the Kingston Village site in Dekalb County, Illinois that are strikingly similar to F-766, including smallness, apparent basin-shape, and most interestingly, the presence of a small quantity of solely *M. nervosa* shells. Key differences included that one of the pits showed signs of firing, which the excavators interpreted as indicators of an abandoned clambake. The other pit at Kingston showed no evidence of firing, but some of the shells were reportedly articulated (Baker 1941:54), while the shells in F-766 were not.

It is strange that *M. nervosa* was represented in remarkably similar features at two roughly contemporary sites in very distantly-located areas, but it is still not yet enough to demonstrate a widespread occurrence of a heretofore unknown feature class that filled a specific function. However, because the remote odds of a random sample of mussel valves consisting of a single species, especially a species that was not exceedingly abundant prehistorically, it is obvious that these valves were purposefully gathered and placed into this concentration as a cache, most likely due to the technological importance of this species as I have noted above (Evan Peacock personal communication 2018). Therefore, the function of at least the shell portion of the feature would be as a cache, but the specific use or intention of caching the shells is not as clear, especially since they were not modified in any obvious way. For the purposes of this article, I want to make a nominal distinction between function and use, function being the real action or outcome of a feature, and use being the intention of creating that outcome or product. An excellent example includes so-called “smudge pits,” or small pits at Mississippian sites filled with



Figure 1. *Megaloniais nervosa* valves. Left: Prehistoric (22Tu549); Right: Modern

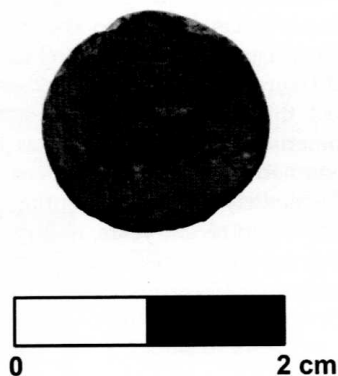


Figure 2. Discoidal from F-766 (22Tu549)

maize cobs or rotten organic material for the function of smoke production (Binford 1967). As to what the smoke was produced for exactly (mosquito repellent, vessel interior smudging, hide smoking, smoke bathing, etc.) I would consider its use, which is not clearly evident. In fact, there may have been no single intention for the construction of each feature but several (see Binford 1967; Munson 1969).

Mussel shell caches believed to have been raw material for temper are known from far afield (e.g. Theler 1990). However, there is nothing that specifically indicates that F-766 represented a spot in which shell was pulverized for temper, and if it was, why would only one economically valuable species of mussel be represented, and why would freshwater gastropods be absent? The quantity of shell encountered by Theler (1990) in a supposed temper-processing feature, amounted to almost 50 kg of shell of a variety of species, at odds with F-766 which contained a comparatively negligible amount of monospecific shell.

Non-utilitarian uses could include “ceremonial” or ritualistic caching behavior, a phenomenon that is well-known at large late prehistoric sites in the Southeast (e.g. Steponaitis et al. 2011). However, the identification of ritualistic caching or offerings by archaeologists tends to be a common-sense judgement reliant on the presence of items that are demonstrably difficult to obtain or manufacture like decorated ground-stone palettes and pigments, or the presence of otherwise everyday items that seem out of place or inordinate

quantities. The presence of the ceramic discoidal in F-766 is certainly strange when considering its size and the rest of the contents of the feature. However, despite being a "special" artifact, ceramic discoidals are not uncommon in and of themselves, nor would this one have required intensive effort to manufacture. Its inclusion in the pit could have very likely been fairly uncostly, and perhaps accidental or unnoticed. The shells, on the other hand, would have been a somewhat costlier expenditure, but their presence, as I described above, can be better explained through utilitarian rather than non-utilitarian uses.

I have presented this description of a feature class with its content, chronological and contextual data as thoroughly as possible should the recurrence of similar features be identified archaeologically in the region or elsewhere. While concentrations of freshwater mussel shell are not unusual in the Yazoo Basin, the particulars of F-766 are, and provide an interesting problem to take note of at similar large-scale mitigation projects.

Acknowledgements: As I mentioned earlier, I greatly appreciate the advice of Dr. Evan Peacock and Derek Anderson, in identifying the faunal remains from F-766. The acquisition of the feature was handled by Dr. Peacock. Thanks are also extended to John Connaway for his work and help with information from the site.

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University News

University of Mississippi

Southeastern Archaeological Conference

The University of Mississippi was well-represented at the SEAC meeting held in Tulsa, Oklahoma in early November. Jay Johnson organized a session in honor of Pam Lieb's retirement from MDAH. Both Jay and Tony Boudreaux gave papers in the session. Robbie Ethridge co-organized a session on the historical turn in archaeology and was a co-author in that session as well as primary author on a paper in a session honoring Greg Waselkov. Maureen Meyers organized a session examining crafting during the Mississippian period. She presented a paper in the session, as did master's student Hamilton Bryant. Meyers also served as a panelist on the Student Affairs luncheon, which focused on running field schools. Emily Clark and Allison Smith, recently graduated from the master's program, both presented papers on their research in a contact period session. Current students Emily Warner and Dalton Capps, along with American University student Erin Cagney, presented a poster on house remains from the Carter Robinson site found this summer.

Curation Project

Two exhibits are currently being prepared. The university library will have a small exhibit of artifacts from the collection which span all time periods in the state. These artifacts were selected, researched, and prepared for exhibit by students in the Fall 2017 Southeastern Archaeology class. This exhibit will open in late January in the Archives entranceway (second floor) and will remain open through the semester. The unifying theme of the exhibit is stone material, and in addition to different types of projectile points, the large bead pendant will be on display as well as hoes, adzes, and similar items of interest.

The second exhibit will occur in May at the Historic New Orleans Collection museum. Five of the Calvin Brown pots will be on display for the 300th anniversary of the founding

of New Orleans exhibit. Maureen Meyers and Robbie Ethridge are overseeing this work.

Graduate student Nikki Matson is currently working with undergraduate students to catalog the Batesville Mound collection, originally excavated by Janet Ford. The city of Batesville recently opened the Batesville Mound site as a public park. Ms. Matson developed signage and content for the site. She worked with the city and the Panola Partnership economic development organization to conduct surveys to gauge knowledge of the site. The work is part of her master's thesis. She also assisted with the grand opening of the park on November 21, which was well-attended.

Also of note, the UM Library now has the Calvin Brown slides used for his book, and are adding them to their digital collection.

VISTA (submitted by Riley Anderson)

As VISTA for the Center for Archaeological Research, I have been working toward the development of a Public Outreach and Education program. Since mid-September, I have had the privilege to put together an artifact display and mock-excavation activity for the UM Field Station's Science Day; host an Open Lab to celebrate Mississippi Archaeology Month, which featured an extensive artifact display and Native-Pottery Making activity; create an artifact display for the MAA Archaeology Expo; write and submit an application for the SEAC Public Outreach grant (to fund a Teacher's Workshop and the creation/distribution of three Mississippi Archaeology centered lesson plans); as well as collaborate with an East Amory Elementary educator to create a lesson for her Intellectually Gifted students, taught in mid-January.

I am also working on the creation of an online space that will house information about archaeology in Mississippi for educators, parents and students, including lesson plans that fulfill the educational requirements outlined by that Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards.

I am so thankful for the opportunity to share archaeology with the youth of Mississippi and have loved getting to put my creative energies into the creation of this program! I am constantly humbled by the interest of the community and my peers in the work I am doing. This job has been incredibly rewarding and has given me the chance to develop a plethora of new skills, and it's only just begun! I look forward to seeing the development of this program and hope that my work helps foster a sense of pride within the Mississippi community of their archaeological history.

Other

Congratulations to Robbie Ethridge who was a recipient of the inaugural University of Mississippi College of Liberal Arts Research, Scholarship and Creative Achievement Award! This award is presented annually to tenured faculty members in the college in recognition of sustained exemplary performance in research, scholarship, and/or creative achievement at the national/international level.

On November 29 for Native American month, Robbie Ethridge and Maureen Meyers co-hosted an "Are You Ready" dialogue in conjunction with the UM Center for

Diversity and Inclusion. The focus of the dialogue was "Who Owns the Past?" Approximately 70 students attended a lively discussion about the meaning of artifacts and the rights of different groups to own and display them.

Maureen Meyers presented a talk as part of the UM Library Archives on November 15 entitled "Living, Making, Being: Houses and Craft Production at a 14th Century Native American Village in Southwestern Virginia."

Meyers also gave a talk at the Winterville Mounds on September 10 which used ten items from the UM Collections to trace the history of Native Americans in Mississippi.

The Gamma chapter of Lambda Alpha has been reorganized and currently has around 10 members. These members will work with the UM Anthropology Club to plan Anthropology Day in February at the university.

MAA Members Receive SEAC Honors

Three prominent Mississippi archaeologists were honored with awards at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference held in Tulsa, Oklahoma in November 2017. John Connaway and John O'Hear both received SEAC's Lifetime Achievement award based on their many contributions to Mississippi archaeology. Jessica Crawford received a Special Recognition Award for "Remarkable achievements in acquiring and protecting many important Southeastern archaeological sites through The Archaeological Conservancy." SEAC president (and Mississippi archaeologist) Jay Johnson presented the awards while each recipient received a well-deserved standing ovation. Congratulations to John, John, and Jessica.

Louisiana Archaeological Society 2018 Annual Meeting

Where: Comfort Inn & Suites, 2601 Severn Ave, Metairie, LA 70002

When: Friday-Sunday, February 16-18, 2018

Accommodations: Deluxe King: \$124.99; Deluxe Double: \$124.99; Executive Suites: \$159.99

Reservations: May be made through the hotel website or by calling the 800 or 504 number: Toll Free Number: 1-(800) 780-7234; Hotel Direct Number: 1-(504) 888-9500. Website - <https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/GA2FJ4>. Group Code is "Louisiana Archaeological Society"

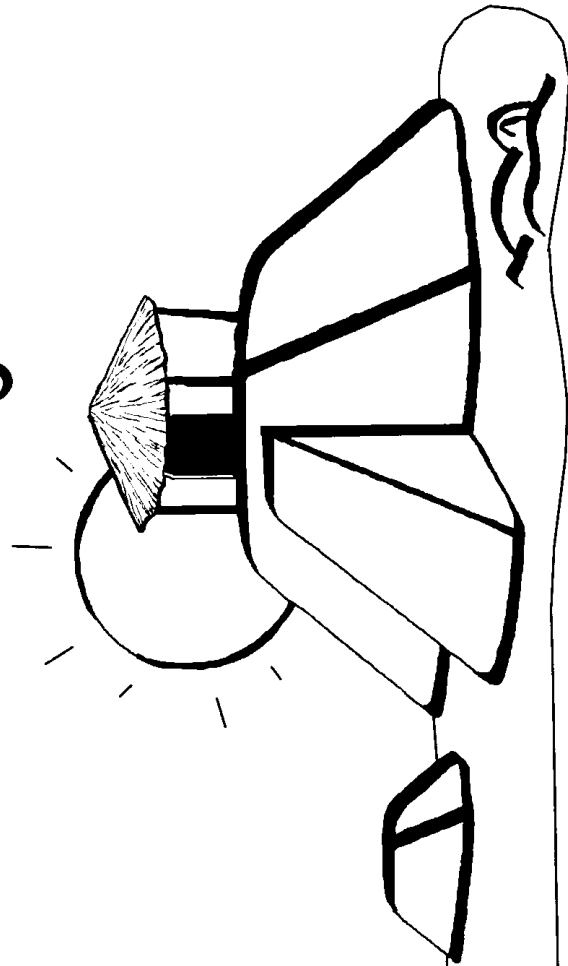
Meeting Registration: Pre-registration: \$35.00 and is open until January 31, 2018 and may be purchased from the website. At the door registration: \$40.00

Banquet: Registration: \$40 - includes buffet with cash bar and keynote speaker. Some seats will be available day-of, but please try to pre-register for the banquet.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Shannon L. Dawdy, University of Chicago. "The shifting archaeological landscape of New Orleans, from 1718 to 2018."

Program Chair: Nathanael Heller, R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc., nheller@rgoodwin.com.

Mississippi Archaeology Coloring Sheet



www.msarchaeology.org