

**In Search of the Nacoochee Chiefdom:  
Recent and Not So Recent Data from  
Habersham County**

*LAMAR Institute Report Series,  
Report Number 89*

**LAMAR Institute**



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## Introduction

During July and August, 1990 Law Environmental, Inc. conducted testing on four Late Mississippian Lamar phase sites for a proposed water supply reservoir for the Habersham County government. These archaeological sites were originally located in an earlier survey by Webb Diversified Consulting (Webb 1990). Plans for the water supply project were tabled, based on the results of a County referendum voting down the proposed project before the testing efforts were completed. A fifth Lamar phase site, which was located by survey and was scheduled for testing, was not examined. Because the project was canceled, funds for the project were terminated and no research report was completed. The field project was directed by the author and Robert S. Webb, who served as Principal Investigator. A full research report of this work was never produced but this monograph serves as a partial summary of the Late Mississippian period Lamar phase occupations that were examined. This monograph also includes a reworking of previously gathered Mississippian period site data by Robert Wauchope and others (Wauchope 1966; Webb 1990). This article is a revision of an earlier paper presented by the author and Steve Webb at the 1992 Fall meeting of the Society for Georgia Archaeology in Gainesville, Georgia. The content of the monograph remains essentially the same as the 1992 presentation, with only minor editorial changes. Since 1992, for example, Mark Williams and his University of Georgia field school students explored portions of the Nacoochee Mound village and other sites in the upper Chattahoochee River area. Moreover, the U.S. Forest Service has made significant strides in archaeological site inventory in the region since 1992 and no attempt was made to incorporate these survey data. Most recently, U.S. Forest Service archaeologists have conducted revealing excavations at a Late Lamar phase farmstead site in Stephens County, Georgia (Wettstaed 2014; Wettstaed et al. 2017).

Special thanks to field archaeologists the late Brian Gumbert and the late John Doolin, Elizabeth Mary Gantt, and to the cheerful Senior Citizen volunteers of the U.S. Forest Service for their efforts. This monograph was revised in 2013 and includes additional information on the Lamar phase occupation in Habersham County (Finney 2010; Webb 2010). To date, however, the Hazel Creek reservoir project archaeology report remains unfinished. This document that follows is not intended as a compliance report on the Phase II archaeological testing conducted for this abandoned reservoir project.

## ***Project Environment***

The project area is located in Habersham County on the Hazel Creek watershed. Hazel Creek is a minor tributary of the Soque River and the Chattahoochee River in northeast Georgia (Figure 1). The Chattahoochee River joins the Flint River to form the Apalachicola River, which eventually empties into the Gulf of Mexico at Apalachicola Bay in Florida. The project is located in a rural area in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains southeast of Clarksville, north of Cornelia, and northeast of Demorest, Georgia. The study area is rural farmland, pasture, and woodland, although the area is increasingly feeling the effect of Atlanta's urban sprawl and the generalized modern migration to the "Sun Belt". This section of north Georgia has received relatively little attention since the 1930s when it was examined by Robert Wauchope and his Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) archaeology squad (Wauchope 1966). This reservoir, if constructed, would flood approximately 225 ha, or 558 ac, with a full pool elevation of 405 m, or 1330 ft. including Hazel, Lick Log, Little, and Law creeks, the adjacent lower ridge slopes, and other minor unnamed drainages. Essentially, no previous archaeological study had been conducted in these tributary watersheds prior to this study.

## ***Previous Research***

Prior to 1990, no archaeological sites were known in the immediate study area. This section of the upper Chattahoochee River valley was investigated early in the history of Georgia archaeology, but many questions remain unanswered in the region. Wauchope (1966) and his CCC crew identified a cluster of two dozen Lamar sites along the Chattahoochee River and Sautee Creek upstream from Hazel Creek. Wauchope's site cluster begins from 15 km to 26 km northwest of the Hazel Creek area. Wauchope conducted excavations at a number of these sites, and although he does not provide site maps or site dimensions, all were designated as villages. Excavations by Wauchope at four sites revealed probable Mississippian period house architecture.

The closest known Lamar village to the Hazel Creek study area is Wauchope's Hm-1 on Mauldin Mill Creek and the Chattahoochee River where evidence of aboriginal houses was found. Wauchope noted that these houses had slightly rounded corners and curved walls unlike those in central Georgia which were more rectangular. Wauchope also identified a circular house at Mauldin Mill Creek with "closely spaced wall posts and a circular burned clay fire pit, with a raised rim, in the center". Unfortunately, Wauchope's report provided no architectural plan for the houses at the Mauldin Mill Creek site. The site also had a midden and refuse pits but their location within the site also is undocumented. Wauchope recovered an iron pendant and a dark blue black gunflint, which indicate that indicate European contact.

Houses also were found by Wauchope and his crew at the Stephenson Site (Wh-28) on the Chattahoochee River, where he reported a house that measured 8 m by 9 m with four central supports, but no prepared hearth. He described it as roughly circular, but it examination of his building plan shows that it could also be described as sub-rectangular. He also reports portions of two other houses at the Stephenson Site. That site yielded no European trade material or burials.



Figure 1. Hazel Creek Project Location (D).

At the Eastwood Site (Wh-2) also on the Chattahoochee River, Wauchope found a low platform mound and nine house patterns. He described the houses as oval or apsidal in outline, with none having right angle corners. He noted that most of the houses possessed circular clay fire-basins ranging from 70 cm to 1 m in diameter, but of the six houses that he illustrated, only two exhibit hearths. Both of these hearths were circular. He decided that the mound at the Eastwood Site was a substructure for a civic or religious building such as a town house and he identified three or four superimposed clay floors, but his excavations never reached the base of the mound. Burials were found at Eastwood, but were thought by Wauchope to postdate the last large townhouse. Wauchope stated that he found no European trade material in his excavations, but his site description noted that trade beads were allegedly found on the surface, and one possible tan chert gunflint and a metal fishhook were found. Grave goods were rare at Eastwood. House 1 was 4.5-5.5 m with circular hearth slightly offset from center, 1.8 m in diameter. Houses 2 and 3 were both described, one was oval measuring 5 m by 5 m, with an offset circular hearth that was 1 m in diameter and the other was an oval structure measuring 7 m by 5.5 m. House 5 also was oval and measured 8 m by 5.5 m, while House 6 measured 7 m by an unknown dimension. None of

the illustrated houses possessed interior support posts. Four other buildings were mentioned by Wauchope but these were not illustrated, the age association of each building was unspecified.

The Lumsden site (Wh-5, or Wh-3 according to Wauchope's collection inventory), was located on Beau Creek which is a minor tributary stream. He reported that the site contained at least three houses. House 1 was sub-rectangular (measuring 5.8 m by 5.8 m) with 5 interior support posts and a central circular hearth that was 1 m in diameter. House 2 was a sub-rectangular structure that measured 8.8 m by 6 m. House 3 was a circular to oval structure that measured 6.7 m by 6.7 m. Neither House 2 nor 3 retained any interior features. Burials were reported by Wauchope at Lumsden. A metal object (which was not specified) was found in the plow zone and conch shell beads were recovered from a stone mound burial.

Other sites excavated in the area by Wauchope did not yield houses, but nevertheless contained Lamar features. Excavations at the Will White site (Wh-29) produced one human burial and refuse pits (although their age not specified). Wauchope also reported on excavations of two refuse pits at a Lamar village near Providence on the Soque River, but the exact location was not provided, and no European trade material were reported.

Nacoochee, located in the Chattahoochee River valley in White County, Georgia, was the premiere mounded site in the upper Chattahoochee River watershed. Bartram lists Nacoochee as a Cherokee town in 1776, and Sturges' 1818 map shows the settlements of Nacoochee, Chotta, and Sookee, and an old Indian village north of the project area. Nacoochee Mound has yielded conch shell and native copper, and C. C. Jones reported that glass beads were plowed up at Nacoochee in the middle to late nineteenth century. The Nacoochee excavations by the George Heye Museum of the American Indian located many burials with goods including glass trade beads, copper buttons, lead buttons, and conch (Williams 1898; Pepper 1917; Heye et al. 1918; Williams 2004). Stone box graves also were documented by Heye's expedition. Once thought to be Guaxule, Xualla, and/or Cauchi visited by DeSoto and Pardo in the mid sixteenth century, this identification for the Nacoochee Site is subject to question in light of recent route reconstructions by Hudson and his DeSoto colleagues.

As a side note, however, rumors persist of Spanish gold mines in the upper Chattahoochee valley--a story that may have its origin in the travelogue of George Featherstonehaugh (pronounced Fanshaw) during his 1830s visit to White County and Dukes Creek where he witnessed the Georgia Gold Rush in full glory. Featherstonehaugh described deeply buried wooden boxes that had been unearthed by miners in the Duke's Creek floodplain, as well as ancient mining equipment at a nearby abandoned mine shaft. Both Habersham and White counties contain significant gold deposits, which undoubtedly did not go unrecognized by Mississippian groups.

Betty Smith (1979), in her distributional study of Cherokee towns, which was based primarily on her examination of eighteenth century maps, did not indicate any Cherokee towns on the Chattahoochee River south of Nacoochee, which would include the Hazel Creek region. This suggests that the study area was largely abandoned by the eighteenth century.

More recent study by Williams (2004) provided important baseline information about the Nacoochee site in Rabun County. Williams' University of Georgia field school made a detailed topographic map of the mound and village site and excavated 83 systematic placed posthole tests. This work in the village area was the first documented, as Heye and his colleagues had focused on the mound. Williams identified numerous components with a primary occupation from A.D. 1350-1600.

Smith (1976) examined 194 acres in the Soque watershed. He recorded a Lamar farmstead (9HM46) on Fry Branch, approximately 1.6 miles northeast of Hollywood, Georgia. The site was located in a plowed field and consisted of a scatter of Lamar incised, plain and complicated stamped potter in an area approximately 46 m by 15 m (Smith 1976:6). No excavations were undertaken at this site.

Extensive archaeological surveys on the Chattahoochee National Forest located additional Lamar phase sites, including examples in Habersham County. Most of these were deemed ineligible for listing in the NRHP because of their shallow, eroded conditions, for example- 9HM43. Some were recommended for additional testing, for example- 9HM44 (Wynn 1984).

Studies in the Soque River region of Habersham County revealed additional Lamar phase settlements. Site 9HM298 was a large Lamar site (285 m by 240 m) located on a sod farm near the Soque River, north of Clarkesville, Georgia. Phase II testing at this site isolated the primary Lamar occupation in the western portion of the site. The site yielded Lamar incised, complicated stamped, Lamar folded, pinched rims, punctated, noded and undecorated sherds (Finney 2010; Webb 2010).

Most recently, Wettstaed and his colleagues discovered a well-preserved Late Lamar phase farmstead in Stephens County, Georgia at 9ST62 (Wettstaed 2014; Wettstaed et al. 2017). This site is located on a terrace adjacent to the Middle Fork Broad River, about 13 kilometers southeast of the Hazel Creek study area. This site is located in the Savannah River watershed.

## **The Hazel Creek Survey Project**

Twenty-eight archaeological sites and 13 isolated finds were located by intensive survey of the proposed Hazel Creek Reservoir by Webb Diversified Consulting in February and March, 1990 (Webb 1990). Their methods included shovel tests and surface reconnaissance (Webb 1990). Eight sites were recommended for testing, but testing was completed on only four sites, because before testing on the fifth site could be completed, the reservoir project was voted down by a referendum, and work on the project was halted. One of the four tested sites proved to have no research potential, but important finds were made at the other three sites. The fifth, untested site contained Lamar pottery and may contain important features. Judging from the findings at the other sites, this site and two other ceramic sites that were not examined should prove enlightening if they are ever investigated.

The survey at Hazel Creek also located at least four other poorly preserved Lamar sites and several other aboriginal pottery bearing sites that may date to the Lamar phase but lacked

diagnostic attributes (Webb 1990). These sites were not examined beyond the survey level and little else can be said about them based on our current knowledge, but they attest to the frequency of Lamar sites in the study area. Three of these sites are briefly described below.

Site 9HM160 (Field Site HB-1-11), located at the woods/pasture margin on a low ridge above Hazel Creek, was a possible Lamar farmstead or campsite. The site was determined by survey to measure approximately 60 m by 50 m. It yielded Lamar incised and complicated stamped sherds. This site was recommended for testing, but environmental work for the proposed reservoir project was halted before this site could be investigated further (Webb 1990:59-60).

Site 9HM165 (Field Site HB-1-16), located in a cornfield on Hazel Creek, was delineated by systematic shovel tests and surface collection revealing a 110 m by 60 m, or <0.7 ha, Lamar artifact scatter. The site yielded a small sample of Lamar plain, complicated stamped, simple stamped, bold and fine incised, punctated, folded pinched rims, and folded cane punctated rims. This site was recommended for testing, but environmental work for the proposed reservoir project was halted before this site could be investigated further (Webb 1990:71-74).

Site 9HM166 (Field Site HB-1-17), located in a pasture near above Hazel Creek, was delineated by systematic shovel tests revealing a 60 m by 30 m ceramic scatter. The camp site yielded a small sample of possible Late Woodland-Mississippian complicated stamped and undecorated sherds and a small triangular projectile point. The Lamar component for this site is tentative. This site was recommended for testing, but environmental work for the proposed reservoir project was halted before this site could be investigated further (Webb 1990:75-78).

## **Methods**

Testing methodology for the four Hazel Creek sites was consistent and included intensive shovel tests spaced at 5 m intervals, or controlled surface collections, to define the site boundaries and identify concentrations of artifacts. These shovel tests were screened through 1/4 in mesh. Density maps generated by these tests indicated areas of concentrated cultural material on each site. Selected areas then were examined using heavy equipment, a backhoe, to remove the plow disturbed soils. The areas that were selected for testing generally had the higher frequency and diversity of artifacts. Samples of plow zone, midden, or buried plow zone were screened through 1/4 in mesh on each stripped block. Significant aboriginal features were identified on three sites, 9HM151, 9HM155 and 9HM176, and the findings at each of these are presented.



## Results

### Lick Log Creek-Site 9HM151

The Lick Log Creek site (aka Field Sites HB-1-2 & 3 and 9HM151) was located on the lower ridge slope and floodplain of Lick Log Creek, which is a tributary of Hazel Creek (Figures 2 and 3). This site measured 195 m by 60 m (<1.7 ha) and contained stone artifacts and aboriginal ceramics in a fallow field and pine woods. A total of 46 m<sup>2</sup> was stripped on this site. One area (30 m<sup>2</sup>) was stripped and found to contain a cluster of pit features from the Woodland period. Another stripped area (16 m<sup>2</sup>) contained one ceramic feature of indeterminate age. Lamar ceramics also were recovered from the site, but none of the 12 features that were found were definitely Lamar. No recognizable house patterns were discerned, but house probably can be defined with additional work. At least two Lamar pottery activity areas were identified from the excavations, which may equate with two discrete farmsteads.

Artifacts collected from the site by the landowner during the 1930s included: Lamar and Woodland pottery, 1 Mississippian clay elbow pipe, 1 crude stone ax, and 1 polished greenstone celt. Lamar pottery recovered from the site in 1990 included plain, complicated stamped, simple stamped, check stamped, bold, medium, and fine incised, folded pinched rims, and folded cane punctated rims.

A black bear visited the site during testing and left a present of fresh spoor as well as re-excavating several of our shovel tests, and this caused me to think that the bear was possibly drawn there by the lick that gives the creek its name Lick Log Creek. The bear's spoor, which was still steaming, contained a significant quantity of sand. This also may have influenced how man used this area in the past and salt, or mineral procurement may have been an activity at this site. No salt pan vessel forms, however, were identified in the project area.

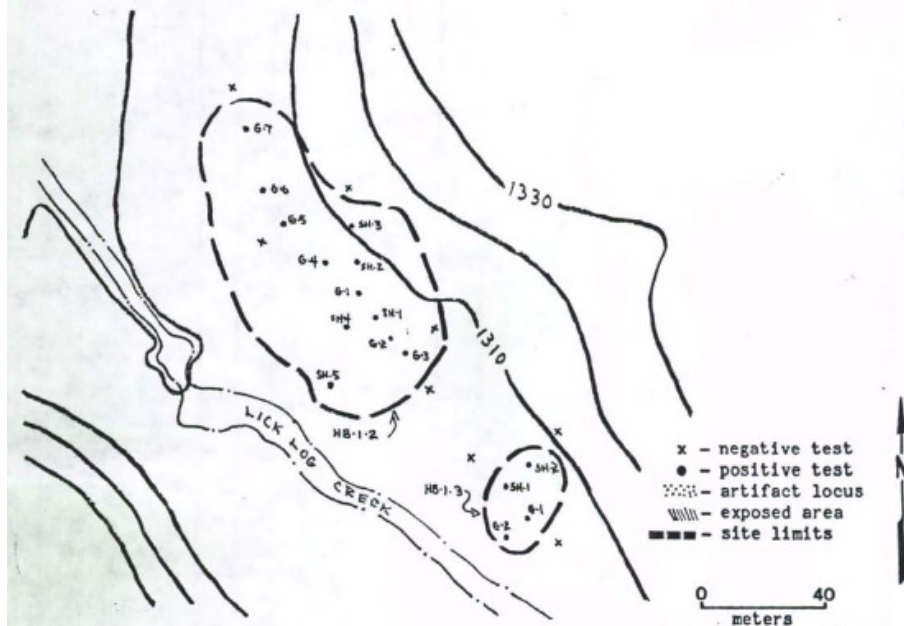


Figure 2. Site 9HM151 (Field Sites HB-1-2 and HB-1-3), Lick Log Creek (Webb 1990:35, Figure 4.3).



Figure 3. 9HM151, Features Excavated.

### ***Clearcut Farmstead-Site 9HM176***

The Clearcut Farmstead site (aka Field Site HB-1-27 or 9HM176) was a small site (45 m by 45 m, or <0.2 ha) located on a ridge slope/terrace 10 m from Hazel Creek that contained stone artifacts and aboriginal ceramics on the surface of a timber clear cut (Figures 4-7). Two areas of this site, totaling 40 m<sup>2</sup>, were examined for features. Stripping of 16 m<sup>2</sup> in the vicinity of a surface concentration of Lamar pottery failed to locate any subsurface features. This pottery concentration was contained in a shallow sheet midden on the slope break. The area was badly eroded and lacked any further research potential, and investigations were shifted uphill a few meters where the topsoil was removed with the aid of a backhoe from an area 24 m<sup>2</sup>.

A large portion of a Lamar house was uncovered. The house was recognized by many post molds, midden staining, a large granite rock that was house furniture, and a prepared clay hearth. Fifty-one features were identified in this block. The clay hearth (Feature 29) was oval and measured 60 cm by 80 cm and the fire basin was less than 10 cm deep. The hearth contained ash, burned bone, and charcoal. The building was approximately 4 m across (probably the short axis) and was sub-rectangular in plan. This site represents a Lamar farmstead and the house experienced at least one rebuilding stage. There is some indication from one profile that the house was semi-subterranean which probably accounts for its preservation on this otherwise eroded area. A modest midden had accumulated, less than 20 cm thick, on top of the house floor. Test excavations on the site yielded no European trade goods or burials.



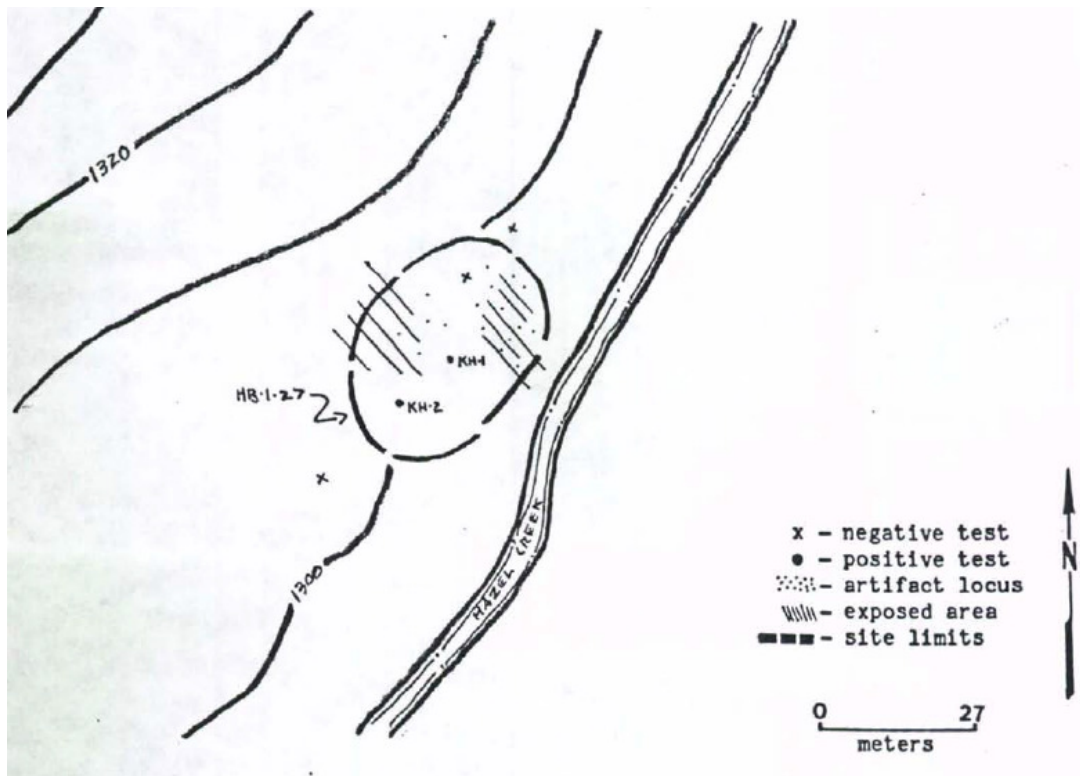


Figure 4. Site 9HM176, Clearcut Farmstead, Hazel Creek (Webb 1990:104, Figure 4.28).



Figure 5. Excavation at 9HM176.



Figure 6. Lamar Structure, 9HM176.

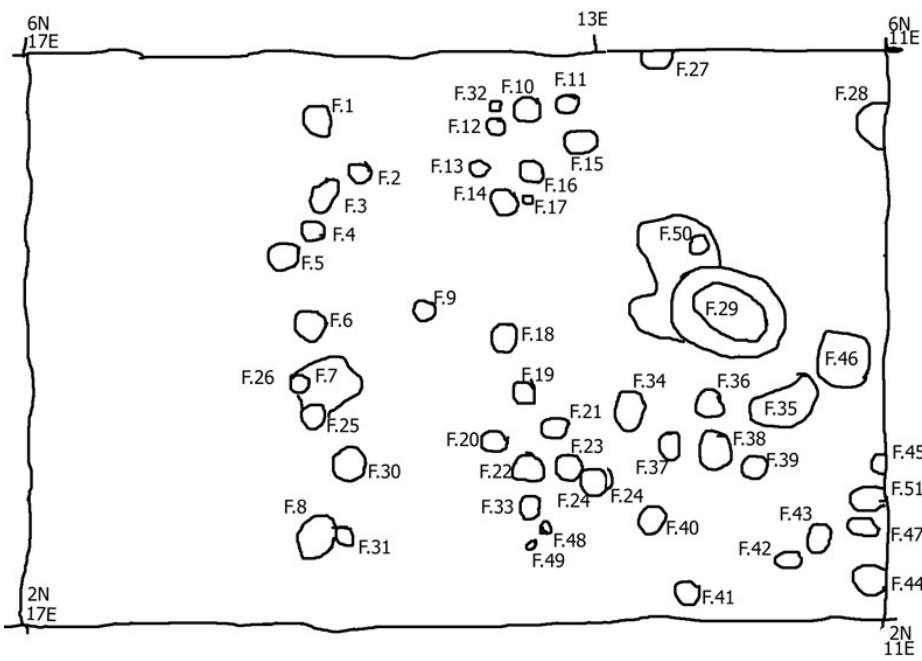


Figure 7. Site 9HM176, Plan of Test Strip 2.

## ***Double Bridges-Site 9HM155***

The Double Bridges site (Site 9HM155 or Field Site HB-1-6) was a large site (measuring 220 m by 140 m, or <3 ha) that contained Woodland and Mississippian pottery and stone artifacts (Figures 8-9). The northeastern portion of the site was in pasture (this area measured 65 m by 55 m) and was examined by 5 m interval shovel tests. The shovel tests yielded plain, simple stamped, incised, complicated stamped, check stamped, punctated, and folded pinched rims. Three areas were mechanically stripped, totaling 54 m<sup>2</sup>. Forty-one features were recorded within two of the stripped areas but the third area contained no cultural features. Test Strip 1 contained nine features (Features 1-9). Test Strip 2 contained Features (Features 10-41). The site was selected for testing because of the recognition of a concentration of Woodland pottery that was found during the survey. An associated Woodland period midden was suspected by the survey team. Stripping of a 16 m<sup>2</sup> area commenced on the Woodland component. Another area was selected for stripping on the northern end of the site where a pottery effigy adorno had been found during the survey. The testing crew immediately encountered burned soil and daub in the lower part of the plow zone. The crew continued to strip down and expose features that had been dug into the subsoil and opened up a total of 22 m<sup>2</sup> in this area. The concentration of daub probably represented collapsed and burned roof and wall material from a Mississippian period building. Beneath the unconsolidated daub rubble was a hard packed clay floor, a prepared baked clay hearth/oven, and numerous post molds indicating the building plan. This complex of features represented was a large Lamar phase building, which was probably over 7 m in diameter. The posts that were identified probably represent interior posts and the packed clay house floor covered the entire stripped area so the building may be much larger than was exposed by testing. Aboriginal pottery found in association with this structure indicated that it dates to the Lamar phase. The hearth/oven was very unusual and it also contained the important subsistence data. The hearth was oval in plan and had a large collared rim with an outer diameter of 180 m by 150 cm and an inner diameter of 90 m by 90 cm and the basin extending 50 cm below the house floor. It was filled with ash, burned bone, and charred material. A small collection of Lamar pottery sherds was recovered from the sealed hearth fill and included two Lamar Complicated Stamped, one Lamar Medium Incised (11 lines), one Lamar Plain, and one Lamar folded pinched rim.

The hard packed floor was carefully troweled, but it contained very few artifacts. The building burned (as evidenced by the fire hardened floor and baked daub roof and wall fall) and the final contents of the hearth were not cleaned out, but there was little in the way of site furniture inside the building (e.g. pots, metates, etc.), so it may have either been intentionally cleaned out prior to burning, or the building had a ceremonial function and did not contain the usual household furniture. There was some indication that the building was rebuilt, since traces of another prepared clay hearth were found during stripping. This hearth, which probably was above the big hearth stratigraphically also was oval and measured at least 90 m by 75 cm. This building was a public structure, possibly a council house, and this site served a more complex function than did the Clearcut Farmstead. It also may have been a semi-subterranean building, which may account for its intactness after years of intensive machine cultivation. The hearth at Double Bridges was twice as large, and five times deeper, than the one at Clearcut Farmstead. This size difference tells us several things. Most obvious, the Double Bridges hearth could hold a bigger fire. Bigger fires require higher ceilings to prevent burning down the house and therefore, the Double

Bridges building was probably taller than the Clearcut Farmstead house. The big hearth at Double Bridges was as large as the biggest hearth reported by Wauchope, which was found at the Eastwood site--a mounded village.

Approximately 36 percent of the pottery recovered from 9HM155 was plain, 15 percent was stamped (complicated or simple decoration), 3 percent was Lamar incised and 1 percent were Lamar folded pinched rims. One hawk's head pottery effigy was recovered from a shovel test.

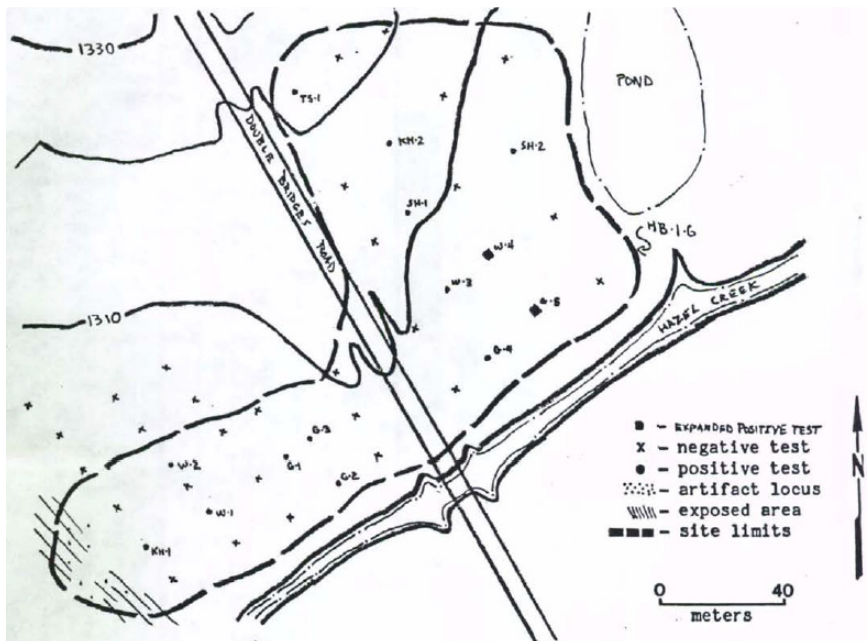


Figure 8. Site 9HM155, Double Bridges, Hazel Creek (Webb 1990:47, Figure 4.7).

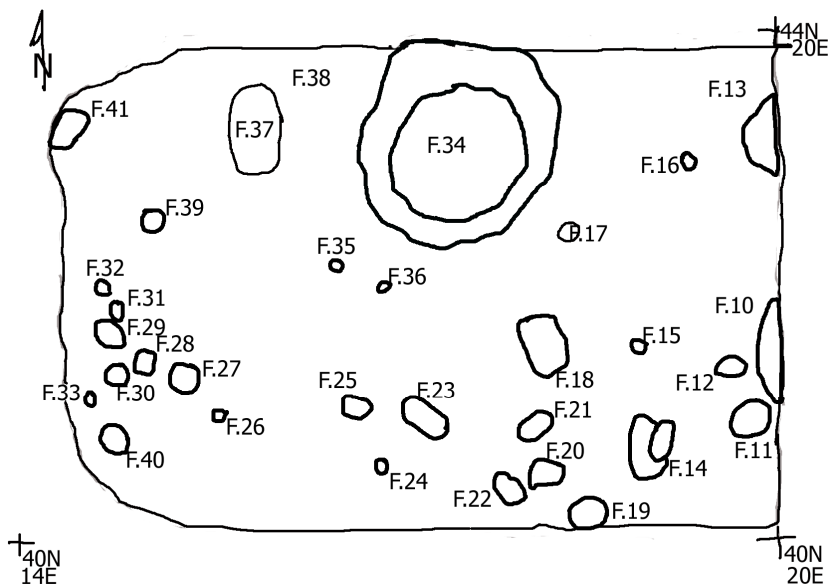


Figure 9. Site 9HM155, Plan of Test Strip 2.



## Site 9HM169

One other Lamar site, 9HM169 (Field Site HB-1-20), on Lick Log Creek was tested by 24 m<sup>2</sup>, which were organized in two 4 m by 3 m blocks (Figure 10). This effort failed to reveal any cultural features or intact midden. The site produced a small sample of plain, complicated stamped, bold and medium incised and punctate Lamar sherds. Folded pinched rim sherds are present. This site measured 75 m by 45 m, or less than 0.3 ha, and probably represents a single Lamar farmstead, which was largely destroyed by decades of agriculture and erosion.

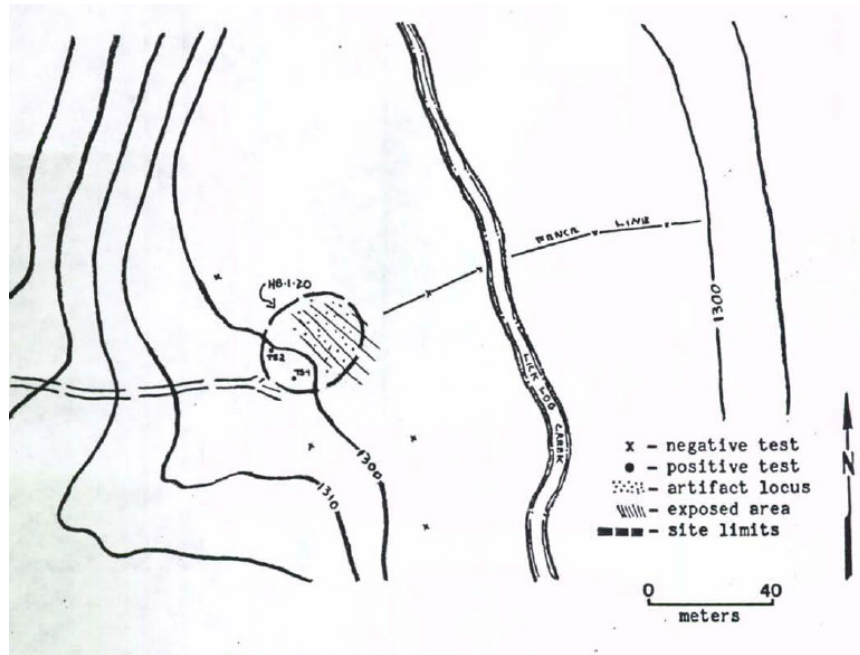


Figure 10. Site 9HM169, Lick Log Creek (Webb 1990:86, Figure 4.21).

## Discussion

How then do the Lamar sites at Hazel Creek connect with Late Mississippian ceramics and settlement in the region? As Webb (1990) noted, Mississippian settlement in Hazel Creek was dominated by the Lamar phase and all of the sites were located within or near floodplain environments. No Lamar mound sites were identified in the study area, although previous research by Wauchope and others identified several mounded sites in the upper Chattahoochee River region. Webb concluded that most of these sites represent small farming hamlets or isolated farmsteads. These data indicate a minimum Lamar site frequency of 0.04/ha, or one Lamar site per 25 ha, or one site per 62 ac, for similar environments in this region. This is a relatively high site frequency that rivals the Lamar phase site yields observed in Lake Oconee region surveys (cf., Elliott 1982; Fish and Gresham 1990:147-172; Fish and Kowaleski 1990; Freer 1989).

Two distinct Lamar site types are represented in Hazel Creek--a single family farmstead as seen at the Clearcut Farmstead site, and something bigger, and possibly political, but as yet undefined, as seen at the Double Bridges site. The Hazel Creek Lamar farmsteads are generally less than 50 m in diameter, although overlapping occupations may make them appear larger. This size is consistent with excavated examples of farmsteads in the Lake Oconee region (Kowalewski and Williams 1989; Kowalewski and Hatch 1991 Hatch and Humpf n.d.). Permanent architecture consisting of post in ground, wattle-and-daub semi-subterranean houses with prepared clay hearths, is associated with these farmsteads. Double Bridges was a much larger site than the Clearcut Farmstead and likely contains multiple houses, whereas Clearcut Farmstead had only one house. As at the Clearcut Farmstead, there were no European trade materials or burials found at Double Bridges. Lamar phase artifacts were generally not abundant in or around the Double Bridges Lamar building and no dense Lamar midden areas were identified on the site. The Double Creek site may represent a more complex settlement and may possibly have been used for some community function. It is tempting to label it as a council house, although this assessment may be premature. The nature of other sites, such as Lick Log, require more study to determine if they contain multiple contemporaneous houses (i.e. a small hamlet), or unrelated single family farmstead occupations spanning several centuries.

Jim Hatch, Mark Williams, Marvin Smith and others who have conducted research in the Oconee River valley all noted the tendency for middens, or refuse pits, to be located northeast of house mounds and houses on Lamar sites. Recently, Williams and Smith suggested that this pattern may be pan-southeastern and they suggest that prevailing wind may be an important causal factor in this pattern. The refuse midden at Clearcut Farmstead, however, was located southeast of the house. Nor were any specific Lamar secondary refuse areas identified at Double Bridges or Lick Log Creek.

Hally (1986) has argued that the eighteenth century Cherokee in northeastern Georgia evolved out of a local sixteenth century Lamar culture which he terms the Tugalo phase. His scheme is

based primarily on archaeological research in the upper Savannah River watershed (Kelly and DeBaillou 1960; Kelly and Neitzel 1961; Williams and Branch 1978; Duncan 1985). On his map, Hally tentatively places the Hazel Creek region within the sphere of his Tugalo phase. Based on negative evidence, the absence of European trade goods, the Hazel Creek sites probably predate the eighteenth century Estatoe phase since trade goods were common during that period.

The Tugalo phase, based on the collections from the northeast dump at the Tugalo mound site, contain 2 percent Lamar incised, 91 percent Lamar Complicated stamped, and 6 percent plain, although Hally considered that some sherds that were identified as complicated stamped in the initial analysis are more properly rough plain. Writing elsewhere on the Tugalo phase, Hally and Rudolph present different percentages of decoration for this phase: complicated stamped (62%), plain (29%), incised (8%), and check stamped (3%). The Tugalo phase, as first defined by Hally, includes: an absence of check stamping (although check stamped wares were present in Lamar contexts at Estatoe and Chauga), common use of complicated stamping, presence of only folded rims on jars; common use of a cauldron shaped jar with undulating rim, and absence of the squat jars of the Estatoe phase. Barred oval and filfot cross stamped motifs are present, while the concentric cross motif is absent. An incised guilloche motif is present in small numbers in Tugalo phase assemblages.

Hally and Rudolph (1986:77, 89) tentatively placed the Nacoochee and Eastwood sites into the Tugalo phase, but not without reservation. They also noted that the Upper Chattahoochee River is poorly understood for ceramic classification, phase definition, subsistence economy, settlement pattern, and socio-political organization.

Design motifs were tabulated for approximately 600 sherds from the Hazel Creek project. The pottery assemblage at Double Bridges (which does not include testing shovel test data) contains mostly plain (81%, this likely includes some Woodland plain wares), complicated stamped (15%), and incised (4%). The Clearcut Farmstead contained: mostly complicated stamped (59%), with lesser amounts of plain (21%), incised (17%), and check stamped (3%). A pottery disc was recovered from Clearcut Farmstead and an animal effigy (a bird) was found at Double Bridges. A Lamar tobacco elbow pipe was found by a collector at Lick Log Creek, but no other pipes were found. Pottery data from six other Lamar sites in Hazel Creek reveal the following percentages: plain (60%), complicated stamped (32%), and a minority of incised (8%). Folded pinched rims were more frequent at Clearcut Farmstead than at Double Bridges. While cane punctation, more common on Early Lamar assemblages in the Lake Oconee region, is present on several of the Hazel Creek sites, folded pinched rim treatment predominated on jars. One T-rim, a hallmark of the Bell phase in central Georgia, was found at Clearcut Farmstead. Incised cazuelas, plain and stamped flaring jars with applied rims, and a possible bottle form were among the vessel forms represented at Hazel Creek. Complicated stamped pottery occurs in high frequencies at Hazel Creek, but not near as high as Hally suggests is typical for the phase. The complicated stamped motifs at Hazel Creek were not studied in great detail since most were small sherds. Lamar Check Stamped and Lamar Simple Stamped are clearly present on Lamar sites in the Hazel Creek area.

Small triangular points were extremely rare in Hazel Creek, only two were found, a similar trait observed on Lamar sites in Lake Oconee. Since we know that these tools were used during the Late Mississippian period elsewhere in the southeast, their absence at Hazel Creek may indicate this area was within a "safe zone" that is the project area is well within the interior of a Lamar phase chiefdom and defensive, or military weapons, were unnecessary. The high population density also may have depleted large game stock in this area, thus negating the need for hunting weapons on these sites. It is predicted that frequency of small triangular points on Lamar sites will vary geographically and may tend to occur in increased frequencies near the boundary of a chiefdom, or in areas of social tension.

European trade material was present on only 16 percent of the Lamar sites investigated by Wauchope in Habersham and White Counties, and only at the Nacoochee site were significant quantities of European trade goods found. Probable Lamar phase burials were located at four of the sites visited by Wauchope. The greater abundance of trade material at Nacoochee suggests that Nacoochee was a distribution center and a politically important place in the settlement of the upper Chattahoochee River in early historic times.

It is premature to place the Hazel Creek and other upper Chattahoochee Late Mississippian sites within the Tugalo phase since it is in another river drainage and may represent a distinct polity, possibly part of the Nacoochee chiefdom as Anderson (1990) suggests. The boundaries of Lamar settlement in northeast Georgia need to be better defined by systematic survey. At the very least, someone should reexamine Wauchope's collections, as well as the collections from Nacoochee, to see how the ceramics from these collections mesh with Hally's defined phases. Tulane University houses collections from each of Wauchope's sites except for the Sutton site. The Nacoochee mound excavation collection is presently in transition from its former home at the Heye Museum of the American Indian in New York to its new home at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

All of the Lamar sites in Hazel Creek contain incised pottery, which this probably places the major Lamar settlement after A.D. 1450. Trade goods were not observed on the Hazel Creek sites. While the absence of Spanish trade material may be explained by the remoteness of this area, the absence of British trade material strongly suggests that these sites were abandoned prior to the late seventeenth century. Smith (1992:32) estimates that the burial goods at Nacoochee probably date to the early to mid-seventeenth century. An estimate for the period of Lamar settlement in Hazel Creek is between A.D. 1400 and 1600.

The Hazel Creek study area lies some 18 km southeast of the Eastwood Mound; 21 km southeast of Nacoochee Mound; 22 to 27 km west of Tugalo, Estatoe, and Chauga Mounds; 30 km east of the unconfirmed Tesnatee Creek Mound (Wauchope's Wh-30); and 45 km south of Dillard Mound, which is on the Little Tennessee River headwaters (Colburn 1936). Smith and Kowalewski (1980) recognized that mounded sites in the Lake Oconee region were regularly spaced at regular intervals. The Hazel Creek study area is surrounded by Lamar mounds and Hazel Creek is located about the proper distance from the surrounding mounded site to have its own mound, assuming a regular spacing of 20 to 30 km. Nevertheless, no mounded sites are known in the study vicinity proper.



All of the Lamar phase sites containing houses in Wauchope's study, except one, were located in the Chattahoochee River floodplain or its major tributaries. The exception, Lumsden, was on a hilltop overlooking a minor tributary. Previous research at Nacoochee focused exclusively on the Nacoochee mound and none of the associated village was examined. While no houses were mapped at Nacoochee, undoubtedly several were present but their size is unknown.

The Hazel Creek Lamar sites were peripheral to the central power structure at either Nacoochee or Tugaloo, yet the existence of a very large building with a possible public function at the Double Bridges site may indicate a secondary power base. The southern and eastern boundary of the Nacoochee chiefdom is somewhere beyond the Hazel Creek drainage. Where then is the southern limit of the Nacoochee chiefdom? Recent survey of a proposed landfill site in Banks County identified upland Lamar phase sites in the extreme upper Oconee River watershed (Jerry Lilly personal communication 1993). With which chiefdom are these sites associated? Other recent archaeological work for a golf resort at Brasstown Creek in Towns County, which is in the extreme headwaters of the Tennessee River valley, yielded evidence of substantial Lamar phase settlement on a relatively minor tributary stream (Simpkins 1988, 1990). How does the Brasstown Creek site relate to the Nacoochee chiefdom?

The presumption has been, in southeastern Indian studies, that major settlements and chiefly centers were centered in river valleys. Other ethnographic examples can be cited of chiefdoms that were centered on the major ridge divides between river valleys. In southwestern Puerto Rico, for example, the Spanish Explorer Juan Ponce De Leon encountered a series of strong chiefdoms whose centers of power were located on the mountain crests (Elliott and McWatters 1986). Perhaps this analogy has some bearing on the Nacoochee situation. Within a few kilometers of the Nacoochee site are found the headwaters of the Chattahoochee, Oconee, Savannah, and Tennessee rivers.

With increasing development in northeast Georgia caused by the expansion of Atlanta, it is important to document aboriginal settlements before they are destroyed. It would be nice to know, for example, the spatial dimensions of the "village" sites visited by Wauchope, and what settlements exist on other minor creeks that feed into the Chattahoochee before these areas are gone. Is Hazel Creek atypical of Lamar phase settlement in the region? Probably it is not. As other counties in northeast Georgia clamor for landfill, reservoir, and multi-residential development sites, many of the archaeological sites in these areas will vanish. Will Cornelia, Clarkesville, and Hollywood, go the way of former rural towns like Chamblee, Doraville, and Norcross? It is imperative that archaeologists gather survey data from the Upper Chattahoochee River area as soon as possible.

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