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The Wachesaw Landing Site: The Last Gasp of the Coastal Waccamaw Indians

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S. Homes Hogue

The Wachesaw Landing Site, SoC^v529, is situated on the east bank of the Waccamaw River about 17 miles north of Winyah Bay in Georgetown County on Wachesaw Plantation. The Waccamaw River, while influenced by tidal fluctuations, is fresh water above Winyah Bay and in the past has supported considerable rice agriculture. There are significant fresh water marsh areas, representing eighteenth century rice fields, to the north and south of the high ground at Wachesaw. The site area is 6 to 10 feet above the river elevation and has apparently never been flooded (Figure 1).

The site was first uncovered in May 1930 when workmen, excavating the chimney footing for a cabin to be built on the southern portion of the bank overlooking the river, found a series of seven adult skeletons in one area and in another area one adult and a child (Charleston Museum field notes). The Charleston Museum was notified and W.H. Ritter and E.B. Chamerlain quickly removed these burials. The skeletal preservation was excellent and Ritter's field notes indicate that a large quantity of trade beads were found associated. A single drawing shows a loosely flexed burial with no notation of orientation. Local inhabitants recall that all the burials were "on their sides or backs with their knees drawn up," indicating flexed, primary burials. A newspaper account of the find appeared in the *Horry Herald* on May 8, 1930 and this publicity was sufficient to cause amazing distortions of the facts. Milling (1940:24), regarding these burials, notes:

In digging for the foundations of a chimney, thirteen skeletons were discovered, arranged in a radial pattern, the skulls at the center, the feet outermost. Two of the skeletons were those of unusually large men, several were women, and two were children. Each cranial cavity was filled with assorted trade beads and hundreds of beads were scattered in the adjacent soil.

While not mentioned by any of these accounts, the burials were also accompanied by a variety of brass or copper trade goods and red ocher. The trade beads include at least 11 distinct types dating from 1600 to 1890 with mean dates ranging from 1727 to 1749 (see Brain 1979:98-133). Based on evidence presented below it is likely these trade beads date from the last half of the seventeenth century. Found in local collections were a single spoon and a broken C-bracelet. Copper stains on the bones suggest that other metal artifacts were present during excavation, but are today lost.

The spoon, probably tin plated latten, has an oval bowl, trifid end, and lacks a rat tail. Hume (1978:183) suggests that spoons of this type were most popular in the "second half of the seventeenth century, but lost out to the pewter spoon in the early 1700's."

About 1936 the property caretaker found two burial urns and urn covers north of the cabin area, while plowing down the banks of an old road leading to the river landing. Both urns had been "killed" and one contained the poorly preserved remains of an infant burial. While the skeletal material has been lost or misplaced, the two urns and one urn cover are in the Charleston Museum collections. In 1941, while digging the basement for the existing main house, a series of five additional skeletons were uncovered. Because of the disturbance from building activities, however, these remains were not salvaged nor were any trade goods found. Several of the individuals from the main house locus were noted to have large, heavily worn teeth.

The principle secondary sources for the Indians from the South Carolina coast are Mooney (1894), Hodge (1910), and Swanton (1952). Despite considerable investigation of the recognized primary sources little can be added to these previous, rather sketchy accounts of the two Indian groups known to have inhabited this area at contact, the Waccamaw and the Winyah. Hodge (1910:887) places the Waccamaw along the Waccamaw River and Rivers (1894:14) places the tribe 100 miles northeast of Charleston in 1715. At that time they had four villages containing 210 males and 400 females. The Winyah are placed on the west side of the Pee Dee River near its confluence with Winyah Bay (Hodge 1910:963). Rivers (1894:94) locates the Winyah (Weneaws) 80 miles northeast of Charleston in 1715, at which time they had one village of 36 males and 70 females (Figure 2).

The Waccamaws and Winyahs are most often remembered in connection with the establishment of a trading post in the area by the South Carolina Commissioners of Indian Trade. By the fall of 1716 a post had been established at "Uauenee" or Yauhannah (SoC^v502), only to be deserted in the summer of 1717 because of mounting Indian (primarily Sara or Cheraw, Santee, Pedee, and Waccamaw) hostility (McDowell 1955:111, 202). In fact Waties, the factor at Yauhannah, noted that in 1716 "only the Winyahs could be trusted." In 1717 both the Winyah and Waccamaw groups petitioned the government to establish the factory at Andrew Collins' plantation on the Black River (McDowell 1955:208). Hughes, the new factor of Yauhannah, attempted to convince the Waccamaw, who had recently moved to the south side of the Black River, to return to the neck along the Waccamaw River (McDowell 1955:265). Rogers (1970:14) notes that while there is no plat or grant for Andrew Collins on Black River, there is a plat for Andrew Collins on the south side of the Pee Dee River. Rogers also

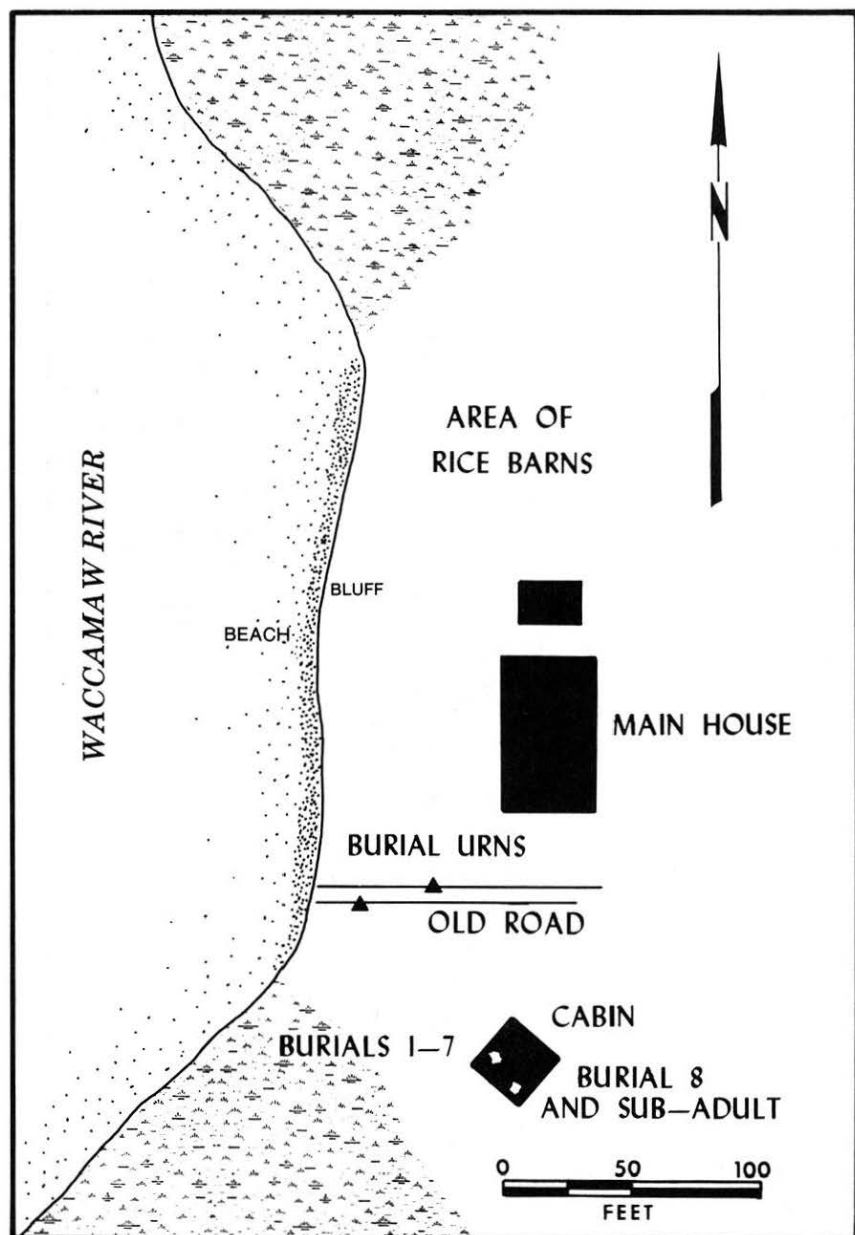


Figure 1. The Wachesaw Landing Site, SoC 529, Georgetown County, South Carolina

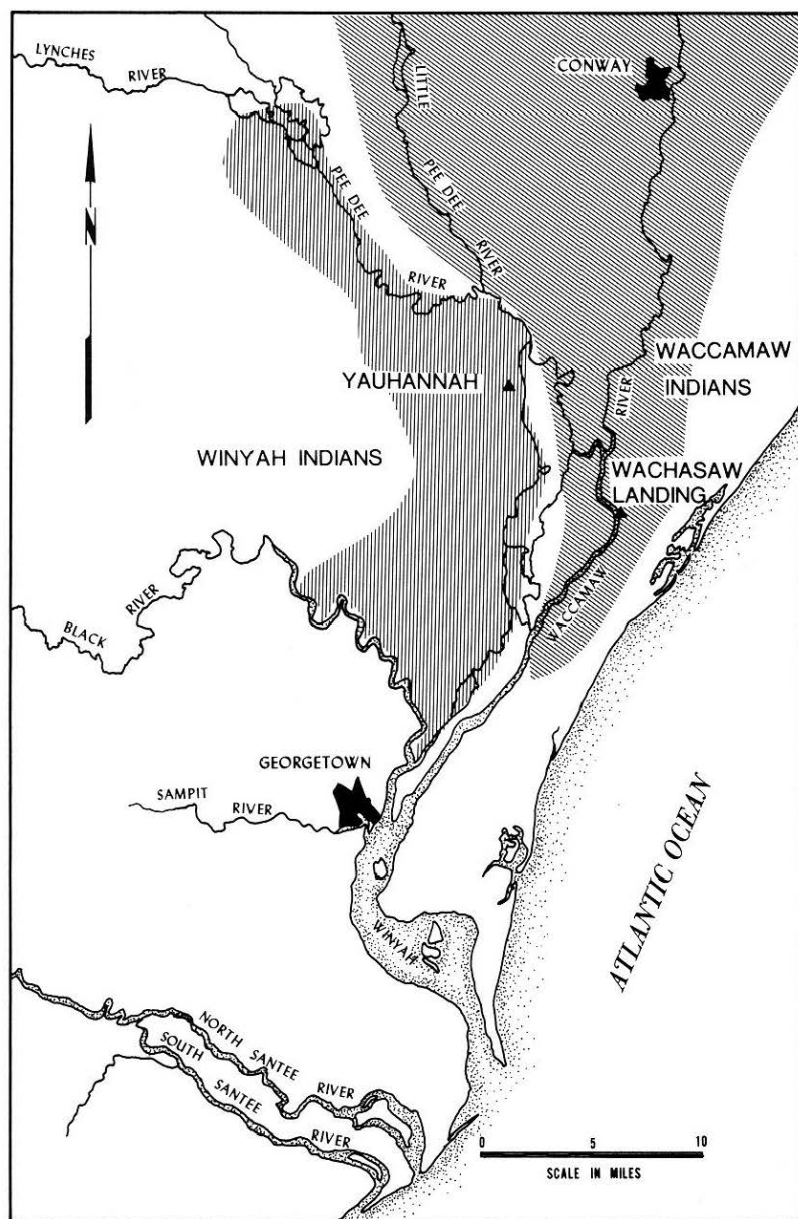


Figure 2. Vicinity of Winyah Bay and the Waccamaw River, South Carolina

notes that the Waccamaw were destroyed in 1720, after 60 of 100 warriors who were making war on the settlers were captured and sent into West Indian slavery. The Winyahs, however, sided with the colonists and survived in this region somewhat longer. No mention can be found of *any* Georgetown Indian tribe in the Colonial records after 1753 (Rogers 1970:12). Mooney (1894), Hodge (1910), and Swanton (1952) all believe that these remnant coastal groups joined with the Siouan Catawba and it is on this circumstantial evidence that the Waccamaw and Winyah are argued to be Siouan themselves. The exploitation of these coastal groups for the slave trade as early as 1683, coupled with the failure of any of the major exploration parties to pass through the area, accounts of the scarce information on the Winyah and Waccamaw tribes.

No maps have been found which document the location of the Waccamaw, although an undated Bowen map ("A New and Accurate Map of the Provinces of North and South Carolina, Georgia, etc.") does show the "Winyou" Indians southwest of the Pee Dee River. Based on the ethno-historic documents and a reliance on the secondary sources, it appears that the Wachesaw Landing site is well within the area of presumed Waccamaw Indian control prior to their move to the Black River in 1717.

Smith (1913:68) found most grants indicating Colonial occupation of the Waccamaw Neck began about 1711, but it was not until about 1730 that the Alston or Allston family began to acquire land in the vicinity of Wachesaw Plantation (Smith 1913:69). While there is little firm evidence, the Alstons seem to have been the original owners of the Plantation; by 1825 the Rev. James Belin had acquired the land (Lachicotte 1955, Mills' Atlas of 1825). The original plantation house burned in 1890 and the remains of the associated rice barns and plantation out buildings were dismantled during the late 1930s. The majority of this colonial era disturbance was concentrated inland from the site and north of the existing house. The southern site area has been damaged only by the recent cabin construction, the filling in of the old ferry and dock road, and by grading activity where asphalt barges were landed and their cargo stored.

The Wachesaw Landing site was visited on several occasions in November and December of 1981 by the authors. During these visits a small collection of artifacts were collected from the eroded beach and the artifacts in the owner's possession were photographed. Several profile cuts along the bank were examined, with evidence of either overbank deposition or slumping noted. In addition, the authors re-examined the skeletal material curated at the Charleston Museum.

ARTIFACTS

The primary artifact recovered from the beach surface is pottery. Of the 313 sherds, 69% or 217 are readily identifiable as belonging to the Pee Dee Series (Coe 1952, Reid 1967). The paste has the characteristic sugary texture and the stamps are generally well executed with fine lands and grooves. One hundred nineteen sherds, or 55%, were complicated stamped, with recognizable motifs including the fillet, arc-angle, and line block. Simple stamped sherds, previously recognized in the Pee Dee Series by Joffre Coe (personal communication) account for 16% of the sample (34 sherds), and plain sherds account for 23% (49 sherds). Twelve sherds of Pee Dee Textile Wrapped pottery (5% of the sample) were found, as were small quantities of a corn cob impressed motif and a cord marked motif, both on sherds with Pee Dee paste (see also Reid 1967:9 for information on similar sherds from Town Creek).

Of the 93 rim sherds in this sample, 47 sherds (51%) had some sort of temporally sensitive rim decoration. The earlier form of rim decoration (Joffre Coe, personal communication; see also Reid 1967:59) consists of reed punctations parallel to the lip (Fig. 3a). Caldwell (1974:95) suggests that the single row of punctations, such as is seen at Wachesaw, may be slightly later than the double row. The equally early pellet forms (Fig. 3b) are rarely found in the available surface collection. The later form of rim decoration consists of a rim fillet applique which has been added to the rim and then punctated with a reed or stick (Fig. 3c). This fillet strip is found on complicated stamped sherds almost as frequently as the reed punctations, but dominates the rim decoration of the simple stamped pottery.

The Pee Dee vessel forms identified from the Wachesaw site include the carinated bowl form and a deeper, wide-mouthed vessel. While the majority of the rims were straight, several evidenced moderate to strong eversion. The combination of traits observed from Wachesaw suggest a relatively late date for the Pee Dee pottery, perhaps A.D. 1500 to 1600.

Also found in the collection is a small sample (96 sherds) of what we have called the Wachesaw Series (Fig. 4a). This pottery is characterized by a coarse, granular paste with rounded quartz sand grains in large amounts. The color ranges from light gray to very dark brown and the cores are occasionally slightly darker. The interiors are moderately well smoothed and the exteriors are either plain or are stamped with a complicated stamped or simple stamped motif. The stamp designs are bold, with sloppy lands and grooves. Application is usually sloppy with much overstamping and smearing. Shoulder and lip decoration is very rare. The one example found evidences rim slash punctations. The rim is straight, suggestive of deep jars. The lip is usually strongly beveled and thickened. The vessel mouth diame-

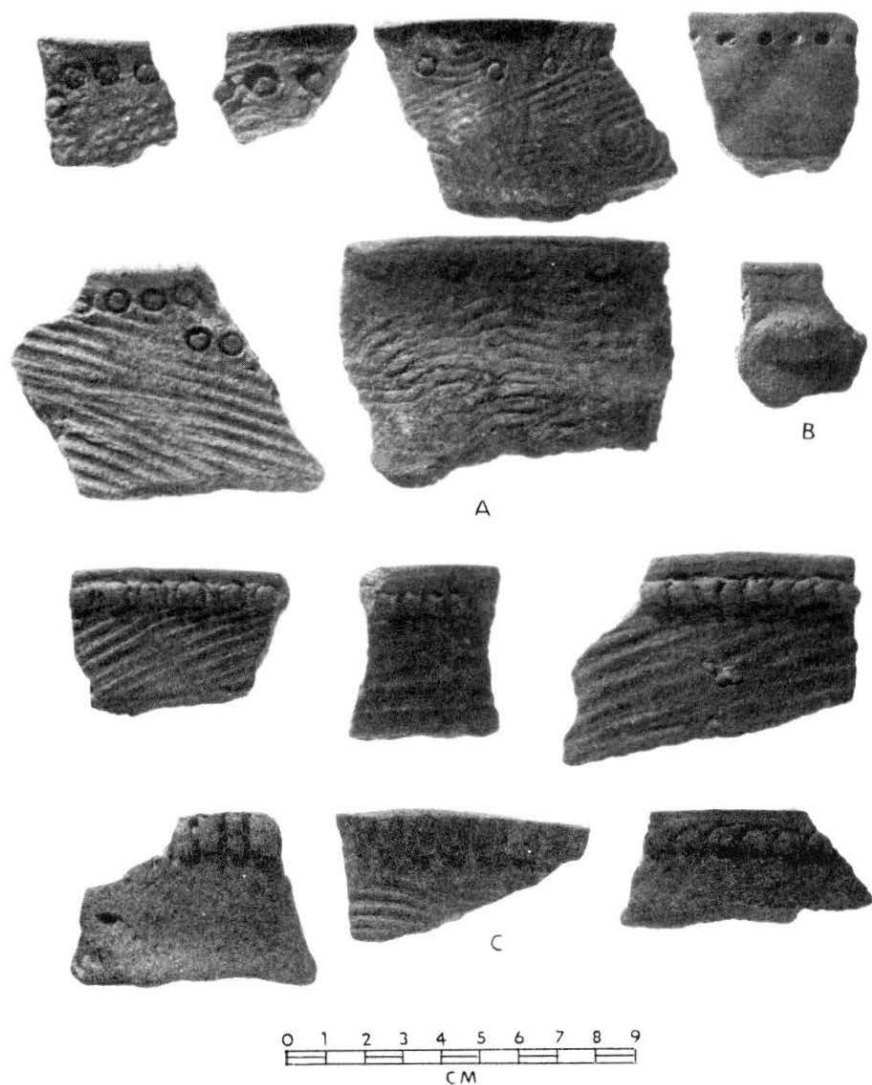


Figure 3 Pee Dee Series pottery from Wachesaw Landing. A, Pee Dee rims with reed punctations; B, shaped pellet on Pee Dee rim; C, Pee Dee rims with reed impressed fillet applique.

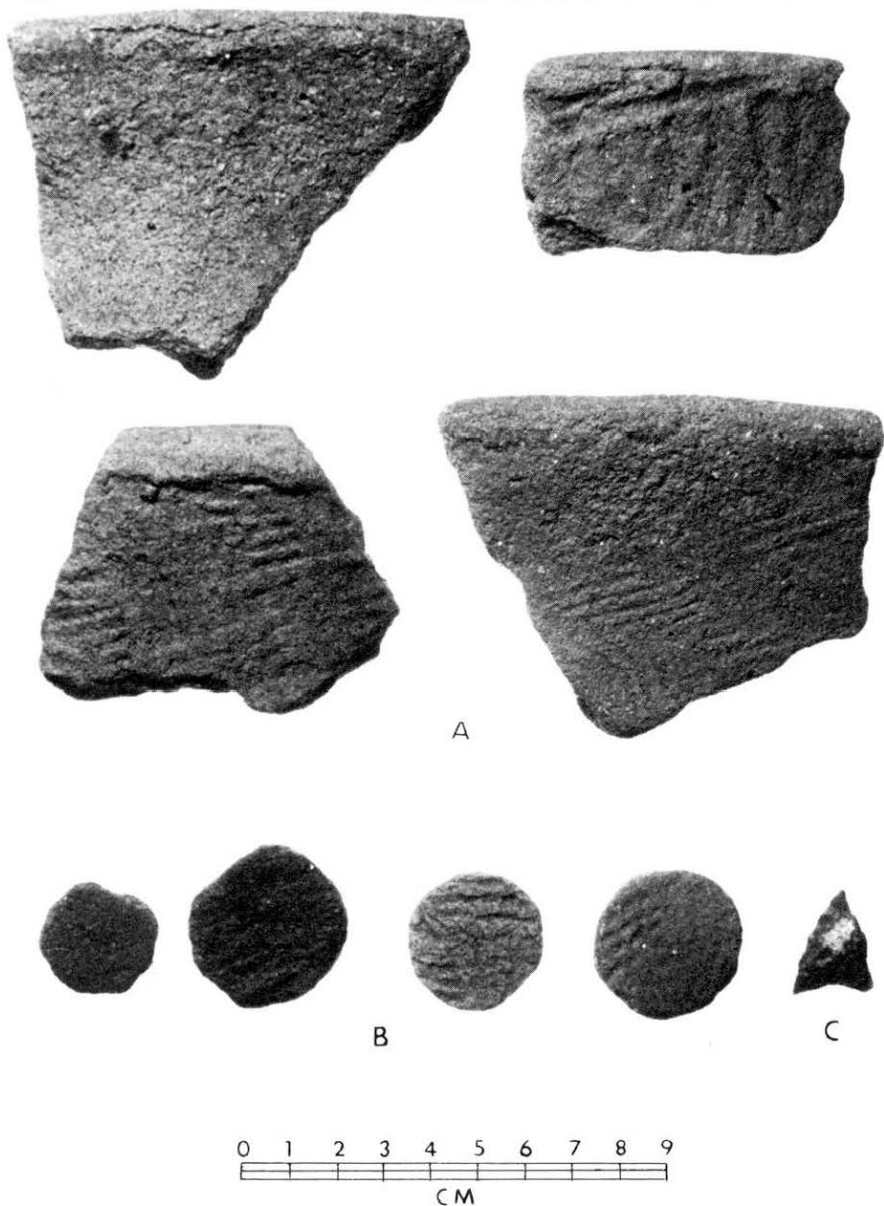


Figure 4. Miscellaneous artifacts from Wachesaw Landing. A, Wachesaw Series pottery; B, Pee Dee sherd discs; C, projectile point.

ters range from 36 to 90 cm with a mean of 60 cm. The body thickness ranges from 8 to 14 mm (see also Trinkley 1981).

Of the 96 Wachesaw Series sherds, 56 (58%) are complicated stamped. The only motif thus far identified has been the filfot scroll, which accounts for 14% (8 sherds) of the stamped sample. The simple stamped motif accounts for 30% of the sample, while 12% are plain.

Although the pottery may have ties with the Pee Dee Series, it is much less carefully made, lacks rim decoration, and, in general, appears quite distinct. It is this pottery which was recovered in proximity to the cabin burials and trade goods, suggesting that the Wachesaw Series was made by the contact period Waccamaw Indians. If this is correct, the pottery may date from about A.D. 1650 to 1720. At the present time this is the only site from which Wachesaw Series pottery has been identified.

Four clay disks (Fig. 4b) have been recovered, all made from Pee Dee Series sherds. A single, poorly made rhyolite triangular projectile point (Fig. 4c) was also recovered from the beach. This point is similar to the roughly made Siouan points found at Rk^v1 (Lewis 1951:265) and at Sk^v1a (Jack Wilson, personal communication). Flakes of rhyolite and quartz were collected, as were a small quantity of animal bones. Two kaoline pipe stem fragments, both having 3/32-inch bore diameters, were recovered. Hume (1878:298) indicates that these specimens may date from 1680 to 1710, and may therefore relate to the Indian occupation of the site.

SKELETAL ANALYSIS

The skeletal remains excavated from the cabin area had been separated into cranial and post-cranial categories at the Charleston Museum. In only one instance was a box of post cranial material labeled to indicate that the remains belonged to the same individual; the remainder of the remains were thoroughly mixed. No attempt to preserve or reconstruct the burial remains was evident. Because of the time allocated for this preliminary analysis, certain bone types were selected for study. These included, when possible, reconstructed cranial material which was used for aging and sexing the individual and the humeri, femora, tibias, and innominates, which were used for sexing and stature estimation of the individuals.

From the cranial fragments five crania could be reconstructed for study. By observing suture closure (Krogman 1978:76-88) and morphological traits diagnostic of the two sexes (Krogman 1978:115, Ubelaker 1978:42) the following results were established: cranium 1 is from a male, aged 25 to 30 years, cranium 2 is from a female aged 41+ years, crania 3 and 4 represent males, aged 45+ years, and cranium 5 is from a female aged 20 to 25 years.

Six mandibles were reconstructed from the remains, half of which could be sexed according to Giles' (1964) method using discriminant function analysis. The three measurements used to determine sex of the individual include the symphyseal height, bigonial breadth, and ramus height. Comparing these measurements with those calculations provided by Giles resulted in two females and one male. All six mandibles were observed for male or female morphological traits (Bass 1971:73). The results indicate the presence of five males (mandibles 2-6) and one female (mandible 1).

Molar wear was observed to determine age. The Wachesaw sample was compared with Brothwell's age classification of wear on pre-medieval British teeth (Bass 1971:239). While differences in environments should be considered between the Wachesaw and British populations, a general correlation of molar and age may be recognized. Mandible 1 suggests an age of 25 to 35, mandibles 2 and 6 suggest ages of 35 to 45, mandible 5 indicates an age of 17 to 25, and mandibles 3 and 4 contain no molars. Maxilla 1 appears to belong to the same individual as mandible 5 and is aged at 17 to 25 years. Maxillas 2-6 and 8 are aged at 25 to 35 years. Maxilla 7 is from a subadult.

Whenever possible, the diameter of femora and humeri heads were measured as an indicator of sex. Four humeri (three left and one right) were measured and the head diameters compared with measurements computed by Stewart (1979:99-101) for males and females. The left humerus 1 has a head diameter of 44 mm, indicative of a female. The left humerus 2 and the right humerus 8 have head diameters of 49 mm and 47 mm respectively, and are both indicative of males. The left humerus of ANP-8 has a head diameter of 45 mm, the midpoint for male and female separation.

Measurements from 13 femurs were compared with Pearson's estimates (Bass 1971:173) resulting in five males and one indeterminate from six left femurs and six male and two indeterminate from eight right femur heads. Perhaps the large percentage of males reflected in this population sample is the result of the great deal of overlap between the diameter of femur heads of males and females (see Stewart 1979:121).

A final attempt to sex the individuals represented in the sample from Wachesaw was made using a study designed by Dibennardo and Taylor (1979). This technique measures the circumference of the femur midshaft as an indicator of sex (measurements ≥ 86 mm indicate male sex while measurements ≥ 85 mm are considered indicative of female sex). In comparing the measurements of four femurs from Wachesaw, two males and two females were identified.

For estimates of stature, intact humeri, femora, and tibias were measured and stature was estimated using the equations for both males and females

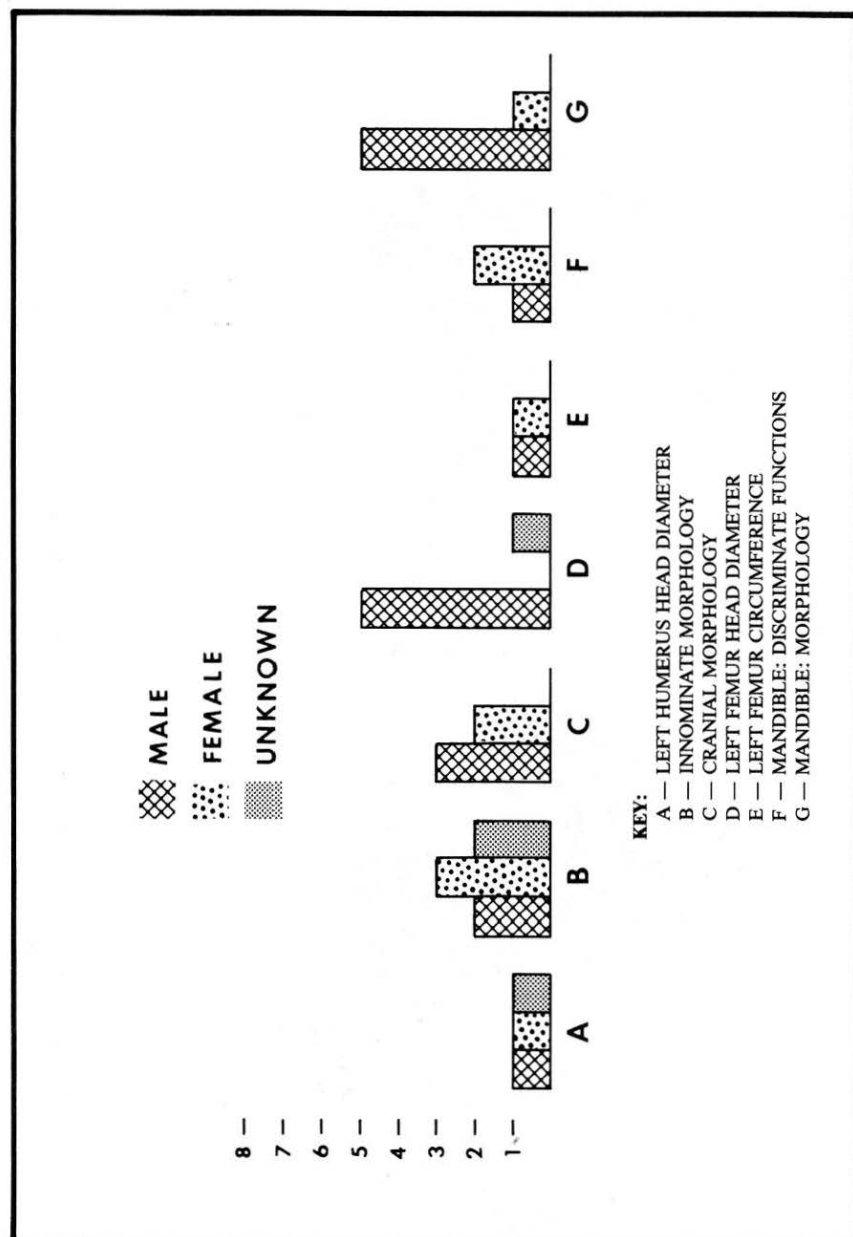


Figure 5. A comparison of male-female sex ratios from Wachesaw Landing.



Figure 6. Frontal views of cranium 1 (left) and cranium 2 (right) from Wachesaw Landing.

of white and black populations (Trotter and Gleser 1952, 1958). Fragmented bones were measured in segments (Steele 1970). These measurements were then used in formulas to produce length estimates (Steele 1970:93-96).

Stature estimation equations given by Trotter and Gleser (1952, 1958) for white and negro populations of both sexes as well as formulas to determine stature for Mongoloid and Mexican populations (Bass 1971) were chosen for this sample. In general, the mean stature estimates range from 5'4.5"±2.5" to 5'7.4"±2.9" using femura, 5'4.8"±2.0" to 5'9.4"±3.1" using tibias, and 5'4.9"±2.9" to 5'8.8"±3.4" using humeri.

The pelvis provides the most accurate data for determining sex. Differences between males and females are easily recognized and research confirms the differences as adequate indicators (Ubelaker 1973:42). Because of the overall poor and fragmented condition of the Wachesaw innominates, little could be observed to determine sex differences. Most of the distinctions are based on the angle of the sciatic notch and the presence or absence of a pre-auricular sulcus. The results of this limited analysis indicate one male and three females from right innominates and two males and two indeterminants from the left innominates.

Figure 5 presents an overall picture of the male-female sex ratio resulting from the various studies. The sex ratio appears almost balanced until one observed the difference from the femur head diameter. As mentioned earlier, there is a great deal of overlap between males and females when using this technique. It should be noted that the accuracy of sexing an individual is 95% for the pelvis alone, 90% for the skull alone, and 80% using just the long bones (Krogman 1978:149). Of course, this accuracy percentage increases with the combination of any of these remains, but in the situation at Wachesaw it is not possible to relate cranial and post-cranial remains to the same individual so the remains can only be observed in isolation.

The overall size of these individuals resembles a Siouan population. While no cranial measurements were possible because of the highly fragmented nature of the sample, the material appears to fit Neumann's (1952:17-20) Iswanid variety. Neumann (1952:19) notes:

[t]he face as a whole is of gracile rather than rugged build and not large in relationship to the braincase. All facial dimensions tend to be moderate...and the same applies to the proportions...Prognathism is medium to submedium. The size of the mandible is medium, the most common chin form is bilateral, and gonial eversion is small to medium.

Pollitzer (1971:33) indicates that the Iswanid variety is also characterized by "a small, moderately long, ovoid skull with small to medium browridges and medium frontal slope." Although this estimate lacks the support of cranial indices, it does provide the first osteological evidence that the abo-

original occupants of the northeast coast of South Carolina were Siouan, as Mooney (1894), Hodge (1919), and Swanton (1952) have argued on circumstantial grounds (Fig. 6).

In summary, the skeletal analyses of the Wachesaw material suggest that there are, minimally, eight adult individuals, based on the left tibia count (two complete, six proximal fragments). This agrees with the notes from the Charleston Museum. Additionally, a single subadult maxilla was identified in the collection, which may have come from the single child burial reported by the Charleston Museum fieldnotes. No long bones from this subadult were found. The male-female ratio is probably 3:2, with the ages ranging from a young adult (20 to 25 years) to 45+ years. Insufficient material from the subadult burial was found to more accurately age the individual.

Although this research was not designed to study the pathology of the skeletal remains, some observations were made. Moderate lipping was noted on the edges of vertebrae centrum, suggestive of osteophytosis. Several caries were observed in the pre-molars and molars and at least one abscess was found on maxilla 9. This abscess was probably sufficiently infected to result in purulent discharge. A left tibia, left femur, and proximal end of a right radius evidence a pathological condition characterized by moderate to extreme hyperostosis. The similarity of these bones suggest they belonged to the same individual, although there are no notes regarding their location in the field. Dr. Albert Kreutner (personal communication to the Charleston Museum) suggests that the condition is osteomyelitis which may have been caused by trauma, staphylococcus, or treponemal infections (syphilis or yaws).

SUMMARY

These analyses have suggested that Wachesaw Landing was a village occupied by makers of Pee Dee pottery from about A.D. 1500. Sometime prior to A.D. 1650 a new pottery, called the Wachesaw Series, began to be made, apparently by the historic Waccamaw Indians. Also present at the site were a variety of trade beads and copper or brass trade items. The only features known from the site are two urn burials, associated with the Pee Dee Phase occupation, and a series of nine, presumably flexed, burials dating to the contact period. Osteological study of this small, fragmented contact period population suggests that the historic Waccamaw were Siouan.

Of considerable interest are the differences in the Siouan pottery being made at historic contact by the Hill Tribes (Gardner 1980, Lewis 1951), the North Carolina coastal groups (Loftfield 1976), and the South Carolina coastal tribes. The preliminary data suggest that while these groups *may*

have spoken the same root language and *may* have possessed a similar cultural pattern, distinctive differences are observed at the fundamental archaeological level of ceramic series. Further investigations may indicate that the cultural patterns of these groups are not as similar as previously supposed. Additional work is proposed for this site, focusing primarily on a stratigraphic analysis of the site, isolation of architectural features, and the recovery of a larger population sample.

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