EXAMINATION OF ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES ON MOUND C OF THE CARSON MOUND GROUP, COAHOMA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

A Thesis

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Degree

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ABSTRACT

The Carson Mound Group, located in Coahoma County, Mississippi, contains six large mounds arranged on a northwest to southeast oriented prehistoric grid. The removal of a historic structure on the top of Mound C, a platform mound, allowed excavations where the house once stood. These excavations revealed a number of large wall trench structures, some of which may have been palisades, as well as many pits, postholes, and historic features. The prehistoric features found on Mound C are described in detail, as well as their relationship to one another. A possible sequence of when these structures were built and rebuilt is developed based on superposition and soil core data, and the unusual nature of the arrangement of these features is explored and discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Carson Mound Group, 22-CO-505, is a late Mississippian mound site located in the Lower Mississippi Valley in the Yazoo Basin, in Coahoma County, Mississippi (Figs.1-3).

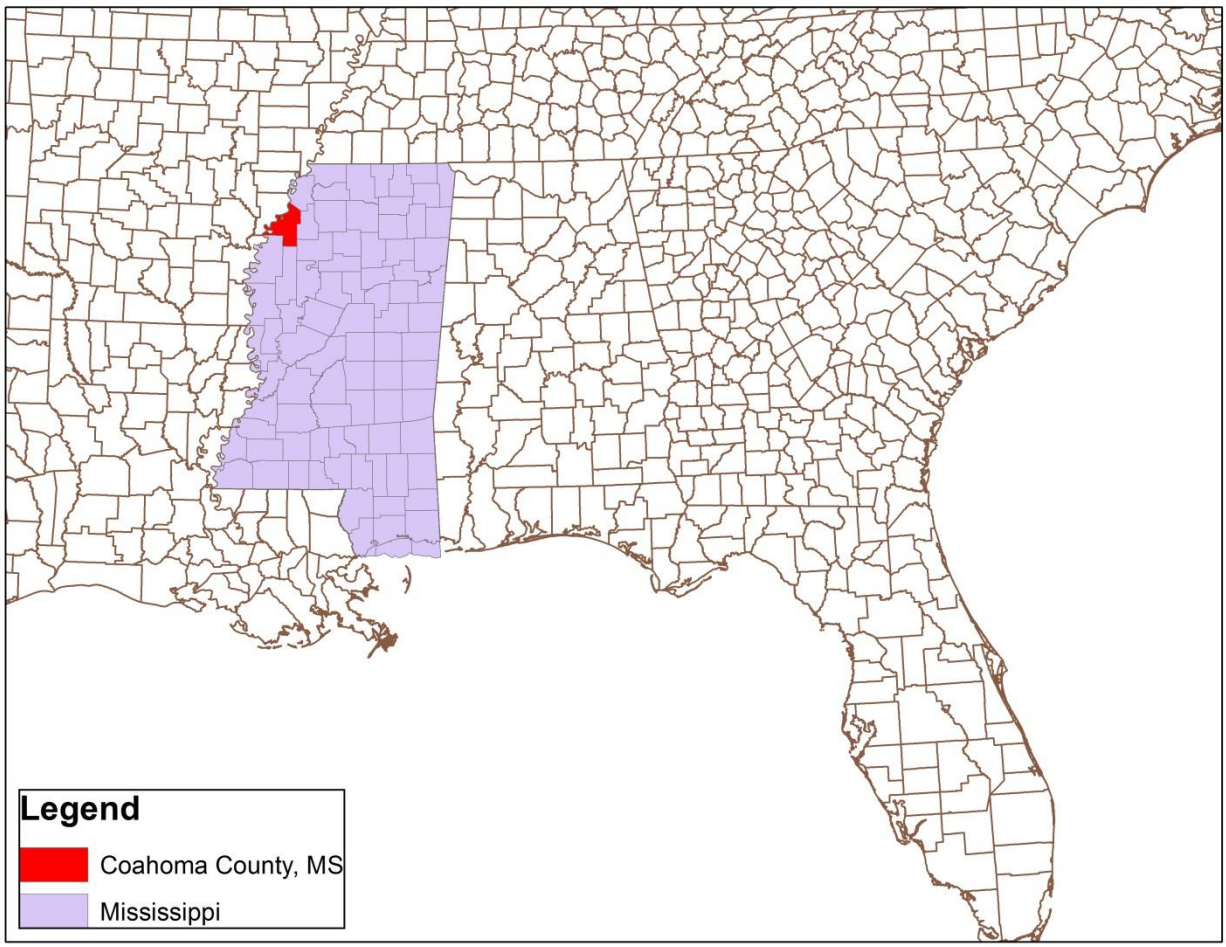

Figure 1: Location of Mississippi and Coahoma County within the Southeastern United States (Mississippi Geospatial Clearinghouse)

It was first mapped by William Henry Homes in the Bureau of American Ethnology's 12th annual report in 1894, reported by Cyrus Thomas (Phillips et. al 2003: 372-373). Carson was in

much better condition when it was first recorded, consisting of six major mounds, over eighty small mounds, several burials, and a trench and embankment, spanning approximately one mile and covering approximately 150 acres

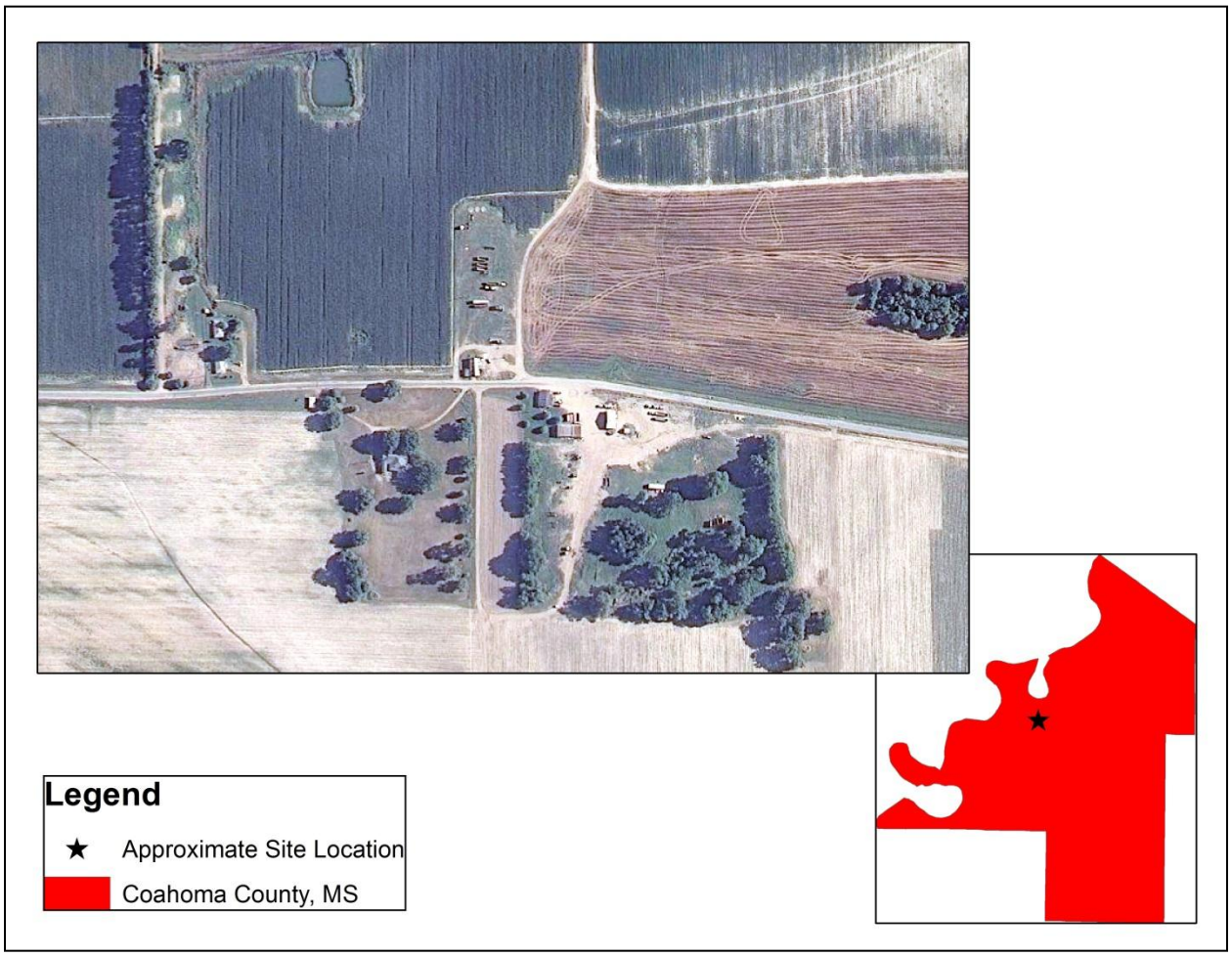

Figure 2: Location of the Carson Mound Group within Coahoma County, Mississippi (Google Maps, Mississippi Geospatial Clearinghouse)

Today only the major mounds remain, which include two twin mounds, a five-sided platform mound, and three truncated pyramidal mounds. Even these mounds are reduced in size and condition due to erosion and cultivation of the fields that cover much of the site. The mile along which the major mounds are arranged is on a crevasse splay, putting the site on a slightly higher level than the surrounding area, and giving the major mounds a northwest to southeast orientation. This orientation is called the Carson Grid and its significance is discussed below.

Archaeological research has been conducted at Carson since 2008 by both the University of Mississippi and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. My research problem began as a continuation of the work done on Mound C during the 2010 field school.

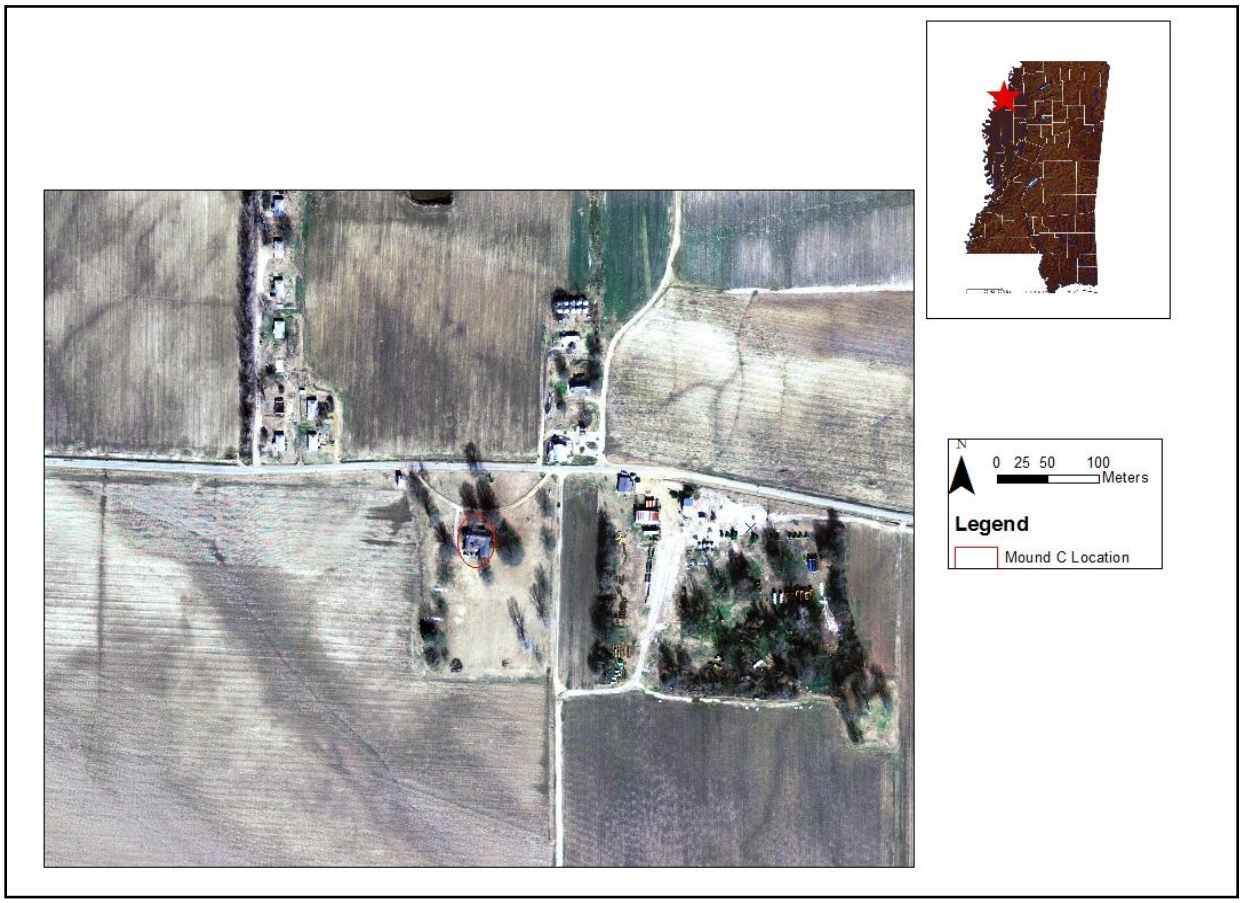

Figure 3: Location of Mound C (Google Maps, Mississippi Geospatial Clearinghouse)

At this time, the field students dug a trench on the western side of Mound C and opened two units on the western and eastern sides of the mound. These revealed several partial wall trenches, pits, and postholes. These partial wall trenches lie at 18 degrees off north, in alignment with the south side of Mound D and also with the palisades and wall trenches in the embankment area just to the northeast of Mound A (Fig. 4). This northwest to southeast orientation on which all of the major mounds of the Carson Group are aligned, the Carson Grid, provides evidence that the six major mounds of Carson are part of a single complex social unit. The size of the wall

trenches, both in width and depth, and the angles of the corners of these partial wall trenches are suggestive of a structure larger than a building or a house, but rather a palisade or large screen. Further exploration of these findings did not take place during the 2010 field school largely because at this time Mound C was the site of a modern house.

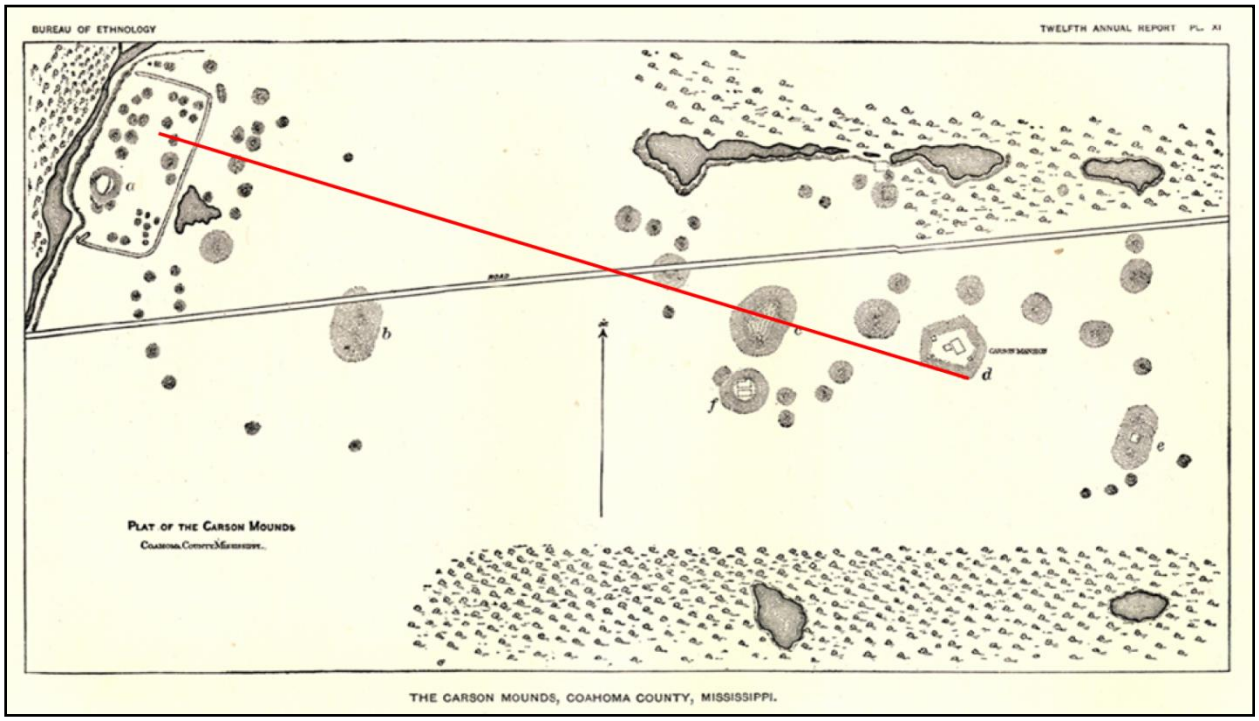

Figure 4: The Cyrus Thomas Map of Carson with site grid alignment in red

My research sought to further examine these unusual wall trenches on Mound C. With the demolition of the most recent house on its top in the summer of 2012, I was able to examine the prehistoric architecture more toward the center of the mound where the house once stood (Fig. 5). My main goals were to try to get a clearer idea of what these large, deep wall trenches were, if they continued to the interior of the mound, and why a palisade would have been built to enclose the top of a Mississippian mound. I accomplished these goals using the architectural data collected during the 2010 and 2012 field seasons.

These July 2012 excavations revealed unusual architectural features, including wall trenches that were possibly screens or palisades due to their size.

Figure 5: Mound C before (top) and after (bottom) removal of historic house (Google Maps)

The removal of the house on Mound C also exposed a portion of the eastern side of the mound, which allowed for the continuation of this exposed mound profile down to the prehistoric ground

surface. This thesis will describe the features found on Mound C during the summer of 2012 when the central portion of the mound became accessible. I begin with a review of selected literature on what comprises the Mississippian Period in general, including Mississippian mound construction and mound-top structures. My focus is on delineating "Mississippian standards" used to describe the various aspects of Mississippian sites, the scholarly departure from these standards in more recent literature, and my stance and approach to describing Mound C and Carson. Two contemporaneous sites near Carson, the Parchman Place site and the Hollywood site, are used as examples of Mississippian sites adhering to "Mississippian standards" in the Yazoo Basin. Three major Mississippian sites, Cahokia, Moundvile, and Etowah, are used to show departures from these "standards" through a look at unique mound top structures at each of these sites. I also lay out the setting of the Carson Mound Group within the Upper Yazoo River Basin. The third chapter delineates my methods in the field and in the lab. This includes the use of GIS and Surfer to map and analyze the architectural features exposed on Mound C and the basement profile on the eastern side of Mound C. Chapter four presents the results of the field work conducted on Mound C and the basement profile during the summer 2012 field season. I use data based on superposition and intersection of wall trenches and post holes as well as depth of fill from soil coring in select features to construct a potential sequence. The final chapter includes a discussion of the preceding chapters and some conclusions about my findings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The presence of earthen mounds across the prehistoric Southeast is indicative of the prehistoric impact of native peoples on the American Southeast, and demonstrates the levels of control and power exerted by the heads of these early societies. At the Carson site, Mound C, a truncated pyramidal mound with evidence of a palisade at its top, demonstrates a Mississippian architectural manipulation of the landscape.

There are several reasons for Mound C's importance as a research topic aside from the question of the palisade on its summit. Mound C is an example of the reclaiming of the landscape, as part of its structure was built over backswamp. Stratigraphy shows that the mound was under construction while the area was subject to flooding episodes. It also fits into the same northeast to southwest grid as mounds A, B, and D, which is of interest since it is unusual for Mississippian sites to have a uniform structural orientation. This research will add to the growing collection of data being found at Carson, and will also provide an exploration of architectural archaeological elements, as architectural analysis is a modern way to examine Mississippian cultural practices and social dynamics.

This review of selected literature begins with a description of the traditional standards of what constitutes a Mississippian site. I will then describe the recent departure from this traditional stance for one of diversity, and how I approach Carson and Mound C given these differing approaches to exploring Mississippian sites.

The Mississippian World

There have been several disagreements concerning the specifics of defining "Mississippian" over the past several years, but "Mississippian" is generally characterized by several features including intensive corn agriculture, hereditary chiefs, religious and mythological iconography, widespread trade, warfare, and construction of earthen mounds (Anderson and Sassaman 2012; Hudson 1978; Lewis and Stout 1998). Blitz (2010) examines the possible pre-existing conditions needed for the initial emergence of primary chiefdoms, citing environmentally restricted habitation zones, population growth, increased reliance on maize agriculture, peer polity, and boundary maintenance due to increased hostility as likely causes. Walthall (1980) also references several similar factors involving changes in subsistence, pottery temper, manufacture of goods, construction of earthen mounds and structure at their tops, and hereditarily-based leadership. Such consistencies in defining "Mississippian" are indicative of many years of study of the cultural period, and show how no single factor was the main catalyst, but rather the synthesis of these equally important factors and events were necessary to bring about such a drastic change.

The shift from solely hunting and gathering to incorporating corn agriculture into subsistence patterns is indicative of movement into the Mississippian period, taking place around 700 CE (Walthall 1980:185). Agriculture began with the domestication of maize, but also involved the cultivation of beans and squash in order to fill all dietary requirements, which were originally thought to have originated in Mesoamerica alone, but some of the cultivars have recently been found to have originated in eastern North America (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:127; Walthall 1980:185). With the advent of intensive agriculture, particularly intensive corn agriculture, came the need for a surplus in order to be prepared for the possibility of famine

due to increasing numbers of people living in close proximity. Such subsistence patterns reflect the fertility of the soils found in the alluvial flood plains of much of the Mississippian world, particularly in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley in which the site of interest, Carson, resides (Phillips et. al 2003:16; Walthall 1980:191).

Heavy reliance on shell-tempered pottery is a hallmark of the Mississippian period, and James B. Griffin's extensive categorization and analysis of pottery sherds from throughout the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, which is the location of the site of interest, provides a basis for creating a chronology of ceramics found at the Carson site and also to aid in determining occupations of the site (Phillips et. al 2003:61). Variations in pottery types and sherds made of materials unavailable in the Southeast are indicative of a trade system extending outside of the region (Anderson and Sassaman 2012; Walthall 1980:190). The presence of rare trade goods at various sites across the Southeast, particularly as grave goods, are often seen as indicative of status and wealth, whether social or ideological (King 2004b; Knight and Steponaitis 1998:17-19).

Warfare was a constant issue for Mississippian towns and chiefdoms as made apparent by archaeological evidence of palisades enclosing major sites. Some even claim it was the leading cause for the shift into the Mississippian phase "given that organizationally complex and populous societies will tend to have a distinct military advantage over smaller and simpler forms" (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:185). Evidence of warfare is also found on skeletal remains through signs of physical trauma and damage on the bones. Mississippian chiefdoms and towns thought to have been ravaged by warfare sometimes show signs of damage from burning or forced destruction and hasty protection of valuables, one such example being Etowah, which is thought to have been attacked and destroyed during the Late Wilbanks phase (King

2003:79-80). The taking of body parts as trophies was a normal part of warfare, and one on one combat was the preferred type of battle. Religious and cosmological ideologies were a large influence on warriors, as is evident in iconography portraying anthropomorphic warriors carrying the severed heads of presumed enemies (Townsend 2004). Chiefs were often seen by their followers as descended from the gods, or as deities on earth, which added to the dynamics of performance in battle and trophy-taking (Anderson and Sassaman 2012; Helms 1992).

One of the most visible bodies of evidence for the solidification of Mississippian as a distinct period in southeastern Indian prehistory is the ideological and religious iconography, generally considered to be part of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, or SECC (Galloway 1989). Although the styles, motifs, constituent materials, and types of iconography vary across the Mississippian world, the term is more recently used to signify any sort of artistic Mississippian artifact (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:200-201). Common motifs include warfare and what appears to be the taking of enemy body parts, mythological figures such as Red Horn and the Great Serpent, and other cosmological images such as the hand in eye motif and the bi-lobed arrow. Materials include various types of stone, shell, bone, and even wood. (Townsend 2004).

Sites on the periphery of the Mississippian world, with one of the most prominent examples being Spiro of eastern Oklahoma, show through their artifact assemblages how far-reaching Mississippian trade routes extended. Varieties of stone, shell, and other raw and worked materials are found in Spiro, including the only Mesoamerican artifact known to date in the Mississippian world (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:203). The variety of trade goods in the assemblages at Spiro reveals Mississippian connections with the Plains and West Coast as well, which is indicative of a highly functional political and economic system. It is important to note

the peripheral chiefdoms of the Mississippian in order to account for the variation in goods across the Mississippian world due to trade but also to environmental and ecological differences.

The Argument for Diversity

Overall, Mississippian chiefdoms were diverse and the product of intersecting local and external factors that defy isolation. Several major ceremonial centers have been studied and interpreted, such as Cahokia (Pauketat 2004; 2007; 2009), Etowah (King 2003, 2004a, 2004b; King et. al 2011), and Moundville (Knight 1989, 2006; Knight and Steponaitis 1998; Knight et. al 2010). From the studies conducted on these sites, it has been determined that there is no single, archetypal type of chiefdom on which to base understanding of Mississippian chiefdoms, and that each polity shared enough characteristics to be considered "Mississippian," but each is unique in their structure and expression of ideologies (Blitz 2010; Townsend 2004). Despite all chiefdoms having the presence of monuments and mounds usually arranged around a plaza, there is not enough similarity between the sites to make much generalization; the term "Mississippian" is better used to distinguish a time period rather than to place categorical constraints on such a varied, individualized set of settlements (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:179;195). Research shows how general thinking about Mississippian chiefdoms is understood under only a few groupings, and how this top-down approach to understanding Mississippian sites and their inhabitants, particularly levels of social stratification within a chiefdom, is narrow and leaves no room for the variety that is an intrinsic part of human nature (Hammerstedt 2005: 11)

Even the term "chiefdom" has come under scrutiny in recent years, as it has been pointed out that "chiefdom" is just a cultural construct for conceptualizing the political systems of the Mississippian period (Pauketat 2007). Such constructs are made to form a framework for

something not entirely understood, and based on only a few observations (Pauketat 2007:2). The term also assumes that there is only one logical way to understand Mississippian leadership, through the presence of a chief, and does not allow for other possibilities (Brown 2006:197). Knight (2006) has famously called the SECC not exclusively Southeastern, nor ceremonial, nor a complex, and suggests that instead of making generalizations about this aspect of the Mississippian world, scholars should focus on variability and distinctive qualities. This is what Anderson and Sassaman (2012:200-201) call an approach that "characterizes current research," as the notion of looking at Mississippian chiefdoms and towns as individual entities and not carbon copies of one another is the model of recent research on the Mississippian world (Blitz 2010). Looking at the localized styles of pottery, architecture or iconography is a way of appreciating the highly individualized nature of Mississippian sites (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:200). Thus, there is a need for a "new synthesis" with which to examine Mississippian society (Blitz 2010; Knight and Steponaitis 1998:xix). The neo-evolutionary terms more traditionally used to describe chiefdoms, such as apical and constituent, simple and complex, or corporate and network, are being cast aside for their pigeonholing of forms of social organization too varied and complex to be arbitrarily grouped and labeled (Anderson and Sassaman 2012:186; Pauketat 2007). While these terms do allow for a frame of reference for studying these societies collectively, there has been a theoretical shift to examining these polities on an individual basis due to their unique histories and ways they changed during their time of occupation (Blitz 2010).

These discussions have led to questions how to approach Mississippian culture, with divisions developing along the lines of whether to characterize Mississippian government and social functions as centralized or de-centralized (Blitz 2010:4). Theoretical approaches to understanding Mississippian political structure have recently begun to move away from the

traditionally accepted view of Mississippian chiefdoms operating under centralized, hierarchical systems toward the possibility of decentralized, heterarchical control (Blitz 2010:4). This theoretical shift is relatively recent, and a political-economy based understanding of chiefdoms' political construction is still the predominant theoretical means for studying Mississippian society (Blitz 2010:4). Shifts in understanding the temporal changes of Mississippian societies have occurred as well, for example the shift from studying the phases of Moundville from a synchronic perspective to a diachronic perspective, meaning a shift in looking at the phases for their characteristics at the present to examining characteristics of the phases and the processes involved in their change (Knight 2010).

In my research, I have come to know the older, neo-evolutionary terms and the characteristics of Mississippian that go along with them as the "Mississippian standards." These terms were valid in the early days of exploring Mississippian sites (Hudson 1978), but as more data and information on Mississippian sites throughout the Southeast and Midwest have been collected and interpreted, the need for these generalizing terms and standards has decreased. The more recent theoretical movement to approaching Mississippian archaeology calls for a departure from categorizing sites and aspects of Mississippian culture based on generalizations to an approach that focuses on the diversity of each site. The various factors contributing to each site's composition are too numerous and varied to pigeonhole. Thus, my approach to interpreting my findings on Mound C of the Carson Mound Group is that of the school of thought promoting diversity in the Mississippian world. My analysis of the features found on Mound C addresses the related Mississippian standards but also shows how my findings are unique and a departure from such standards, giving more credibility to the push for diversity in examining Mississippian sites and their contents.

Major Mississippian Sites

The "Big Three" of Mississippian chiefdoms consist of Cahokia, Etowah, and Moundville. Each of these sites contains mounds with unique mound summit structures comparable to Mound C at the Carson site. For example, Cahokia contains several pyramidal platform mounds and lies on a site grid slightly off a north to south orientation; Etowah's Mound A is a pyramidal platform mound with evidence of a palisade at its top which relates directly to the architectural feature atop Carson's Mound C; Moundville features several platform mounds and a deliberately laid out site grid which can be compared to the site grid of the Carson site for analysis and comparison. The purpose of this section is to lay a foundation for historical comparison of well known Mississippian sites to the Carson site in order to add more information about Carson to the archaeological record. The history of archaeological research done at these sites is discussed below; a discussion of their platform mounds follows, as well as a section on mound construction and symbolism, and mound-top structures.

Phillips et. al (2003:325) write that "the division between 'small' and 'large' ceremonial centers is entirely arbitrary" and that "sites distinguished in the latter class are distinguished solely by having more and larger mound structures." This notion is useful in examining the Carson Mound Group with its large number of mounds spread across a large area; at approximately one mile in width, Carson is one of the largest sites in the Yazoo Basin. This further supports Anderson and Sassaman (2012), Blitz (2010), and Pauketat (2007) in calling attention to the need to rethink "Mississippian" and other blanket terminology about this highly variable time period and its components and features. Thus, an overview of the major sites of

the Mississippian Period provides a starting point for understanding how these sites are all Mississippian while still maintaining their individuality based on the unique features at each site.

Cahokia

Cahokia is widely considered to be source of much Mississippian culture and the core from which Mississippian culture flourished and spread to other parts of the prehistoric Southeast (Anderson and Sassaman 2012; Blitz 2010:12; Pauketat 2007). Arising during the emerging years of the Mississippian period around 800 CE and disappearing around 1350 CE, Cahokia was the earliest major Mississippian center, and is sometimes considered a state due to the more than 100 mounds packed into a relatively small area and the evidence for centralized political control implied by these mounds and their contents (Demel and Hall 1998: 206; Fowler 1991; Pauketat 2004: 71). Cahokia is home to the largest standing platform mound in the Mississippian world and the largest earthen mound in the United States, Monk's Mound, which measures 1037 ft north to south, 790 ft east to west, rises 100 feet above the landscape and has four levels of terraces, covering sixteen acres of land and consisting of approximately twenty-two million cubic feet of earth (Pauketat 2004; Reed 1969: 31; Walthall 1980:187). Monk's Mound was built in fourteen stages, exhibiting evidence of human occupation all the way down the mound layers through to the sterile sand under the base of the mound (Reed 1969:31). Such a colossal manmade structure is demonstrative not only of extreme power of the elite, but also of subservience and organization of the community due to combined ideological and political power.

Cahokia is thought to be the product of possible migration from the nearby Toltec and Plum Bayou sites due to a sort of revival, or cultural "big bang" around 1050 CE due to religious

reasoning (Pauketat 2009). "Evolv[ing] into the major ceremonial center in the American Bottom during the first 200 years of the Mississippi period," Cahokia was founded at a late Woodland farming village which stretched along the Mississippi River, and early on it functioned as a site for feasting and community festivals (Demel and Hall 1998:202). It is projected that the core of Cahokia was built in a single phase of construction around 1050 CE (Pauketat 2004:78). These first 200 years of Cahkian growth and establishment encompassed the Lohmann, Stirling, and Early Moorehead phases. Porter's excavations at Cahokia in 1968 determined that the estimated construction time of Monk's Mound was from 900-1200 CE (Reed 1969: 32-33). Also between 900 and 1200 CE, Cahokia was transformed through the intensification of corn agriculture into a highly populated community center with earthen mounds, monuments, hierarchical elite control, and outlying villages. These outlying communities contributed to the "social, religious, economic, and political growth" of Cahokia proper by providing support through goods and labor.

Demel and Hall (1998:202) describe the ways in which Cahokians transformed and continuously reclaimed the landscape to accommodate for the ever increasing population. Such creation of space for new people in the community led to the rearrangement of existing space through alteration of "the landscape with their monumental earthworks and other architecture" and also by going "below the natural surface, borrowing, leveling, and reclaiming earth (Demel and Hall 1998:202). The modification and alteration of the natural environment in which Cahokia rested shows the power of agency and the importance of expressing the Cahokian presence in the environment architecturally and ecologically (Blitz 2010; Dobres and Robb 2000).

Etowah

The chiefdom of Etowah, located on the banks of the Etowah River in northwestern Georgia, functioned as a major Mississippian chiefdom from approximately 1000-1450 CE, with its height being around 1350 CE. In its initial Late Etowah phase, which lasted from 1100-1200 CE, Mounds A and B were constructed. The large platform mounds at the site suggest a chiefly presence at the site and allow for the assumption that at this time Etowah was a capital chiefdom (King 2004:153).

Mound A of Etowah was investigated via remote sensing by King et. al (2011). "Anomalies" found at the top of Mound A are thought by King et. al 2011:355) to be representative of the interaction of human agency and tradition as expressed architecturally during the peak of Etowah's occupational history. The investigation of Mound A by geophysics alone without the inclusion of excavation is controversial within the archaeological world to a degree but it does acknowledge the sacred nature of the site to the descendants of those who once inhabited Etowah (King et. al 2011:356). Mound A is thought to have been constructed in an early phase and added onto later in Etowah's history. Magnetic gradiometry atop Mound A revealed what King et. al (2011:359) describe as "at least four anomalies that are interpreted as a complex of Mississippian buildings separated by open spaces with some areas screened from view." In other words, the summit of Mound A appears to host not only mound-top buildings, but also some sort of screening palisade. This information will be useful in the excavation and interpretation of the data found at the summit of Mound C at the Carson site, as 2010 field school excavations on the edges of the mound's summit revealed a potential a mound-top palisade (Johnson et. al N.d.:2). More details on this excavation are provided below in the section on mound-top structures.

Moundville

Moundville, located near the Black Warrior River in west central Alabama, is a prominent Mississippian site that exhibits signs of major political and ideological change during the course of its existence (Knight et. al 2010). The site consists of thirty-two mounds, twenty-one of which are flat-topped pyramidal mounds, and eleven of which are burial mounds. Twenty-nine of these mounds still exist today (Knight and Steponaitis 1998:3). During the Moundville I phase, which lasted from 1050-1250 CE, Moundville was settled and two mounds were built. This was indicative of the rise of an elite hierarchy, as well as an increased dependency on corn due to a larger number of people living in the area at this time than during the Woodland occupation of the area. The Late Moundville I phase (1200-1250 CE) and the Early Moundville II phase (1250-1400 CE), exhibits evidence of the coming together of people living on surrounding farmsteads to a more centralized residence at Moundville proper (Knight and Steponaitis 1998:12). This can be seen in the archaeological record through the construction of all of the major mounds between 1200 and 1250 CE. Thus, it appears that the city was planned and built in one action, as well as the palisade which surrounded the city. Such a phase of construction is exemplary of the growth of political power over the region at the time (Knight and Steponaitis 1998:13-15). The construction of these major mounds between 1200 and 1250 CE marks a change of the settlement from one that is spread out along the Black Warrior River valley and fairly loosely centralized to one that structured and formalized as expressed by the precision of the layout of Moundville (Knight and Steponaitis 1998:15). During the Late Moundville II phase (1300-1400 CE) and the Moundville III phase (1400-1550 CE), there is a proliferation of luxury and symbolic grave goods associated with elite burials, which is thought

by Knight and Steponaitis (1998:17) to be emblematic of the emergence of a chiefly cult. At this point, Moundville appears to have transformed from a thriving community of elites and commoners to a necropolis inhabited solely by elite priests and functioning as a sort of mortuary Mecca for burial rituals for a wide area around Moundville. The majority of burials at Moundville during this time were of individuals who did not live in the area prior to interment, and there is archaeological evidence of the habitation areas from previous phases being transformed into cemeteries during Moundville III (Knight and Steponaitis 1998:19).

Mound Construction and Symbolism

One of the main ways mounds have been interpreted in the past is as a symbol of power due to the amount of time and manpower involved in the construction of such an earthen structure (Brown 2006). For a chief or leader to wield such power as to direct hundreds of individuals to construct a colossally sized mound is indicative of the great authority of one, and the subservience of many. This section examines the various interpretations of mound construction and attached meaning, and how such implications relate to the mounds in question of the Carson Mound Group.

Knight (1989) describes the symbolism of Mississippian mounds by examining the rituals and mound-like structures of historical period Indians, detailing the myths and symbols associated with mounds and their construction for each Indian group. The Indians of the historic period hung onto the beliefs and rituals associated with the mounds of the Mississippian period despite the loss of the practice of actually constructing mounds of the same scale as those built during the Mississippian (Knight 1989:280). From this observation, Knight argues that "loss" of ceremony connected to platform mounds should instead be seen as "a change of emphasis within

an unbroken tradition" (Knight 1989:280). In other words, the "deculturation" model so often used in anthropology and archaeology to describe the changing of a native group's culture due to Western or other non-native influence should no longer be considered. This is ethnocentric in its assumption that any outside influence on a native group's culture is damaging to that group's culture, when in reality all social and cultural groups go through constant change. Thus, the historical Indian groups are showing their adaptation to outside influences. The *tadjos* described by Knight (1989:284) "involve the symbolic manipulation of earth in the creation of an objective focus for purification." These small ceremonial mounds used by historical period Indians serve as small ceremonial mounds around which ritual activity related to purification and manipulation of the earth is conducted.

The construction of platform mounds has also been interpreted to be due to the presence of a chief at a particular site (Wesler 2006:142). Wesler (2006) examines the dates of platform mound construction sequences, comparing those of the Wickliffe site in Kentucky to regional sites in order to offer insight into the nature of the construction of platform mounds throughout the Mississippian world. This article brings up several important questions relating to the study of Mississippian mound structures and their functions politically and architecturally. Mounds were not completed in one wave of construction; with the death or removal of a chief, the top of the platform mound on which the chief formerly resided was burned and then built upon to raise the structure in a manipulation of the space vertically, possibly to represent the change in power and also the rise of another to the leadership position (Kidder 1998:138). Hally (1996:92-93) proposes that the construction of mounds "was largely coterminous in time with the existence of the chiefdoms in which they functioned." That is to say, mound construction began when a

chiefdom came into being and stopped after that chiefdom fell or ended. Such an assertion ties together mound construction and political power.

The orientation of mounds with plazas has been under discussion since the advent of examining the meaning behind architectural arrangements and structures on Mississippian sites (Stout and Lewis 1998:160). In his work at Moundville, Knight (2010) compares the arrangement of the mounds around the plaza to the arrangement of a historical period Cherokee meeting house, showing how the arrangement of mounds is essentially symmetrical bilaterally, an exhibition of "deliberate spatial order" (Knight et. al 2010:5-6). Such arrangements of mounds during an assumed single construction period demonstrate the "methodological individualism" inherent in such a large-scale collective effort (Dobres and Robb 2000); thus, the actions of those who participated in the construction of mounds can be seen as purposeful collective action (Blitz 2010). Such theoretical assertions show how more recent work on southeastern architecture is moving away from settlement patterns and structure and the function of such elements, and more toward a cognitive approach through the search for meaning in construction of architectural features (Lewis, Stout, and Wesson 1998:1). Movement away from processual archaeological methods and towards utilizing ethnohistorical methods by studying prehistory in the same way one would study history has arisen at least partially due to processualism's lack of regard for local trajectories and contingency (Blitz 2010; Hegmon 2003; Pauketat 2004, 2007). This "historical processual" approach, which uses more individualized information on sites to reconstruct the prehistoric past in ways similar to those used to reconstruct the historic past, is yet another way in which researchers are moving away from cut and dry categorizations of Mississippian chiefdoms and towns (Anderson and Sassaman 2012; Blitz 2010; Pauketat 2007).

In her article "Political Lords and Political Ideology in Southeastern Chiefdoms," Helms (1992) addresses an important point in understanding the power and symbolism of mound structures, which relates directly to the operational perspective of the chiefdom in question. Helms (1992:185) notes that political authority can be economic or ideological, or both, and such designations are important to the ways in which elites were seen and the community functioned. Chiefs were largely seen as descendants of deities on earth, with the mounds atop which their homes resided representing the cosmological world of the gods, a sort of icon in and of itself (Knight 1989). Chiefly representation therefore influenced and was influenced by identification with the world of the ancestors and other deities (Helms 1992:186).

James Brown (2006) offers an alternative to the usual assumptions that mound construction and mound top structures are solely for affirmation of power in his article "Where's the Power in Mound Building? An Eastern Woodlands Perspective," in which he delineates the alternatives to seeking hierarchical power implicit in every architectural endeavor and pushes for archaeologists to think beyond what seems to be obvious and seek equally legitimate alternative lines of reasoning (Brown 2006:198). Brown's main source of argument comes from Eric Wolf's concept of structural power, which Brown defines as "the power to set the agenda" (Brown 2006:200). In the words of Wolf (1999:5-6), "the power manifests in relationships that not only operates within settings and domains but also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves, and that specifies the direction and distribution of energy flows." To this end, Brown examines what is thought to be one of the most blatant displays of power in the Mississippian world, the burials of Mound 72 at Cahokia, from Wolf's perspective of structural power. He looks to the burials for elements of social identity and "shifting the identity of the

central symbolism away from individualized social identity" so that the burials are allowed to be seen as culturally mediated representations of authority (Brown 2006:205).

Mound-Top Structures

During the Mississippian period, mounds were sometimes the homes of chiefs, priests, or other major figures within a particular chiefdom. Mound-top structures are often physical representations of social structure and power, whether religious, political, or ceremonial through the structures being used as temples, homes for leaders, or charnel houses, respectively (Hally 1996). In any case, the presence of mound-top structures at the major Mississippian sites of Cahokia, Etowah, and Moundville, as well as at smaller sites and at the Carson site, shows that the construction of mounds seems to go along with a structured social system, and the separation of significant buildings could be symbolic of their "higher" nature by being physically placed on a platform. However, practicality should also be taken into account, as the areas settled by the Mississippians were prone to flooding; practicality is just as legitimate a reason for action as power (Brown 2006).

There is existing data on the presence of mound-top structures at most major mound centers in the Mississippian world, including larger, famous sites such as Moundville, Etowah, and Cahokia, as well as smaller, lesser known sites, such as the Gordon Site (Ryba 1997: 47; 75-124). Magnetic gradiometer readings conducted by King et. al (2011) at the summit of Etowah's Mound A revealed four mound-top structures thought to be houses, either for meeting or residential purposes, as well as a set of walls bordering the top of the mound, thought to be some sort of screen (King 2011:359-362). King et. al (2011:361) write:

> In addition to the magnetic patterns that define these four buildings, there are three other anomalies that may represent architectural elements. Two of these represent linear

> anomalies located north of Structure 1 and are positioned at right angles to one another. A gap separates the two anomalies. These two anomalies, which may be walls, are located too close to the edge of the mound to have been a complete building. Instead, we hypothesize that they represent portions of a screen with the gap representing an opening at the top of the staircase.

After some comparison of these findings to other major sites in the nearby regions of northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee, King et. al find that the people of Etowah adhered to many standards considered to be "Mississippian" while also maintaining their own traditions they brought with them in repopulating Etowah just before 1300 CE, as Etowah had been abandoned around 1200 CE (King et. al 2011:362, 366). In this way, I plan to examine the Mississippian aspects of the architectural features on Mound C as well as the aspects of these features unique to the region in which Carson is situated and to the people of Carson.

Elizabeth Ryba's (1997) master's thesis on the summit architecture on Moundville's Mound E provides information on how to approach unique and unusual architectural features. This thesis details the features of one particular mound-top building at the top of Mound E, Structure 3, which shows examples of unique methods of construction involving four very large central posts within this building and the presence of insertion/removal ramps for each of these central posts (Ryba 1997:5-17). Ryba uses a survey of mound summit architecture from throughout the Mississippian world as a means of comparison and finds that "of the 170 structures from 33 sites, only three structures were found to be comparable to Structure 3. These three structures are all located at Cahokia, one on Murdock Mound and two on the fourth terrace of Monk's Mound" (Ryba 1997:62). Two non-mound buildings at Cahokia were also found to be constructed in a similar manner to Moundville's Structure 3, and the five Cahokian buildings were found to predate Structure 3 of Moundville. This is interpreted by Ryba as indicating "a borrowing of Cahokian ideas rather than a mutual exchange of ideas" (Ryba 1997:63). This

methodology used by Ryba has influenced my methodology in comparing the architectural features on Mound C to other Mississippian sites, mainly those relatively nearby or well-known.

Ryba's thesis also mentions mound summit architecture on Moundville's Mound Q, which is described by Ryba (1997:42) as "unidentifiable as a complete structure.. consist[ing] of several overlapping constructions... associated with different periods of occupation rather than episodes of rebuilding during a single occupation." This shows how variable site architecture can be, that it does not always fit the Mississippian standards of a four-sided wall trench or circular post structure (Alt and Pauketat 2011; Hudson 1978).

As mentioned in Ryba's research, the fourth terrace of Monk's Mound of Cahokia holds a palisade structure. Reed (1969: 33) describes the excavations leading to the discovery of these palisade walls:

> Excavations of the fourth terrace by James W. Porter... found evidence of a large wall trench structure running 131 feet across the width of the terrace, its east wall running 68 feet before being interrupted by the slump of the north face. A series of not fully understood post pits were found within this structure. Wall trenches of two houses were found at the southeast corner of it, traces of stockades and post pits were found around the edge, and a major post pit, 2.5 feet below its living surface was found in the center of the terrace.

These findings are a unique structure if examined with "Mississippian standards," and show how a departure from such standards and the use of diversity of sites is necessary to studying Mississippian site features. These architectural findings are very similar to those of Mound C of the Carson Group, which are discussed in greater detail in the results and discussion sections.

These perspectives on the authority of the elites, the purposes for building mounds and their arrangement on the landscape, and how mounds function politically, socially, and ideologically, will be used in the interpretation of archaeological findings at the Carson Mound Group. A knowledge of the possible ways mounds were constructed and used, their orientation

on the site, and their relationships to one another, as well as phases they occupied are other useful pieces of information, and a survey of the approaches to such architectural elements is useful in the research and at hand. The following section provides an introduction to the geographic area encompassing the Carson Mound Group and how the conditions of such an environment set Carson and other Delta sites apart from Mississippian sites in other areas of the country based on these geographic and environmental features.

The Lower Mississippi Valley

The work of Phillips, Ford, and Griffin during their Lower Mississippi Survey between 1940 and 1947 provides a detailed, rich description of the geographic and environmental features of the Lower Mississippi Valley while also focusing on human interaction with the natural features of the landscape and the usefulness of the landscape to prehistoric peoples (Phillips et. al 2003). Phillips et. al write that the interaction between culture and environment in the Lower Mississippi Valley is "so obvious as to be inescapable" (Phillips et. al 2003:5). In other words, in the setting of the Lower Mississippi Valley nature and the environment are such pervasive constants that humans cannot be unaffected by their processes. The low, marshy landscape even today has a hold on human activity and behavior, and culture has been a means of adaptation to such conditions. For example, mound construction may have outwardly been a socially prescribed event, but this was not the sole purpose of their construction. In this vein, Phillips et. al describe their intent with their assessment of the features of the Lower Mississippi Valley as placing "...emphasis is upon the character and distribution of features in respect to their possible utilization by primitive man, rather than upon origins and processes' (Phillips et. al 2003:5).

Thus, the geographic and environmental aspects of the Lower Mississippi Valley are to be viewed in relation to their interaction and effects on prehistoric humans, and vice versa.

In this way, the physical features of the Lower Mississippi Valley are important in relation to its prehistoric inhabitants are the Mississippi River itself and the floodplain it has created. Phillips et. al write that "by way of definition, the alluvial Valley is considered... as including the present flood plain of the Mississippi River, also those of its tributaries... and certain dissected alluvial plains not completely covered by flood waters" (Phillips et. al 2003:7). The Mississippi River is not a singular body, but rather a meandering river prone to change over time which leads to the formation of smaller tributaries, streams, and oxbow lakes as well as varying levels of flood plains on the landscape. Thus the Alluvial Valley is not one consistently flat flood plain, but rather a series of "natural levees" and "backswamp," which are the high level land closer to the river and the low level land farther away from the river, respectively (Phillips et. al 2003:7).

The Upper Yazoo River Basin

The Carson site lies in the Yazoo Basin, or the "Delta" as those living in the area refer to it, within the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley (Fig. 6). This area consists of several meander belts extending from Memphis, TN to Vicksburg, MS, which create a "complex group of minor ridges and basins" ideal for occupations, and crossed by small streams that modify the scars and ridges of the basin (Phillips et. al 2003:16). This alluvial plain is best characterized in the words of Phillips et. al (2003:10), who describe the area as being "a very interesting, not to say peculiar, environment, one which might be assumed to have fostered, aboriginally, an amphibious type of culture." In other words, the presence of multiple flood basins, meanders,

oxbow lakes, and swamps come together to produce a rather aquatic and muddy area in which prehistoric humans would have lived and adapted. The "plain" is not level in all areas but rather consists of a downhill slope to the south and multiple banks and ridges that produce miniscule differences in elevation, leading to ecological and cultural adaptations to the environment in relation to establishing towns and chiefdoms, and also in methods of subsistence.

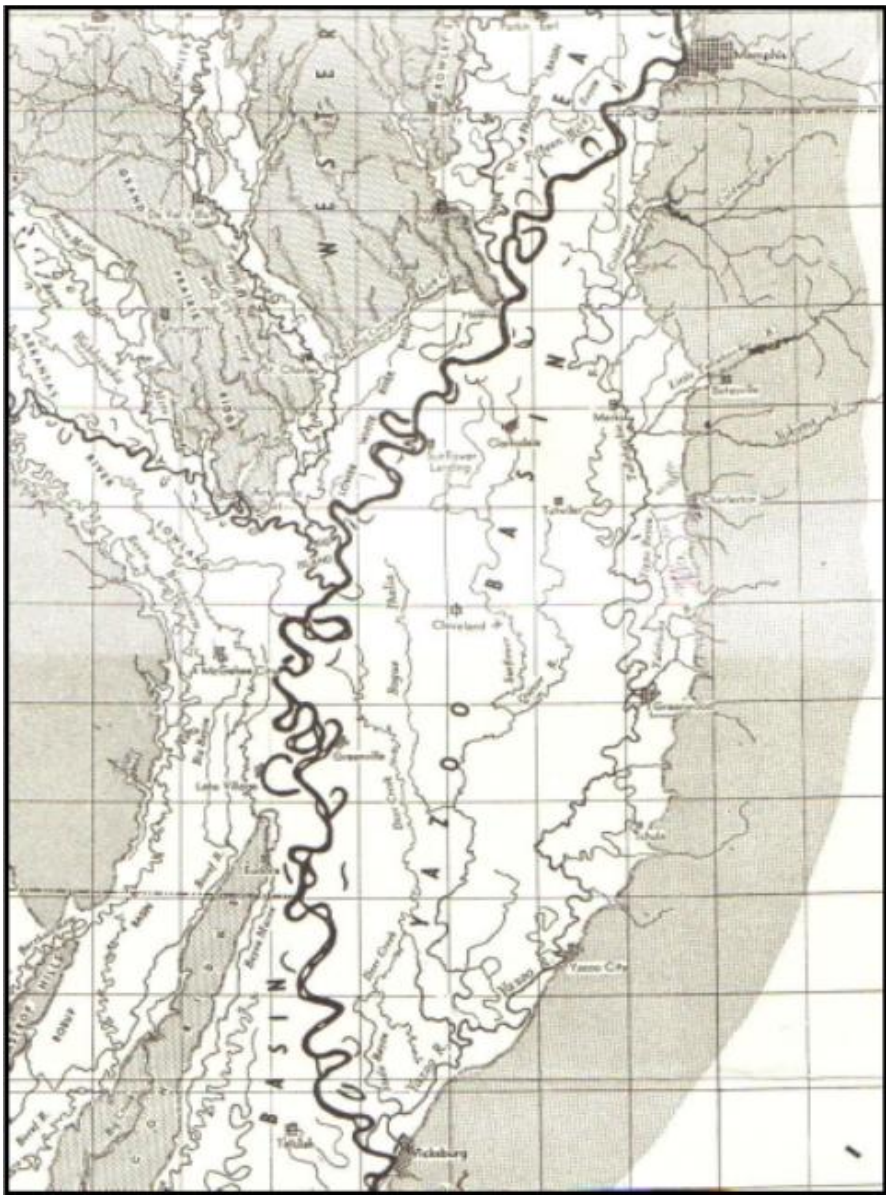

Figure 6: The Yazoo River Basin (Phillips et. Al 2003)

The impact of these environmental factors are seen in the mounds of Carson themselves; a trench dug in one of the larger mounds reveal adaptation to flooding of the Yazoo Basin during the construction of the mounds, as the profile reveals evidence of flooding during mound construction. Also, the major mounds of Carson are arranges along a crevasse splay, a raised area in the landscape (Johnson, personal communication: February 2012; Mehta et. al 2012: 1).

The warm to medium temperatures and mild winters of the Yazoo Basin characterize the area as one of a long growing season despite the occasional cold snap. The Mississippi River itself also provides some relief from the heat that takes over the area for the majority of the seasons (Phillips et. al 2003:20-21). Rainfall is distributed fairly evenly through the seasons with an increase during the summer months, at adequate levels for agricultural subsistence in pairing with equally adequate amounts of sunshine. Soils in the area are of two main varieties, one of which is "fertile but difficult to work," and the other which is "well-drained, light in texture, easily worked, and extremely productive" (Phillips et. al 2003:23). Such types of soil are ideal for cultivation and agriculture, and therefore ideal for the prehistoric peoples of this area.

The Carson Mound Group

The Carson Mound Group (Fig. 7) is located in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley of northwestern Mississippi, in the Yazoo Basin, and was first mapped by W.H. Holmes in the Bureau of American Ethnology's 12th annual report in 1894, reported by Cyrus Thomas (Phillips et. al 2003:371-373; Thomas 1894). Despite mapping Mound E slightly off of where it actually is, the map remains an accurate depiction to this day. Calvin Brown summarizes the Thomas report in his survey "Archaeology of Mississippi (1926:108):

> Along the eastern bank of an old channel, on the plantation of the Carson Brothers, 6 miles south of Friar's Point, is an interesting group of mounds and earth-works... In the north-west is an enclosure surrounded by an earthen wall and a ditch...

The Carson Mound Group was originally categorized into three separate sites, Montgomery (15-N-6), Stovall (15-N-7), and Carson (15-N-8), with this grouping "being justified... by the fact that the three portions of the group do not appear to date from the same period" according to Phillips et. al (2003:372).

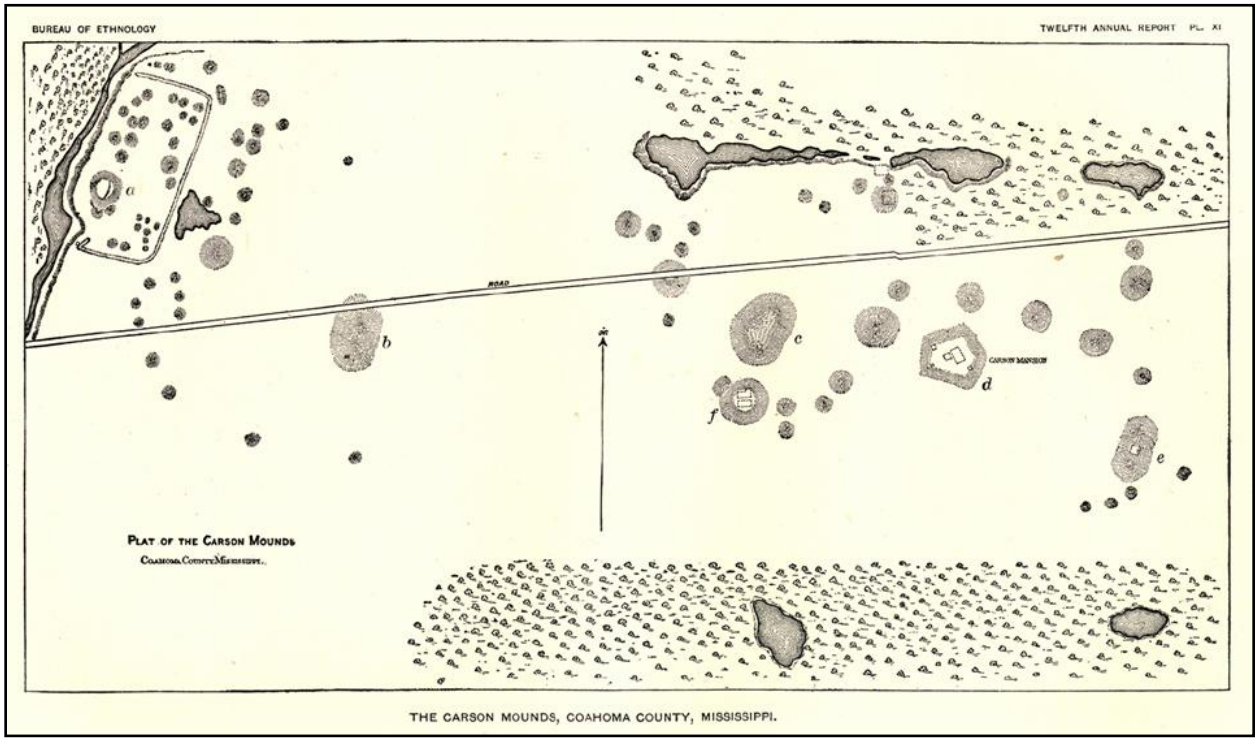

Figure 7: The Carson Mound Group (Thomas 1894)

The three sites are currently listed by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History as Montgomery (15-C0-518), Stovall (15-Co-507), and Carson (15-Co-505) (James 2010:31). Despite listing the Carson Mound Group as three separate sites, Phillips et. al (2003:372) consider it to have been one site. Johnson et. al affirm this as well, writing that the "consistency of orientation across the site, along with a general agreement in the ceramics recovered from

surface collections and test excavations, suggests that the three clusters of mounds were built and used by a single, albeit complex, social unit" (Johnson et. al, n.d.:2).

The site was in better condition when it was first documented, consisting of six major mounds, over 80 small mounds, several burials (James 2010), and a trench and embankment (Johnson et. al, n.d.; Lansdell 2009), located along a crevasse splay that originated from an abandoned channel of the Mississippi River which preceded Horseshoe Lake. Aerial photography clearly shows this large crevasse ridge along which the Carson Site is situated (Fig. 8). The ridge is a result of heavy, frequent flood deposition (Mehta et. al 2012). Today only the larger mounds remain, and several of them have fallen victim to erosion and cultivation. The large mounds include two twin mounds, B and E; one five-sided platform mound, Mound D; and three truncated platform mounds, A, C, and F, with Mound A belonging to the Montgomery Site, Mound B belonging to the Stovall Site, and Mounds C-F belonging to the Carson Site (Johnson et. al, n.d.:1-2; Phillips et. al 2003:372).

The lettered mounds of the Carson Mound Group have been inspected in varying levels of detail in the past few years (Lansdell 2009; James 2010). Thomas (1894:253-255) provides descriptions of each of the six major mounds, each of which I will describe briefly, as well as some information on more recent work done at each of the major mounds.

Mound A lies within an earthen enclosure on the western side of the site, with the embankment being 3 to 5 feet high, and the mound being approximately 15 feet high and 66 feet across the top, with the top being nearly flat. A platform of 5 or 6 feet was also found on which the "mound proper" was built. On the summit and at different levels throughout the mound, fire beds and burnt clay were found, as well as charcoal, ashes, and pottery and stone fragments. No skeletal remains were found in Mound A.

Figure 8: Aerial photograph of Carson Mound Group with elevation contours in red (Google Maps, Mississippi Geospatial Clearinghouse)

Mound A shows a large amount of damage from years of use as the foundation for a house with a basement cutting into the mound, as well as a swimming pool on the lower platform of the mound (Lansdell 2009:8-9). The mound is surrounded by a berm, though it is not entirely visible, and a few smaller mounds which are also not as readily visible as they once were. Most of the work done at Carson has been in the easement to the east of Mound A. Here, evidence of an enclosure, several house structures, hundreds of postholes, and multiple burials have been uncovered (James 2010). The house structures found in the embankment area east of Mound A are four-sided wall trench structures, often with open corners, an architectural style common to Mississippian sites in the Yazoo Basin (Fig. 9).

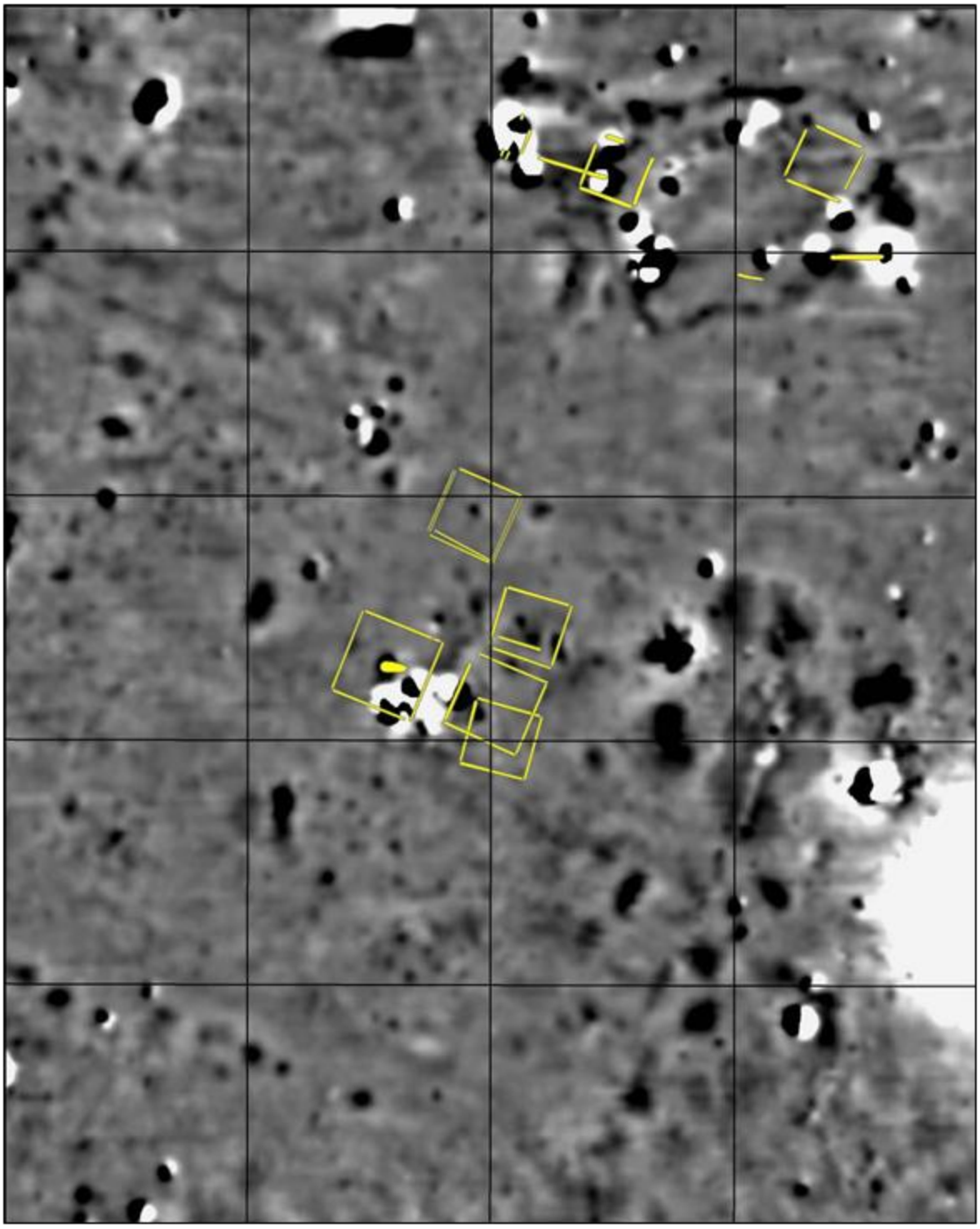

Figure 9: Wall trench structures in the mortuary area immediately to the east of Mound A at the Carson site, 20m grid, gradiometer image in the background (Johnson, personal communication)

Mound B is a double mound consisting of two truncated cones with a joined base 240 feet long, rising jointly to 18 feet, and then separately for 8 additional feet. Thomas (1894:254)

writes that “little excavating was done on this mound and nothing of interest found, except the ever present fire-beds of burnt clay, stone chips, and fragments of pottery.”

Thomas (1894: 254) describes Mound C in the following way:

> Mound C is oval and rounded on top, 210 feet long, 150 broad at the base, and 16 feet high. This mound and several smaller ones near it are... masses of fire-beds, burnt clay, fragments of stone and pottery, together with... charcoal and ashes, as to indicate clearly that they are the sites of ancient dwellings and thus elevated by accumulation of material during long continued occupancy.

This description of Mound C does not fit with the findings of the July 2012 field school, as the construction and demolition of three houses on top of Mound C took place over the course of the years following Thomas’s survey of the Carson Mound Group. These events would explain the top of the mound no longer being rounded, as it was flat and even concave in some areas prior to the 2012 excavations. This would also explain the general lack of prehistoric artifacts, particularly Mississippian artifacts, found during excavations on Mound C, as these could have been cleared away in preparation for historic construction on Mound C’s summit. These issues will be further addressed in the chapters below.

Mound D, considered by Thomas to be “the finest of the group” (Thomas 1894:254), is a five-sided platform mound measuring 310 feet at its base, 210 feet across the top, and rising 25 feet above the landscape. The mound sits atop a 5 foot platform and a smaller nearby mound is almost attached to the main mound, as “a kind of appendage to the large one” (Thomas 1894:254). Mound D was formerly host to the Carson house, built in the 19th century. A cistern dug on Mound D’s summit as well as excavations for cellars and foundations have revealed beds of burnt clay, which provides evidence that Mound D was once home to some sort of dwelling, temple, or other public building (Thomas 1894:254).

Mound D's unique characteristics and relation to the site layout are described by Johnson et. al (n.d.: 2):

> This mound is five sided in plan view with the south side oriented approximately 108 degrees east of magnetic north. This orientation is significant in that recent excavations on top of Mound C uncovered a palisade enclosing the top of the mound that was rebuilt at least twice. The long axis of this palisade it oriented about 18 degrees off north, at a right angle to the alignment of the south side of Mound D. This orientation matches the orientation of all the wall trench structures and the several palisades that partitioned the area inside the embankment that was located just to the east of Mound A, as well as the orientation of the embankment itself. This consistency of orientation across the site, along with a general agreement in the ceramics recovered from surface collections and test excavations, suggests that the three clusters of mounds were built and used by a single, albeit complex, social unit.

This arrangement, dubbed the "Carson Grid," is important in the interpretation of the architectural features atop Mound C, which will be further discussed in following chapters. Mehta (Mehta et. al (2012) has done work for several seasons on and around Mound D and, in collaboration with Rachael Stout Evens, has provided geological information on the arrangement of the site as well as chronological data on mound construction via soil coring and soil-derived dating.

Mound E was described by Thomas as being a double mound similar in almost every way to the other double mound of the site, Mound B. Mound E is on a 5 foot high platform, and measures 120 by 80 feet at its top. The mound is host to a historic cemetery, and Thomas writes of the discovery of prehistoric remains in Mound E (Thomas 1894:254):

> In the depression between the two cones a partially decayed skeleton was found in digging a grave for a person now interred there. This skeleton was under a bed of burnt clay, and other similar beds are found near the surface of the sides and summit.

Lastly, Mound F is a sort of smaller version of Mound C, being oval-shaped and rounded on the top and located just to the south of Mound C. It measures 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 5 to 6 feet high. Thomas (1894:254) writes "that from base to summit it was composed of burnt

clay, mud, or alluvial earth in irregular layers..." and that the mud and clay deposits found on the top of the mound contain burnt casts of cane and wood, indicating the prehistoric presence of daub walled buildings which had been burned. Although twin mounds are generally considered to be a Woodland Period mound type, a test excavation by Lansdell (2009) recovered Mississippian sherd in mound fill.

In sum, the arrangement of the Carson Mound Group displays some level of deliberate planning and placement of the mound structures as well as the palisade atop Mound C, showing the production of a specific, desired manipulation of space by the prehistoric inhabitants of the site. The persistent presence of burnt clay at each of the major mounds indicates the presence of dwellings or public buildings throughout the site. Previous work done at the easement near Mound A and at Mound D have revealed the presence of house structures, for use as charnel houses and dwellings, as well as multiple burials, pottery, and chipped stone tools (James 2010; Mehta et. al 2012).

Parchman and Hollywood

Two other sites in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, The Parchman Place site of Coahoma County and the Hollywood Site of Tunica County, have also been found to have held prehistoric occupations roughly contemporaneous to those of the Carson Site. A brief summary of each of these sites is provided below. Parchman and Hollywood provide examples of how Mississippian house structures are formed in the same way as those found at Carson. Both sites also exhibit mound-top architecture, and for the most part adhere to the Mississippian standards. Because my focus is to show the diversity in Mississippian sites rather than their adherence to "standards," I use these outlines of Parchman and Hollywood to illustrate how the Carson Group is unique even

when compared to roughly contemporaneous sites located within a few miles. I focus mainly on mounds and architectural features rather than ceramics or other artifacts at these sites, as Mound C produced no relevant material culture.

Parchman Place

The Parchman Place Site is a Late Mississippian ceremonial center consisting of one major platform mound, Mound A, and a few other smaller mounds, with a possible earlier village occupation (Stevens 2006: 1). The site has been recognized since the early twentieth century, and were first described by Calvin Brown in his 1926 *Archaeology of Mississippi*, published by the Mississippi Geological Survey, which states that "a mound is reported on the Roselle place two miles southwest of Coahoma" (Brown 1926: 107). It was described later by Phillips, Ford, and Griffin in the mid twentieth century during their very detail and extensive survey of the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley (Phillips, et. al 2003: 372):

> …about 8 miles to the northeast on a small bayou called Mill Creek…this site also exhibits a well defined plaza arrangement dominated by a large platform mound of uncertain shape, about 60 meters in diameter at the base and six or seven meters high. There is, however, no trace of a stockade…

Phillips et. al categorized Parchman Place temporally as late terminal Mississippian based on pottery analysis and comparison. The site is arranged in a fairly standard Mississippian formation according to Phillips et. al (2003), with a village setting of large and small mounds surrounding a plaza. The Hollywood site (described below) is arranged in a similar manner, as is Carson, though there is yet to be a definitive plaza found at the latter. The Parchman site was recorded by William Haag for the University of Mississippi in 1950, who noted that the site consisted of five major mounds surrounding a central plaza with four possible other mounds (Strickland 2009: 26). It was recorded again in 1960 by the Mississippi Department of Archives

and History, but by this point one of the major mounds had been bulldozed (Connaway 1984: 185). Connaway (1984: 185) describes the Parchman site in more detail in the Wilsford site report:

> Mound A was heavily grown up with a good stand of trees and undergrowth. A square or rectangular mound around two to two and one-half meters tall is adjacent to and on a line with Mound A to the southwest. There is also possibly another mound, platform, apron, or midden ridge adjacent to Mound A to the northeast. Mound B which has been bulldozed from the top, was apparently originally rectangular, but now has a wedge shape. Other mounds were not specifically identifiable, but hillocks and ridges with very dense daub and some lithics and ceramics surround a low clean plaza. The plaza is estimated to measure (NW-SE) 100 meters by NE-SW) 30 meters.

Research at the site was conducted during the field seasons of 2002-2005 by the University of Mississippi. The 2002 field season utilized several remote sensing techniques, using magnetic gradiometry, airborne photography, and ground penetrating radar, among others, in addition to traditional excavation methods in the plaza area near Mound A, which revealed some wall trench house structures (Fig. 10; Stevens 2006: 41). The 2003 field season focused on excavations on the surfaces of Mound A and the smaller mounds, using magnetic gradiometry to pinpoint areas to dig. These excavations revealed several mound-top structures. Stratigraphic data showed that one of the smaller mounds was constructed before Mound A (Stevens 2006: 41-44). The 2003 field season focused on the summit of Mound A, where a mound construction sequence was pieced together through stratigraphic analysis. These data suggested that at this position on the mound, Mound A was originally two smaller mounds that eventually were built together into one large mound (Strickland 2009: 28-29). This work was continued in the 2004 field season. Units were then placed between Mound A and Mound B to further explore the construction sequences of the mounds, and the trench on Mound A grew deeper. In 2005, the Mound A trench continued and more excavations took place between Mound A and Mound B. 2005 was the last field season for Parchman, but it produced several Master's theses, including

Fogel's (2005) work on down-hole magnetic susceptibility in examining mound-top structures and construction, Lowe's (2005) work on paleochannel sequences, Stevens' (2006) work on Mound A using a Harris matrix to view and analyze the stratigraphic sequence on the mound construction, and Strickland's (2009) multidimensional modeling of the swale between Mound A and Mound B based on ceramic, geophysical, and archaeological sample data.

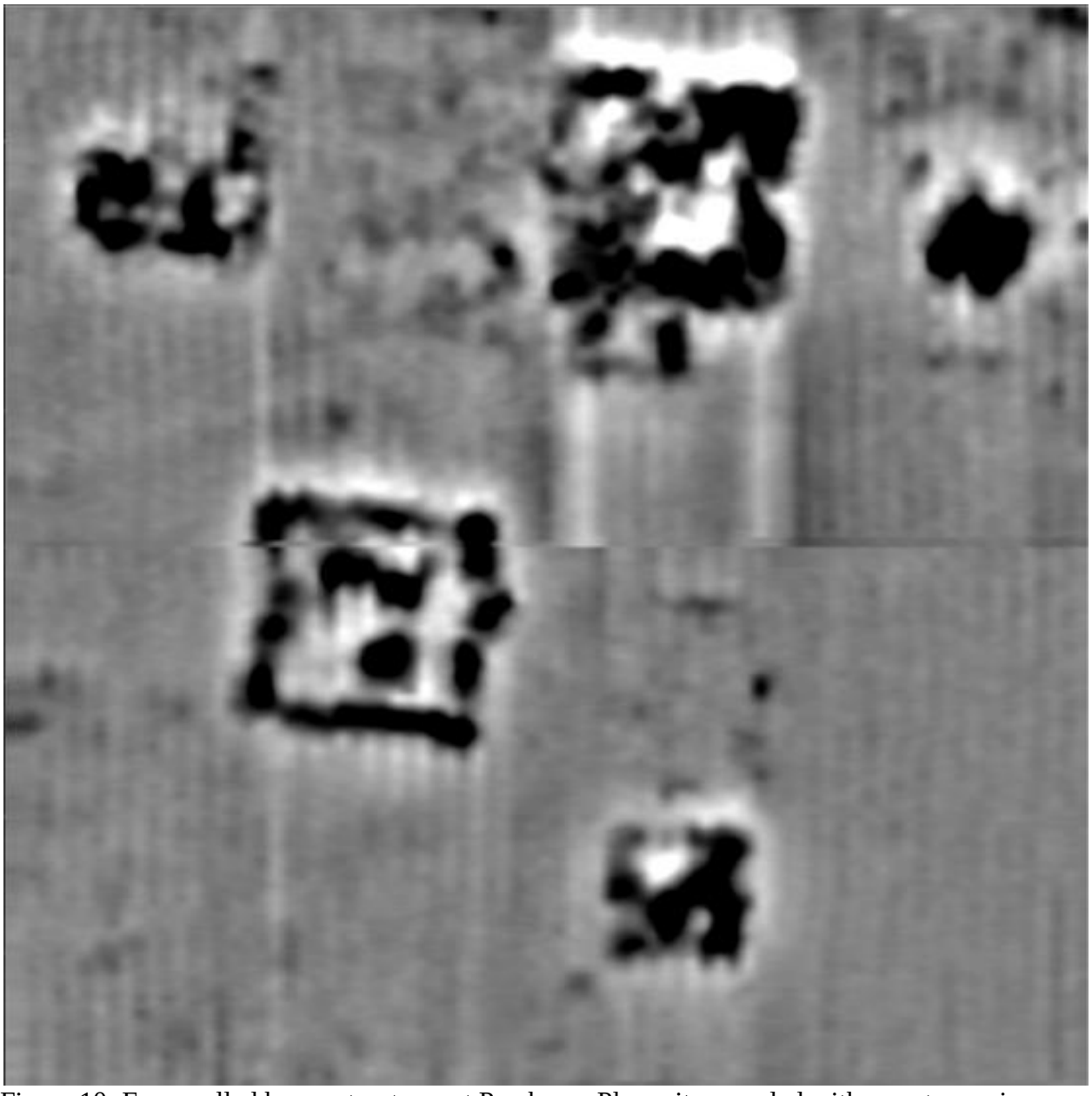

Figure 10: Four-walled house structures at Parchman Place site revealed with remote sensing equipment during 2002 field school (Johnson, personal communication)

The wall trench structures in the plaza area were hypothesized to be house structures from the early village phase of the site, and the construction of Mound A from two smaller mounds was hypothesized to represent sociopolitical change related to the use of the mounds (Stevens 2006: iii). However, if the area to the south of Mound A was a plaza, it was never leveled in the way that other plazas, at Hollywood for example, were leveled. Two structures were found on Mound A and a structure of thatch was found on Mound B, with the smaller mounds being platforms for additional structures as well (Stevens 2006: 44-45).

Hollywood

The Hollywood Site, located in Tunica County, Mississippi, was first recorded in the early twentieth century by Calvin Brown as the Bowdre Site in his survey of Mississippi archaeology (Johnson et. al 2000). In this work, Hollywood is described as "The group consists of a large central mound with a rectangular embankment or series of small mounds surrounding it" (Brown 1926: 120). Additional details provided by Brown describe the worn down, eroded condition of the mounds, as well as the sizes and arrangement of the smaller mounds, and the presence of tenant houses and a barn on some of these mounds. Brown's survey showed evidence of burials, pottery fragments, and stone (Brown 1926: 120-124). Charles Barton references Hollywood a few years later in a similar manner to Brown, documenting the appearance of the mounds and general features of the site (Barton 1927). In 1940, Hollywood was included in Phillips, Ford, and Griffin's extensive survey of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley (Phillips et. al 2003).

The Hollywood Site has been examined with many remote sensing and geophysical surveys since the 1990's (Johnson et. al 2000; Reynolds 2002: 4-6). It is similar in overall

composition and layout to the Parchman Mounds, as it consists of a defined plaza area, a single large major mound, and several smaller mounds. Geophysical remote sensing methods since the late 1990's, in combination with surface collection, excavation, and mapping, has led to the delineation of the earliest occupation of Hollywood being during the Late Woodland, and the latest being Late Mississippian (Haley 2002: 63; Reynolds 2002: 6; Haley 2002; Peukert 2002; Edwards 2003). Reynolds (2002: 8) summarizes the succession of construction events at Hollywood based on magnetic work done at the site in the late 1990's:

> The Late Prehistoric occupation at the site consists of several stages. These include an early domestic occupation of the site, followed by construction of the boundary mounds... After the construction of the boundary mounds, Mound A appears to have been raised. This is the largest of the mounds at the site, located in the northeastern corner of the original boundary mound enclosure. Following the construction of Mound A, the plaza was artificially raised some 1.5 meters above the original ground surface... The site function appears to have changed through time from domestic, to ritual and mortuary focus.

A field school held at Hollywood in the summer of 2001 yielded much new data on the area by using several approaches to acquiring remotely sensed data, including the Air-O-Space sensor, a multispectral digital imaging sensor attached to a low-flying helium blimp (Haley 2002: 77-80; Reynolds 2002: 9-10). This yielded new magnetic data on the mound behind A and between B and C, aptly called Mound B/C, as well as two areas on the western edge of the site, with Mound B/C being of interest due to its holding evidence of a house structure on its summit (Reynolds 2002: 10).

Other recent work at the site also shows evidence of house structures, daub scatters, and some evidence of these house structures having been built on small platform mounds, further showing how Hollywood was at one point a residential center (Haley 2002: 96). Some of Haley's more recent work on the Hollywood site, presented at the 2012 SAA Annual Meeting, provides evidence of burned structures on several of the mounds through magnetometry (Fig 11).

This is an example of how Hollywood adheres to "Mississippian standards" by exhibiting the regular, four-walled structures common to the Yazoo Basin on mound summits.

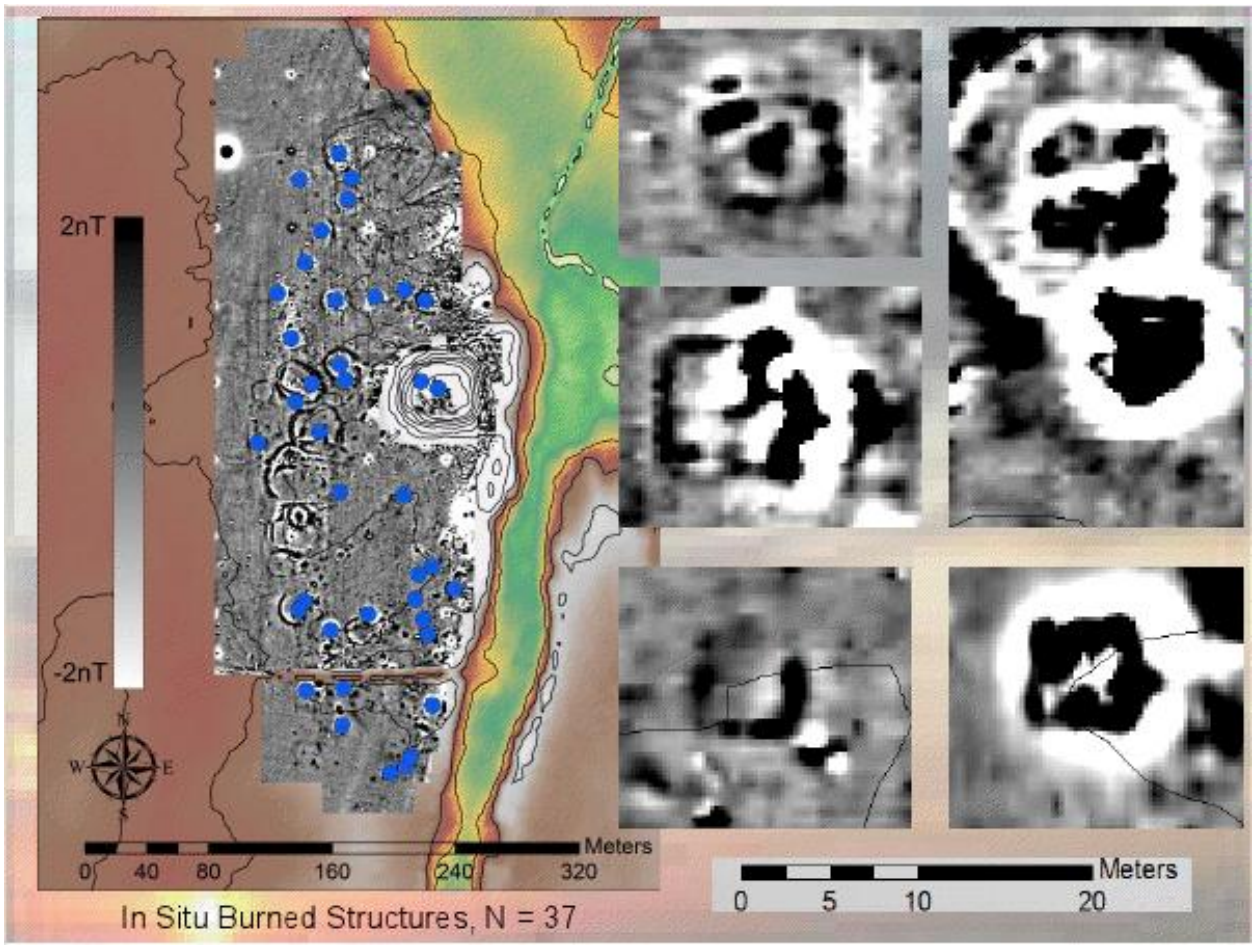

Figure 11: Burned structures on and off mounds of Hollywood site revealed through remote sensing (Haley, personal communication)

Additionally, these data alongside stratigraphic data from excavations and ceramic analysis allowed Haley to discern three major phases of mound building, with all episodes of mound construction taking place over the course of 100 to 150 years or so (Haley 2012). These are outlined briefly. The first phase involved a village-type phase with small rows of house mounds and a midden, indicating a sort of community arrangement. This arrangement expands with the construction of perimeter mounds, and the next phase is characterized by the construction of Mound A, which dwarfed the other architecture of the site and even was built over two existing

mounds, perhaps showing a shift in ideology or symbolic change. Burials in the smaller mounds after Mound A's construction lead to the possibility of Hollywood functionally shifting to a mortuary center for its last phase.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

In the Field

Mound Top

The primary method used on Mound C's summit was shovel shaving the disturbed matrix. This was the most appropriate technology for the purpose of exposing as much undisturbed matrix as possible. It was evident when the undisturbed matrix became exposed, as wall trenches, postholes, and pits were visible in the undisturbed matrix. Screens were not used, but the soil was scanned for artifacts during shovel shaving. The clayey soil only allowed for small slices of soil to be shaved at a time, so artifacts would have been fairly easy to detect during the shovel shaving process without a need for screening.

For shovel shaving on top of the mound we first georeferenced the mound and surrounding areas local using the site grid and an aerial photograph. Using established datums near Mound C and across the site at Mound A, the location of the total station was established and recorded, and then re-shot to ensure the accuracy of the datums. We then shot points using a Leica total station on and around Mound C and Mound F, which is just to the south of C, to allow for the creation of a contour map later in the lab.

A 10 by 10 meter grid was shot in with the total station on top of Mound C. Then, we began to open units starting in the southeastern portion of the mound. Six units were opened on the eastern side of the mound by shovel shaving areas approximately 1 meter north-south by 5 meters east-west. The east-west measurements of these first six units varied since they

intersected the irregular edge of the basement profile and pit on the mound's eastern side. Five more units were shovel shaved to the west of these, measuring approximately 5 meters north-south by 1 meter east-west. After these units, 4 irregularly shaped units were shovel shaved continuing to the western side of the mound with the intent of following the wall trenches presumed to be palisade walls, as time constraints became an issue towards the end of the field school (Fig. 12).

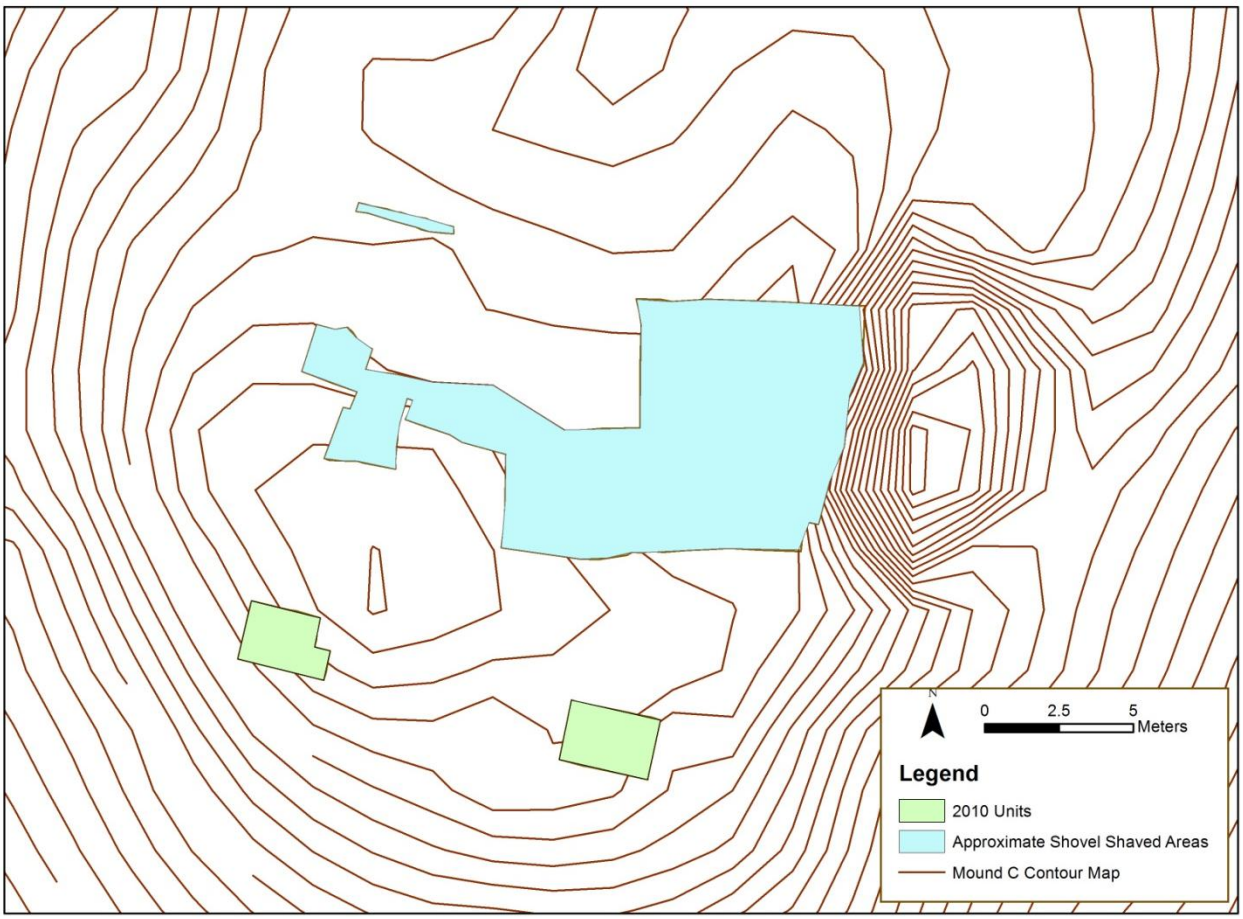

Figure 12: Contour map of Mound C with approximate areas of shovel shaving and 2010 units (10 cm contour interval)

Once units were shovel shaved deep enough to clearly reveal any architectural features present, the features were outlined and then plotted using the total station. The edges and major intersections of the architectural features were pinpointed and recorded with the total station, the easting and northing coordinates of each point were recorded, and each point was graphed by

hand onto graph paper, with one or two pages used for each unit graph depending on the size of the unit (Fig. 13).

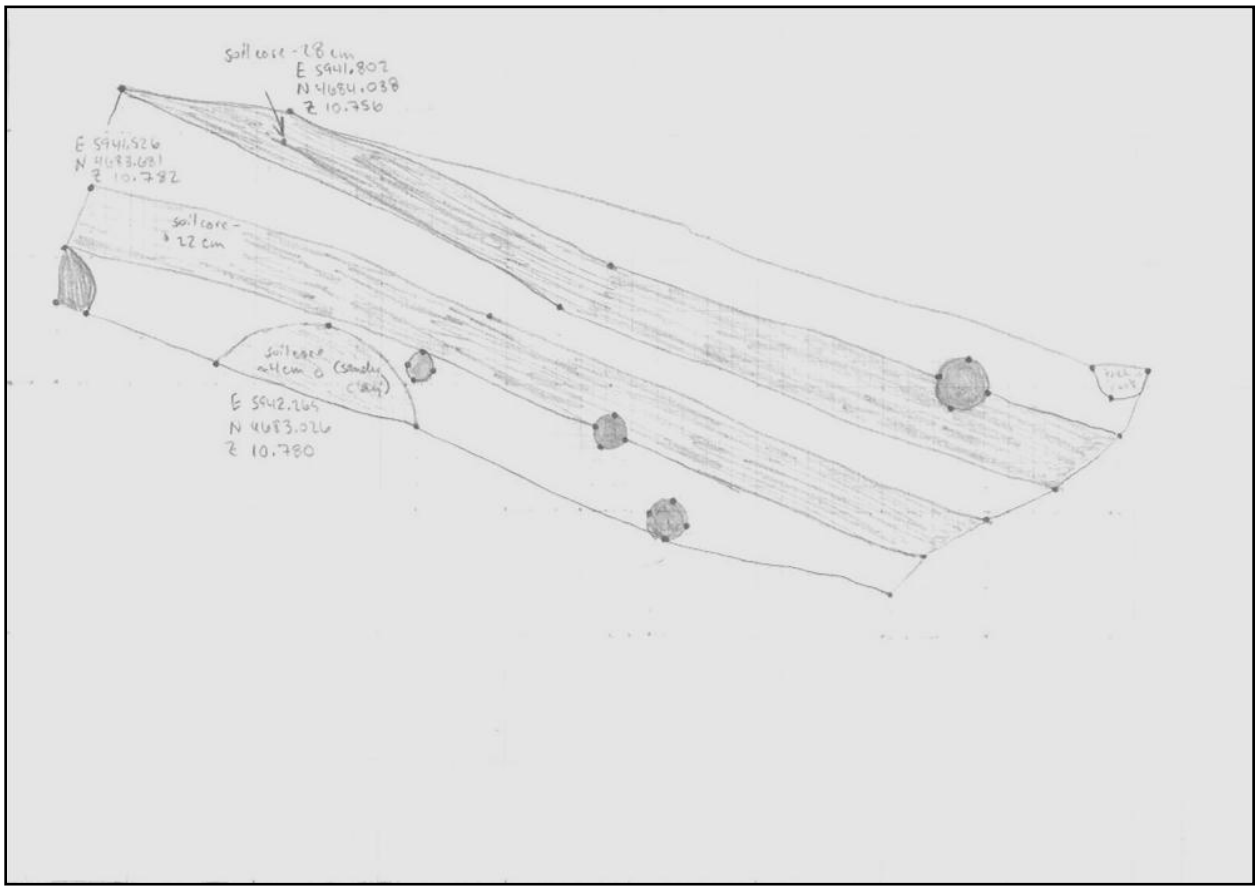

Figure 13: Example of unit graphs drawn in the field

Another means of gathering data on these architectural features was by using the Oakfield, a soil coring instrument. The results of the soil coring are provided in the result section. Soil cores were taken in several of the architectural features on Mound C to determine the depth of the the post holes and wall trenches below the current mound surface and this information would aid in determining the sequence of the features' construction.

Basement Profile

Concrete walls of the basement cutting into the southern end of the east side of the mound were removed during the demolition of the house formerly on Mound C, exposing approximately 4.5 to 5 meters of the profile of the mound. The floor of the basement was elevated above the original ground level. A thick slab of layered concrete, brick, and gravel made up the basement floor. This floor could not be removed, but there was a wide enough gap between the edge of the slab and the profile wall to allow a continuation of the profile down below the basement floor in order to find the prehistoric ground surface.

The profile was cleaned once the trench continuing the profile downward was complete. There was much irregularity in the surface of the profile, so it was not possible to clean the profile to a great extent within the time constraints of field school. However, this did not hinder data collection in any way. Next, the profile was recorded with a Leica total station. To do this, the total station was set up in a location near the profile so that it was clearly visible down to the edge of the basement floor slab. This portion of the profile was recorded by shooting specified points with the total station's laser, recording the corresponding northing and elevation coordinates for each point, and sketching these points on a graph. The portion of the profile below the basement floor slab which could not be recorded using the total station was measured and graphed by hand. Nails were affixed to the profile wall level with the basement floor slab with a string tied between the two nails. The distance from the string to the floor of the profile trench was measured all the way across the profile at one meter intervals. These measurements were also recorded and graphed like those recorded using the total station. The recording of the mound profile was not a part of my primary thesis goals, but it does answer some questions

about the mound's construction, its internal structure, and its construction phases. These answers are discussed in the results section.

In the Lab

Surfer 8

To create the contour map, the points recorded with the total station were exported onto a lab computer. The points were put into an Excel spreadsheet. There were several duplicate points and some points not belonging to the Mound C area (i.e. datums at the Mound A and Mound D areas used to triangulate the total station's location while in the field). These were deleted by sorting the spreadsheet data by Point ID. The points were also sorted by elevation to remove any points not having an elevation recorded. The spreadsheet was then saved as a .xlsx file and imported into Surfer 8. In Surfer, a new plot was made, and the spreadsheet data was used to create a new grid file. X, Y, and Z values were set to use easting, northing, and elevation values, respectively. From this grid file, a contour map was made.

ArcMap

ArcMap 10 and 10.1 were used to digitize the hand-drawn graphs drawn in the field. These hand-drawn images were scanned into digital form and then uploaded into ArcMap. As some units were longer than others and required two sheets of graph paper per sketch, the grouping feature was used to tie these separate graphs to one another to form a single .gif image in ArcMap.

These graphed images were put into ArcMap and digitized to provide a color vector map. The units excavated on the top of Mound C show evidence of architectural features, particularly

pits, post holes, and wall trenches (Fig. 14). The preliminary map of all of the features found during excavation proved to be difficult to interpret, so the GIS was used to search for sequence and structure. The names assigned to each unit while conducting fieldwork did not translate well to the digital map, so arbitrary units were designated to allow for better map comprehension in some circumstances. These units are labeled as West, Southeast, and Northeast (Fig. 15).

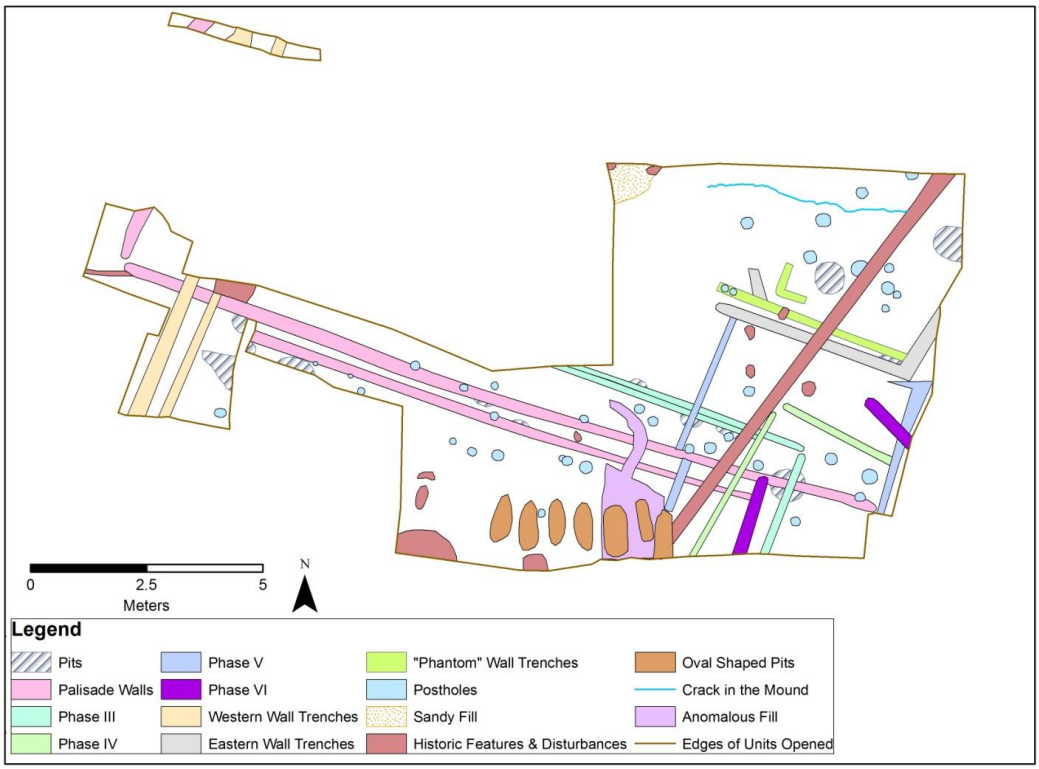

Figure 14: Basic map of all Mound C summit units opened

The compilation of the fifteen separate unit sketches drawn in the field into one cohesive map in ArcMap has provided a great amount of insight into what was uncovered during my fieldwork. It was difficult to visualize all of the excavated units at once while standing among them, but putting all of the units together has allowed for a very thorough inspection of the features and their analysis.

The hand-drawn graph of the basement profile was also digitized in ArcGIS. The software was used to distinguish the different layers based on soil type and construction stage. This map and the components of each unit will be examined in the results chapter.

One of the most valuable aspects of using ArcGIS to construct these comprehensive maps is that the creation of the maps forced me to piece together potential chronologies of the wall trenches based on their relationship to one another and how I layered the graphics within the program. Rather than simply tracing the scanned graphs, I also used the superposition of the features as I created the digital image to properly order the wall trenches into sets or pairs based on their location and depth. This is something that would have been difficult without this technology.

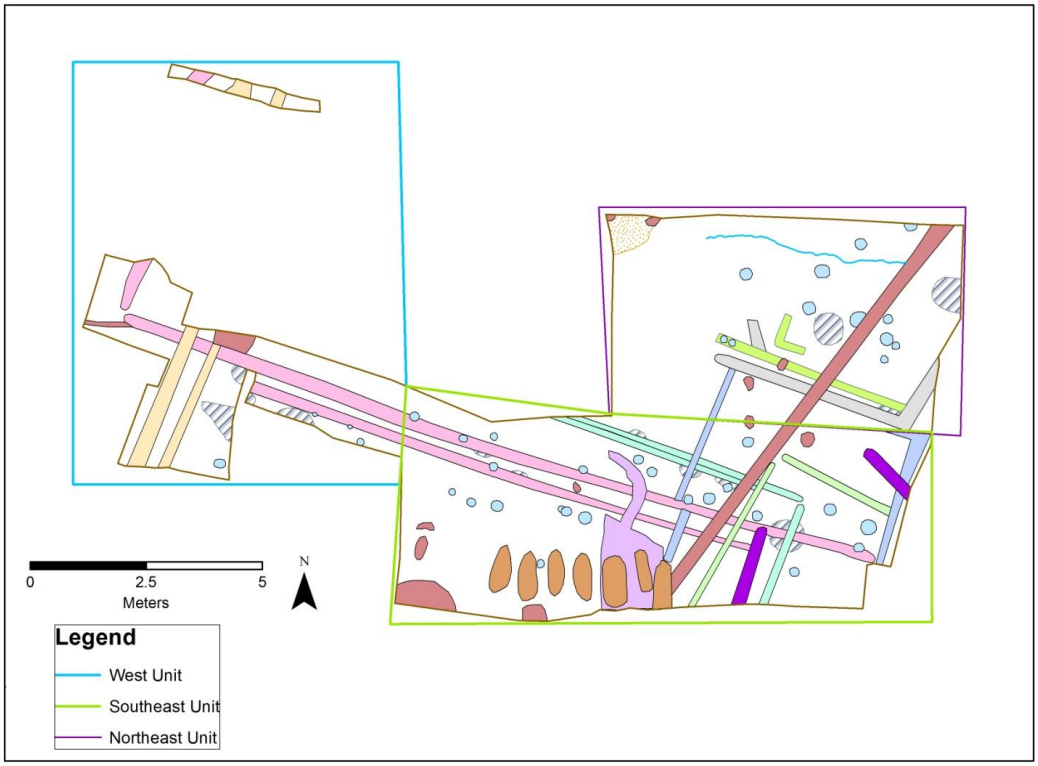

Figure 15: Designation of arbitrary units for aid in map comprehension

With the proper methods implemented and completed, the results came together. In the next section, I will show the results using multiple ArcGIS maps of the various features excavated,

using the software to isolate and highlight groups of features, sequences, and items of importance.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Contour Map

The contour map (Fig. 16) was created using Surfer 8 software and was georeferenced in ArcMap 10. It clearly shows the oval shape of Mound C, the cut where the basement profile is, and the unevenness of the surface of the mound where construction and weathering have taken their toll. The contours of this unevenness is helpful in interpreting the data collected on the mound's surface, as certain features have fairly variable soil core depths from one end of the feature to the other, and features of the same type vary greatly in core depth. This could be because of the way these features were intended to be, but it also could be due to the uneven, irregular surface of the mound.

Mound F is also included in this map, as it lies only slightly to the south of Mound C. The map shows how weathering and time have eroded Mound F to a relatively low remnant. The contour interval is 10 cm. Using the arbitrary 10 m elevation of the Carson datum, the minimum elevation on this map 7.0 m, and the maximum interval is 11.2 m. Irregularities appear in the contour map immediately to the left and right of Mound C. These may be attributed to the 2010 field school trench and to a back dirt pile from the demolition of the house formerly on Mound C, respectively.

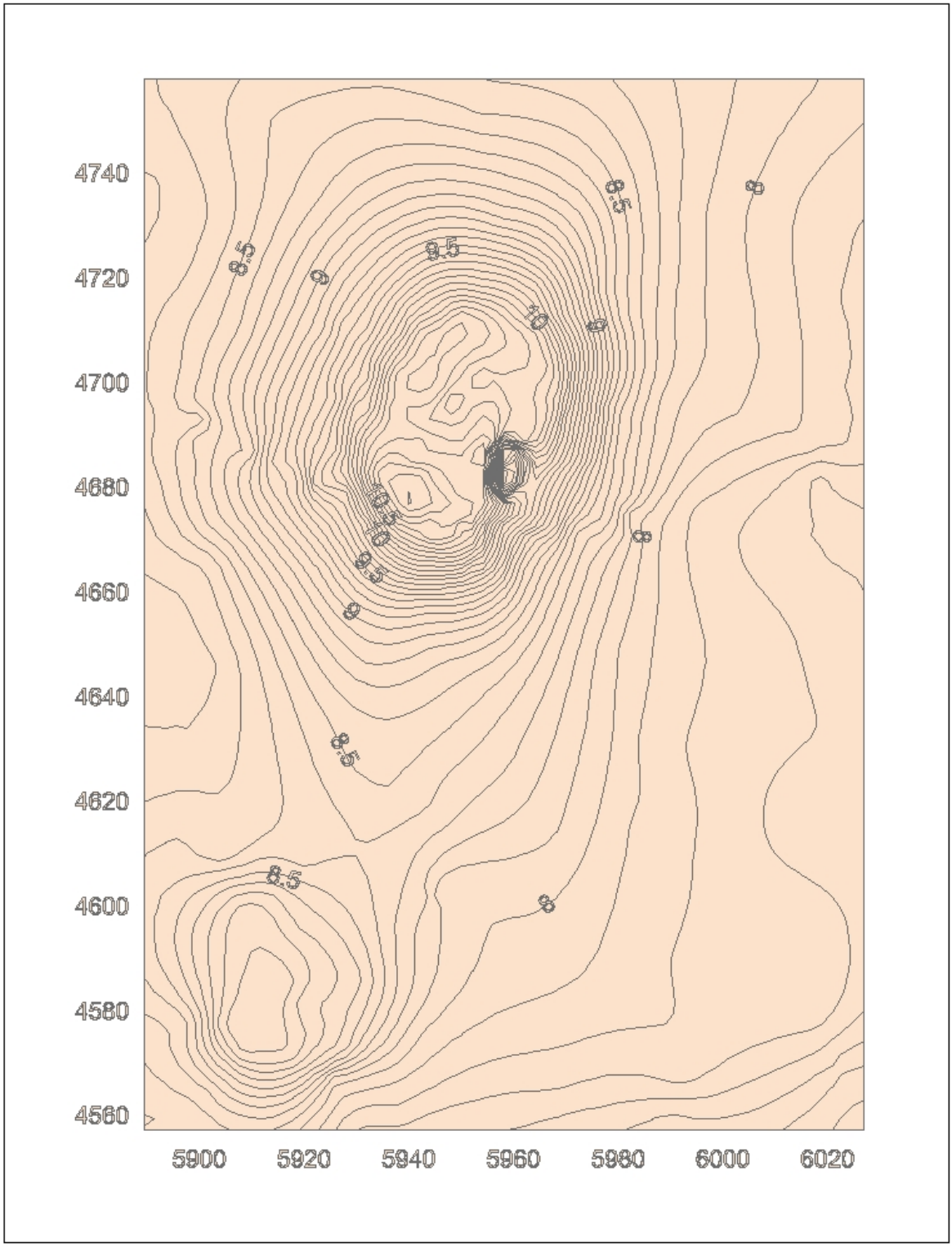

Figure 16: Contour map of lot containing Mound C and Mound F (10 cm contour interval)

Basement Profile

The profile was determined to have approximately seven distinct layers: the E horizon, A horizon, stage 1, and stage 2, which was divided into zones a, b, c, and d (Fig. 17). The E horizon contained light, clayey soil and peds with oxidation. The A horizon, or original ground surface, was a dark clayey layer that was uniform in texture. Stage 1 contained basket loading, with some of the basket loads having a mix of light and dark silty clay loam, and some with precipitated iron. In stage 2, zone a contained sandy soil with some oxidation, which could have been derived from flood deposits that were exposed butting up to the base of stage 1 in the backhoe trench off the southwest corner of the mound; zone b was sandy with some clay nodules; zone c was mainly medium brown with light and dark mottling; and zone d was a heterogeneous light, sandy soil. These sands were gray in color due to weathering and the washing out of minerals over time. Two sherds were found during the cleaning of the profile, but both were Woodland pieces, Baytown Plain and Mulberry Creek Cord Marked, indicating that it was likely that the mound was built from Woodland borrow dirt.

Rachael Stout Evans, an NRCS soil scientist who has been working on the Carson project for several seasons, was able to determine from this profile and its composition that the soils used to construct this mound were taken from two different borrow areas, with the darker gray soils coming from lower on the landscape, and the lighter soils, like those present in zone 2, coming from higher on the landscape. It was also determined that Mound C was built fairly rapidly in two major construction phases which took place in close succession. The actual flood deposits occurred at a much lower elevation, on top the back swamp deposit to the southwest of the mound. The sand at the beginning of stage 2 could have been transported from that position. The flood was not sufficient to deposit sand on top of stage 1.

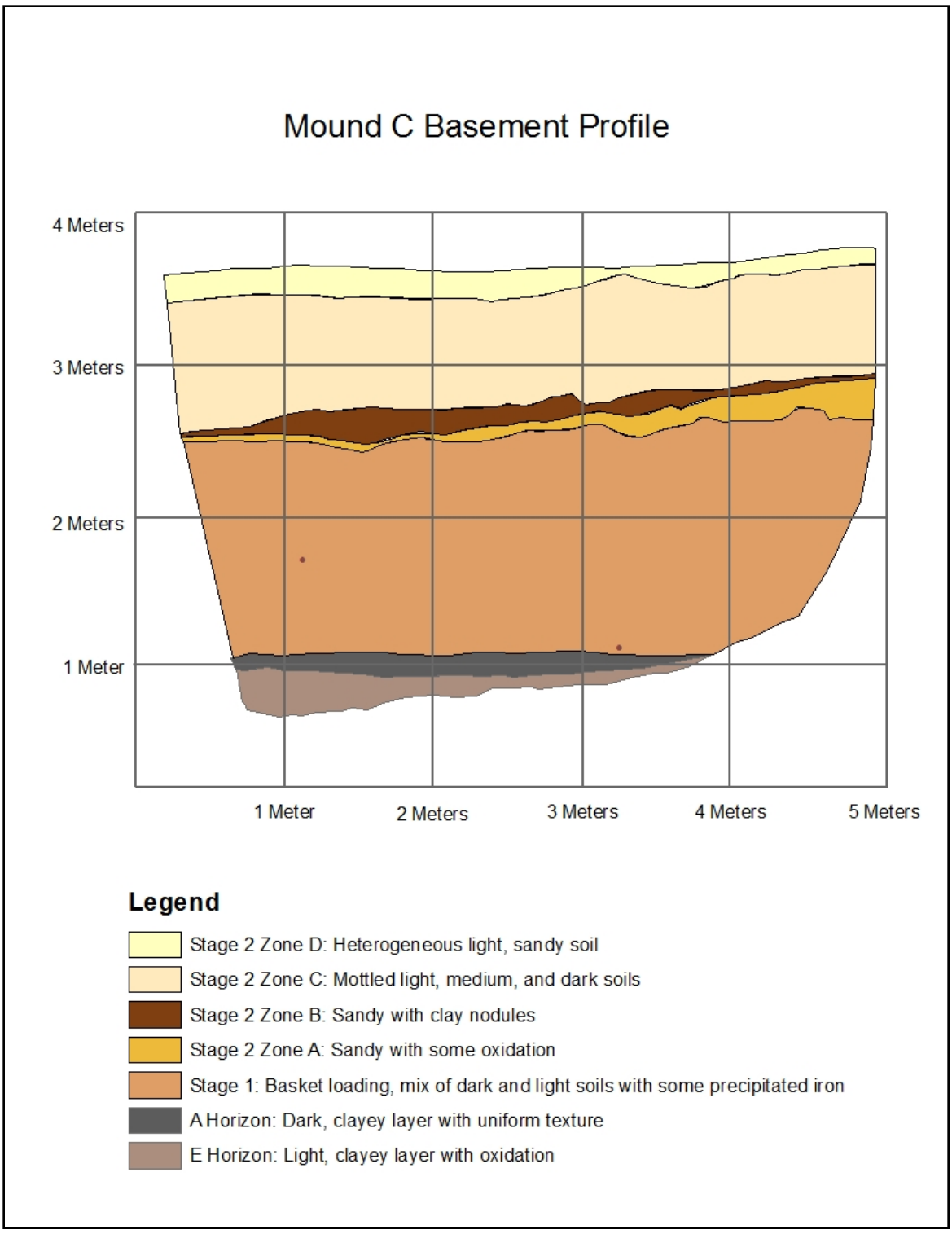

Figure 17: Mound C basement profile: zones and soil types (red markers indicate Woodland sherd locations)

Such a construction pattern is unusual when compared to typical Mississippian mound construction, which is characterized by the addition of layers to the top of the mound a few feet at a time, presumably at the death of a chief. Thus, mounds were built slowly with construction event only occurring every generation or so. The construction and composition of Mound C are suggestive of urgency or a rush to build the mound rapidly. The pause during mound construction due to a flood is an example of what Phillips, Ford, and Griffin (2003) refer to in their opening chapter of their Mississippi Alluvial Survey; captured in the Mound C profile is evidence of humans interacting with and adapting to their environment and the ever-changing conditions of Delta life.

From examining the profile, I knew before beginning work on Mound C's summit that there appeared to be one construction event with two stages and one surface upon which structures were built. This supports the decision to shovel shave the mound's summit.. There was no need for vertical excavation to get to earlier construction stages because all constriction events took place on top of the mound within 10-15 cm of the mound's surface. There was only one occupied surface.

Mound Top

Like the rapid construction of the mound itself, it would appear that the architectural features atop Mound C were also built and rebuilt fairly rapidly, possibly with some urgency. It appears that these features were all built and rebuilt during a single mound summit occupation based on the soil core data taken on various features.

Soil Coring

An Oakfield soil sampler was used to take soil cores of the fill in certain features on Mound C. The instrument was used to see how deep each of the features was. The relatively uniform fill at the top of stage 2 made this an easy job. This was useful in determining the construction sequence of the architectural features on the mound; the features with deeper fill originate lower on the mound's surface and thus would appear to be older than those features with more shallow fill. A table of the soil core location, feature number, feature type, and the depth of fill of each core taken are provided below (Table 1). A map numbering the areas where cores were taken is provided to be used in conjunction with the table (Fig. 18).

Table 1 Table of soil core locations and depths

Feature Number	Unit	Feature Type	Core Depth
1	Southeast	Posthole	15 cm
2	Southeast	Pit	42 cm
3	Southeast	Wall Trench	16 cm
4	Northeast	Wall Trench	14 cm
5	Northeast	Wall Trench	14 cm
6	Northeast	Wall Trench	22 cm
7	Northeast	Posthole	14 cm
8	Northeast	Posthole	10 cm
9	Northeast	Posthole	16 cm
10	Northeast	Posthole	4-8 cm

Feature Number	Unit	Feature Type	Core Depth
11	Southeast	Pit (anomalous)	26 cm
12	Southeast	Posthole	10 cm
13	Southeast	Pit (anomalous)	38 cm
14	Southeast	Pit (anomalous)	14 cm
15	Southeast	Wall Trench	43 cm
16	Southeast	Wall Trench	48 cm
17	Southeast	Posthole	56 cm
18	Southeast	Pit (anomalous)	17 cm
19	Southeast	Pit (anomalous)	25 cm
20	West	Wall Trench	28 cm
21	West	Wall Trench	22 cm
22	West	Pit	~4 cm
23	West	Wall Trench	57 cm
24	West	Wall Trench	26 cm
25	West	Wall Trench	54 cm
26	West	Wall Trench	31 cm
27	West	Wall Trench (?)	16.5 cm
28	West	Wall Trench (?)	29 cm
29	West	Wall Trench (?)	15 cm

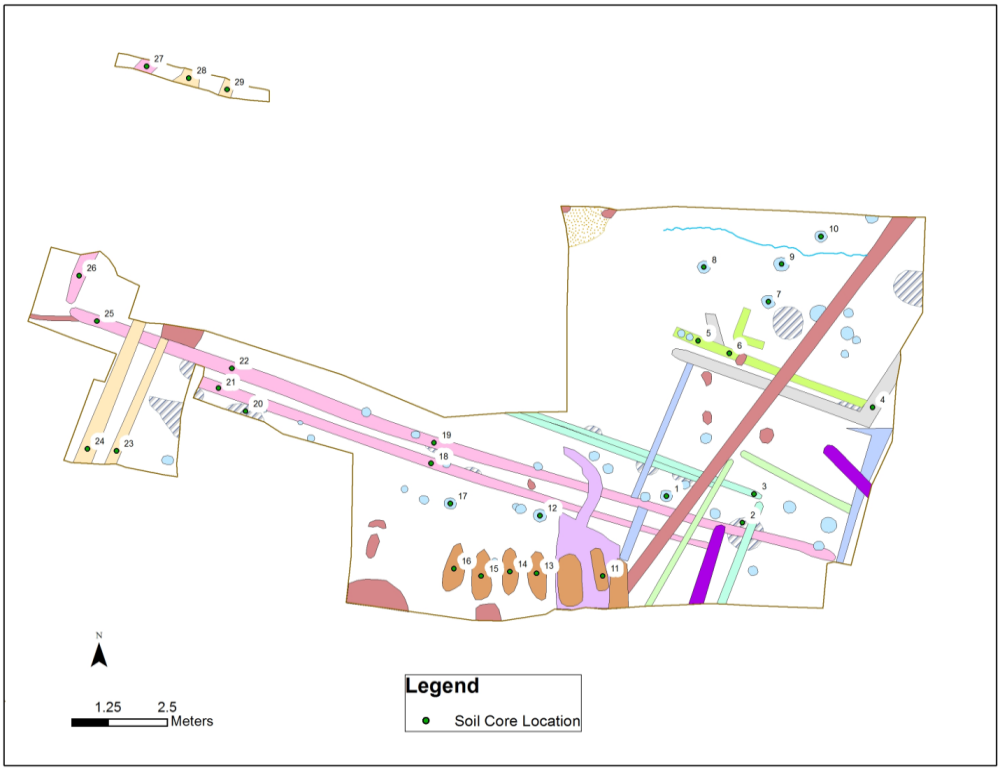

Figure 18: Map of shovel shaved units showing locations where soil cores were taken

Soil cores were also taken on and beside Mound C and Mound D suggest that these mounds are roughly contemporaneous (Mehta et. al 2012). This, along with the possibility of Mound C being constructed rapidly and both mounds being aligned with the prehistoric Carson grid, lends to the possibility that these mounds were built late in the occupation of the site not long before contact with Europeans.

The addition of the mound top soil cores to the data set provides more detailed information about the sequence of the construction of the features. However, even these data are not necessarily conclusive. These data may be skewed by the unevenness of the mound's surface caused by construction and demolition of structures on the mound's summit over the years. Some of the features could have been cut away while others remained untouched, leading to unnatural variation in features which may have actually belonged to the same phase in the sequence but appear to be from different phases due to mound surface damage. But despite these

possible errors, the core data are somewhat consistent with the superpositional data discerned from the mound surface and the way the wall trenches crosscut one another. The cores also provide some information about the postholes and when in the sequence they were put into place; the posthole depths are variable, but they cluster with the depths of the different phases of wall trenches and pits, showing that they were not necessarily all part of one phase. More detail on these aspects follow.

ArcMap

The features recorded and graphed in the field were scanned into ArcMap 10 and digitized into a series of maps illustrating the features of the excavated units as a whole as well as some maps showing the layers thought to belong to each construction phase and so on. A map was created to show all of the features found during the July 2012 excavations on Mound C. This includes both historic and prehistoric features, as the houses formerly standing on Mound C led to a considerable number of historic items being left behind. The prehistoric features are described in varying levels of detail below. As stated in the methods chapter, arbitrary units were designated for the major sections of the units excavated on the mound (Fig. 19).

Phase Designation

Before entering a discussion of the different phases of construction on Mound C, it is important to first define some of the terms used to distinguish the aspects of the features and the phases to which these features are thought to belong. The intersection of the wall trenches is one way the phases are discerned.

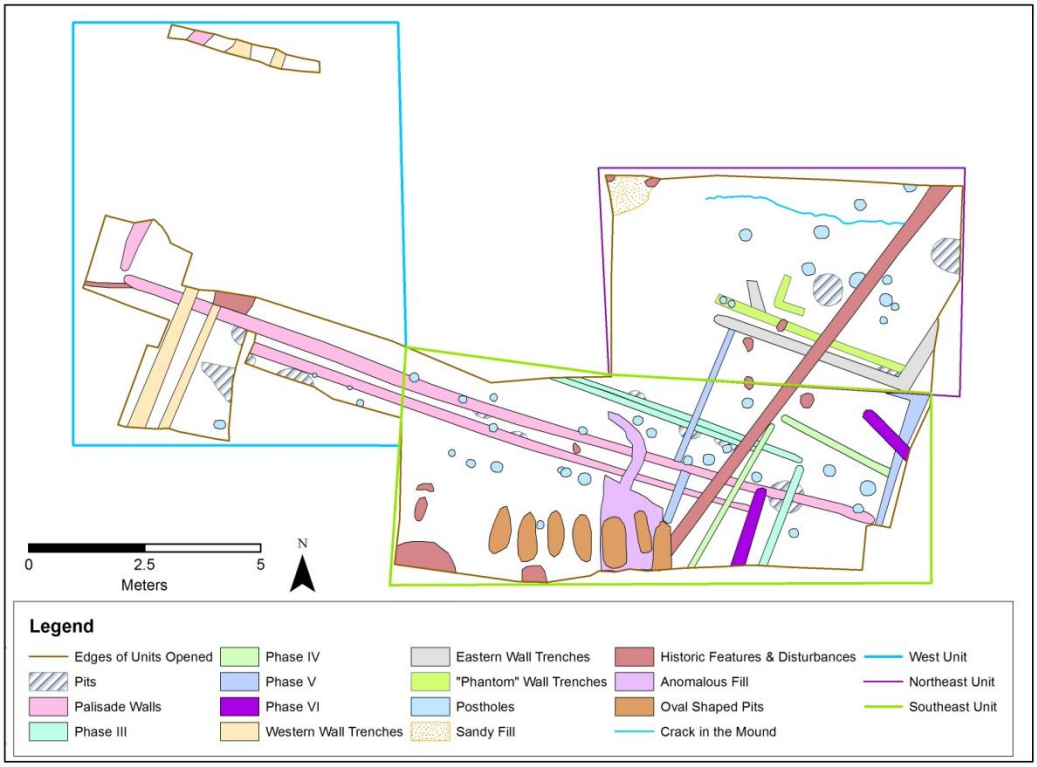

Figure 19: Map of all Mound C features with arbitrary unit distinctions

In the field during excavation, the crosscutting of one wall trench over another could be seen in the soil, and it was fairly clear which wall trench crossed over the top of another (Fig. 20; Harris 1989). This apparent superposition allowed me to determine some information about the phase sequence. In some instances, this data was more accurate and useful than the soil cores, as the historic house construction and demolition caused damage to the mound's surface, making soil core data less reliable than if the top of the mound had not been mechanically disturbed.

The meeting of two wall trenches at approximately right angles, or cornering episodes, is another way phases were determined. Wall trenches exhibiting a cornering episode are likely to belong to the same phase since Mississippian house structures were sometimes rectangular buildings constructed with wall trenches. Thus, wall trenches appearing to contribute to one constructed unit would likely belong to the same construction phase. The same sort of logic also applies to wall pairings, which are two wall trenches of similar length constructed very close to

each other or even touching each other. These could be instances of the reconstruction or reinforcement of an existing wall.

Figure 20: Example of how superposition of wall trenches is visible in trench fill

Feature depth is another factor in distinguishing construction phases. The soil cores taken with the Oakfield were used to determine feature depths along with the profile data from the 2010 field school, in which the palisade-like walls along the edges of Mound C were cut in profile to determine their depths. These data revealed that these wide wall trenches were also deeper than expected for a wall trench, showing that these walls were likely not part of a house structure, but rather part of a large wall enclosing a portion of the mound top. The depths of the wall trenches uncovered in the Summer 2012 field school produced similar data to that of 2010. In general, the wall trenches appearing wide on the surface were also deeper into the mound than

the thinner wall trenches, which were of a shallower depth. The two unusual features explored on the mound, an anomalous pit and a pairing of a crack in the mound surface and a posthole, reveal some depth information on non wall trench features. These features are discussed in some detail below.

By using these methods of designation, I have determined approximately five phases, consisting mainly of wall trenches. For each phase I will provide a map of the features belonging to that particular phase followed by a detailed discussion of the features belonging to that phase. After designating and detailing these phases, I will discuss the features I was unable to fit into a specific phase and why this is so. It should be noted that these wall trenches do not corner more than once in any of the units currently open. In other words, the wall trenches uncovered so far do not appear to be part of any house structures, but rather are oriented at right angles or parallel to one another or are individual walls that have no interaction with any other wall trenches. This is one of the reasons these architectural features are so unusual. The easement near Mound A and Mound D of Carson both have examples of four-sided walled structures, some with burned clay floors or inner support postholes, but these wall trenches on Mound C have none of these features typical of Mississippian structures.

Phase I

Phase I is made up of the various pits on Mound C (Fig. 21). Based on superposition, it would appear that the pits predate the rest of the features as they are crosscut by the wall trenches present on the mound. Soil cores were taken in only two of the non-anomalous pits; the core depth for the pit in the West Unit was approx. 4 cm, and the depth for the pit in the Southeast Unit was approx. 42 cm.

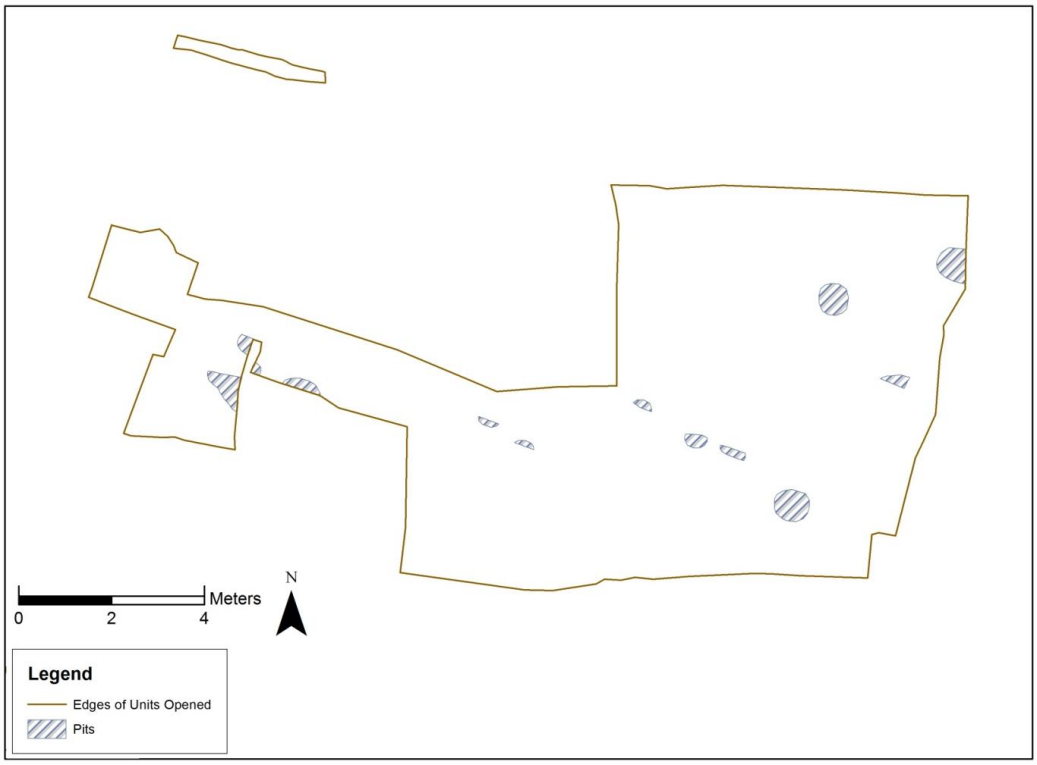

Figure 21: Phase I: prehistoric pits

This is a large variation of depth between these pits, but paired with the superposition of the other features over some of the pits, the core depth taken in the Southeast Unit supports superposition of the upper palisade-like wall trench and one Phase III wall trench crosscutting this pit. There are also multiple possibilities for why there is such a variation in these pits' depths, such as damage to the top of the mound, as the pit the core was taken in the West Unit was near several areas of deeply impacted historic fill and trash. The pits are filled with a dark, mottled soil as compared to the lighter silty loam of the mound fill.

Phase II

Phase II consists of the large palisade-like wall trenches (Fig. 22). These are the long, roughly 15 to 20 meter wall trenches running along the Carson grid alignment.

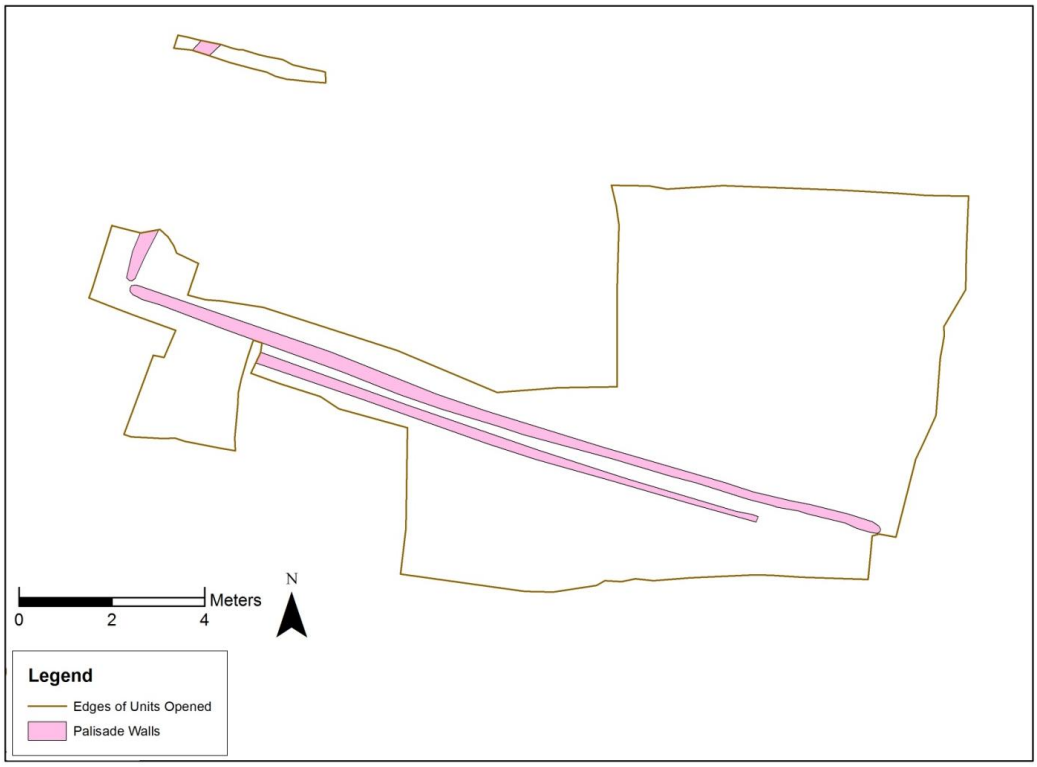

Figure 22: Phase II: palisade-like wall trenches

This is a pairing of two wall trenches of similar length and width, which may be indicative of a rebuilding episode. The more northern of these two wall trenches extends the entire length of the units opened and appears to corner in the West Unit, which is suggestive of a large walled structure on the back half of the top of Mound C.

Three core samples were taken from the upper palisade-like wall trench, measuring 43, 28, and 31 cm in depth (East to West). The cores were taken from the lower palisade-like wall trench measure 48 and 22 cm in depth (East to West). Like the prehistoric pit and anomalous pit depths, these are also variable, but the depths are within 5-6 cm of the same depth where cores from each wall trench are taken adjacent to one another. This could signify loss of mound height, as the West Unit is where the 22-31 cm depths occur, and this is an area with substantial historic disturbance. Nonetheless, these are large wall trenches both in depth and width. The size of these wall trenches could be due to their function as a palisade, as they extend across

almost the entire central area of the mound. There are some examples of houses or other types of buildings on mounds being this large (Hammerstedt 2005; King 2011; Ryba 1997), but the width and depth of the wall trenches on Mound C are too great to be part of a house structure.

The addition of the 2010 field school units is helpful in determining how these walls functioned at the top of the mound. From these 2010 data, it is possible to visualize how some of the wall trenches from 2010 align with those of July 2012 (Fig. 23). The East-West Walls from the 2010 units appear to be of a similar size to the palisade-like wall trenches found during 2012 field work. These wall trenches were determined to be aligned with the Carson grid in 2010. Because the 2010 and 2012 palisade-like wall trenches are approximately parallel, it can be inferred that the 2012 palisades are also on the Carson grid.

Figure 23: Palisade-like wall trenches, western wall trenches and 2010 units

The Western Wall Trenches are potentially part of this phase as well (Fig. 24). Two soil cores were taken from the North-South oriented wall trenches in the West Unit, measuring 57

and 26 cm (West to East). These wall trenches appear to align with some of the North-South oriented wall trenches in the 2010 units. This could be indicative of a these sections being part of the same wall trenches. Based on these suppositions, these sets of wall trenches and palisade-like wall trenches may have belonged to the same overall structure.

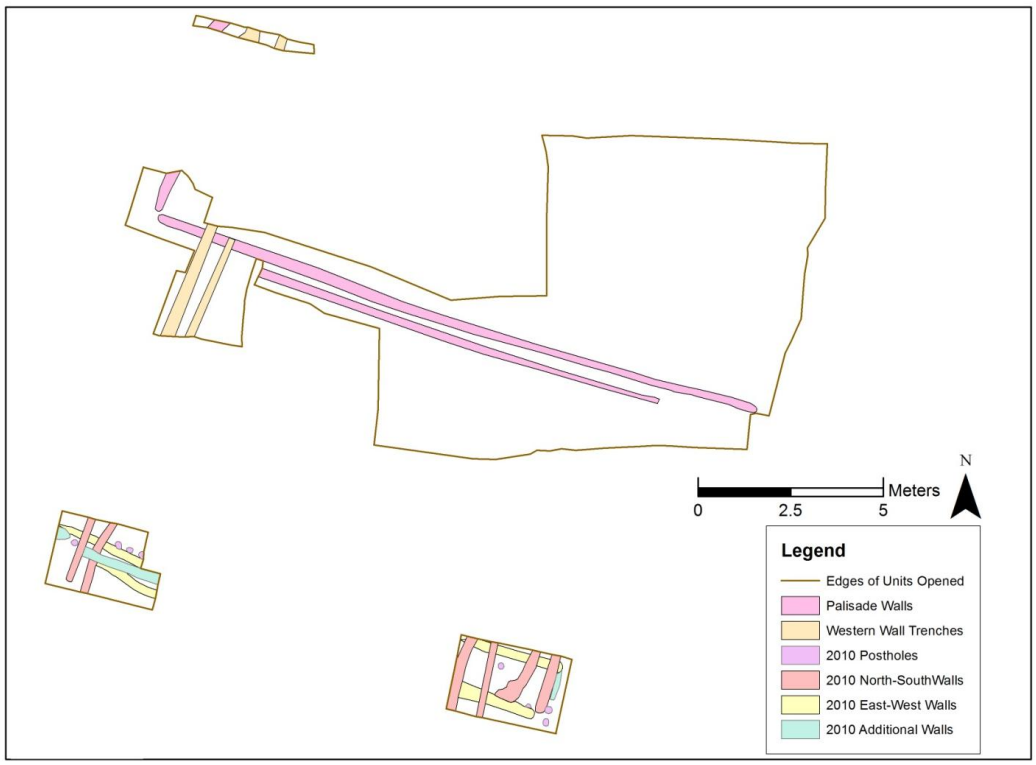

Figure 24: Palisade-like wall trenches, western wall trenches, and 2010 units

The remaining phases lie in the Northeast and Southeast Units. They consist of smaller and shallower wall trenches than those of the palisade-like wall trenches, and could be representative of a shift in the use of the mound from an open surface enclosed by large palisades or screens to a mound with a divided and partitioned central area. The shift of use of space is also characterized by the size of the walled structures; The larger structure suggested by the palisade-like wall trenches was constructed from deep, wide wall trenches, while the smaller, compartmental walled structures on the eastern side of the mound were constructed using shorter, narrower wall trenches.

Phase III

Phase III lies in the Southeast Unit and consists of a northwest to southeast oriented wall trench pairing, possibly indicative of a rebuilding episode (Fig. 25).

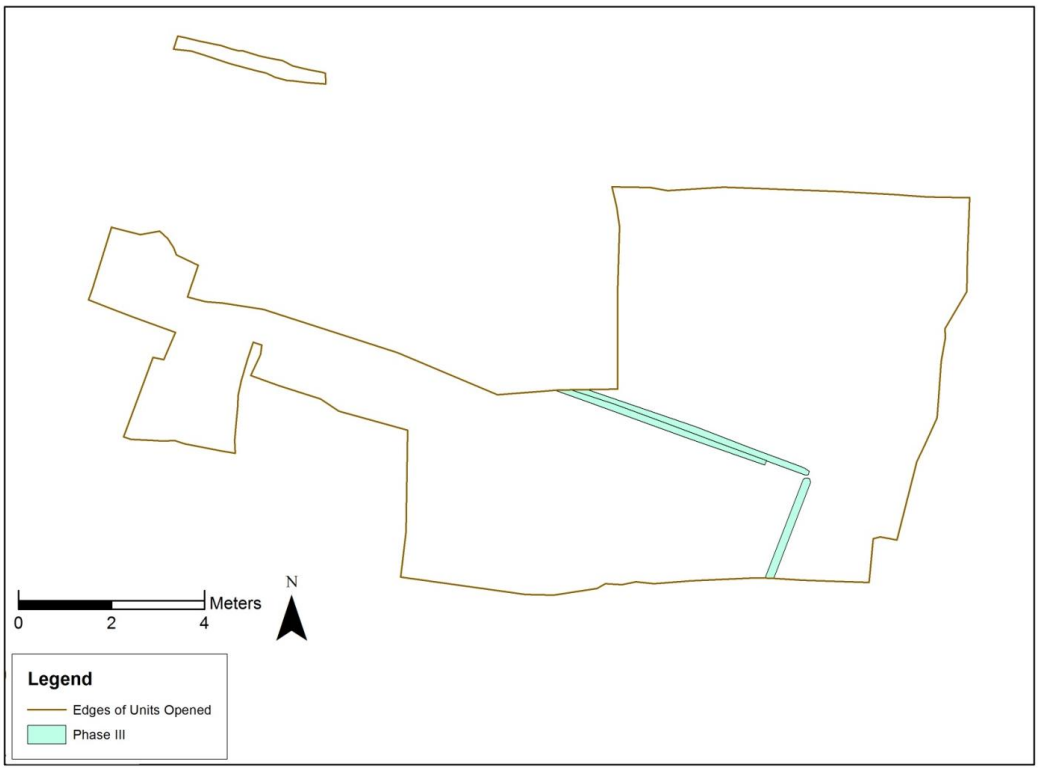

Figure 25: Phase III

This pairing corners with a slightly off north-south oriented wall trench, forming a right angle. A soil core was taken from one of these wall trenches, with a depth of 16 cm. However, no core depths were taken from the wall trenches belonging to later phases, so superposition was the more reliable source of data for determining this phase. In the field, the contrasting soil in the wall trenches visibly revealed the superposition of these wall trenches, specifically where the easternmost of these wall trenches crosscuts a pit and one of the palisade-like wall trenches (Fig. 26).

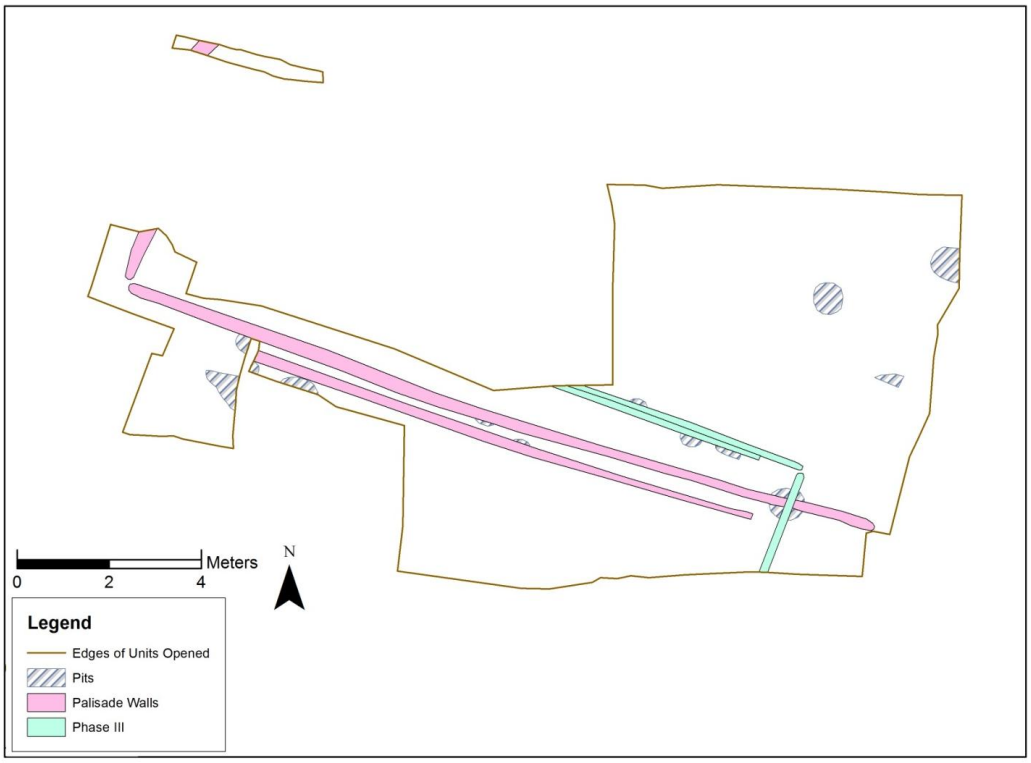

Figure 26: Crosscutting of Phase III wall trenches over Phase I and Phase II

Phase IV

Phase IV consists of a pairing of wall trenches crosscutting both the palisade-like wall trenches and one of the wall trenches of Phase III (Figs. 27 and 28). These crosscutting episodes provide the superpositional data needed to assert that this is a later phase. The wall trenches of Phase IV have a larger space between them where they meet than the cornering episode present in Phase III. In a similar manner to the palisade-like wall trenches and the wall trenches of Phase III, Phase IV is not a full, four-walled structure typical of Mississippian architecture at other sites or even at other areas of the Carson site. In this area of the mound, the mound fill lost to the basement created in the eastern side of the mound might have held more wall trenches and other features that may have given a clearer picture of what these structures were like during their time of use.

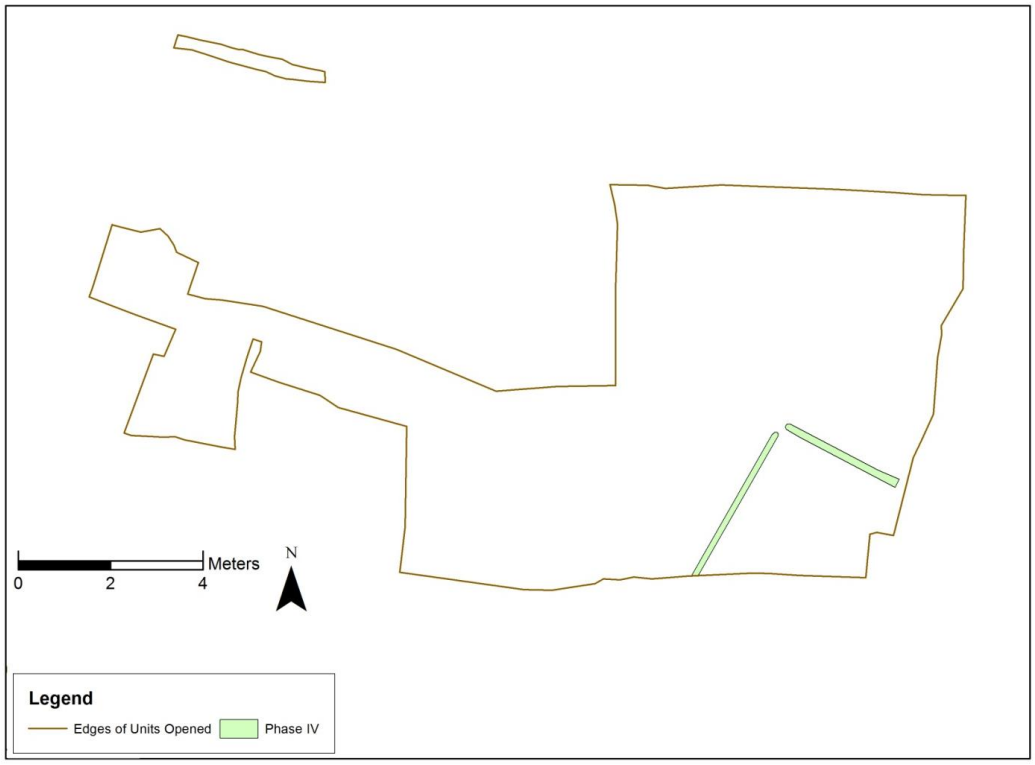

Figure 27: Phase IV

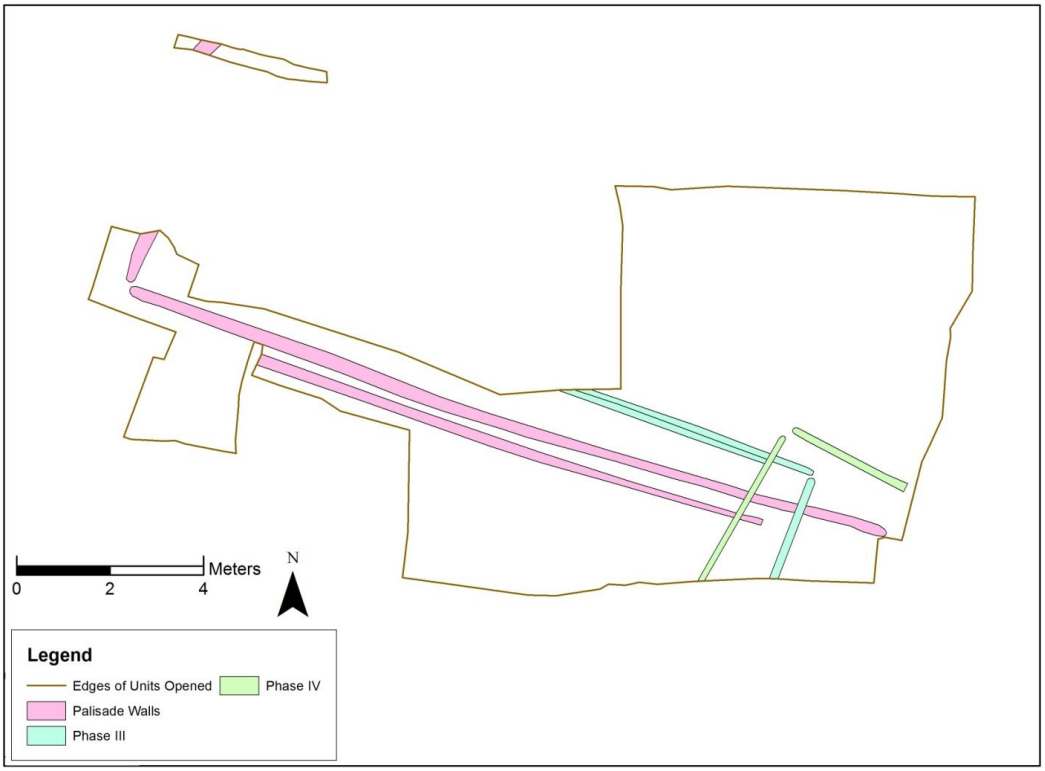

Figure 28: Crosscutting of Phase IV over Phase II and Phase III

Phase V

Phase V includes a wall trench extending down from the Northeast Unit to the Southeast Unit (Fig. 29). This wall trench stops where it meets the upper palisade-like wall trench of Phase II, but continues a few centimeters to the east on the southern edge of the upper palisade-like wall trench, extending across the lower palisade-like wall trench and disappearing into an anomalous pit in the southern portion of the Southeast Unit (Fig. 30). There is a posthole between these two sections of this Phase V wall trench that touches the upper section of the wall trench and crosscuts the upper palisade-like wall trench, which makes it seem that this posthole and perhaps the surrounding postholes belong to this phase (Fig. 31).

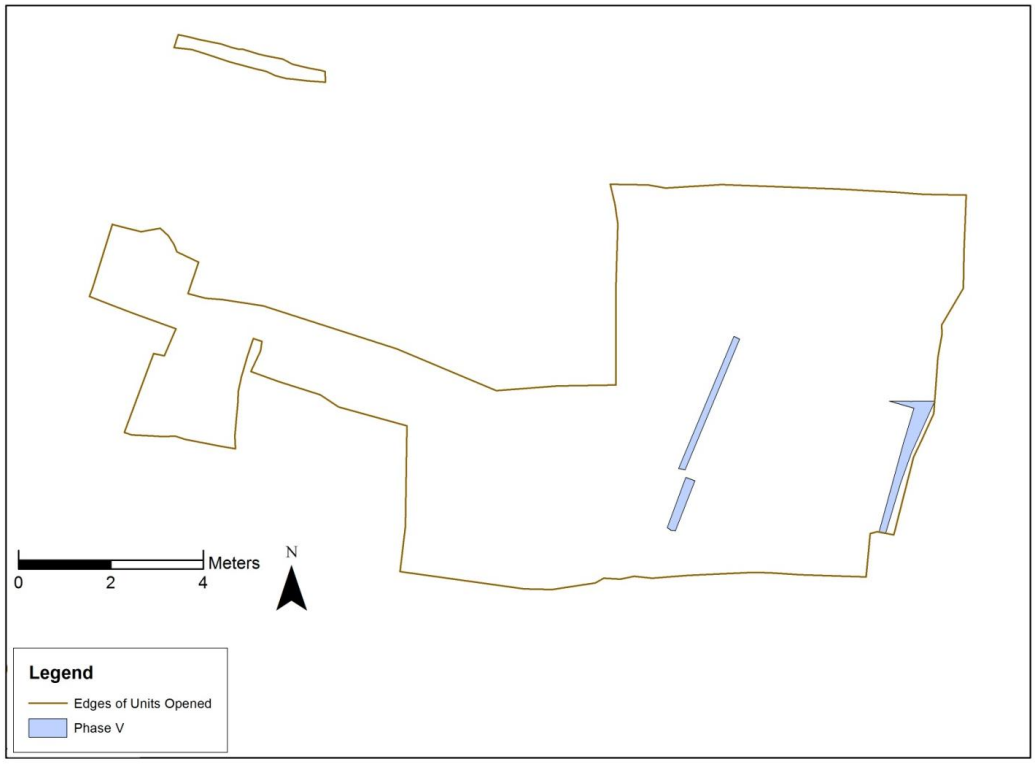

Figure 29: Phase V

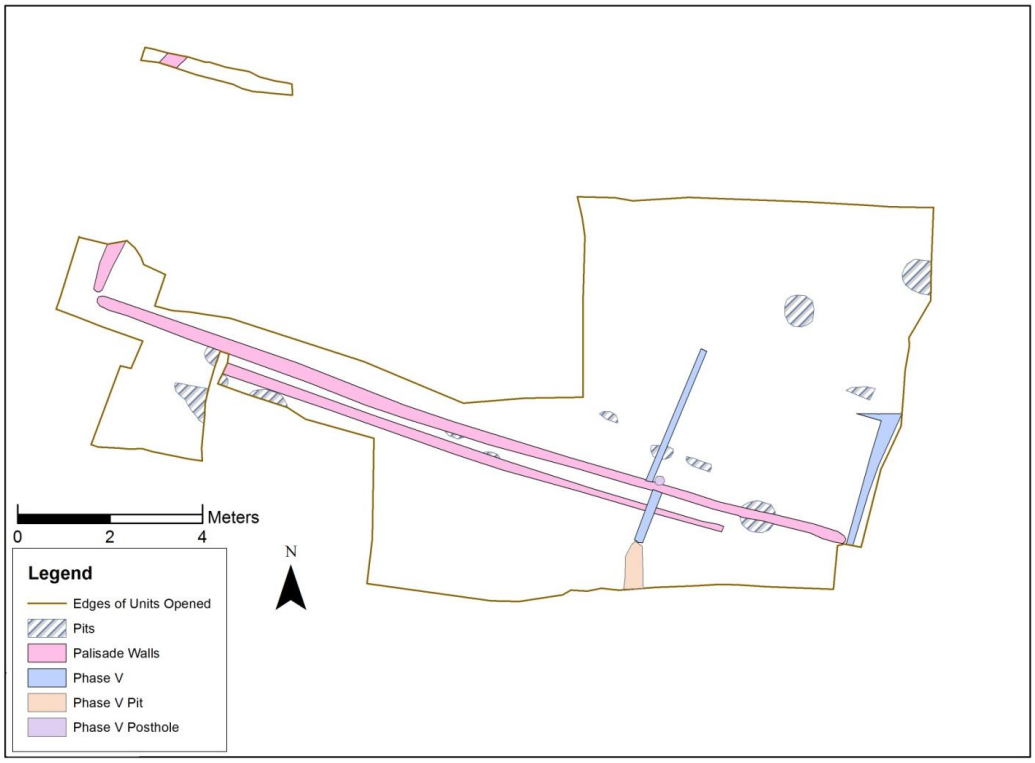

Figure 30: Unusual nature of Phase V in relation to Phase II, posthole, and pit

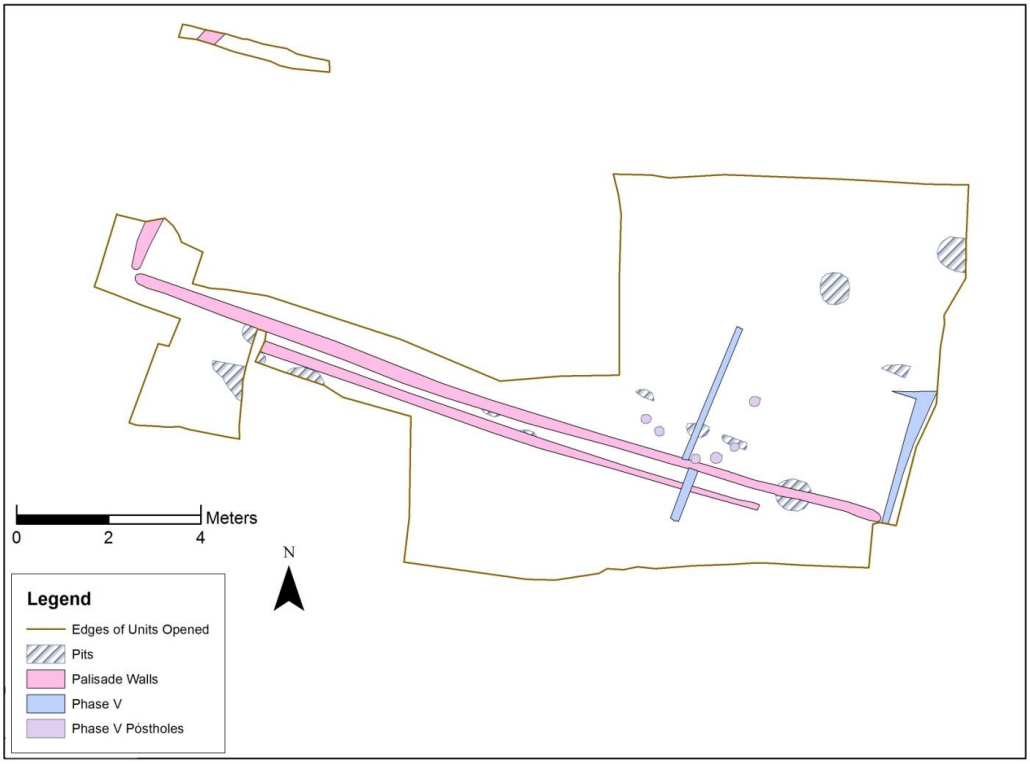

Figure 31: Possible posthole arc in Phase V

There is another wall trench in this phase, though it is oddly shaped and possibly continues off the edge of the mound top into the pit holding the basement profile. This makes it impossible to know the true dimensions of this wall trench. In its current state it appears to partially corner at its northernmost point, but no other wall trench extends from it or meets it. However, this wall trench is considered to be part of Phase V because it is parallel to the other wall trenches belonging to Phase V, and it crosscuts one of the Phase IV wall trenches (Fig. 32).

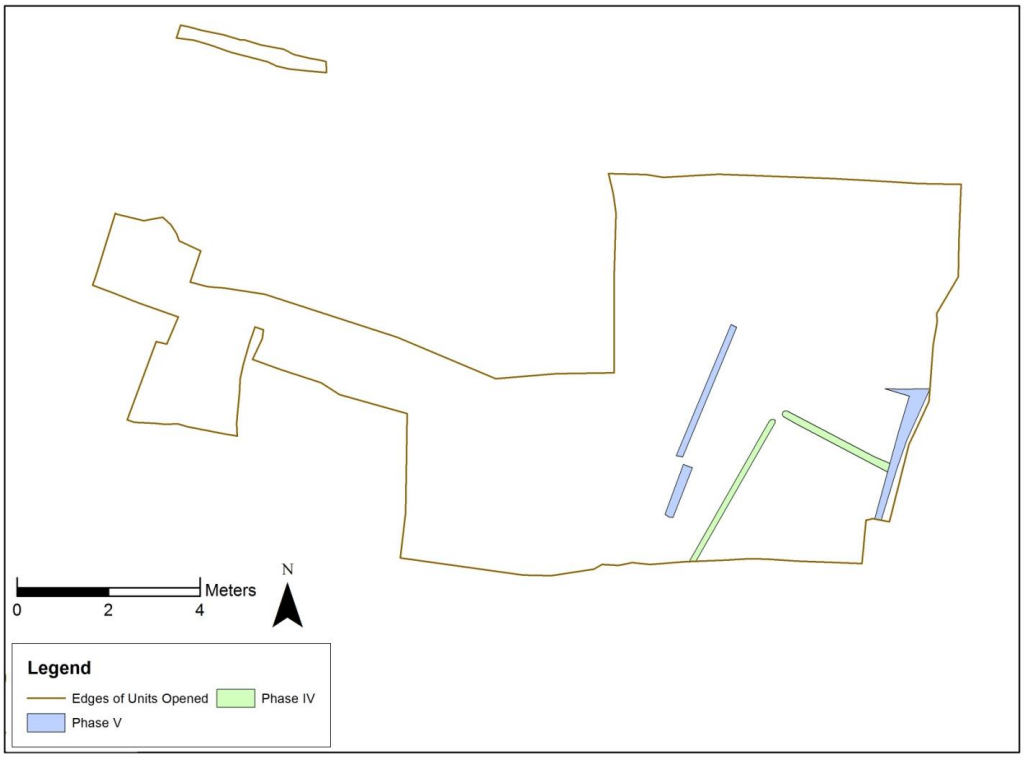

Figure 32: Phase V crosscutting Phase IV

Phase VI

Phase VI is the last distinguishable phase, though it is not certain if the walls I have grouped into this phase are really part of the same phase (Fig. 33). There is simply not enough data other than superposition, as no cores were taken of these wall trenches. This phase consists of two short, narrow segments of wall trenches. They do not corner and are not parallel or perpendicular to one another.

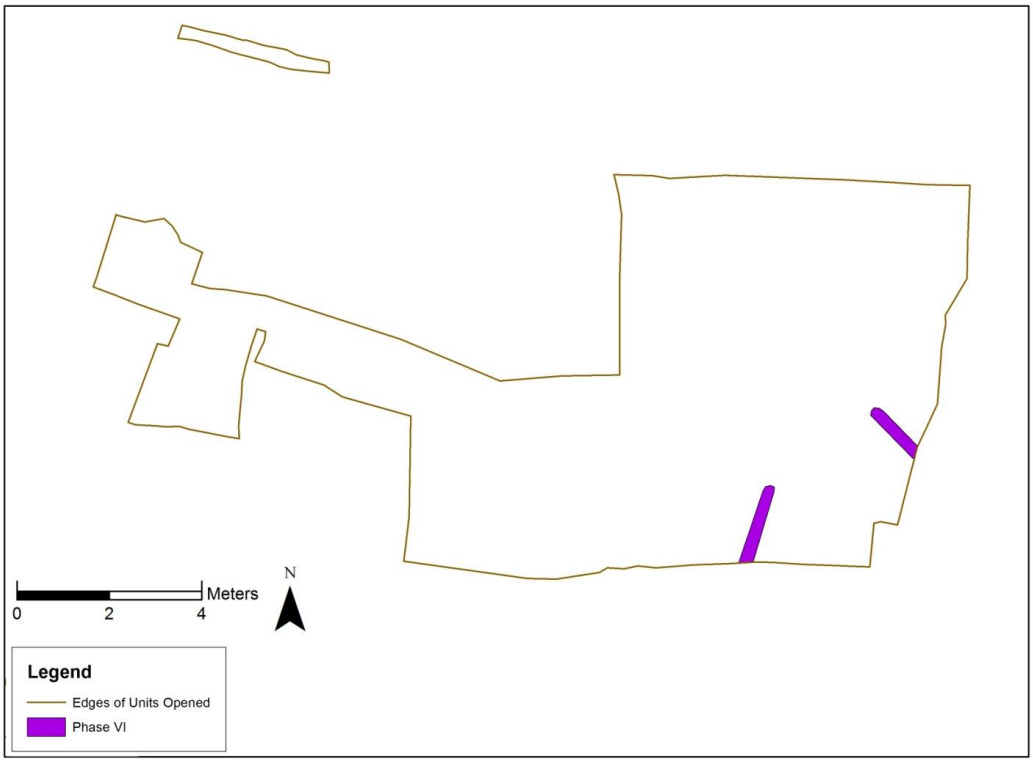

Figure 33: Phase VI

The westernmost of these wall trenches crosscuts both of the palisade-like wall trenches and appears to be aligned with one of the 2010 wall trenches, while the easternmost of these wall trenches crosscuts the easternmost Phase V wall trench (Fig. 34). I chose to group these two wall trench segments together because of their similar width and length as compared to the other wall trenches in this portion of the mound. I also grouped them together because of their proximity to one another. There were other short, narrow wall trench segments in the northeastern portion of the shovel shaved units, but that area of the mound was the edge of where the most damage to the mound's surface took place when the house was demolished. I describe these wall trench features in the section below. Like the wall trenches in Phase IV, the missing section of the mound where the basement was made may have held more data on how these small wall trench segments could have looked or functioned.

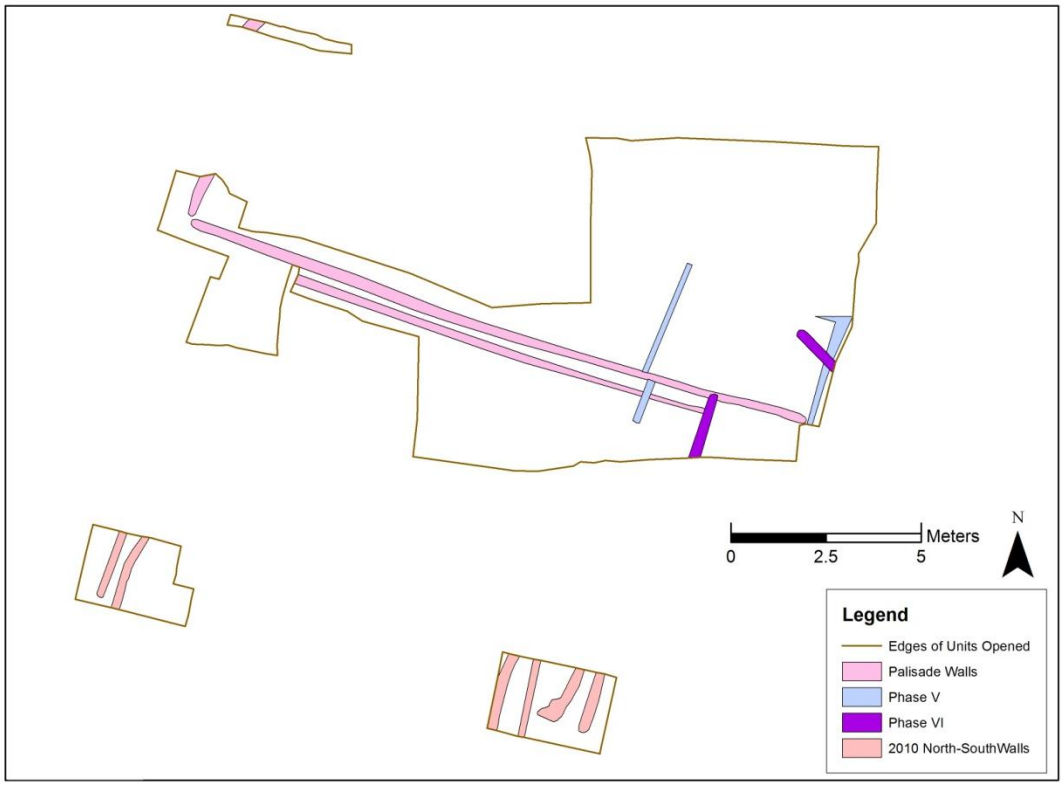

Figure 34: Phase VI crosscutting Phase V, possible alignment of Phase VI wall with 2010 unit wall

Indeterminate Phases and Features

Northeast Unit Features

Some of the wall trenches were difficult to attribute to a particular phase (Fig. 35). One possible reason for this is the damage to the surface of the mound from the construction and demolition of the house formerly on the mound. Another reason could be that these wall trenches could be that they were late in the mound top sequence and thus were higher on the surface, allowing for more of these wall trenches to be taken away during construction and demolition. This applies to the various wall trenches and postholes in the Northeast Unit. The postholes here are of varying depths, measuring 4-8, 16, 14, and 10 cm deep (East to West). Also, the wall trenches are inconsistent in their depths. One of the wall trenches in the Northeast Unit fades into a line of postholes before fading out completely, all at a relatively shallow depth.

Figure 35: Indeterminate wall trenches and postholes in Northeast Unit

Two soil cores taken from the wall trench that fades away on the western side of the unit measure 22 and 14 cm in depth (East to West). A soil core taken from the cornering wall trench on the eastern side of the unit measures 14 cm in depth. Soil cores were not taken from the pits in this area. The crack in the mound in the upper portion of the Northeast Unit was deemed historic and not examined in any greater detail.

Postholes

The postholes do not appear to have any regular pattern to their placement on the mound surface, which makes it difficult to assign them to any specific phases (Fig. 36). However, some appear to have a curvilinear alignment to one another, and there is a slight semicircular arrangement to some of the post holes found in the Southeastern Unit near the westernmost wall trenches of phase 2 and phase 4 where six postholes form a half circle. This could simply be a

coincidence, but it also could be the remnants of a circular structure such as a meeting house, as circular arrangements of posts were used during the Mississippian Period as a means of making house structures (Alt and Pauketat 2011).

Figure 36: Posthole locations

Perhaps the gaps between these larger postholes were filled with smaller posts whose footprints are no longer visible due to their shallow placement on the mound or the effects of time and weathering to the top of the mound.

At the easement to the east of Mound A at Carson, the postholes are also sporadically arranged. However, these postholes are often within house walls, which is indicative of a roof or a platform in the case of a charnel house. In contrast, the postholes at Mound C are not enclosed in house walls, as no house-shaped structures have been uncovered on Mound C. King et. al (2011:366) write of scattered post holes just inside a curved wall trench on Mound B at Etowah,

and how excavators thought these post holes to be indicative of "a series of benches and possibly partitions." Perhaps that is what has taken place here, with the postholes being supports for benches and the right angled walls being some sort of partitions.

Of the many postholes on Mound C, soil cores were taken from seven. The postholes in the Northeast Unit have depths of 4-8, 16, 14, and 10 cm (East to West). The Southeast Unit postholes measure 15, 10, and 56 cm in depth (East to West). All of these postholes are within 5 or so cm of one another in depth except for the posthole measuring 56 cm in depth. This is one of the deepest soil core measurement on Mound C, with the only core deeper belonging to the lower portion of the left wall trench in the pairing of wall trenches in the West Unit (labeled as Western Wall Trenches), which has a depth of 57 cm. Perhaps these are two of the oldest features on the mound, though an equally plausible hypothesis would be that there is too much surface damage to Mound C's summit to discern much about feature depths from soil cores.

Sandy Pit

An area of almost purely sand was found in the northwest corner of the Northeast Unit (Fig. 37). This is unusual as such a concentration of sand is rare in this part of the Delta. This sandy pit is located in the most central portion of the units excavated and invites the notion that this sandy soil was brought into the site area and placed toward the center of Mound C to serve some sort of purpose, whether practical or symbolic. The only other place on Mound C where this concentration of sand was found was in the profile, where sand was washed onto the partially constructed mound during a flood. Perhaps the placement of the sandy soil on the mound's summit was a commemoration of the flooding event.

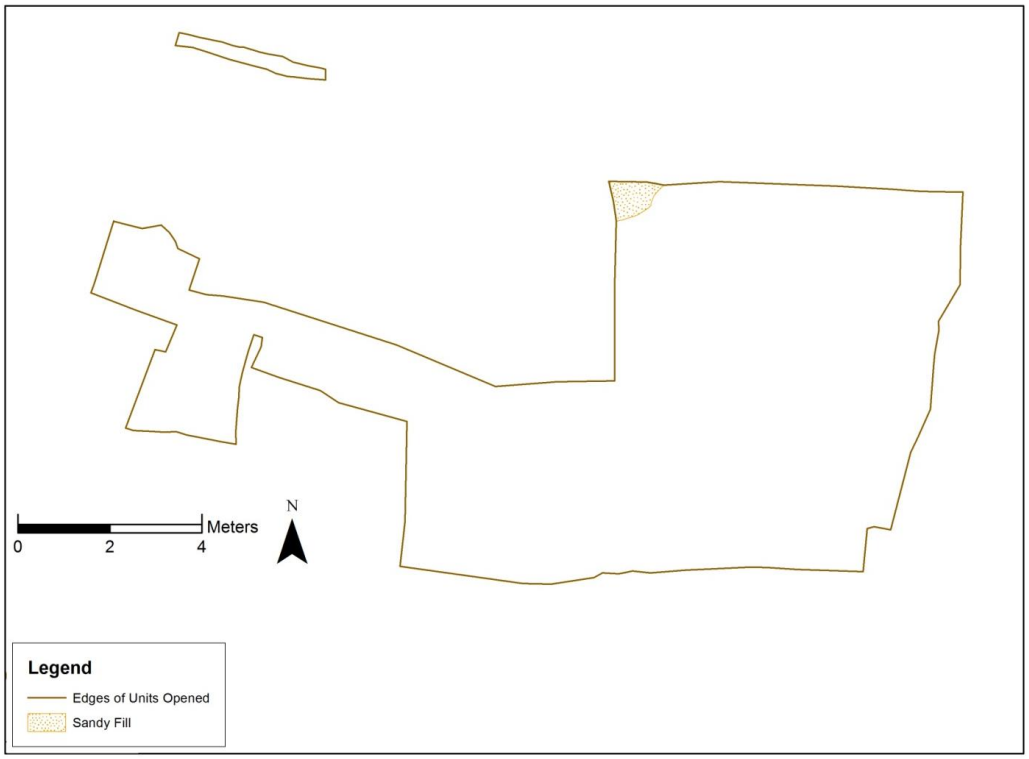

Figure 37: Area of sandy fill toward center of mound

Historic Features and Disturbances

The wall trenches are oriented within the Carson Grid in a Northeast to Southwest alignment, which supports the notion that these are prehistoric architectural features (Fig. 38). The features found atop Mound C which have been determined to be historic lie at different orientations from the Carson Grid, for example a large pipe extends into the cellar pit on the eastern side of the mound through the Northeastern and Southeastern Units, and the trench for that pipe crosscuts the prehistoric wall trenches. There is also a series of large, oval-shaped anomalies lying roughly North-South in the Southeastern Unit. One of these oval-shaped pits was cross sectioned at first to see if these were burial pits due to their shape and size, but later to see the extent of their depth and the types of soil comprising the pit fill.

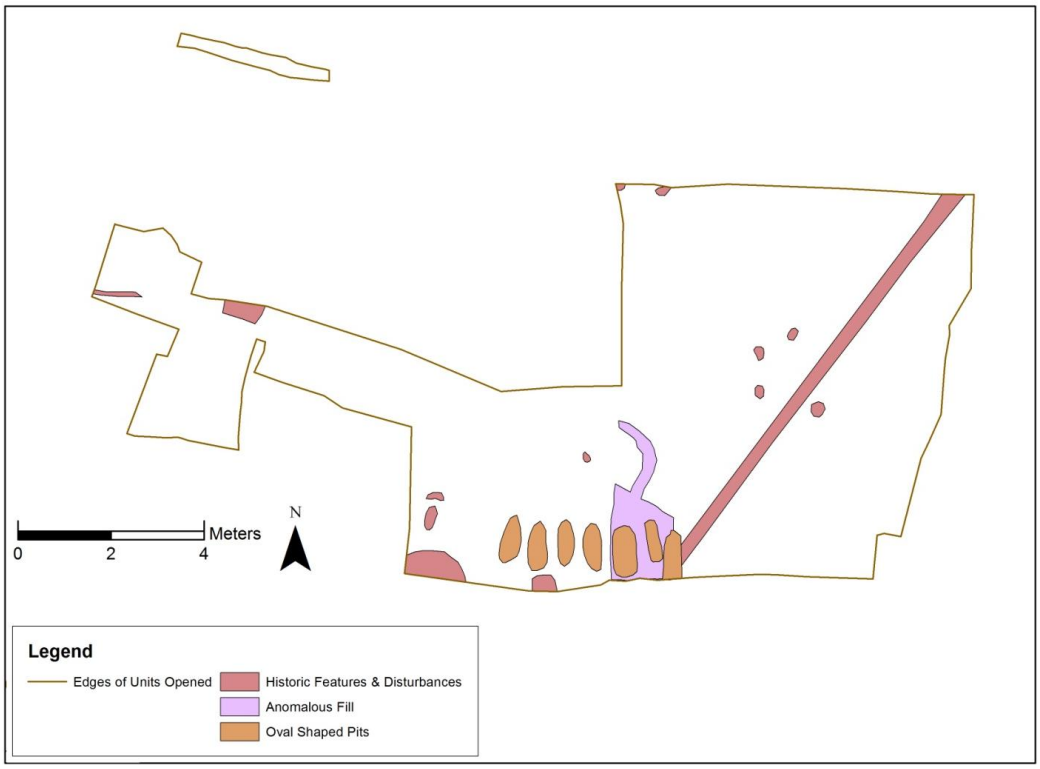

Figure 38: Historic features, areas of compacted historic fill, and anomalous fill

Soil cores were taken in five of the seven anomalous pits, with depths measuring 26, 38, 14, 17, and 25 cm (East to West). The variability of depth of these pits does not aid in discerning their purposes, but because these anomalous pits do not lie in the Carson grid orientation, they were understood to be historic and perhaps the plots for rose bushes. No further investigations were conducted on this set of features.

An area of anomalous fill in an irregular shape also occurs in the same area as some of the oval-shaped anomalies. The fill is lighter than the mound fill in the lower part of the unit in which it was found, and the light fill continues in a curved trench-like shape upward in the unit before fading into the mound fill.

In the final chapter, I briefly discuss the results of my field work on Mound C, how these results answer my research question, and how these results stand in relation to other Mississippian sites with similar features.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The remodeling of the environment by the prehistoric people of Carson is a major facet of "Mississippian" culture and behavior, and yet it shows how these individuals reacted to and interacted with their particular situation in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. Mound centers in different areas of the Mississippian world had their own varied environments and obstacles to deal with and adapt to, yet this particular part of the country has unique challenges that set it apart from other geographic and environmental settings. Carson's location in the Yazoo Basin therefore makes the site Mississippian in its design and construction, but also sets the site apart with nuances specific to being in the Delta.

Both Parchman and Hollywood exhibit examples of mound-top structures. But these are more complete, four-sided structures. Remote sensing equipment was used as both sites when mound-top structures were found. This allowed for excavations to take place on Mound A at Parchman for several field seasons (Fogel 2005; Lowe 2005; Stevens 2006; Strickland 2009). Magnetic data has shown that multiple mounds at the Hollywood site serve as platforms for structures, as these data show evidence of burnt wattle and daub, but excavations are limited (Haley 2012). These are regular rectangular structures as opposed to the unusual right-angled wall trench pairings on Carson's Mound C.

There are several directions in which hypotheses about these structures can go, but first I would like to address the issues of damage to the mound surface, both from natural weathering and erosion over time, and also from the construction and demolition of historic structures on

Mound C's summit. These occurrences have taken a major toll on the preservation of the mound and the features it holds. This is exhibited in the soil coring data collected; in plan view it is clear that some features intersected and followed other features, but the core data may have shown that the deeper wall had a shallower depth than the one crossing over it, and so on. This is troublesome for data analysis and for understanding this portion of the Carson site, as there is data we will never understand all due to historic activities which led to severe damage to these prehistoric features.

With all this taken into account, the lack of artifacts on Mound C aside from the Woodland sherds in the mound fill makes more sense. The burnt clay, stone and pottery fragments, and fire beds described by Thomas in the 19th century to be on and around Mound C suggest burned floors, daub fall, and midden but they are no longer present, possibly due to the amount of human disturbance of the mound and the areas surrounding it. We have no idea how much of the top of the mound was removed during the construction of the historic structure. Any of these types of items would be useful in creating a stronger chronology of the construction events on Mound C, but a lack of any prehistoric artifacts left superposition and soil cores as the best options in this situation.

The scattered and seemingly disorganized appearance of the features on Mound C are comparable in some ways to the features uncovered at the summit of Mound Q at Moundville (Ryba 1997: 42). The excavation on Mound Q revealed several wall trenches and post holes crosscutting one another with no real semblance of organization and no indication of which walls belong to which structures, or if there are any cohesive structures at all. However, while the features on Mound C were determined to have been constructed and reconstructed in fairly rapid succession during one occupation, "the architecture on Mound Q consists of several overlapping

constructions which are associated with different periods of occupation rather than episodes of rebuilding during a single occupation" (Ryba 1997: 42). Thus, the only real similarity is the appearance of the features themselves on a superficial level. Additional structures at Moundville share superficial similarities to the architectural features on Mound C at Carson. For instance, two non-mound structures, labeled as "Public Buildings" and "Elite Residential Area," show instances of single walls cross-cutting one another or episodes of wall pairs arranged at right angles in addition to the four-walled structures there (Ryba 1997: 32-37). However, this similarity is useful in analyzing the findings on Mound C, as it shows that not all sets of architectural features are necessarily coherent and organized. Each group of people in any given area had the individuality to do things in their own way, and were influenced in varying amounts by the major political centers of the time, allowing for a variety of ways in which villages and individuals could be influenced.

The unusual architectural features on Mound C bring several questions and possibilities to mind. Was this more or less how the architecture appeared during the Mississippian Period? Did damage to the mound during the construction of houses in later centuries cause such damage to the mound surface so as to prevent full understanding of this architecture? It seems unusual, as far as Mississippian standards go, for there to have been sets of two walls coming together in individual cornering episodes as is seen on Mound C. According to major sources and authorities on the Mississippian Period (i.e. Anderson and Sassaman 2012, Brown 2006, Hudson 1978, etc.), Mississippian structures, which tended to be various types of houses, whether family dwellings, meeting houses, or charnel houses, were four-sided with wall trenches or circular and made from a series of posts (Alt and Pauketat 2011; Hudson: 1978; Ryba 1997: 32-33). None of these point to two-sided structures or walls set at right angles. This leads me to two main

possibilities, though there are certainly more: these right angled wall pairings were constructed in this way intentionally to serve some sort of purpose unique to the conditions of this part of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. Unfortunately, the construction equipment used in building and tearing down the historic houses on Mound C created deep gouges in the mound's surface, which has damaged and even removed parts of these prehistoric features as well as artifacts which may have been there. This would also account for the lack of Mississippian artifacts on Mound C, as the surface of the mound would have been cleared and made level before construction could take place.

Despite this damage and loss of artifacts and features over time, the data we do have shows a shift in the use of the mound over the course of the mound's lifetime. The deep, wide palisade-like wall trenches on the edges of the mound's summit could be illustrative of a time when the central portion of the mound was open, but the occurrences on the mound's summit were not to be seen or needed to be protected, whether symbolically or otherwise. The smaller, more concentrated wall trenches occurring mainly in the eastern side of the mound which exhibit the cornering episodes may show a later shift from an open mound top to one divided and sectioned for yet another purpose.

The outstanding feature of many of the wall trenches exposed on Mound C is that they are too long to have been house structures, particularly given the lack of any indication of interior roof support. They were almost certainly palisades. These palisades enclosing the top of Mound C are unusual as well. Again, according to major scholars of the Mississippian Period, palisades are most often found surrounding entire villages or mound complexes as a part of a defense system. Palisades around Mississippian sites indicated warfare between neighboring groups and a need for chiefs to protect their area of control from outside opposition and conflict.

Knowing this, what can be said about a palisade around the edges of the top of a mound? The tops of mounds were often the homes of chiefs, priests, or other major figures within a mound complex. Multiple Mississippian sites throughout the southeast are host to mounds with architecture thought to be screens or palisades at their summits (Ryba 1997: 58-63, 75-124). At Etowah, a pairing of walls at a right angle close to the edge of Mound A is thought to be a screen, serving a practical or aesthetic purpose such as framing the ramp to the top of a mound or visibly distinguishing one mound from another (King et. al 2011: 361).

Another possibility is that these screens could serve a symbolic purpose. Perhaps the residence at the top of a mound belonged to a priest or spiritual leader, and the screen served as a separation of the sacred realm of the priest from the profane world below. Stevens' (2006: 45) work at the Parchman site's Mound A summit used theoretical discourse in combination with a Harris matrix of the trench profile on Mound A to hypothesize about the relationship of mound construction to sociopolitical change. Perhaps the rapid construction and reconstruction of walls on Mound C is related to a turbulent sociopolitical period for Carson.

Of course, there is no need to go beyond the confines of the Carson site to find evidence for palisades that were not apparently built for defense. The area to the east of Mound A upon which much of the fieldwork at Carson has focused is a complex overlay of pits containing up to 40 bundle burials, standard wall trench houses, and specialized structures which may be charnel houses (Johnson et. al n.d.). This entire area is surrounded by a palisade which was rebuilt at least three times. It is unlikely that this wall was for defensive purposes since the primary activity within this palisade was mortuary ritual. Its major function may have been to separate the sacred mortuary areas from the rest of the site. One of the diagnostic characteristics of a defensive palisade is the presence of corner bastions. At the Mound A easement, only one corner

has been found, but no bastions have been found yet. Similarly, no bastions have been found in the corners exposed in the 2010 units or the 2012 units on Mound C. The parallel use of palisades in both of these areas of Carson suggests that these palisades were used to demarcate sacred areas rather than for defensive purposes. The placement of sand in the central area of the mound could also relate to a ritual purpose. Sand was found in one other place on the mound, in the basement profile, deposited as a result of the flooding episode during the mound's construction. Perhaps the placement of the sand in the central area of the mound's summit was in commemoration of the flood event.

Overall the field work on Mound C fulfilled my research goals, which were to continue the work on Mound C started in the 2010 field season, and to explore the implications of the presence of the palisade-like wall trenches found in the 2010 field season. The features I found are an example of why "Mississippian standards" are no longer the best way to approach Mississippian sites and their analysis, as Mound C exhibits unusual architecture on its summit. There are no artifacts aside from Woodland sherds in the mound fill and historical items on the mound's surface. Comparison with the literature on mound-top structures at other sites more often than not is less than helpful, as these sites' mound-top structures are four-sided, organized, and come with a nice assortment of Mississippian artifacts. Some sites have screens around the edges of the top of a mound, such as Mound A of Etowah, but the wall trenches of question on Mound C are too large and deep to have been a screen. The only other instance of a palisade being found on a mound top and to be recorded as such is on fourth terrace of Monk's Mound of Cahokia, which is an unusual mound itself, defying most "Mississippian standards" with its tiered construction and size, strengthening the argument for Mississippian diversity. In sum, this

type of structure enclosing a mound's summit is unusual (Alt and Pauketat 2011; Hammerstedt 2005; King et. al 2011; Reed 1969; Ryba 1997: 58).

The majority of the top of Mound C is still unexamined, and I plan to continue excavations to determine the extent of the large palisade-like wall trenches. I do realize that the damage to Mound C's summit is extensive and that this will have an effect on the data I am able to collect. The architectural features on Mound C are unlike those at any other site except for the fourth terrace of Monk's Mound of Cahokia, but the size of Mound C is miniscule in comparison with the fourth terrace. This uniqueness could be attributed to the intentions of those who constructed the walls and dug the pits and postholes on Mound C, but the historic damage on the mound's surface make such possibilities less likely, and place more likelihood on attributing this to years of damage. In either case, I raise two important points. Education about prehistoric mounds and sites as well as efforts to preserve these areas are crucial to learning more about the prehistoric peoples associated with such sites and to giving these ancient people's land and history the respect they deserve. Also, the stereotypes of the Mississippian period are just that. In my research and small amount of experience, I have opted to follow the school of thought within Southeastern archaeology that Mississippian sites are too diverse to be categorized based on neo-evolutionary terms and features held by the majority of sites. The individuality of human experiences and thoughts are present in the culture humans create, and human experience and individuality in turn is molded and reinforced by culture. This is seen in the earthworks of Carson and in the architectural features of Mound C.

In conclusion, the palisade-like wall trenches on Mound C are unusual for Mississippian architecture, as is the series of partial wall structures on the eastern portion of the mound. These departures from the standards of Mississippian culture make it apparent that although sites

determined to be Mississippian do belong to the large, general category of Mississippian, each site has its own individualized characteristics particular to that site. A multitude of human-influenced and naturally-influenced factors can be a part of these individualities.

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Work Experience
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Presentations
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