

THE FORT OF THE NATCHEZ

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Honors Thesis
Curriculum in Archaeology
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2014

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ABSTRACT**Brandon Prickett: The Fort of the Natchez
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This thesis examines a collection of artifacts taken from a site in Sicily Island, Louisiana that is thought to have been the location of the historic 1731 battle between French settlers and the Natchez Indians. The battle is thought of by many to have been the beginning of the end for the Natchez nation and represents an important moment in the history of the Lower Mississippi Valley. By combining cartographic, historic, and archaeological evidence, the site at Sicily Island is shown to be the likeliest candidate for the location of the battle.

The discussion of this battle has often revolved around ambiguities within the maps of the French campaign against the Natchez. This thesis seeks to explain these ambiguities and uses these maps to support the idea that the Sicily Island site is the location of the battle. In addition to this, ten burials found at the site are described in detail, with drawings of how the burials were arranged and pictures of the artifacts found at each burial. The artifacts associated with these burials are consistent with what one would expect as the site of the 1731 battle and are very similar to other 18th century Natchez sites, such as the Fatherland site (Neitzel 1965).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First off I would like to thank the Michael P. And Jean W. Carter Research Award Fund for providing money for me to go see the artifacts that I describe in this thesis. A large thank you is due to my family who traveled with me all the way to Louisiana to see the site at Sicily Island. Another large thank you goes to Joseph V. "Smokey" Frank III for being my guide while I was there and for driving me to the site at Sicily Island from Natchez. Amanda Hayes was an invaluable help towards the project, without whom the photo editing and formatting of my thesis would have taken a much longer amount of time. My thesis committee members, Kathleen DuVal and Brett Riggs, gave insight towards the project that I could not have done without, and for that I am grateful. And then, of course, the man who found these artifacts and allowed me to research them, Jack Shaffer. He was an excellent host and was extremely informative and inviting when I visited him at his home last December, and for that I am extremely thankful. Finally I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Vin Steponaitis, who first presented me with the opportunity to study this particular site and who has had an immense impact on my interest in Archaeology ever since I took his introductory class. Without Vin's guidance (and his extreme patience), this thesis could not have been what it eventually became.

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

The Natchez Indians have been a matter of discussion and debate ever since the French first came in contact with them. The Natchez, after years of conflict with the Europeans who settled near them, sealed their own demise when they made a decisive blow against the French. In 1731 the French retaliated in a battle that was later seen as the beginning of the end for the Natchez nation.

The archaeological collection discussed here was found at a site in Sicily Island, Louisiana. The small town of Sicily Island has long been thought to be the location of the 1731 battle. Artifacts at the site were uncovered in the late 1980's, shortly before the site's destruction. Had the artifacts not been found when they were, this material evidence would have surely been lost.

The following is not only a description of how and why the Natchez were forced to leave their homeland, but also a discussion of why Sicily Island is most likely where they retreated to. Both the artifact collection presented and the historical sources discussed here agree that the Sicily Island site was the location of the historic 1731 battle, making these artifacts an important addition to our understanding of the Lower Mississippi Valley at that time.

The History of the Natchez

The Natchez people were first written about in 1682, when the French explorer Robert de La Salle came across their village on the lower Mississippi River. The Natchez did not immediately welcome this stranger and the band of Europeans who were with him, but instead lined the shore with "bow and arrow in hand" (Tonti in Swanton 1911:187). La Salle was quick

to seek peace with the Natchez, and, after smoking the calumet (a ceremonial pipe) with their leaders, was welcomed into the village (Swanton 1911:187).

It was 17 years later before any Europeans would write of their encounters with the Natchez again. Catholic missionaries, François de Montigny and Albert Davion, came to the Natchez village on June 12th, 1699 and established a relationship with the people there. The two missionaries had traveled to the area from other French settlements to the North in order to manage their missions farther to the south among the Taensa and Tunica (Swanton 1911:190). A year later Montigny returned to the Natchez and baptized 185 of their infants. That same year a French naval officer, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville made an alliance with the Natchez by means of the calumet (Swanton 1911:190). Various other Europeans visited the area during this time, including Andre Penicaut, who would go on to write about his experiences with the Natchez (Swanton 1911:192).

The first permanent French post at the Natchez village was established in 1713, and consisted of 12 men. This post was principally made to aid in commercial endeavors but would have also served as an attempt to keep English settlers from creating a permanent settlement near the Natchez. Despite these intentions, Penicaut reported three Englishmen living among the Natchez the year the post was made. This struggle between England and France for the New World was a continual source of conflict in the area; however the Natchez had avoided any major conflicts with the Europeans thus far (Swanton 1911:193).

Unfortunately for the Natchez, this peace did not last long. In 1714, four Natchez men were hired by four Frenchmen to help them canoe up the Mississippi River. According to Penicaut, the Natchez waited for the Frenchmen to fall asleep and then killed and robbed their unsuspecting employers. This was the first of several events that led to what would eventually be

called the First Natchez War (Swanton 1911:193). After these four murders, another group of Frenchmen were attempting to carry trade goods north with eight Natchez in their employ. This expedition was cut short when the Indians they were employing warned them that 150 Natchez men were waiting to ambush them farther north on the Mississippi (Swanton 1911:194).

The French post near the Natchez was quickly abandoned and the news of the violence was brought to Mobile. There, a French officer named Jean-Baptiste de Bienville, assembled a small punitive force to avenge those who were killed by the Indians. The force consisted of just 34 soldiers and 15 sailors, while the Natchez had, according to Penicaut, “at least 800 men” (Swanton 1911:197). Despite his lack of brute force, Bienville was able to trick the Natchez chiefs into becoming his hostages, allowing him to demand punishment for the men who committed the murders against the French (Swanton 1911:198). Although not all of the men that Bienville considered to be guilty for the murders were punished, he elected to release most of his prisoners on the condition that they would assist the French in constructing a fort near the Natchez villages (Swanton 1911:203). This fort was finished on August 3rd, 1716 and was named Fort Rosalie (Swanton 1911:204).

A year later, John Law’s Company of the West gained control of trade in France’s American colonies, and a new wave of French immigrants began to settle the Lower Mississippi Valley (Barnett 2007:76-78). The increased amount of interaction between the Natchez and the White settlers that were now flooding into the area correlated with an increase of conflict between the two groups. Two major conflicts became known as the Second and Third Natchez wars.

The Second Natchez war began when, in 1722, an old Natchez man was not able to pay a debt to a French soldier. According to Antoine-Simon Le Page Du Pratz, a Dutch settler living

near Fort Rosalie at the time, the Natchez man was asking for more time to pay back his debt because the corn crop was not yet ready (Swanton 1911:207). The soldier found this unacceptable and ended up fatally shooting the Natchez man out of anger. When the soldier's superior officer found out about the murder, the culprit was given no punishment other than a reprimand. To avenge the old man's death, the Natchez began to attack and kill the French settlers. This conflict went on for three or four days until one of the Natchez chiefs, called Tattooed Serpent¹ was asked by the fort's commandant to calm the other Natchez (Swanton 1911:208). This chief was successful and the Natchez smoked the calumet of peace with the French leaders (Swanton 1911:209).

The cause of the Third Natchez war is less certain than that of its predecessor. Jean-François-Benjamin Dumont de Montigny, a French officer, wrote that the Natchez were killing French livestock; Du Pratz wrote that the French attack on the Natchez was unprovoked (Swanton 1911:211, 215). Whatever the cause, the French campaign in the fall of 1723 was swift and without mercy. According to Du Pratz, Bienville led 700 men against the Natchez, and for four days he killed their men and enslaved their women. The Tattooed Serpent was able to negotiate a peace with the French in exchange for the deaths of two enemies of the French who were living with the Natchez. One of these enemies was a Natchez chief named Old Hair (Swanton 1911:215).

The chief known as Tattooed Serpent was often a calming factor when the Natchez and French were in conflict (Swanton 1911:149), although his assistance in peacekeeping could not last forever. On June 2, 1725 he died of natural causes, leaving the French and the Natchez without the mediator they had relied upon in years past (Swanton 1911:150). The relationship between the two groups was further aggravated when a new officer was placed in command of

¹ The title of Tattooed Serpent seems to be a political office rather than an individual's name.

Fort Rosalie. The officer, Sieur Chopart, was described by Dumont as “being a tyrant over them, ill treating all those whom he suspected of not being his friends, ... and always making the balance incline toward those whom he wished to gratify” (Dumont 1853:62). If this was true, then Chopart did not wish to gratify the Natchez. Shortly after assuming his position as commandant of the fort, Chopart demanded land from the Natchez, wanting to turn their land into a plantation for his slaves to farm (Dumont 1853:65). Both Dumont and Du Pratz pointed towards this move on the part of Chopart as one of the causes of the uprising that followed (Swanton 1911:222).

The reasons for the Natchez uprising have been discussed ever since the event took place. Some sources state that the uprising was part of a larger, organized attack on the French by an alliance of Indian nations (Swanton 1911:224). However, the Natchez themselves had many reasons to attack their European neighbors. The Third Natchez war, for instance, had caused the Natchez to execute one of their own chiefs as punishment for nothing more than the deaths of French livestock (Swanton 1911:220). There was also no longer a diplomat like Tattooed Serpent, meaning that when Chopart caused conflict, there was no one to negotiate a peaceful resolution.

On November 28, 1729, a group of Natchez went to Fort Rosalie under the pretense of joining Chopart for a hunting expedition. Once a large number of the Natchez were within the fort's walls, they attacked the unsuspecting French. Everywhere in the settlement, the Natchez ambushed their neighbors killing at least 150 people in a single day. Women and children were taken as slaves and the entire outpost was raided so that the Natchez feasted for days after the attack (Le Petit 1730:167-171). There were only about 20 people who were able to escape

(Swanton 1911: 226), some making it back to New Orleans and bringing word of the uprising to the French government (Gayarre 1854:420; Dumont 1853:84).

The French immediately began to increase defenses at all their posts and sent out a punitive force to take back Fort Rosalie (Le Petit 1730:187). On January 27th, 1730 the French forces arrived near the fort and attacked the Natchez (Le Petit 1730:189). The Natchez then moved into two forts (named Fort Valeur and Fort Farine by the French). Both of these forts had been constructed in the months since the uprising and demonstrated the skill that the Natchez had in fort making (Swanton 1911:237). Facing such a well-fortified enemy led the French to seek peace. The Natchez demanded that the European forces retreat away from the forts and, in exchange, the Indians would release their hostages. The French agreed, and after releasing their prisoners the Natchez escaped across the Mississippi River (Gayarre 1854:433). There they continued northwest, hiding from their aggressors and eventually settling in the area now known as Sicily Island, Louisiana (Swanton 1911:242-243).

Over the next year, the conflict between the Natchez and French continued. With the French remaining ignorant of their location, the Natchez were free to attack European posts along the River with impunity (Swanton 1911:243). Two such attacks resulted in French casualties. On December 9, 1730, Perier, the governor of the Louisiana colony, led a group of French marines north along the Mississippi to find where the Natchez were and to put an end to their attacks (Perier in Green 1936:552). Perier was joined by European and Indian inhabitants of the area, until his forces exceeded 500 men (Swanton 1911:244).

Perier was still unaware of the exact location of the Natchez, but with the help of a Tunica chief, he knew enough information to find them (Perier 1730:121). Perier's army moved up the Mississippi, then the Red River, the Black River, and the Tensas until they were within

just a league of the new Natchez settlement. This path, which has been a matter of some debate, is discussed more in Chapter 3. On January 20th, 1731, Perier's forces discovered the Natchez at Sicily Island. The Natchez had built a new fort at the location, which Perier called Fort Valeur, perhaps referencing the forts that were built near the original Natchez village (Perier in Green 1936:553).

Upon discovering the Natchez, Perier divided his forces and surrounded the Natchez fort on all sides. Over the next four days, the French laid siege to the fort, showering the Natchez with grenades and cannon fire. On January 23rd, the Natchez lost a redoubt on the outer edge of the village area, providing the French with an even stronger advantage. Two days later a white flag was raised over the Natchez fort and they attempted to negotiate peace with Perier. The French governor refused to negotiate unless all of the Natchez chiefs came out to his camp, which was situated just southwest of the fort (Perier in Green 1936:555).

When the chiefs finally agreed to meet with Perier, he captured the three of them and demanded that the Natchez surrender. Around 235 Natchez surrendered and left the fort after their chiefs were taken captive as slaves. That night, one of the chiefs was able to escape and gather the remaining Natchez from within the fort. The chief convinced his few remaining subjects to leave with him in the cover of night. It had been raining for some time which likely assisted these Natchez as they escaped through the woods, unheeded by their enemies (Swanton 1911:246-247).

Individuals who had been enslaved at Sicily Island were eventually taken to Santo Domingo in the Caribbean (Charlevoix in Swanton 1911:249). The rest of the Natchez continued to attack the French and other Indians, and eventually became scattered throughout the Southeast. The Natchez who were still free divided into three main groups: some stayed in hiding

near the location of their original villages, others settled on the banks of the Mississippi near the Yazoo River, and the largest group took shelter with another Indian group: the Chickasaw (Gayarre 1854:459). From these locations, the Natchez eventually found their way to living with the Catawba, Cherokee, and Creek Indians. There were some Natchez living with the Creek and possibly still speaking the language of the Natchez as late as 1890 (Swanton 1911:254). The Natchez who settled with the Cherokee intermarried and were eventually assimilated into that tribe (but remained a distinct entity through the 19th century). There were a small number of Cherokee Natchez who could speak the Natchez language as late as 1907 (Swanton 1911:256), and their language was recorded by linguists in the early 20th century before going extinct (Swanton 1911:257).

CHAPTER 2: CARTOGRAPHY

The events described in the previous chapter involved the movement of peoples and armies within the Lower Mississippi Valley. The present chapter seeks to illustrate the geographic space in which these events took place, as well as to support the idea that the artifacts discussed in the subsequent chapters were from the site of the historic battle between Perier's forces and the Natchez. By illustrating the path that Perier took to the Natchez fort and showing how the settlement at the fort site ought to have been arranged, this idea can be solidly supported.

For nearly two months, Governor Perier marched his army to Sicily Island, where the Natchez had escaped (Perier in Green 1936:552-554). The path that he took and the final destination of his campaign have been debated and misrepresented since the battle took place. The following maps suggest that Perier led his soldiers from the Mississippi, to the Red River, up the Black River, and then along the Tensas, until finally they found the Natchez living in Sicily Island. As discussed below, it would seem that a militia contingent of the army might have also taken a separate path, curving back towards the current town of Natchez, and then joining Perier at Sicily Island.

When questioning how the French army came to find the Natchez at Sicily Island, John A. Green's 1936 article, "Governor Perier's Expedition Against the Natchez Indians" is a priceless asset. In it Green summarizes the multiple theories that have been put forward about where the Natchez built their final fort as well as what path the French army took to arrive at the location. After dismissing less credible theories, Green discusses the possibility that the Natchez made their settlement in what is now known as Sicily Island, Louisiana.

It was the general opinion of the Sicily Island citizenry that some sort of battle took place there. Green presents several letters written by inhabitants of the area discussing this possibility, some even suggesting that it was the 1731 battle between the Natchez and the French (Green 1936:565-567). Green's primary piece of evidence for this theory rests in a map that is now in France's *Service historique de la Défense* (recueil 68, no. 64), and was formerly found in the *Bibliothèque de la Service hydrographique*. This map, entitled *Route de l'Armée* in its legend, shows the path of Perier's army from New Orleans to the fort of the Natchez. By comparing the map to modern geography, Green was able to show that Sicily Island is almost certainly the location of the Natchez battle. There are three manuscript copies of the *Route de l'Armée* map, as well as a fourth map that Green did not have access to that shows the route of Perier's army. These four maps are discussed and compared below.

Maps of the Army's Route

The most detailed version of the *Route de l'Armée* map is stored in the *Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer* (Route Map 1; catalog number 04DFC 45B). This map is likely the closest copy of the original *Route de l'Armée* map, if not the original itself. A summary of the differences between the three *Route de l'Armée* maps can be seen in Table 1. Green did not have access to Route Map 1. A photograph of the manuscript can be seen in Figure 1. The characteristic that makes this copy most unique is its detailed depiction of the Sicily Island Fort Area. This area of Route Map 1, when compared to a map of the fort area (such as the map in Figure 10), reveals itself to be a fairly accurate source on not only the army's path to Sicily Island, but also the Natchez fort that was found there.

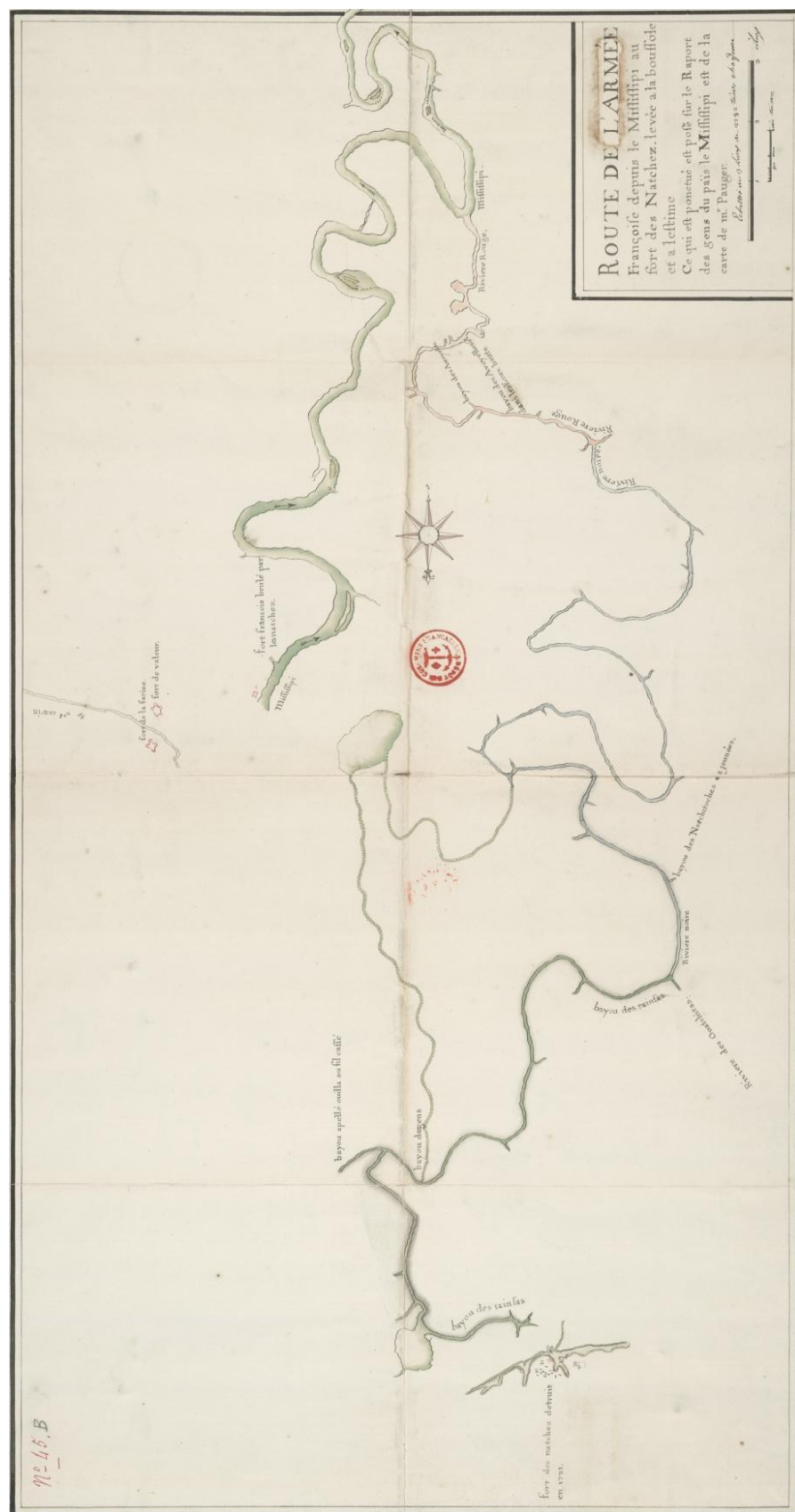


Figure 1. Route Map 1. Perier's route from New Orleans to the Natchez fort in Sicily Island, Louisiana. Another path, branching off from the Black River, is shown with a dotted line. Found in *Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer* (Catalog Number 04DFC 45B).

Table 1. Comparison of *Route de l'Armee* Maps

	Route Map 1	Route Map 2	Route Map 3
Dotted Lines used for <i>Bayou d'Argent</i>	X		X
Details about the Fort at Sicily Island	X		
Unnamed river between Black River and <i>Bayou des Avoyelles</i>	X		X

The next map is found in the *Service Historique de la Défense, département Marine* (Route Map 2; recueil 69, no. 63) and can be seen in Figure 2. This map is the least detailed of the three available manuscript copies and is also not the manuscript to which Green had access to. Route Map 2 not only lacks a detailed depiction of the fort area, but is also missing two details that Route Map 1 includes. The first of these is an unnamed river that connects to the Red River in between its intersection with the Black River and where it passes through the *Bayou des Avoyelles*. Although this detail is subtle, and largely unimportant to the map's overall purpose, it could be an indicator of the fact that Route Map 2 is a later copy of the *Route de l'Armee* map than Route Map 1. In addition to this, Route Map 2, unlike Route Map 1 and Route Map 3 (discussed below), uses a solid line to mark the *Bayou d'Argent*. The legend for these three maps, according to a translation by Green, describes this bayou as being marked in a "dotted" manner (1936: 572). Route Map 1 and Route Map 3 use a dotted line, as suggested by the legend. This again suggests that Route Map 2 is not the earliest copy of the map.

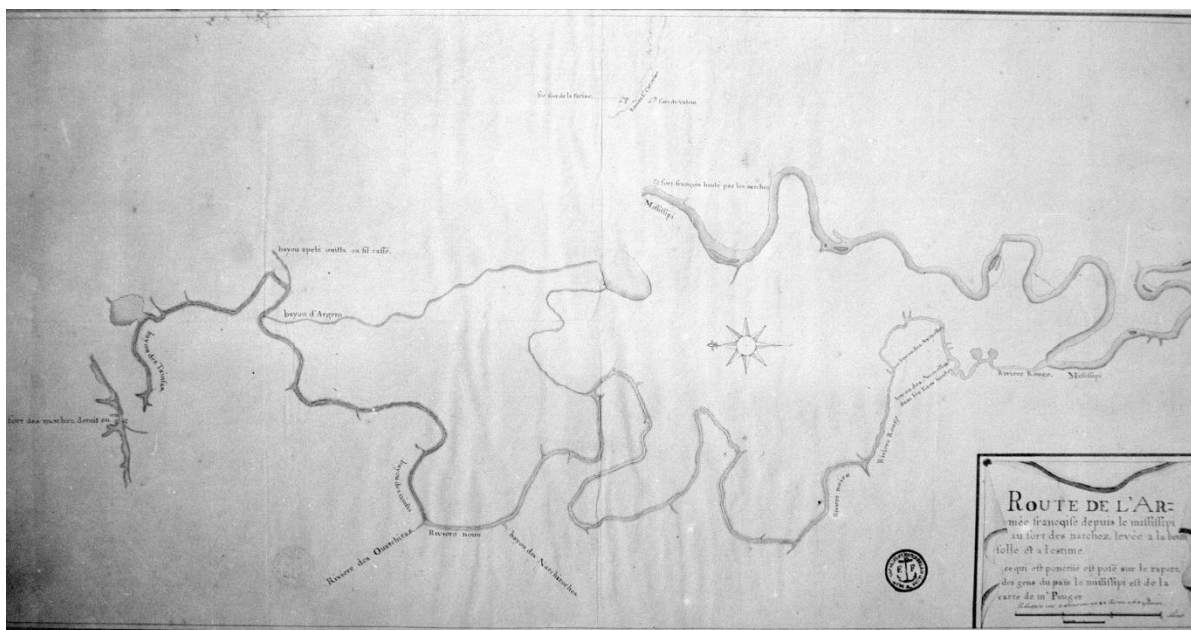


Figure 2. Route Map 2. Perier's route from New Orleans to the Natchez fort in Sicily Island, Louisiana. Another path, branching off from the Black River, is shown with a solid line. Found in *Service Historique de la Défense, département Marine* (recueil 69, no. 63).

The manuscript used by Green (Route Map 3; recueil 68, no. 64) was also from the *Service Historique de la Défense, département Marine* and can be seen in Figure 3. Route Map 3 is more detailed than Route Map 2, but lacks the detailed depiction of the Sicily Island fort area that makes Route Map 1 unique. Apart from this specific detail, Route Map 3 also seems to be a later copy because of the format in which it is presented. Rather than standing alone as its own map, Route Map 3 is the lower half of a manuscript that includes another map (which is discussed more below) in addition to Route Map 3. This conjoined nature of Route Map 3 suggests that it was also a copy made later than Route Map 1.

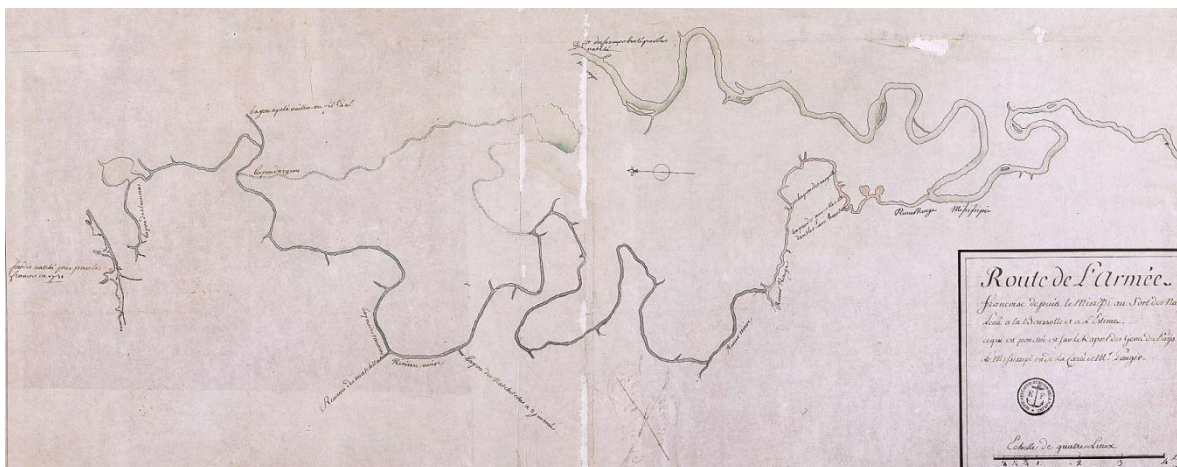


Figure 3. Route Map 3. Perier's route from New Orleans to the Natchez fort in Sicily Island, Louisiana. Another path, branching off from the Black River, is shown with a dotted line. Found in *Bibliothèque de la Service Historique de la Défense, département Marine* (recueil 68, no. 64). Originally drawn with a map of the fort at Sicily Island above it.

Another manuscript that Green did not have to assist in his analysis is the *Carte du Cours du Fleuve S. Louis, Depvis son Embouchure Jusqu'au Poste des Natchez Rivieres Rouge, R. Noire, et des Taencas*, presented in Figure 4 (Route Map 4; catalog number GE SH 18 PF 138 BIS DIV 3 P 10). This map resides in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Division du Fonds du Service Hydrographique de la Marine* and further illuminates the exact route that was taken by Perier on his hunt for the Natchez. On the map, dates are indicated for each day of the French army's journey towards Sicily Island. A close comparison of the map with Perier's own account of the campaign testifies to the map's accuracy.

Figure 5 shows a tracing of the map with numbered circles representing every point at which Perier's account gives a location and a date. Table 2 shows each excerpt that corresponds with the numbered points and upon examination proves that at each point in the map's dating system is synchronized with Perier's personal account of the troop movements.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 5. Route Map 4. Entitled *Carte du Cours du Fleuve S. Louis, Depvis son Embouchure Jusqu'au Poste des Natchez Rivieres Rouge, R. Noire, et des Teancas*. Perier's route from New Orleans to the Natchez fort in Sicily Island, Louisiana. Dates are marked that correspond to the French Army's movements. Found in *Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Division du Fonds du Service Hydrographique de la Marine* (Catalog number GE SH 18 PF 138 BIS DIV 3 P 10).

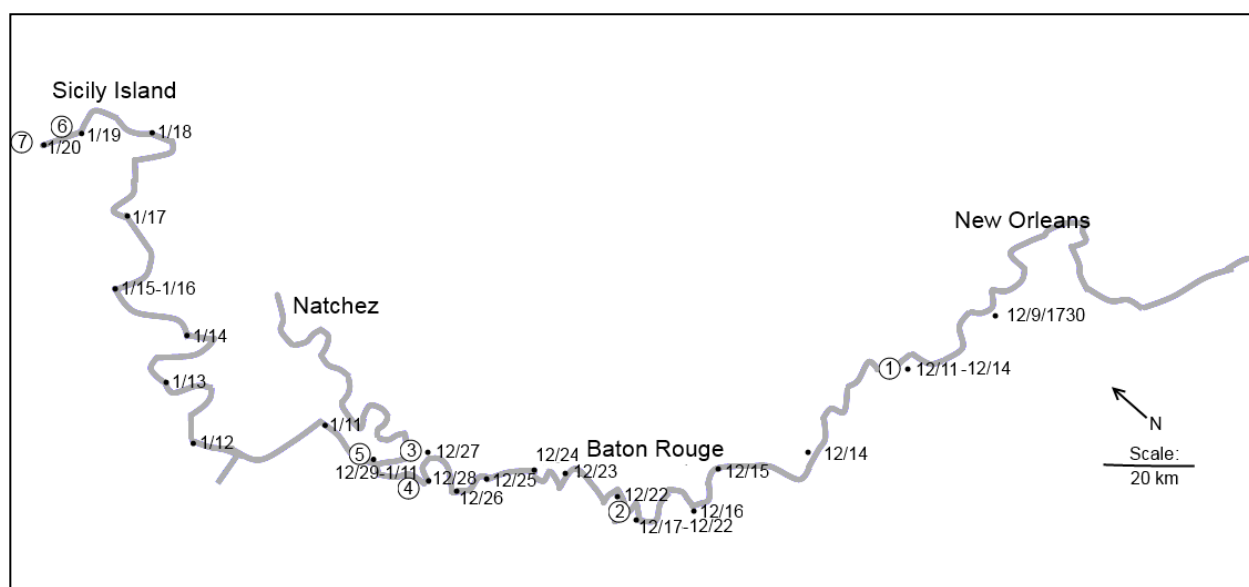


Figure 5. A tracing of Route Map 4 with dates typed and points that coordinate with Perier's account marked with numbered circles. See Table 2 for excerpts that correspond with the numbering.

Table 2. Excerpts From Perier Corresponding with Figure 3 (Green 1936)

Key for map	Quotations from Perier for Route Map 4	Page Number
1	“as it [the army] left the 9th of December, with a battalion of Marines with orders to wait for me at the village of Carlesten.”	552
2	“...Bayagoulas, from which I left only on the 22nd, the large vessels not having been able to join me sooner.”	552
3	“...my brother, who joined me in spite of the snow and ice at the Tunicas on the 27th.”	553
4	“The 28th, I had my brother to continue the march almost to the mouth of Red River.”	553
5	“...we were to attack them by Red River, from which we all left the 11th [of January] to find the enemy.”	553
6	“...we arrived on the 19th at exactly one league from the Fort Valeur.”	553
7	“It was not until the 20th...they were on a beaten path to the fort.”	554

The Dotted Lines

In addition to the Red-Black-Tensas path, there is another path marked in dotted lines that branches off of the Black River in the *Route de l'Armee* maps (Route Maps 1-3). This is the route that was described above as being a detail listed in the legend of the map. At the time that Green wrote his analysis, there was a “system of large connecting bayous approximately on the course of this dotted line” (Green 1936:570) in the Lower Mississippi Valley; however these bayous would not have been practical for Perier’s entire army to navigate (Green 1936:571). Green thought that the *Route de l'Armee* map’s cartographer did “not purport to show that Perier's army actually traversed the course of this dotted line; but ...[the dotted line] indicates, rather, the route that the natives suggested should be taken” (Green 1936:572). This was based partly on Green’s translation of the map’s legend which read “That which is dotted is from the

report of the natives of the country; the Mississippi is from the map of M. Pauger.” (Green 1936:572)

With Route Map 4 as an aid, a more likely reason for the dotted line in the *Route de l’Armee* maps becomes apparent. The place at which the two paths diverge is near the January 14th date marked on Route Map 4. Perier’s account states that near this point in the campaign, part of the French army separated from the rest of the group. The men that split apart were described by Perier as *les habitants* “the inhabitants” (Perier in Green 1936:553) and were likely a militia of Frenchmen that now lived in the Louisiana. Perier says that he sent these militiamen towards the original site of the Natchez village (labeled as “Natchez” in Figure 5) in order to trick any Natchez scouts who might have been spying on the Frenchmen. This happened around the 11th of January (Perier in Green 1936:553). If these local militiamen were to leave from where the army was on the 11th (at the mouth of the Red River) the best way to travel to Natchez would be by the path marked with a dotted line in the *Route de l’Armee* maps. Figure 6 illustrates how well the dotted lines fit in with Route Map 4’s illustration of the troop movements.

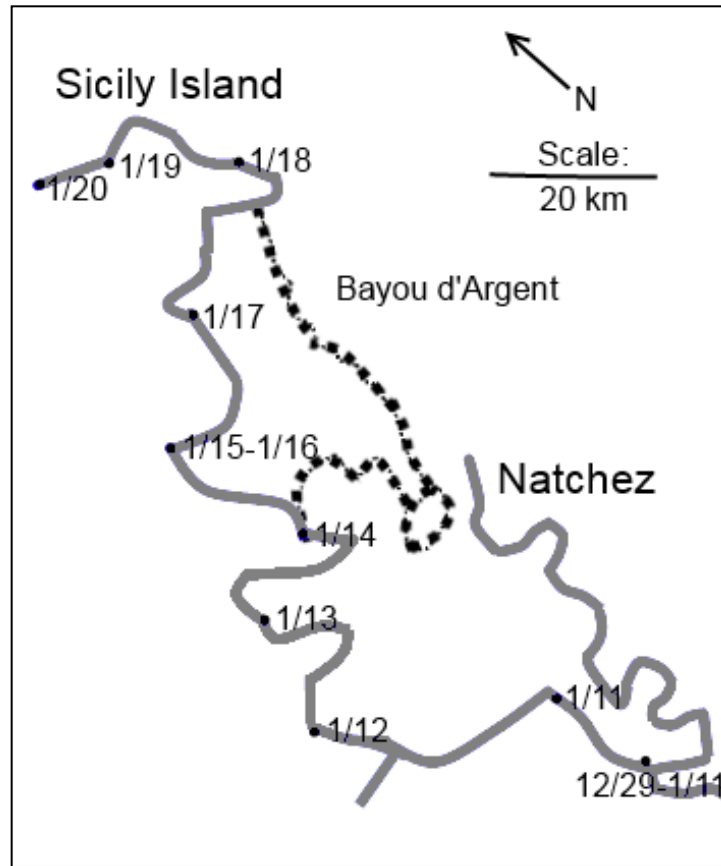


Figure 6. Northern section of Route Map 4 tracing, with a tracing of the “dotted line” path inserted from the *Route de l’Armée* maps.

Green’s concern over this waterway not being able to support Perier’s army is solved since the group travelling through this path would have been nothing more than a small contingent of militiamen. Green’s translation of the legend could be altered slightly to match this theory as well. The phrase that he translates into “natives of the country” was *gens du pays*. Here *du pays* means “of the country” and *gens* likely means “people.” Often the word *sauvages* was used by the French to describe Indians, so the phrase *gens du pays* suggests a separate group of people from the American Indians who were traveling with the French army. Instead, the phrase could have been used to mean the French inhabitants that Perier sent separately from the group. Then the translation would read: “That which is dotted is from the report of the [French]

inhabitants of the country; the Mississippi is from the map of M. Pauger” (Kathleen Duval, personal communication, 2013). Since the inhabitants were not professional soldiers, they would have likely lacked an engineer with the skills to make an actual map of where they went. This meant that when Perier’s professional mapmaker wanted to chronicle the campaign, he would be combining a professionally surveyed map with an amateur description and would need to mark the difference between the two — hence the dotted lines.

Maps of the Fort at Sicily Island

Figures 7 through 11 show five different map manuscripts of the Natchez fort at Sicily Island. Fort Map 1 (Figure 7; recueil 68, no. 64) is from the *Service Historique de la Défense, département Marine* and is the upper half of Route Map 3 (described above). Fort Map 2 and Fort Map 3 (Figures 8 and 9; catalog numbers 04DFC 33A and F3 290 8bs, respectively) are both from the *Archives Nationales d’Outre-mer* and are very similar each other at a cursory glance. Only minor details reveal the difference between the two, such as the style of illustration used for the trees. Fort Map 4 (Figure 10; Vd 21 (3) Fol) is from the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* and is discussed at length below. Fort Map 5 (Figure 11; Caillot 2013) is unique in that the person who copied it is not unknown. It is the only one of the maps that can be attributed to a specific individual, Marc-Antoine Caillot.



Figure 7. Fort Map 1. A rendition of the fort area without much detail, originally drawn above the SHD2 map. in *Service Historique de la Défense, département Marine* (recueil 68, no. 64).

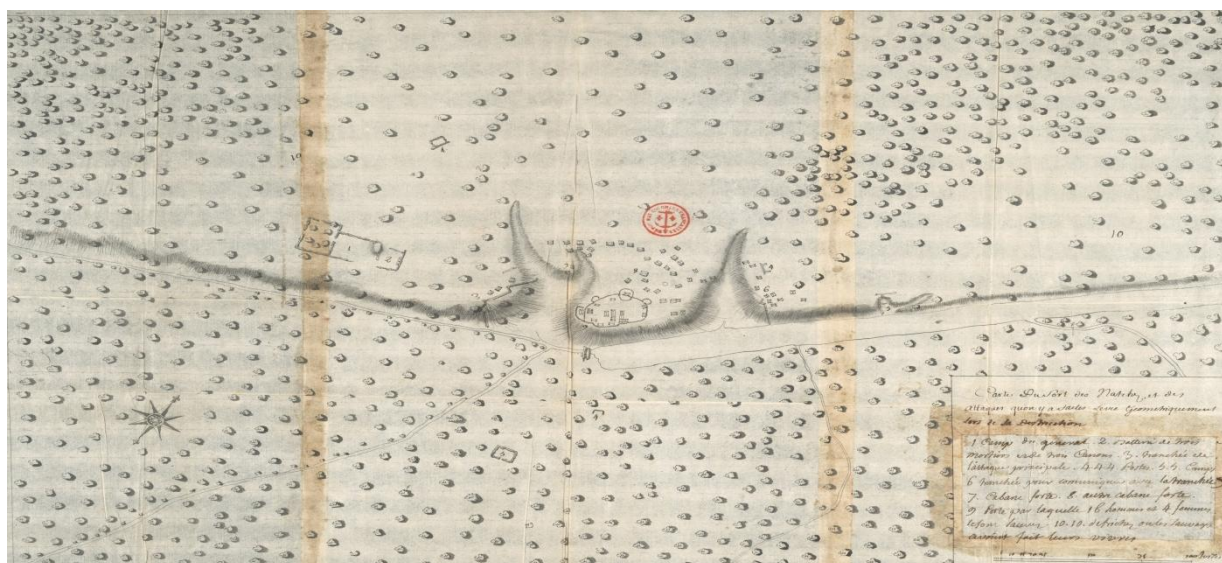


Figure 8. Fort Map 2. A rendition of the fort area without much detail. Found in the *Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer* (Catalog number 04DFC 33A).

[illegible]

Figure 10. Fort Map 4. The most detailed map of the fort area. Found in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Estampes* (Vd 21 (3) Fol).

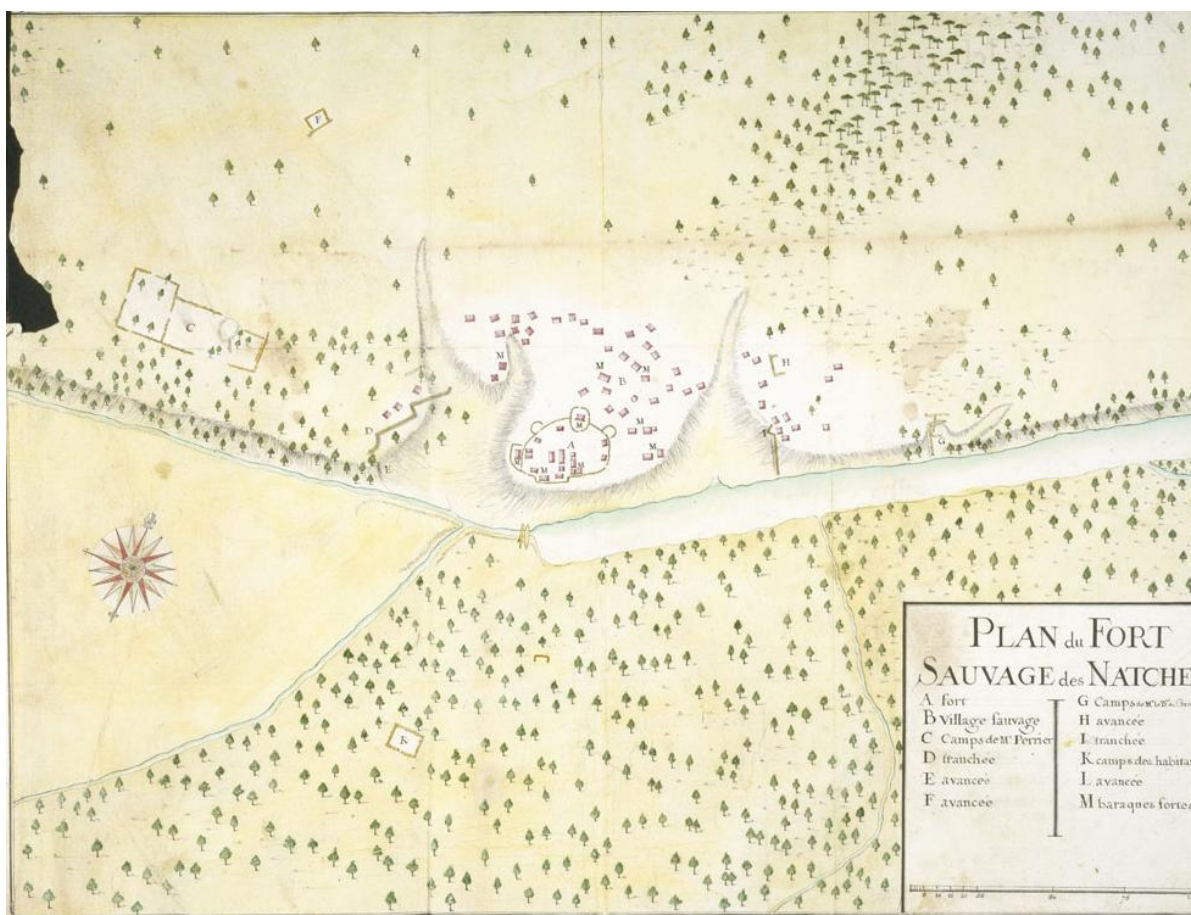


Figure 11. Fort Map 5. A rendition of the fort area without much detail. Marc-Antoine Caillot created this copy and it is entitled "Relation du Voyage de la Louisianne ou Nouvelle France fait par Sr. Caillot en l'Annee 1730." Found in the Historic New Orleans Collection (catalog number MSS 596; reproduced in Caillot 2013).

All five of the maps indicate the fort itself near the center of the map. The fort is shown to be standing on a raised area, near a small lake. Two ravines are located on either side of the fort, making it an advantageous location to defend. Houses (called *cases fortes* “fortified structures” by the maps’ legends) surround the fort, and were likely where the Natchez lived in the time before the French attacked. Perier’s base is to the west of the Fort and other outposts are scattered around the area (belonging both to the French and to the Indians allied with the French).

Each of these maps has minor differences, but Fort Map 4 (Figure 10) stands out from the rest. Fort Map 4 has more details than any of the others—including paths marked out where Perier and one of his officers, the General Commandant Salvart, led their troops. Two other paths marked on Fort Map 4 are a line of communication for the French army and a dotted line showing the path that the Natchez took in their escape. Figure 12 shows a simplified version of Fort Map 4, with emphasis on the historical details it contains. Since the other fort maps lack any indication of the paths, they are likely later copies than Fort Map 4. This becomes even more certain when one compares other details from Fort Map 4 (discussed below) to the written sources of the battle.

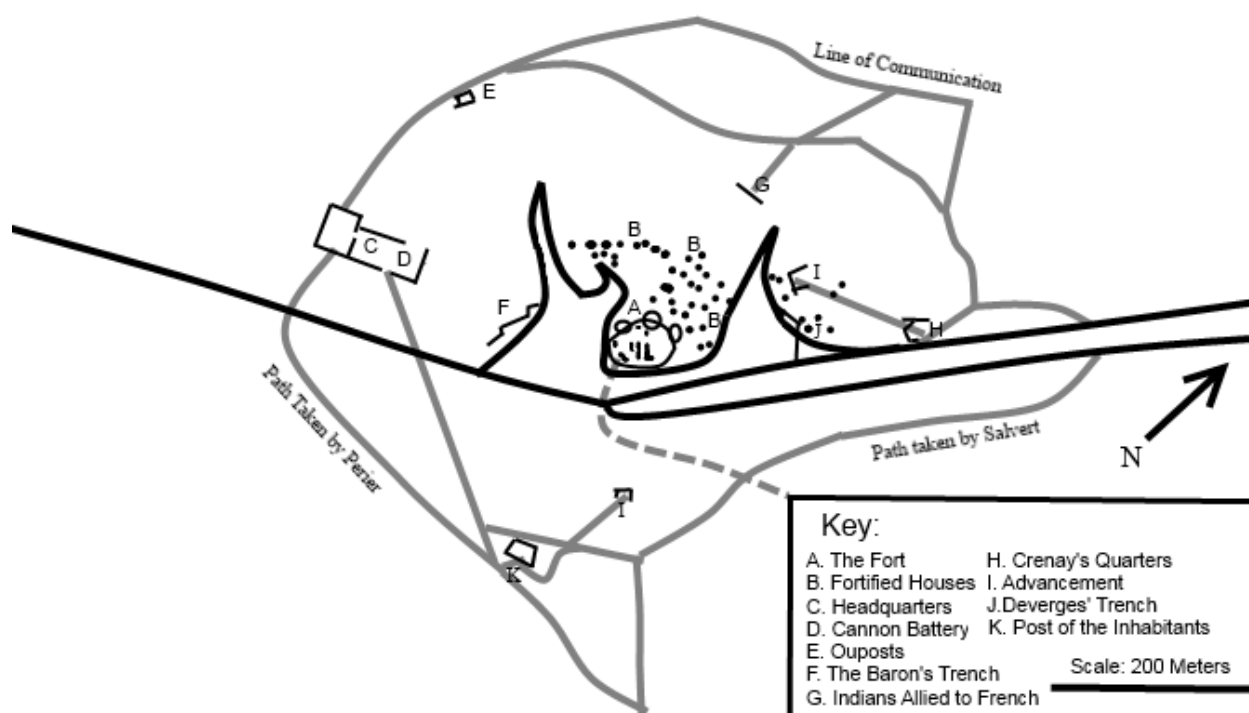


Figure 12. A simplified version of Fort Map 4 (Figure 10). Paths used by the French are in grey. The path used by the Natchez to escape is shown with a grey dotted line.

Perier details his troop movements, saying that Salvert “marched by the right with a party of troops, and I marched by the left” (Perier in Green 1936:554) which matches up with the paths on the map. Figure 12 shows that, approaching from the southeast (as the army would have done), Perier’s path would have led to the left and Salvert’s would have gone to the right. Perier also describes the location of the Baron de Creñay, one of his commanding officers, as being on the opposite side as Salvert (Perier in Green 1936:555). An additional piece of evidence for the map comes from Charlevoix, another writer who recorded the events of the campaign.

Charlevoix describes the path that the Natchez took to escape as “between the quarter of the militia and that of Baron de Cresnay” (Charlevoix in Swanton 1911:247). The dotted line on Figure 12 runs directly through the areas marked “Post of the Inhabitants” (the “inhabitants” were likely Frenchmen living in Louisiana that made up the militia) and “Cresnay’s Quarters,” just as Charlevoix described the exodus of the Natchez. The rich amount of detail and the support of historical sources make Fort Map 4 the likeliest candidate for being closest to the original manuscript.

In summary, the four route maps illuminate that path and destination that Perier took to find the Natchez fort. Route Map 4 is particularly illuminating because of its annotations that mark the dates of Perier’s journey. Using Route Map 4, the ambiguous dotted line in the other Route Maps (1-3) is made clearer. The fort maps are made clearer by Fort Map 4 which illustrates the Natchez fort with much more detail than the others—details which are verified by historical sources and which point to Fort Map 4 being the closest of these copies to the original.

CHAPTER 3: SITE INVESTIGATIONS

The artifacts to be discussed here were all found by Jack Shaffer in Sicily Island, Louisiana in an area near the corner of Ditto and Gamble Road. The area is now plowed farmland, as can be seen in Figure 13, and has been used for this purpose since the 19th century (Green 1936:565).



Figure 13. A photograph of the Natchez fort site at Sicily Island, taken in December of 2013.

Although surface collecting has occurred on the property for over a hundred years (Green 1936:566), Shaffer was the first person to retrieve any artifacts from below the ground's surface. The land's owner gave Shaffer permission for this and informed him that the surface of the soil would be scraped away shortly after Shaffer first showed interest in the site. Although the land appears to have been plowed somewhat before, due to broken pottery, guns, and possibly damaged skulls (discussed more below), this new damage could have meant the destruction of all of the fort's archaeological remains. After urging the land owner to give local universities an

opportunity to excavate to no avail, Shaffer decided to retrieve artifacts from the site by himself (Shaffer, personal communication, 2013). He proceeded to uncover ten burials as well as many other artifacts throughout the site, taking detailed notes and creating labeled, near-life-sized sketches of each burial as he went. The artifacts remain in his personal collection.

In February of 2009, Vin Steponaitis was able to take pictures of the collection. In the summer of 2013, I was given the pictures Steponaitis took and began researching the Sicily Island battle. In the winter of 2013 I traveled to Louisiana to physically examine the artifacts, discuss them with Shaffer, and take pictures of my own. The figures in this thesis that depict the artifacts are a combination of the pictures taken by myself and Steponaitis (Figures 28-51 and 54-57). In addition to being able to talk with Shaffer about the artifacts, I had the opportunity to take a large number of his notes home with me for further study. The pictures taken by Steponaitis as well as a digital copy of Shaffer's notes are currently on file at the Research Laboratories of Archaeology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Site Plan

Figure 14 is an illustration of the site area, showing areas in which Shaffer describes the artifacts to be "concentrated" in a map that he created of the site. These areas of concentration, in general, correlate with where one would expect to find historically important areas of the site, such as the Natchez Fort or Perier's command post. The concentrated areas are overlaid on an aerial image of the site in Figure 14. The overlay was accomplished by lining up certain geographic features and Ditto Road from topographic information in Shaffer's map onto the aerial imagery. Figure 15 shows the tracing of Fort Map 4 from Figure 12 overlaid onto the map from Figure 14. Locations labeled by the cartographer on Fort Map 4 that correspond to areas of

artifact concentration include the Natchez fort, Perier's base, the Baron's trench, and a French outpost (Figure 15). Ten burials were found in the area of the Natchez fort (labeled "A" in Figure 15). The next section will discuss these burials and Shaffer's drawings in more detail. Figures 16 and 17 show the burials' relative location and distribution within the site.



Figure 14. A tracing from a map showing areas of artifact "concentration" (in grey) at the Natchez fort site. Geographic features marked on the original map are in solid black and Ditto Road (according to the original map) is marked with dotted lines. Tracing is overlaid onto a screenshot of the site on Google Earth. Original map was traced from the notes of Jack Shaffer (no scale was provided in the original; however geographic features and Ditto Road were shown. These were used to match the map up with Google Earth).



Figure 15. Figure 14 overlaid with the tracing from Fort Map 4 (Figure 12). Artifact concentration in grey, geographic features/Ditto Road in black, and Fort Map 4 in white. Fort Map 4 and Google Earth were matched up using the two ravines on either side of the fort. Areas marked on Fort Map 4 that happen to occur near areas of artifact concentration are labeled (according to the labels given in Fort Map 4): a) Natchez fort, b) the Baron's trench, c) Perier's base, d) French outpost.



Figure 16. Map of the site. Background is from Google Earth, lines are from topographic map in Shaffer's notes described above. The white star indicates the location of the burials, according to the sketches made by Shaffer.

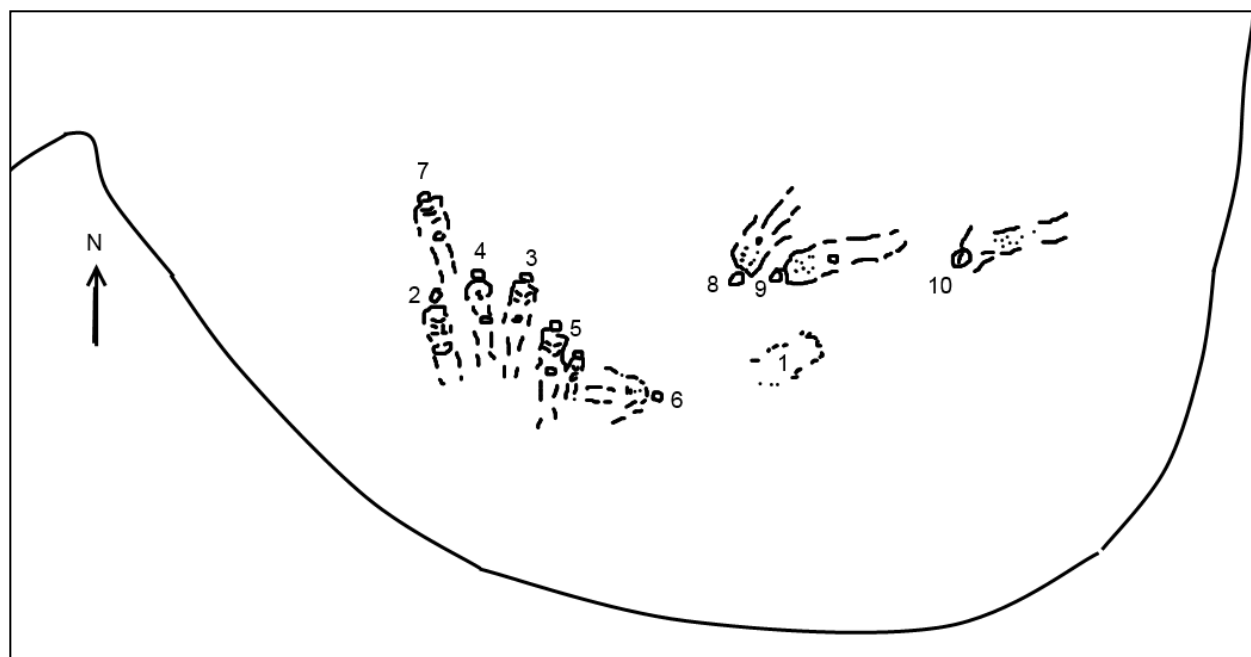


Figure 17. Distribution of burials. Numbers indicate which burial. Not to scale. No reference was given in original map, other than the fact that it was found within where the fort was likely to be located (See “A” in Figure 15). Traced from the notes of Jack Shaffer. See Figure 16 for the location of the burials relative to the rest of the site.

Individual Burials

Due to decay, Shaffer did not retrieve any bones. He kept teeth from almost every burial, however, in the hopes that these could be used to provide more information on the individuals that were buried at the site. Future research could examine these teeth to determine more biological information about the remains. For now, the following drawings are the best pieces of evidence for providing information about the individuals that were buried at the fort site.

Figures 18-27 show tracings of drawings that Shaffer made while working to retrieve artifacts at the site. The position of the individuals in the burial (supine or prone) is noted here according to annotations made by Shaffer on the original drawings. The prone position is not often found at other contemporary sites in the Lower Mississippi Valley (see, for instance, Brain 1979, or Neitzel 1965), although the majority of the burials here seem to be prone (Burials 2 and 6-10). The reason for this is unknown; although it has been suggested that past plowing of the

site could have caused damage to some skulls that would have made the individuals appear to be prone when they were actually in a supine position (Vin Steponaitis, personal communication, 2014).

The drawings are not to scale; however Shaffer recorded many details about the burials such as the direction of north relative to the graves and labels for the artifacts found within them. I cross-referenced each artifact's label with field notes that Shaffer took in a separate journal while he was working at the site and with the current collection. Almost every artifact that is labeled in the drawings remains in his collection as of December 2013.

Burial 1

The burial that was first discovered by Shaffer shows the least amount of skeletal evidence in the drawings (Figure 18). It was considered to be a burial due largely to the presence of teeth and because of the large deposit of artifacts nearby. These artifacts include two keys a brass strap, Jesuit rings, a brass triangle, a musket barrel, iron scissors, a thimble, a bell, teeth, beads (IIA1, IIA3, IIA7, and IIB2), possibly an iron turn bolt, an unidentifiable brass object, a melted musket ball, various gun parts (lock, lock plate, frizzen, etc.) a copper bracelet, a brass earbob, a stone, and a buckle.

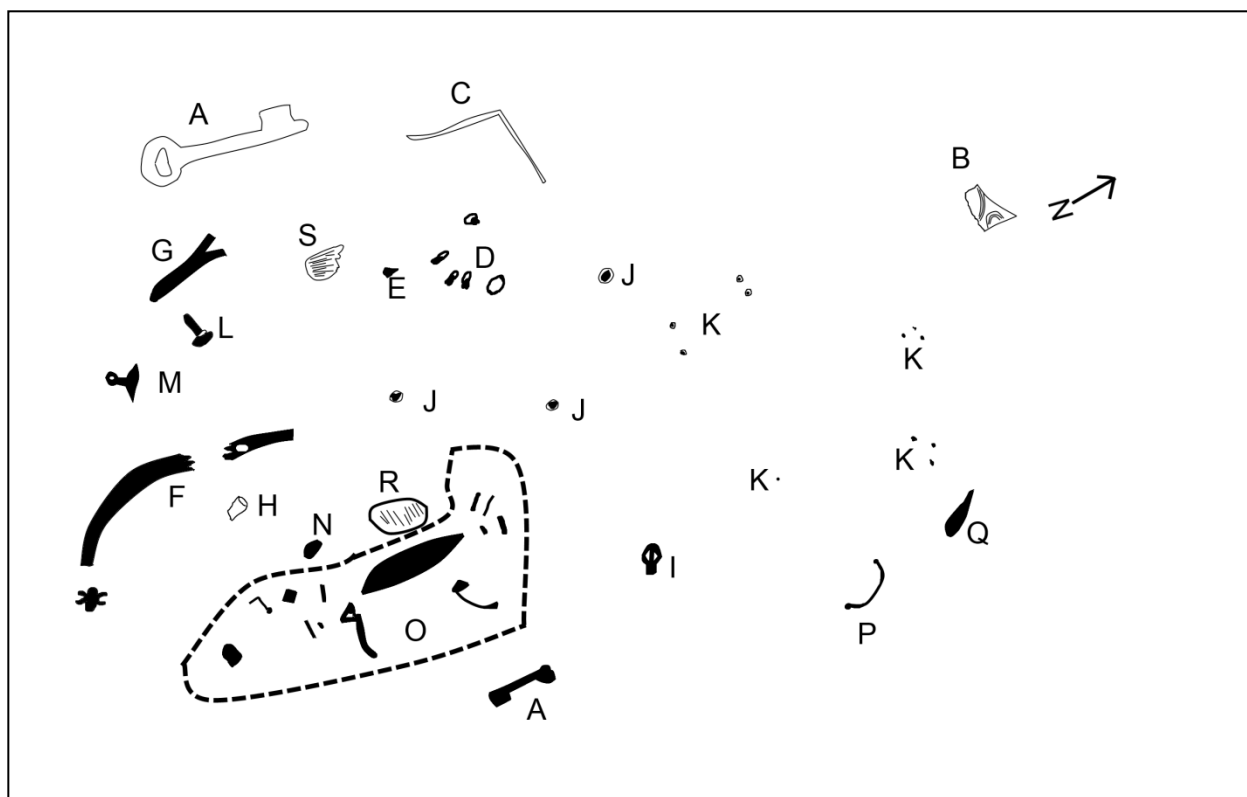


Figure 18. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 1. Key to labeled objects: a) 2 keys, b) potsherd (Fatherland Incised), c) brass strap, d) Jesuit rings, e) brass triangle, f) musket barrel, g) iron scissors, h) thimble, i) hawk bell, j) teeth, k) beads (IIA1, IIA3, IIA7, IIB2), l) possibly an iron turn bolt, m) unknown brass object, n) melted musket ball, o) gun parts (flint lock, lock plate, frizzen, etc.; area outlined), p) copper bracelet, q) brass earbob, r) stone, s) buckle.

Burial 2

Burial 2 was one of the most artifact-laden burials at the site (Figure 19). It contained the more flints than any other burial, most of which were stored in a ceramic vessel near the skull. The individual was buried in a prone position, with the head pointing towards the north, and a hatchet blade across the chest. The skeleton was entirely surrounded by nails, suggesting that the individual could have been placed in a wooden coffin. None of the other burials were found to have nails arranged like this. Artifacts found near this burial include 1 large axe head, flints, nails, a small bell, beads (IIA7 and WIC1), an unidentifiable iron object, two scissors, a piece of a knife/short sword, musket balls, a bowl (Fatherland Incised) with flint inside of it, a jar (Barton

Incised) with musket balls inside of it, a button, a spoon, two keys, four ear coils (iron), a ramrod pipe, a brass trigger guard, various other gun parts, and vermilion.

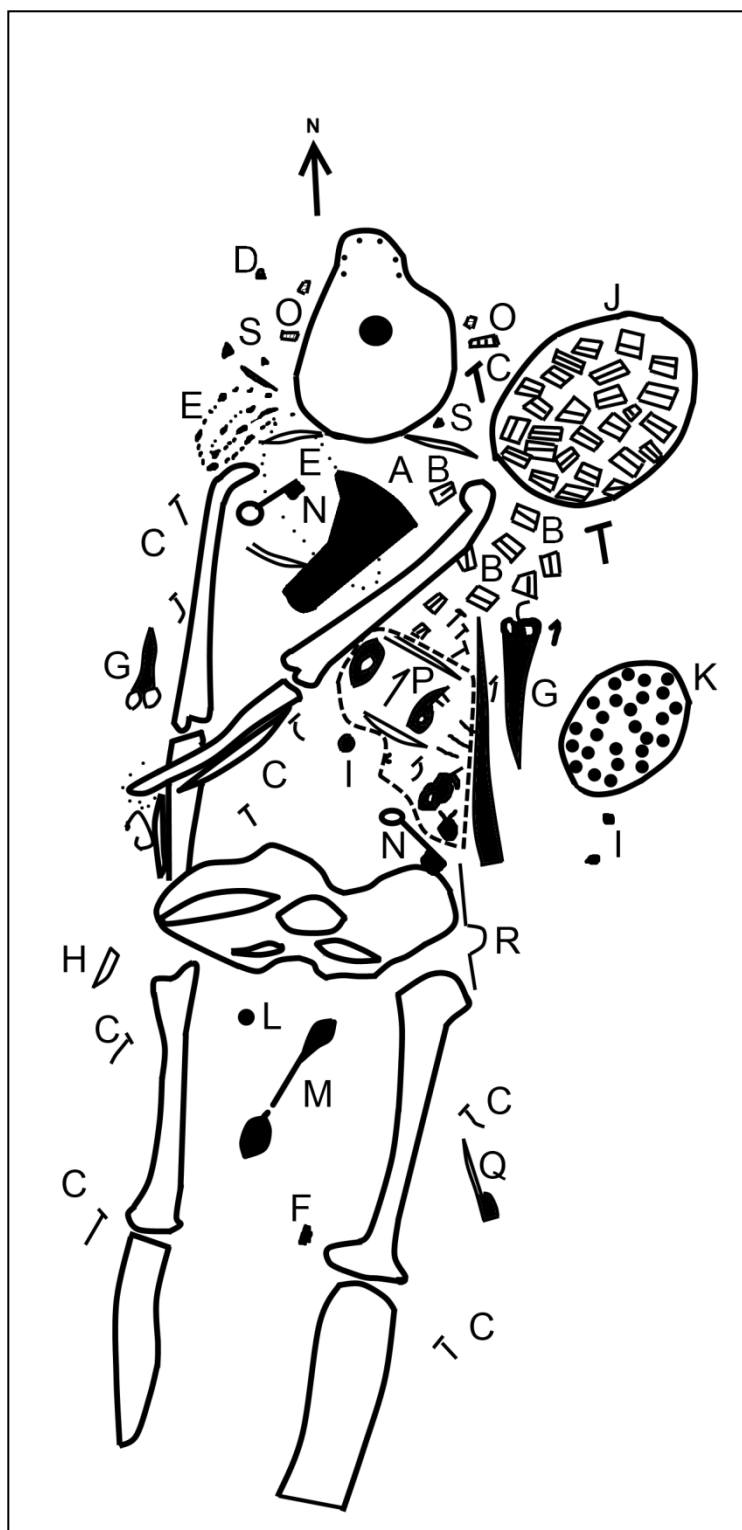


Figure 19. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 2. Key to labeled objects: a) 1 large axe, b) flints, c) nails, d) "very small" bell, e) beads (IIA7, WIC1), f) unidentified iron object, g) 2 scissors, h) piece of blade, i) musket balls, j) pot (Fatherland Incised) with flint, k) small pot (Barton Incised) with musket balls, l) button, m) large spoon, n) 2 keys, o) 4 ear coils (iron), p) small gun parts (area outlined), q) 1 ramrod pipe, r) 1 brass trigger guard, s) vermillion.

Burial 3

Burial 3 stands in stark contrast to the previous burial (Figure 20). There were only four artifacts that were associated with this individual. The individual was buried in a supine position, with the head pointing in a northerly direction. Artifacts found were a metal thread near the right elbow joint, a blade, and 2 bowls (Fatherland Incised).

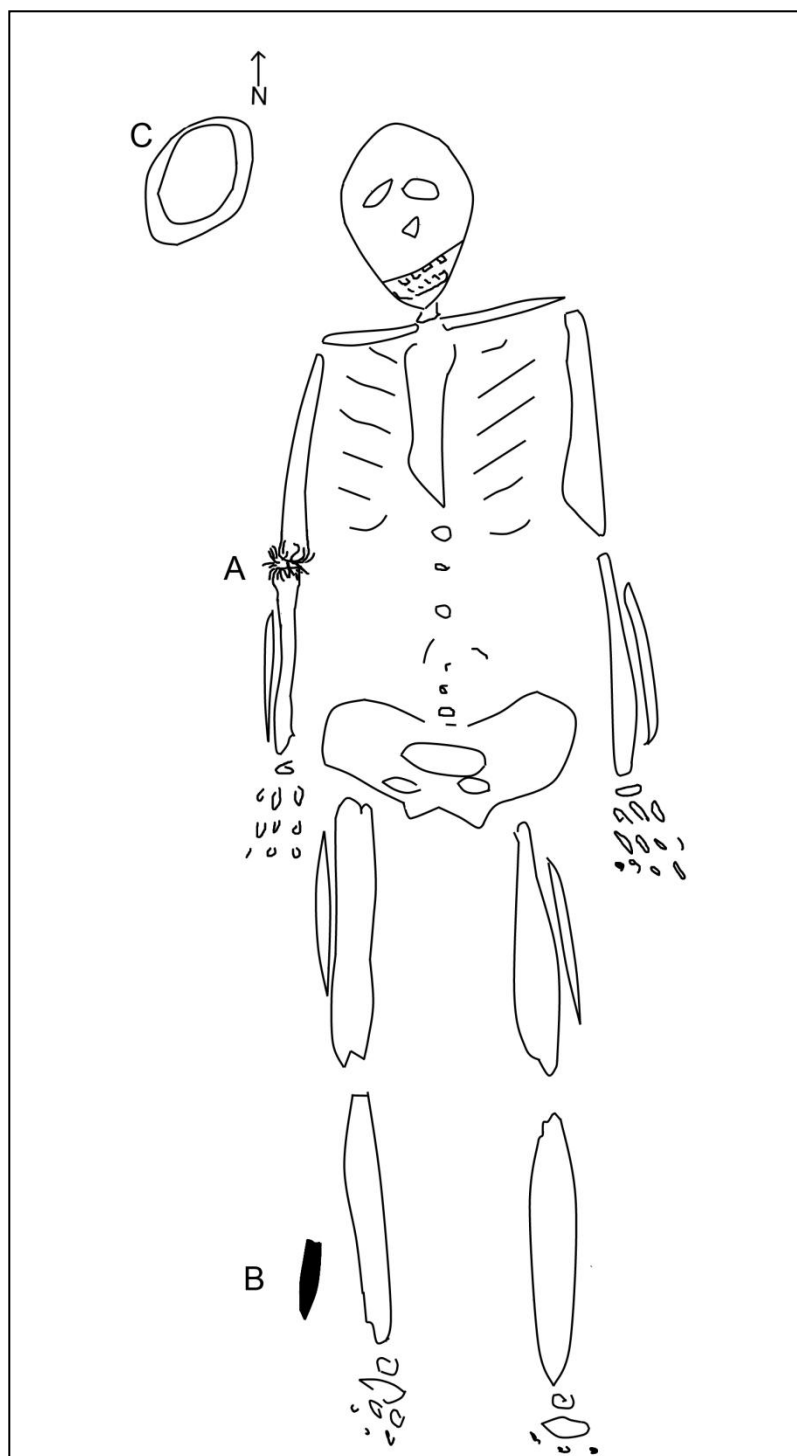


Figure 20. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 3. Key to labeled objects: a) metal thread in right elbow joint, b) blade, c) 3 pots (Fatherland Incised).

Burial 4

Like Burial 3, Burial 4 did not have many artifacts to speak of (Figure 21). This individual was also buried in a supine position, with the head pointing north. Artifacts found near this burial include a short string of white beads (IIA1, IIA7), a musket ball, a Jesuit ring, copper wire, and a key.

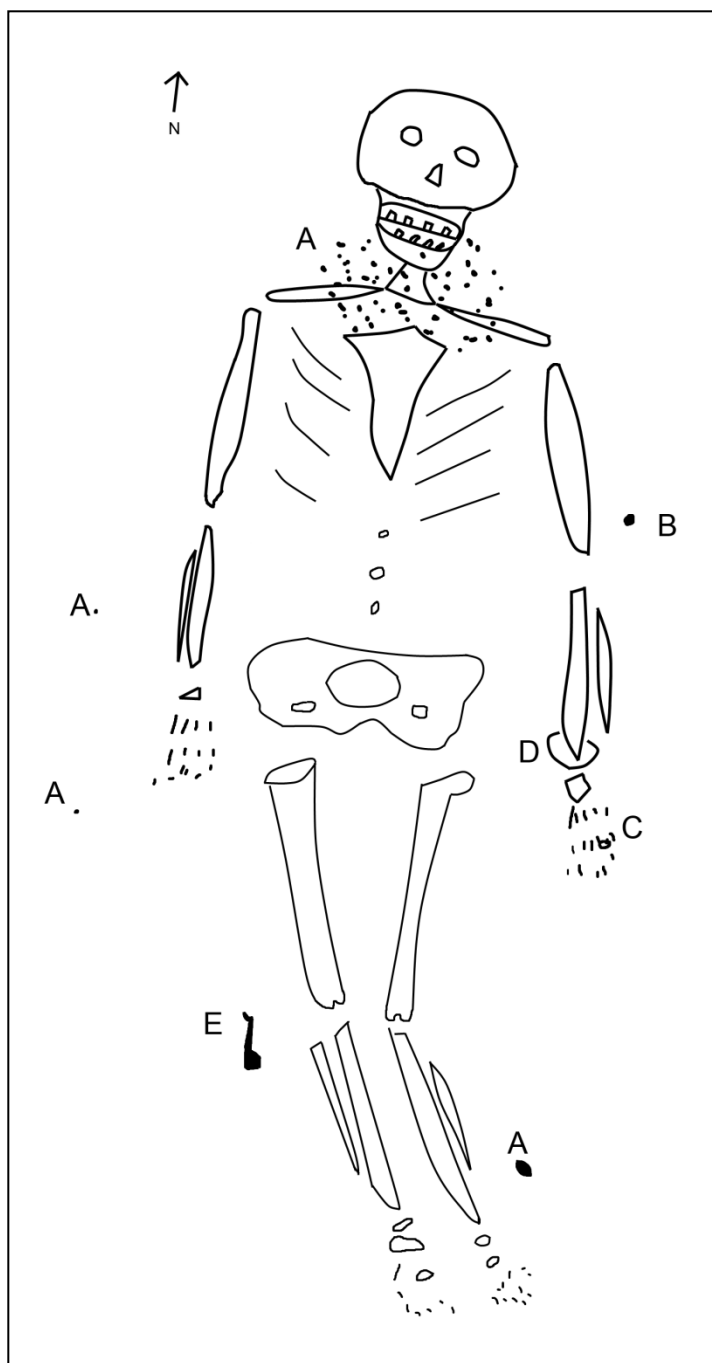


Figure 21. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 4. Key to labeled objects: a) short string of white beads (IIA1, IIA7), b) musket ball, c) Jesuit ring, d) copper wire, e) key.

Burial 5

Burial 5 is unique in that it contained two individuals (Figure 22). One was much smaller, perhaps the child of the larger individual within the burial. This burial was also unique in its contents. It was the only burial in which large amounts of pins were found. In addition to this, an unusually small Jesuit ring was found on the finger of the smaller individual. Both of the individuals were buried in a supine position, with their heads pointed north. Artifacts found within this burial include three collections of pins, beads (IIA1, IIA3, IIA5, IIA7, IVA1, IIB13, and WIIIA8), musket balls, Jesuit rings, a copper wire bracelet, and vermillion.

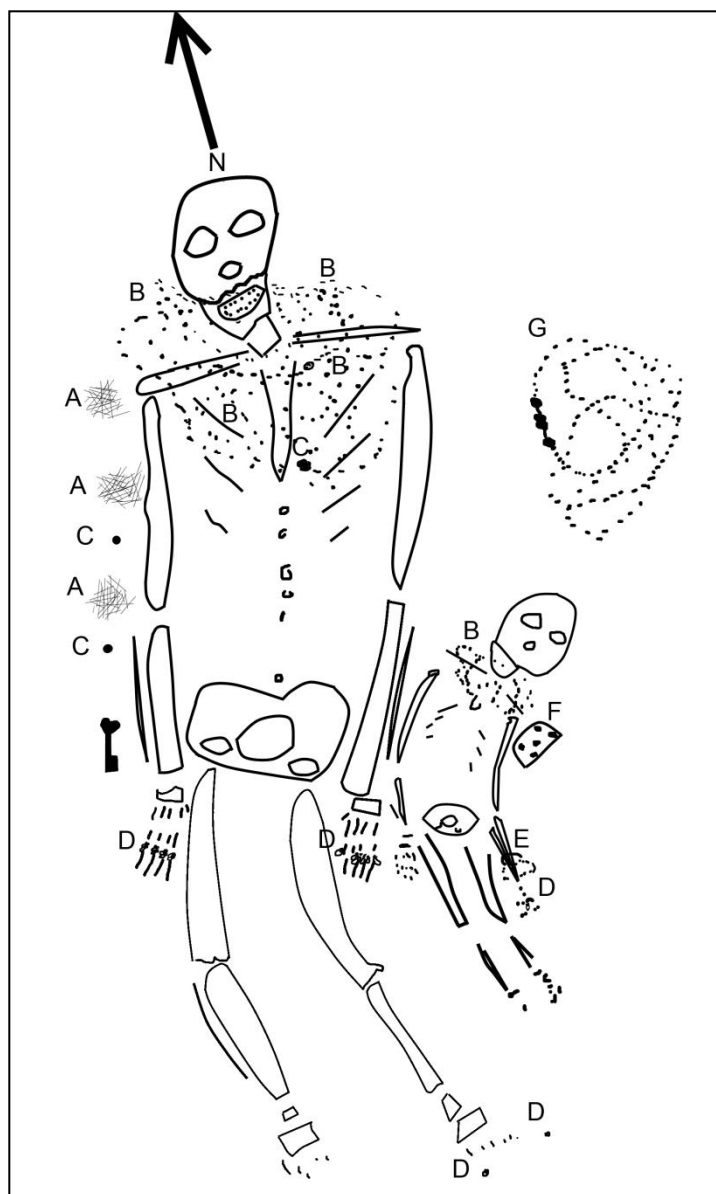


Figure 22. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 5. Key to labeled objects: a) 3 packets of pins, b) beads (IIA1, IIA3, IIA5, IIA7, IVA1, IIB13, WIIIA8), c) musket balls, d) 14 Jesuit rings, e) copper wire bracelet, f) vermillion, g) long necklace.

Burial 6

While the individuals' heads in Burials 2-5 were all pointing generally to the north (See Figure 17), Burial 6 was pointed in a distinctly eastward direction (Figure 23). The individual was in a prone position and was not buried with many artifacts relative to the other burials. These artifacts included seven bells, two small nails, beads (IIA1), an earbob, two buttons, two bowls (Addis Plain), and a jar (Addis Plain).

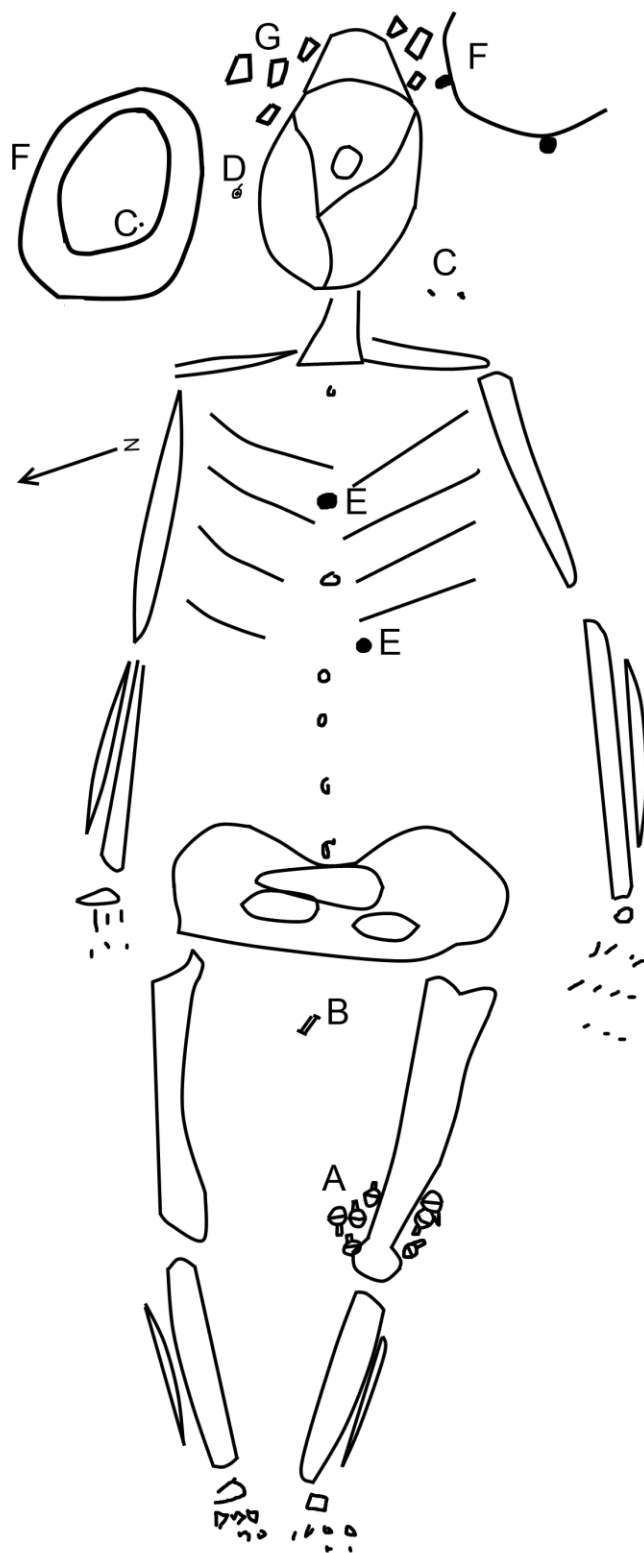


Figure 23. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 6. Key to labeled objects: a) 7 bells, b) 2 small nails, c) beads (IIA1), d) earbob, e) 2 buttons, f) pottery (Addis Plain), g) potsherds (Fatherland Incised and Addis Plain).

Burial 7

Burial 7 contained an individual buried in a prone position with the head pointed to the north (Figure 24). Artifacts found here include a bowl (Fatherland Incised), two bowls (Addis Plain), a large, hand wrought nail, scissors, musket balls, beads (IIA1, IIA3, IIA7, W1A3, W1C1), a lead cylinder, part of a blade, a knife spring or gun part, an unidentifiable iron part, and a pewter spoon.

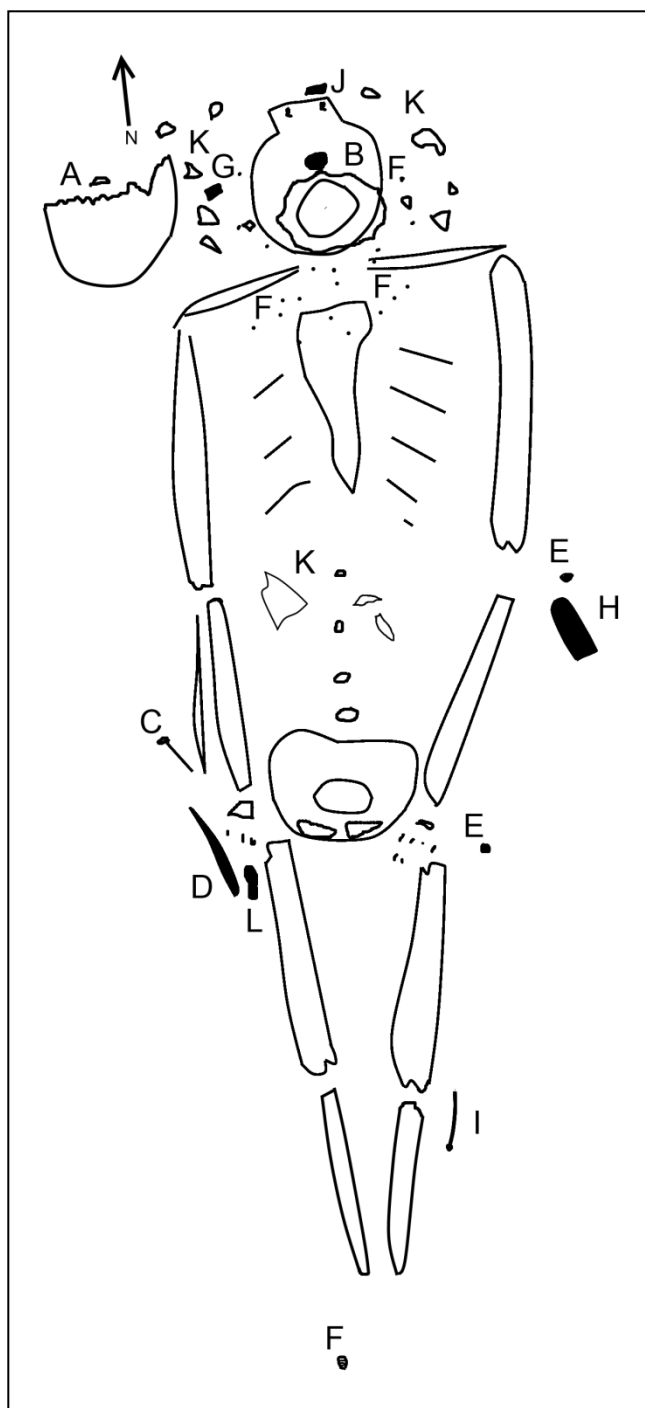


Figure 24. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 7. Key to labeled objects: a) 1 pot (Fatherland Incised), b) 1 pot (Addison Plain), c) 1 large hand wrought nail, d) scissors, e) musket balls, f) beads (IIA1, IIA3, IIA7, W1A3, W1C1), g) lead cylinder, h) part of blade, i) knife spring or gun part, j) iron part, k) potsherds (Fatherland Incised and Addis Plain), l) pewter spoon.

Burial 8

Burial 8 also contained an individual buried in the prone position (Figure 25). One artifact unique to Burial 8 was a crinoid fossil and was found near the individual's skull. Burials 8-10 are separated somewhat from the rest of the group and all point in a generally westward direction (Figure 17). The skull in Burial 8 points southwest. Other artifacts found near this burial include a cast pewter button, two bowls (Addis Plain), tacks, and musket balls.

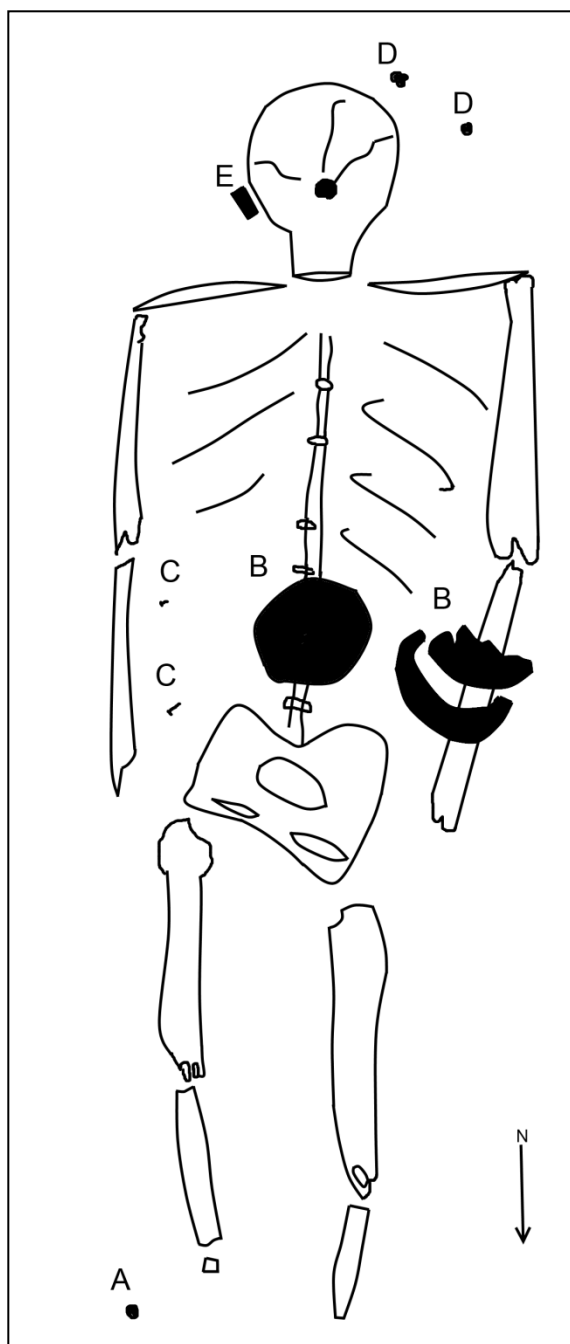


Figure 25. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 8. Key to labeled objects: a) cast pewter button, b) pottery (Addison Plain), c) tacks, d) musket balls, e) possible crinoid fossil.

Burial 9

Burial 9 had the smallest number of artifacts (Figure 26). The only artifacts found near this burial were a bowl (Fatherland Incised) and an iron rod. The individual was buried in a prone position, with its head pointing generally towards the west.

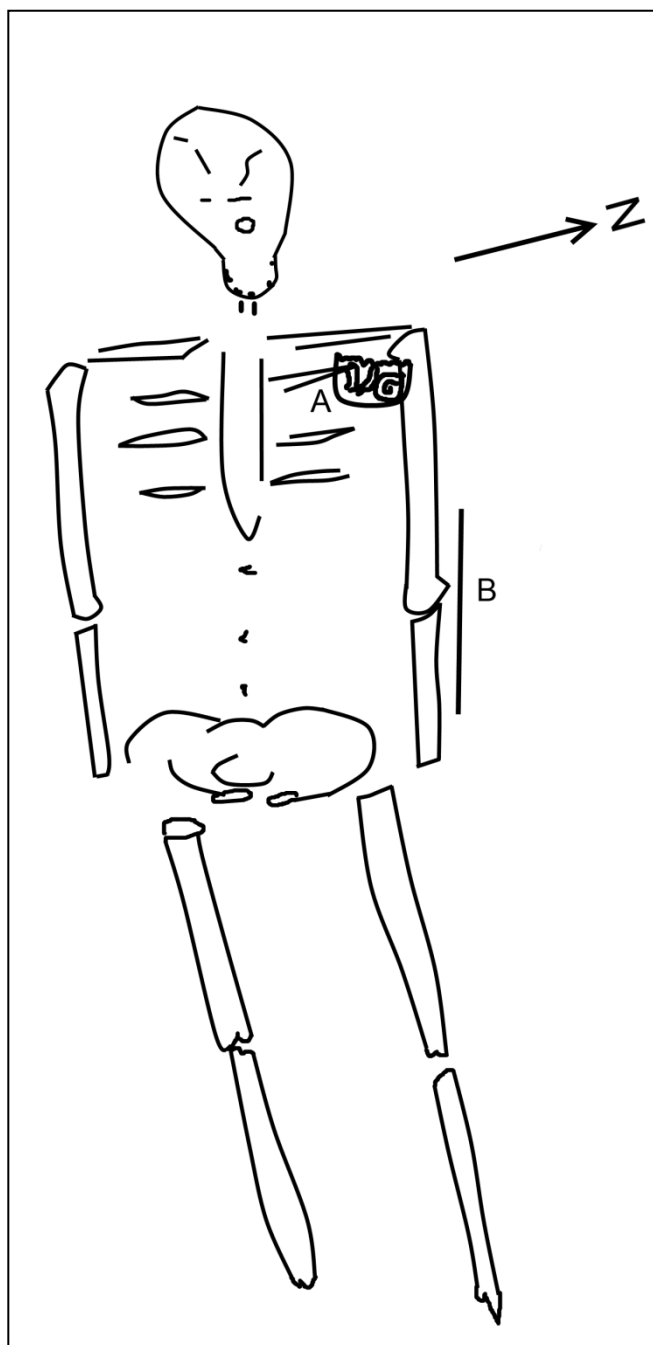


Figure 26. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 9. Key to labeled objects: a) pot (Fatherland Incised), b) iron rod.

Burial 10

The individual in Burial 10 was buried in a prone position (Figure 27). Artifacts here included beads (IIA1, IVA1), iron coils, an iron spoon, a stone pipe, two bowls (Fatherland Incised), and five composite buttons (these could not be retrieved). The head in Burial 10 was also pointed in a generally westward direction.

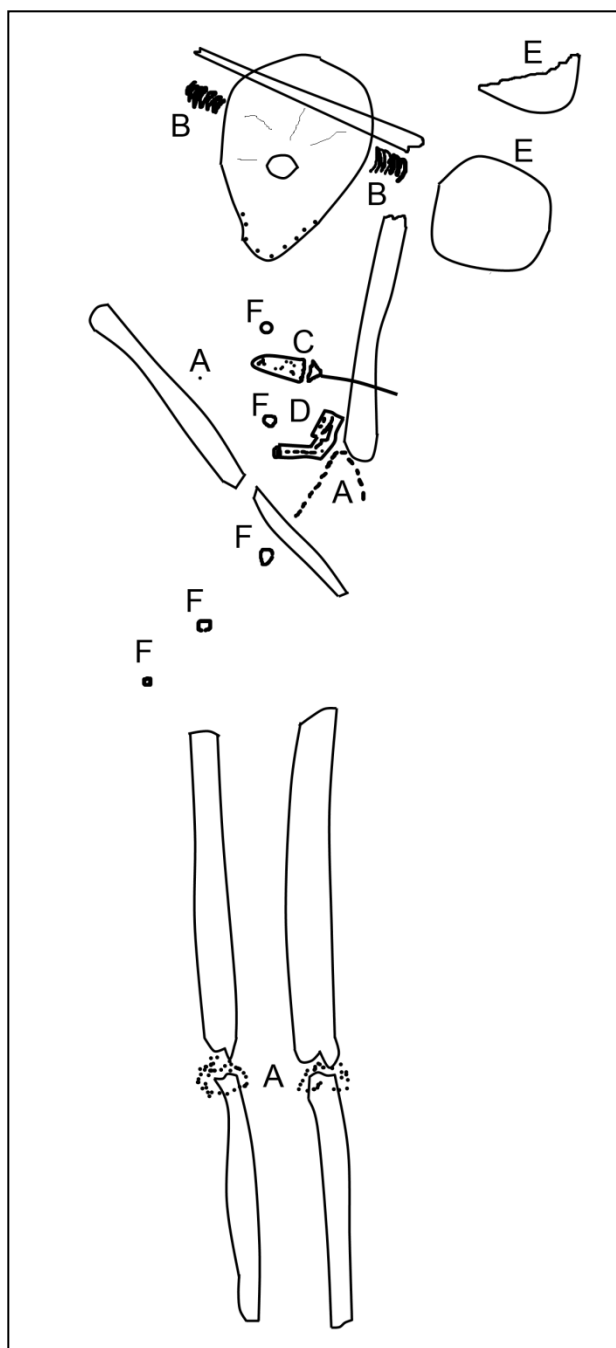


Figure 27. A tracing of Shaffer's drawing of Burial 10. Key to labeled objects: a) beads (IIA1, IVA1), b) iron coils, c) iron spoon, d) stone pipe, e) pottery (Fatherland Incised), f) 5 composite buttons (could not retrieve).

CHAPTER 4: ARTIFACT ANALYSIS

An abundance of artifacts were found by Shaffer at the site. In this chapter I analyze the objects and compare them with both the Fatherland site (a place the Natchez lived before the uprising; Neitzel 1965) and a contemporary Tunica site that would have shared a large amount of material culture with the Natchez (Brain 1979, 1988). Items associated with war were especially abundant, such as gun parts, musket balls, and flints. Other items that were especially common were European-made rings and keys. These European-made items could have been traded to the Natchez or they could have been some of the plunder that the Natchez took with them from the uprising the year before. It is important to note that Shaffer did find more artifacts than those that were discussed in the previous chapter. However, it could be difficult to show that all of these artifacts were necessarily associated with the Natchez fort that once stood there. Because of this, the main focus in this chapter is on the artifacts found with the ten burials previously discussed.

Ceramics

Fifteen examples of pottery from the site were able to be reconstructed from potsherds by Shaffer. There were many potsherds that could not be combined back into their original forms found at the site. Pottery types included Addis Plain, Fatherland Incised, and one jar that was Barton Incised (classifications from Brain 1988). Bowls were the most abundant shape of pottery (thirteen of the ceramics were this shape) with just two jars being represented (in Burials 2 and 6), and the color of the pottery ranged from a dark, reddish brown to black. Table 3 show type counts for the reconstructed pots. Pictures of the reconstructed pottery can be viewed by type in Figures 28-30.

Table 3. Type Counts for Reconstructed Pottery

Type of Pots	Number of Reconstructed Pots
Fatherland Incised	8
Addis Plain	6
Barton Incised	1
Total	15

Addis Plain

The Addis Plain type accounted for six of the fifteen reconstructed pots (5 bowls and 1 jar). These were found in Burials 6, 7, and 8. There was also a large quantity potsherds that appeared to be Addis Plain. This could be exaggerated, though, since pieces from other varieties of pottery (such as Fatherland Incised) could appear to be plainware (such as Addis Plain) if they happened to come from a part of the pottery that was not decorated. These can be seen in Figure 28.



Figure 28. Addis Plain pottery. Key: (a) bowl found in Burial 3, (b) bowl found in Burial 2, (c) jar found in Burial 6, (d) bowl found in Burial 7, (e) bowl found in Burial 8, (f) bowl found in Burial 6.

Fatherland Incised

Parallel bands of two, three, or four lines are characteristic of the Fatherland Incised type (Brain 1979:242). The majority of reconstructed pottery is Fatherland Incised. All of the Fatherland Incised pottery that was reconstructed formed bowls and these bowls were found in Burials 2, 3, 7, 9, and 10. These can be seen in Figure 29.

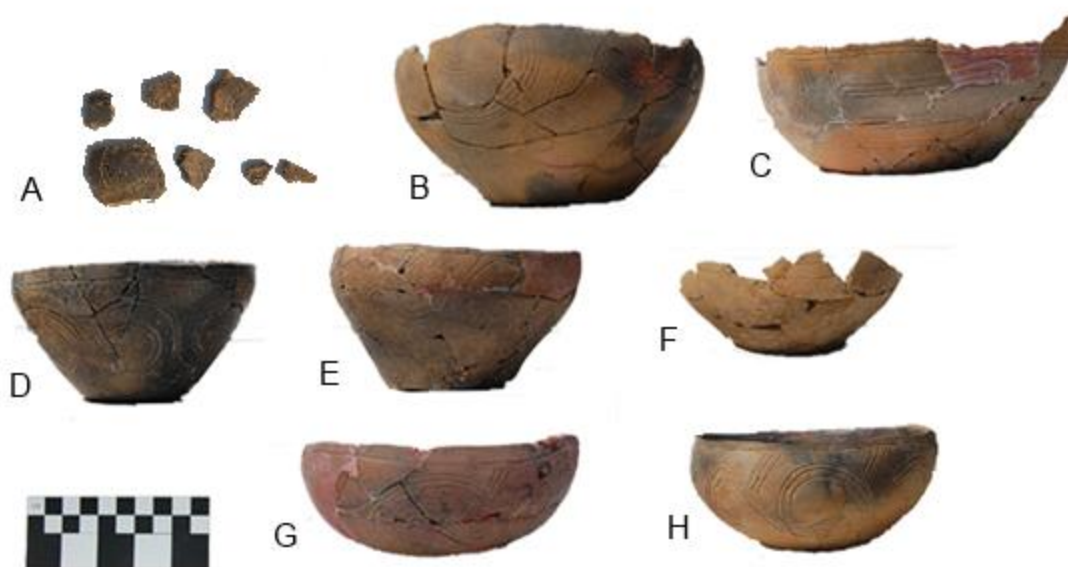


Figure 29. Fatherland Incised pottery. Key: (a) potsherds from Burial 9 (b) bowl found in Burial 10, (d) bowl found in Burial 3, (e) bowl found in Burial 3, (f) bowl found in Burial 3, (g) bowl found in Burial 10, (h) bowl found in Burial 2.

Barton Incised

Only one reconstructed piece of pottery fits within the category of Barton Incised. Barton Incised pottery is known for having “simple, rectilinear patterns” (Brain 1979:238). Jars are the most common shape for this type (Brain 1979), so the jar shape of the Barton Incised pottery within this collection is to be expected. The Barton Incised jar can be seen in Figure 30.



Figure 30. Barton Incised jar, found in Burial 2.

Jewelry and Clothing

A variety of jewelry and clothing accessories was found at the Sicily Island fort site. The different types include beads, bracelets, ear bobs, Jesuit rings, ear coils, bells, and buttons.

Beads

Both drawn glass beads and wire-wound glass beads were found at the site (see Brain 1979:98-116 for bead classification system). Most beads in the collection were white and fell under the IIA1 (found in Burials 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10) and IIA3 (found in Burials 1, 5, and 7) groups. Less common varieties of white beads were IVA1 (found in Burials 5 and 10) and the wire-wound W1C1 (found in Burials 2 and 7). Most of the colored beads were in the IIA7 group of bluish-green beads (found in Burials 1, 2, 4, 5, and 7). There were also white beads with blue stripes, such as the IIB2 group (found in Burial 1) and the IIB13 group (found in Burial 5). One amber-colored, translucent bead was found, belonging to the WIA3 group (found in Burial 7).

Darker, almost black, groups were also in the collection, but were uncommon. These included the IIA5 group (in Burial 5) and the wire-wound WIIIA8 (in Burial 5). The different classifications of beads present can be seen in Figure 31.



Figure 31. A sample of beads from the site. Key: (a) IIA1 and IIB13 beads found in Burial 5, (b) IIA1 and IIA5 beads found in Burial 5, (c) IIA7 found in Burial 4, (d) IIA7 found in Burial 4, (e) IIA1 found in Burial 7, (f) IIA7 found in Burial 7, (g) IIA7 and IIA1 found in Burial 7, (h) IIA7 and W1C1 found in Burial 7, (i) IIA7 found in Burial 7, (j) IIB2 and IIA7 found in Burial 1, (k) IIA1 found in Burial 5, (l) IIA1 and IIA7 found in Burial 5.

Bracelets

Three copper bracelets were found with the burials (in Burials 1, 4, and 5). The bracelets are made of copper wire, bent to the necessary shape. These were abundant at the Trudeau site, and were common among Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley at the time. These bracelets could have been made by Indians or by Europeans (Brain 1979:193). The bracelets are shown in Figure 32.



Figure 32. Bracelets found in Burials 4 and 5.

Earpieces

Two brass earbobs and six iron coils were found among the burials. The two earbobs are of a different style and occur in different burials (Burials 1 and 6). One is in a tear shape while the other has a round hook and a larger, with spherical bob hanging from it. The ear coils occur in two different burials as well (Burials 2 and 10). According to Du Pratz, coils such as these were also passed through a hole in the ear and were specifically worn by warriors (Du Pratz in Swanton 1911:55). Both earbobs and coils were found among the Trudeau (Brain 1979:191 and 196, respectively). Figure 33 shows these eight earpieces.

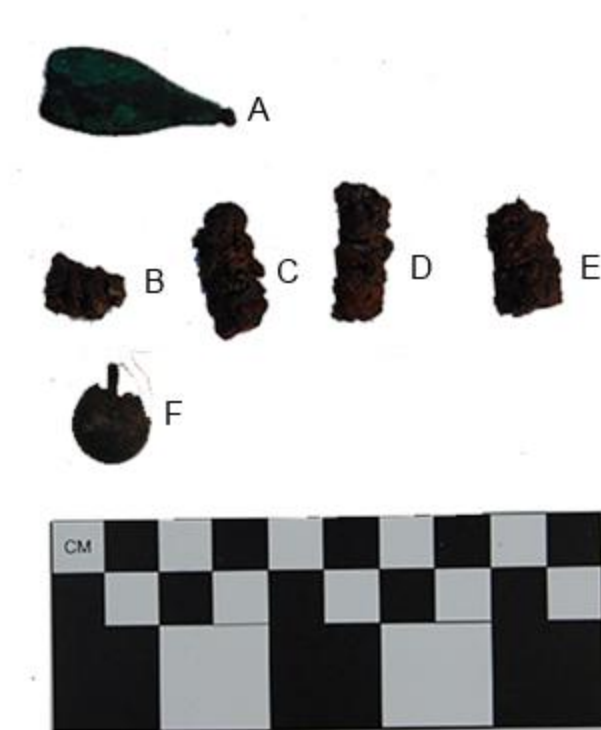


Figure 33. Earpieces found at the site. Key: (a) earbob from Burial 1, (b) ear coil from burial 2, (c) ear coil from burial 2, (d) ear coil from burial 10, (e) ear coil from burial 10, (f) ear bob from Burial 6.

Rings

Twenty-one brass Jesuit rings were found at the Sicily Island site. There is no necessary connection between the Jesuits and this particular type of ring (Brain 1979:192). Jesuit rings are often heart-shaped and have also been found at the Trudeau site and the Fatherland site (Brain 1979:192; Neitzel 1965:50). Pictures of the rings can be seen in Figure 34.

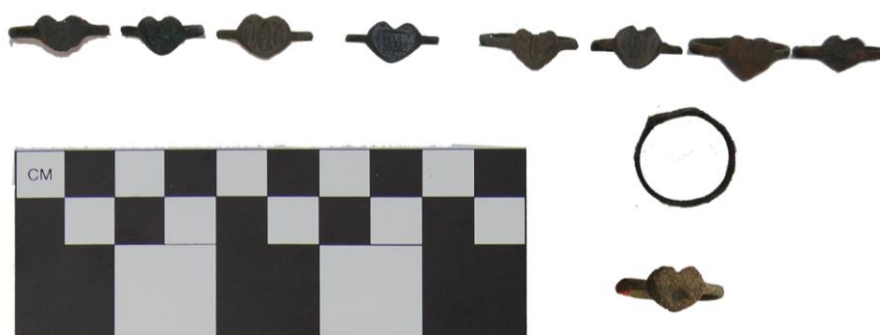


Figure 34. Jesuit rings found in Burials 1, 4, and 5.

Buttons

There were three brass buttons found at the site. Two of the buttons (both in Burial 6) are hollow and made of copper sheet metal. The other button (Burial 2) is made from a solid casting. Buttons such as these three are thought to have been from French uniforms but could have been traded to or taken by the Natchez (Brain 1979:189). Similar buttons are found at the Fatherland site (Neitzel 1965:43). Buttons can be seen in Figure 35.

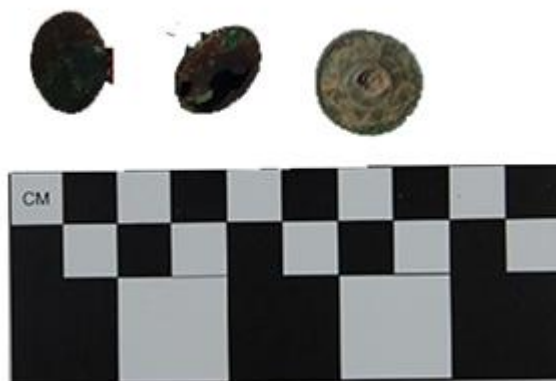


Figure 35. Buttons found in Burial 6 (2 leftmost buttons) and Burial 2 (button on the right).

Bells

Nine bells were found at the site. Bells are known to have been both worn and attached to objects by many American Indian cultures and would have come originally from Europeans (Brown 1979:197). Seven of these bells (in Burial 6) appear to be of the Clarksdale variety (Brown 1979:204). These undecorated bells have two holes in their lower hemisphere that are connected by a wide slit. No holes exist in the upper hemisphere, and the handle is made of a wide strip of brass. Of the other two bells, one is small and in too poor a condition to identify (in Burial 2), and the other is a Flowerkey bell (in Burial 1). These bells are known by their “raised stylized flowers” and are somewhat rare (Brown 1979:198). Pictures of the bells are in Figure 36.



Figure 36. Bells from Burial 6 (bells that are strung together), Burial 2 (the two smaller bells) and Burial 1 (larger, unattached bell).

Weapons and Ammunition

The Sicily Island fort site had a plethora of artifacts related to weaponry. A variety of gun parts, as well as artifacts that appear to be parts of blades were found in many of the burials. In

addition to these, musket balls were one of the most numerous types of artifacts found at the site. The following sections describe the artifacts.

Gun Parts

The gun parts in the collection were almost all made of iron. Oxidation of the iron caused a considerable amount of damage to the parts, and any detail that could have distinguished them in a more specific way than just their function has been lost. A small object found in Burial 7 could have been part of a gun (“knife spring or gun part” is what Shaffer wrote when describing it), but a large amount of rust makes it difficult to discern its original intent. A lock plate (Burial 1), frizzens (Burials 1 and 2), a turn bolt (Burial 1) and a piece of a musket barrel (Burial 1) were all found but suffered from severe rust.

There were two gun parts that were not made of iron: a ramrod pipe and a brass trigger guard. These were in better condition and were both found in Burial 2. Trigger guards like the one found in Burial 2 were discovered at the Trudeau site and were of a type made from 1685 to 1730 (called “Type C” in Hamilton 1979:212). This time period is consistent with when the Natchez would have likely come into possession of the gun. Hamilton goes on to describe this type of gun as possibly being made by Europeans specifically for trade with Indians (1979:215). Beyond this, little can be deduced from the gun parts because of their poor condition. It is likely that the poor condition of the guns could be to the site having been plowed in the past. Gun parts are shown in Figure 37.



Figure 37. Gun parts found at the site. Key: (a) trigger guard found in Burial 2, (b) ramrod pipe found in Burial 2, (c) piece of a musket barrel found in Burial 1, (d) assorted gun parts found in Burial 2.

Gunflints

Gunflints were found in Burials 1 and 2, and were particularly abundant in Burial 2. At this time, flints such as these were being exclusively produced by the French (Hamilton 1979:210). Burial 2's large supply of flint was found within a bowl that was buried near the individual's head. (See Chapter 4 for more details on the layout of this burial.) Figure 38 shows the gunflints found at the site.



Figure 38. Gunflints found in Burial 2.

Musket Balls

Musket balls were found in almost all of the burials at Sicily Island. Burials 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8 all contained them and other musket balls were scattered throughout the site. There is anecdotal evidence that suggests this site was once used as a source of lead for the surrounding community because of the large number of musket balls that used to be present on the surface of the ground (Green 1936:566). Among these there are two groups: those that have retained their original shape and those that have not. See Figure 39 for a visual comparison of these two groups. The musket balls were originally small (a little over a centimeter in diameter, or around .40 inches) and spherical. They were made by melting lead and allowing it to seep through the holes of a colander into water. The lead would fall into the water as drops and then harden into a small ball (Hamilton 1979:208).

The musket balls that have not retained their original shape could have been altered for a variety of reasons. Being shot and hitting a tree, the ground, or even a human could have changed the shape of the musket balls. The adult in Burial 5, for example, has an altered musket ball in his or her chest. This could have fallen into the grave when the individual was being buried, but it is also likely that the musket ball could have been shot into the person while they were still alive. If the individual was shot with a musket ball, it could give insight into when the burials uncovered at the site took place.

There was also an unidentified lead cylinder found in Burial 7. The cylinder was about the size of two musket balls. Although the reason for this cylinder is unknown, it could have been the result of manufacturing error in making musket balls or musket balls somehow getting fused together in that shape. This particular artifact is shown in Figure 39.



Figure 39. Two musket balls representative of the collection. The musket ball on the left is in its original form while the musket ball on the right is an example of the altered shaped of some of the musket balls that were found.

Iron Blades

There were three burials (2, 3, and 7) in which blades were found that could have been part of a weapon or tool. These blades were all in a poor condition, so that typically only the tip of the blade remained and even this was covered with rust. Since the length of the blade is not

clear from the remnants that were found, is possible that these blades could have been from knives or swords (Shaffer suggests as much in his field notes). They could have also belonged to bayonets, although bayonets were rare in the Lower Mississippi Valley because of a ban on selling the weapons to Indians. However, they were present at the Trudeau site and could have been present at Sicily Island (Brain 1979:158). These can be seen in Figure 40.



Figure 40. Iron blades found in Burials 2 and 3.

Other Metal Artifacts

Metal artifacts, besides those that would have been in weaponry or jewelry, represent a large amount of the collection. Unfortunately, much of the metal is in a poor condition and even those that can be identified clearly are still covered in rust. Pictures of these artifacts can be seen in Figures 41-49.

Iron Scissors

Scissors were a relatively cheap item for Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley during this time (Brain 1979:154). This could explain the relative abundance of these tools in the Sicily Island collection. Scissors were found in Burials 1, 2, and 7. They range in size from about 8 cm to about 13 cm. The individual in Burial 2 is the only one at this site that was buried with two pairs of scissors. Figure 41 shows the scissors in the collection.



Figure 41. Scissors found in Burials 1, 2, and 7.

Iron Keys

Iron keys were found in three different burials as well (1, 2, and 4). Keys such as these were found at the Trudeau site, and Brain suggests that keys such as these could have been used for chests that the Indians might have been using for storage (1979:155). This could have been the purpose of these keys as well, although there was little evidence of chests in the collection.

(See sections below on nails and straps for more information on this.) Keys can be viewed in Figure 42.



Figure 42. Keys found at the site. The larger key was found in Burial 1 and the smaller key was in Burial 4.

Nails

Nineteen iron nails were found the burials and in other areas of the Sicily Island site. Burials 2, 6, 7, and 8 all contained artifacts in this group. Burial 2 was surrounded with eight nails, suggesting that the individual there could have been incased in some sort of coffin. In addition to these eight, six smaller nails were located towards the center of the burial. Burial 6 contained two small nails between the individual's legs and Burial 7 had one larger nail (about 5 cm long). Two smaller nails (called tacks in Shaffer's notes and in the previous chapter) were found in Burial 8. Brain suggests that small nails such as these could have been used in the construction of chests (Brain 1979:156). See Figure 43 for photographs of the nails found at the site.



Figure 43. A sample of the nails found at the site. Found in Burial 2.

Pins

Burial 5 is the only burial in which pins were found; however there were three groups of pins (with about 260 pins total) buried beside the adult in this burial. Pins were considered a luxury item until the early 19th century, giving extra significance to the large amount buried at Sicily Island. The Trudeau site had a similar amount of pins, although it is rare to find them in the possession of 18th century Indians (Brain 1979:189). This could suggest that both the Tunica and the Natchez were wealthier than the average Indian nation. These pins can be seen in Figure 44.

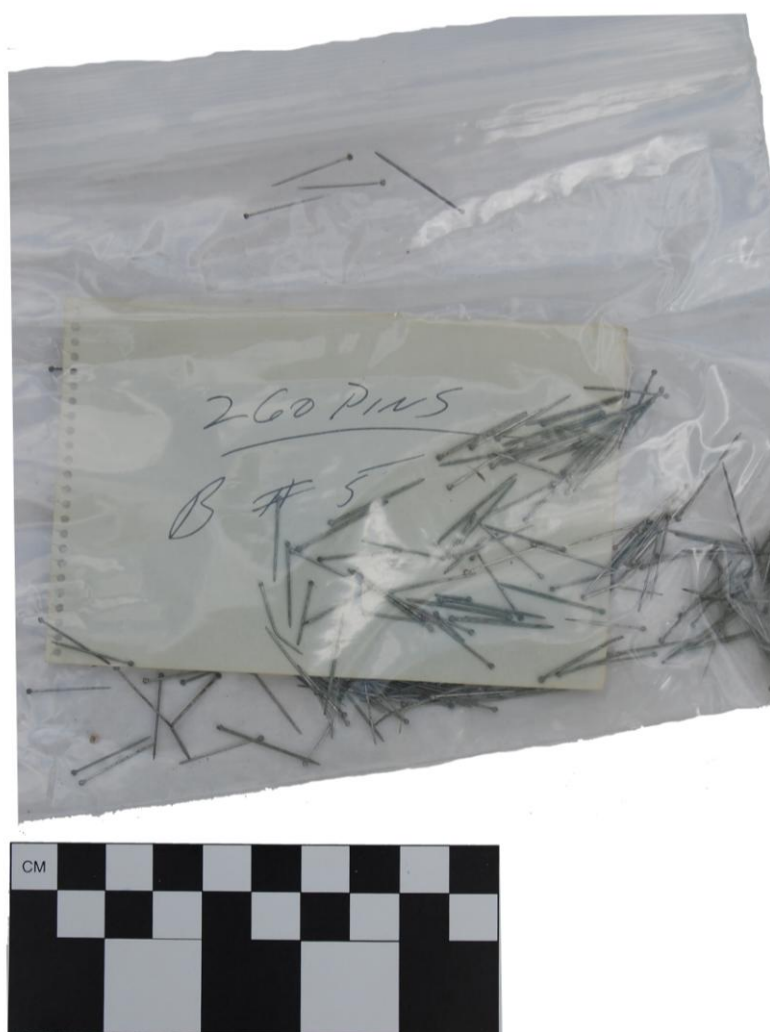


Figure 44. Pins found at the site in Burial 5.

Spoons

Three spoons were found at the Sicily Island site (in Burials 2, 7, and 10). Two are only partial fragments and are impossible to identify due to rust. The third is in much better condition, although, like the spoons found at the Trudeau site, the “simple style” of the spoons makes them hard to identify as belonging to any specific manufacturer (Brain 1979:186). The spoons are in Figure 45.



Figure 45. Spoons found at the site in Burial 2 (top) and Burial 7 (bottom).

Miscellaneous Metal Objects

There was a piece of metal thread found in Burial 3, near the individual's elbow. The reasons for this are unknown. Figure 46 shows this thread.



Figure 46. Metal thread found near the individual's elbow in Burial 3.

Burial 1 has a brass strap that is more easily explained. The strap is about 3 cm wide and bent into the shape of an “L”. Straps this size could be used for chests (Brain 1979:155). The strap can be viewed in Figure 47.



Figure 47. Brass strap found in Burial 1.

The head of an iron axe was found lying on the chest of the individual in Burial 2. There is a similar burial motif using an unidentified metal tool at the Trudeau site (Brain 1979:277, Burial III). Iron axes such as this one were very popular trade items during this time and axes like this one were found at the Trudeau site as well as the Fatherland site (Brain 1979:140; Neitzel 1965:50). Figure 48 shows this.



Figure 48. The head of an axe, found on the chest of the individual in Burial 2.

Brass thimbles were also found at the site in Burial 1. Thimbles such as these were found at the Trudeau and Fatherland site (Brain 1979:188). Burial 1 also contained an iron buckle. The buckle was covered in rust and is hardly identifiable, but there were buckles found at the Trudeau site, suggesting that this is a reasonable description for the artifact (Brain 1979:190). Thimbles are shown in Figure 49.

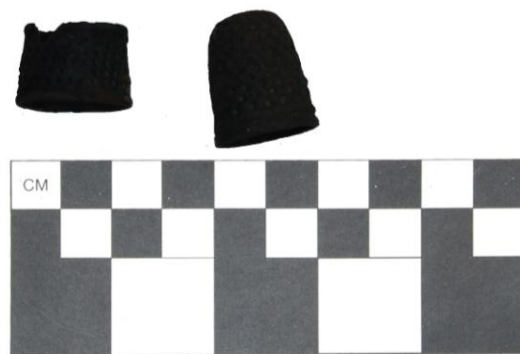


Figure 49. Thimbles found in Burial 1.

Unidentifiable Metal Artifacts

There were also six metal objects whose function was unable to be identified because of corrosion and rusting. Burials 1, 2, 7, and 9 all contain objects that suffer from this issue. The different metals that these objects seem to be made of are brass and iron. They range from small, brass, triangular items (like in Burial 1) to large, iron, rod-shaped item (like in Burial 9).

Miscellaneous Artifacts

The remaining artifacts, while just as important to the understanding of the collection found at Sicily Island, did not fit into the above categories and do not have much in common amongst themselves. These artifacts include stone artifacts, vermillion, a possible fossil that was associated with one of the burials, and a crystal.

Smoothing Stone

The smoothing stone, found in Burial 1, was a oval shaped, smooth, tan colored stone about 6 cm long and 2 cm wide. Stones like these were found in the Trudeau collection and were suggested by Brain to be “smoothing stones” (1979:250). The smoothing stone found in Burial 1 was the only one of its kind in the collection and can be seen in Figure 50.



Figure 50. Smoothing stone found in Burial 1.

Stone with the Apparent Image of a Face

Another stone found at the Sicily Island site (shown in Figure 51), but not associated with any of the burials was a stone that appears to have an image of a face. No paint appears to be on the stone's surface, but a discoloration is clearly present. The face-like shape of the discoloration has been traced in Figure 52 to illustrate it more clearly. It was suggested by Shaffer (personal communication, 2013) that this could be the Natchez idol described by Saint-Cosme (in Swanton 1911:172). According to Saint-Cosme, the idol was thought to have been a demigod who was turned to stone as a punishment. Shaffer's proposal could be correct, since the appearance of the idol was never described. However, a stone statue, found in the town of Natchez in the 19th century was previously proposed to be this idol. This statue, which can be seen in Figure 53, is more consistent with idols that Indians of the Lower Mississippi Valley were known to worship (Smith and Miller 2009:4). Although it is impossible to know whether the stone found at the Sicily Island site had religious purpose for the Natchez, the face-like image cannot be denied and could have had significance for them.



Figure 51. Stone with an image of a face on its surface. Found at the site, but not associated with any of the burials.

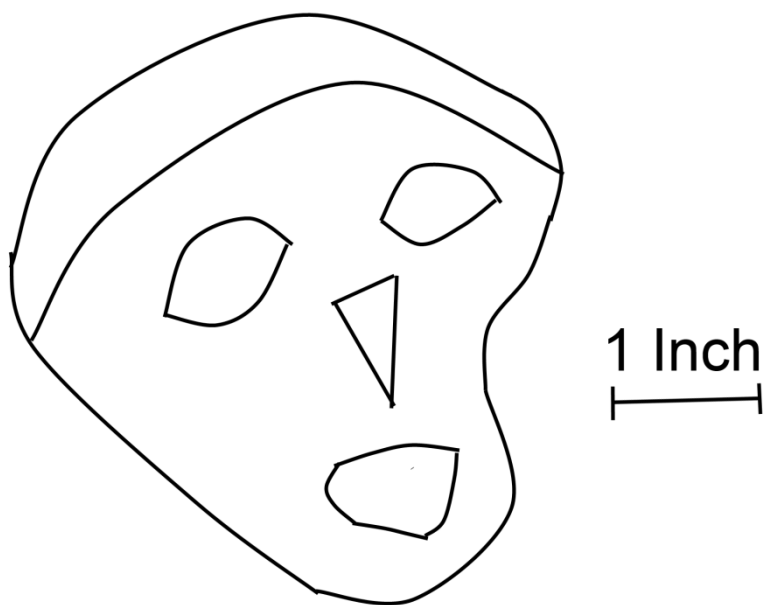


Figure 52. A tracing of the face-like image on the surface of one of Figure 51.



Figure 53. Stone statue found in the town of Natchez (from Atwater 1820:215).

Catlinite Pipe

A catlinite pipe was also found at Sicily Island and was associated with Burial 10. The pipe was a bright red color and was similar to pipes found at the Trudeau site (Brain 1979:248). The pipe is an example of part of the *calumet* described by Swanton as the pipe smoked by Indians to celebrate peace with an enemy (1911:136-137). The pipe is shown in Figure 54.



Figure 54. Catlinite pipe found in Burial 10.

Vermillion

Four samples of vermillion were found in Burials 2 and 5 at the Sicily Island site. Vermillion was a red dye used by Indian women as body decoration and would have been bought from Europeans. A large amount of vermillion was also found in the Trudeau collection (Brain 1979:223). The vermillion from Sicily Island resembles a clump of bright, red powder and can be seen in Figure 55.



Figure 55. Vermillion found in Burial 5.

Crinoid Fossil

Burial 8 contained a fossilized crinoid (Figure 56). Crinoid fossils were used by the Tunica as jewelry (Brain 1979). The fossil's location (to the left of the individual's skull) suggests that the shell could have been worn by the person buried there as jewelry.



Figure 56. Crinoid fossil found in Burial 8.

Quartz Crystal

Two feet northeast of Burial 10 a quartz crystal was found, surrounded by small nails and near a metal buckle. The crystal is in the shape of a rectangular prism that comes to a point at one end. The presence of the buckle and nails suggests that the crystal was likely buried in a small container. Quartz crystals were present at the Trudeau site, although none were the same shape as the one found at Sicily Island (Brain 1979). Shaffer suggests that it could be one of the “pieces of rock crystal” that Du Pratz describes in his account of the Natchez temple (in Swanton 1911:158). Le Petit also mentions “pieces of crystal” in the temple being stored in special containers (Le Petit 1730:125). This could certainly be the case, since the crystal does seem to have been in some sort of specialized container. Figure 57 shows the crystal.

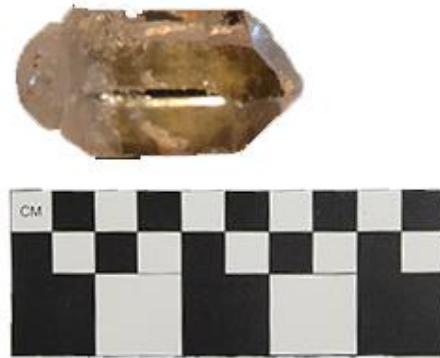


Figure 57. Quartz crystal found two feet northeast of Burial 10.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The artifacts in the Natchez fort collection give insight into the culture of the Natchez people in their darkest days. The first piece of information suggested by the collection is the fact that the Natchez were, in fact, at Sicily Island. Multiple lines of evidence point towards this conclusion. The 18th century maps that document this conflict between the Natchez and the French (discussed at length in Chapter 3) sufficiently supported this theory. The *Route de l'Armee* maps (see Figure 3), which Green struggled to explain, have now been made clear (partially due to the availability of Route Map 4 shown in Figure 4).

The army's path through the Red, Black, and Tensas rivers testified to by the *Route de l'Armee* map is supported by Route Map 4, which shows the French army following the same path. Route Map 4, in turn, is supported by historical accounts that agree with the map's dates for the army's progression. This suggests that both maps are valid sources for defending the location of the Natchez fort.

Not only has the validity of the maps been supported, but their ambiguities have been further explained. The dotted lines on the *Route de l'Armee* maps were brushed away by Green as inconsequential, but thanks to Route Map 4 and historical evidence, the dotted lines now seem to depict the path that Perier's militia of inhabitants followed. With the two different paths that the army took both leading in the direction of Sicily Island, the small Louisiana town becomes the most likely suspect for being the location of the Natchez fort. Another piece of cartographic evidence comes from the overlay of the fort map in Figure 15. The correlation between the locations labeled by the map and the concentration of artifacts found at the site presents further evidence in favor of Sicily Island being the location of the battle.

The artifacts support this idea as well. Similarities with the Fatherland site, a known past location of the Natchez abound (Neitzel 1965, 1983). Chapter 5 notes artifacts that were found in both sites. Examples of these are Fatherland Incised pottery, bells, and beads (Neitzel 1965:41). These artifacts are also common at other Indian sites in the Lower Mississippi Valley (the Tunica site at Trudeau, for instance; Brain 1979, 1988), but not necessarily in the same proportions. Table 4 shows the proportion of Fatherland Incised to Barton Incised pottery for three sites: Fatherland, Sicily Island, and Trudeau. This proportion is much higher for Fatherland and Sicily Island (five to one and eight to one, respectively) than for Trudeau (.35 to one). Figure 58 illustrates this comparison. The similarities between Sicily Island and Fatherland suggest that it was the Natchez that were living in Sicily Island, and not another group in the Lower Mississippi Valley such as the Tunica.

Table 4. Pottery Proportion (Fatherland Incised to Barton Incised)

Site	Fatherland Incised (FI)	Barton Incised (BI)	Proportion of FI to BI (FI/BI)
Fatherland ²	20	4	5
Sicily Island ³	8	1	8
Trudeau ⁴	472	1359	.35

² Potsherd counts based on Neitzel 1983, Plates XVII to XXIV.

³ Counts for reconstructed pottery.

⁴ Potsherd counts based on Brain 1988, Appendix A.

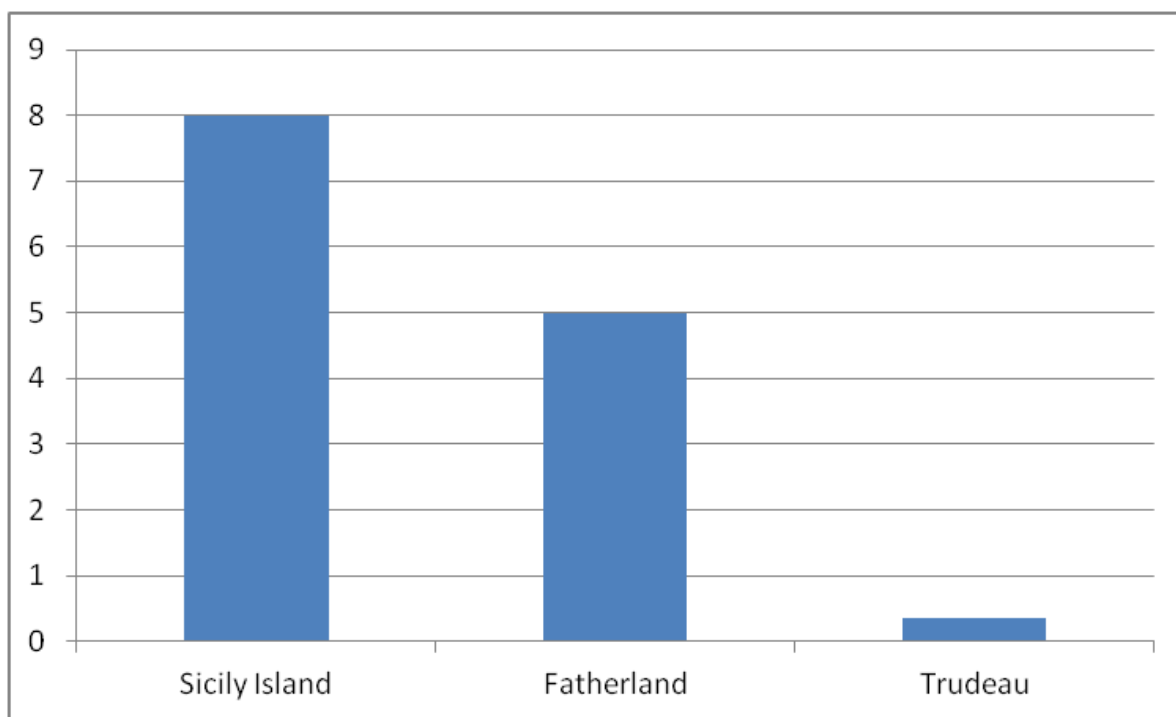


Figure 58. A comparison of pottery proportions between three sites: Sicily Island, Fatherland, and Trudeau. The ratio is shown between Fatherland Incised and Barton Incised for each location (Fatherland to Barton).

Differences between artifacts give clues to other aspects of Natchez culture. There were distinct differences in the amount and types of artifacts between burials. The number of artifacts found at each site can be seen in Figure 59. A disparity between the quantities of artifacts in each burial could represent hierarchical differences among the people being buried (Brain 1979: 278). Burials 2, 5, and 1 had a larger amount of artifacts near them than any of the other burials. This could mean that these individuals were wealthier than the other 7 at the site. Certain burials seem to contain individuals that were once warriors. For instance, Burials 1 and 2 both contain a number of gun parts. This could suggest that the individuals used the guns these parts came from. In addition, Burials 2 and 10 contain ear coils, which were said by Du Pratz to be worn by warriors of the Natchez (in Swanton 1911:55). In contrast, Burial 5 has a large amount of

artifacts, such as beads and pins, but does not contain any evidence of weaponry. This warrior/non-warrior distinction could actually represent a gender distinction—differences in types of artifacts suggested gender difference at the Trudeau site (Brain 1979: 279).

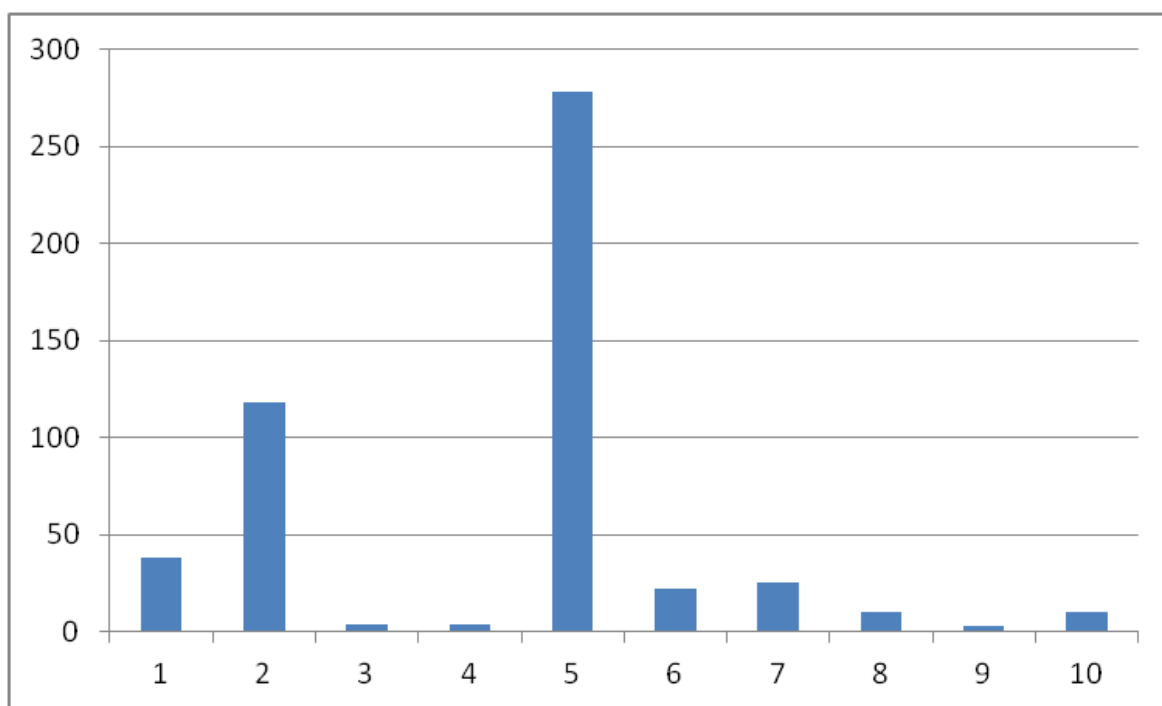


Figure 59. Artifact counts for each burial, based on Shaffer's drawings. Beads are not included in the counts due to the uncertainty of how many of these were represented in each drawing.

One question that arises when considering this collection is when these burials actually took place. The artifacts seem to suggest that at least some of them were happening during or shortly after the siege. One reason for this is the location of the burials. If the analysis of the site plan in Chapter 4 is correct, the burials are all located within the fort's walls. There is some evidence that the Natchez buried their dead in cemeteries, rather than at the center of inhabited areas (such as the Rice and O'Quinn cemeteries; see Brown 1985). If this is the case, then burying the dead at the center of the community could be a result of the Natchez being stuck

inside the fort due to the French attack. However, with the siege only lasting five days, there would not have been much time for burying the dead. Another possibility that would explain the location of the burials is that the Natchez wanted those who died to be buried somewhere that would be safe from their enemies even before the French arrived. The fort would have then been the most logical place to bury the dead if this was their reasoning.

Two of the burials show possible signs of violence. Burials 2 and 5 both contain musket balls where the chests of the individuals would be. Since there were no musket balls lodged into the actual bones of the individuals, this does not necessarily mean that they were shot. Instead, the musket balls could have merely been buried on top of or under them. There is historical evidence for violent deaths occurring within the fort from Perier: "I immediately fired a few Royal grenades, two of which fell in the fort on one of their cabins, after which they exploded. We heard the loud cries and weeping of their women and children" (Perier in Green 1936: 555). However there is no way to know for sure if any of the individuals found buried at the site died in the conflict with the French.

This collection of artifacts not only supports and illuminates past research on the Natchez, but also provides new information about this historic battle between the Natchez and the French. Both historical sources and archaeological evidence point towards this being the location of the 1731 battle between the Natchez and the French. This battle is thought by many to be the beginning of the end for the Natchez nation, but the eleven individuals discovered in these ten burials stand testament to the desperate battle that the Natchez fought against the French at Sicily Island.

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