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History of Excavations at 8BR85

Alexis Russell

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8BR85, known as the Burns Site, is comprised of a Native American burial mound and village, along with two historic cemeteries. The burial mound, first noticed as a site to be studied in the 1860s, has received 150 years of intermittent archaeological work. The two cemeteries, with burials from the late 19th and early to mid-20th century, have only been recorded and preserved in modern times. Despite the multiple studies conducted over three separate centuries, the need for archaeological study at 8BR85 still exists. This is due to the size of the site, errors and oversights made by previous studies, and because of the site's threatened state of inundation from sea level rise. By outlining the past, present archaeologists can understand the body of work they are building upon, and know what they must do to properly record the site for future generations.

In 1869, the first mention of 8BR85 was published in the "New York World" by J.S. Adams (Rouse 1951). The description is as follows: "In the course of our travels, we found one large Indian burial mound some twenty feet high and eighty or ninety feet at the base..." (Adams 1869) It was only a passing mention, and no actual recording was undertaken of the site in the 1860s. In 1896, Clarence Bloomfield Moore conducted expeditions into the East Florida area. His work in Brevard County is well known, but no record exists of him working on the Burns site despite his extensive work and publication on similar sites in Florida. Moore did, however, excavate nearby sites by conducting surveys through the central portion of the mound – as he did on his work on the Mound at Tropic, a nearby burial mound on Cape Canaveral (Moore 1896). Francis Le Baron was a Deputy U.S. Surveyor who had an interest in locating and recording burial mounds in the Central Florida area. His survey in 1877-1878, which included several Cape Canaveral burial mounds, was the first published work on 8BR85, representing the first attempt to record a systematic survey of the site (Doran 2014). After the turn of the century, there was a

period of dormancy in archaeological work at many sites across Florida, including 8BR85 – where no archaeological survey took place until the 1930s.

The Harvard Peabody Museum and the Civil Works Administration (C.W.A.) brought professional archaeologists to the Burns Site during 1931-1934 (Bellomo 1996). Their work represented a greater trend of the beginning of Federal Relief Archaeological Projects created in the wake of the Great Depression (Willey 1954). However, funding problems caused by lack of planning and exacerbated by the Great Depression cut research short, resulting in minimal analysis and reporting (Doran 2014). The limited collecting undertaken by the Harvard Peabody Museum's G.M. Stirling, comprised of fifteen sherds and two animal bones, was a part of Stirling's more comprehensive project of Cape Canaveral (Rouse 1951). The mound then was "completely excavated" by Woodbury in 1933 and 1934 as reported by Rouse in his 1951 report. However, Willey (1954) reports that "approximately one-half of the total bulk of the mound" was excavated, leaving a discrepancy in the amount of the mound that had been disturbed by the 1933-1934 excavation. Woodbury himself never published his work on the Burns mound, however, Willey does use Woodbury's notes in order to inform his own report of the excavation of 8BR85.

Woodbury, in his excavation, split the mound into two levels: an upper level and a lower level. The upper level was comprised of "a thick laminated deposit which contained... charcoal, pot sherds, shells, etc." (Willey 1954). The lower level was made up of sand. The upper level had 21 burials, while the lower level had 31 burials, for a total of 52 burials excavated from the mound. The burials were in a "spoke pattern", with the heads pointing inward towards the center of the mound (Willey 1954). This pattern is exceedingly rare in the Indian River area. Woodbury also found 249 check stamped sherds, and a "pendant of European silver, of Indian manufacture"

(Willey 1954). The occurrence of European silver in burial mounds is not exclusive to the Burns mound. Other mounds in east Florida, such as the Gleason mound, also had European silver as possible burial goods (Moore 1896). The extent of trade and contact between the people who constructed the burial mound and Europeans is still not known, but the artifacts of 8BR85 do suggest an occupation that possibly dates to after European contact. Woodbury's C.W.A. team were the only ones to conduct archaeological excavation in the mound itself, and it remains unknown how much of the mound is disturbed by both his work and other non-archaeological activity.

Willey (1954), as a result of these artifacts collected from Woodbury's excavation, assigns the Burns site burial mound to the Malabar II period. Willey defines the Malabar II period as occurring circa 1250 to 1650. However, a more recent evaluation of the Malabar II period dates the period to 750-1565. Archaeological Consultants, Inc. found the presence of olive jar sherds, which they suggest date at least one period of the occupation to 1513 to 1565. (Deming 1999). However, the length of occupations by Native Americans at the Burns site is still unknown.

Throughout the 1950's and 60's, the focus was on consolidating and recording the previous work done on Cape Canaveral. It was also during this time that the focus of Cape Canaveral was changing from a small settlement owned by several families to the site of the United States' space program. In addition to Willey's 1954 on the work completed by Woodbury and the C.W.A. on 8BR85, Rouse (1951) and George W. Long (1966) aimed to summarize previous work conducted in the Cape Canaveral area. Rouse, working at Yale University, never visited the Cape Canaveral sites he wrote about, working instead with previous reports and publications to form his summaries. Rouse recorded the notes of J.S. Adams, Francis Le Baron,

George Woodbury, and G.M. Stirling. He also communicated with A.T. Anderson, who in 1947 had made a brief collection from 8BR85 after hearing reports “that human bones had been found there” (Rouse 1951). Rouse also made the claim that Burns mound represented a historic Ulumay village. This suggestion represents the first published interest in the village surrounding the burial mound. George A. Long, a graduate student from the University of Florida, made surface collections from several sites at Cape Canaveral. Long makes the first reference to the Wilson burial plot in his report, which at the time of his writing in 1966 was only twenty-six years old. Long, through research with locals, found out that the mound had been bulldozed and reshaped by Tex Williams “in recent years” (1966). A previous resident of the Cape Canaveral area, Mr. Leonard Johnson, also reports that the mound and the surrounding area was damaged during the construction of powerlines (Cantley 1994). Long also made surface collections from the newly leveled ground, finding both sherds and shell tools. The sherds he collected included “fragments of St. Johns Plain (250); St. Johns Check Stamped (53); Belle Glade Plain (3)” (Long 1966).

In addition to the change of use of Cape Canaveral itself, the public, along with the government, began to take more interest in how historical sites were managed and expected more precision from archaeologists. Archaeologists themselves had established the field of archaeology as a science rather than a historical field under the new wave of Processual archaeology. Several laws were passed in the 1960s and 70s that regulated archaeological work and the preservation of culturally significant sites. One of these, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), which required all federally funded projects to be evaluated for possible damage to historic and archaeological sites, directly influenced the start of the modern era of archaeological work at Cape Canaveral.

Modern archaeological work on 8BR85 in the late 20th century was conducted by multiple Cultural Resource Management (CRM) firms. The first of these firms was Resource Analysts Inc., who conducted a base-wide archaeological survey of Cape Canaveral Air Force Station (CCAFS). The work done by Resource Analysts Inc., reported by Levy et. Al (1984), was a 1982 survey that included both the prehistoric Native American midden and the historic Burnham grove. Both surface collection and twenty-six shovel tests were undertaken at 8BR85, revealing the extensive size of the Native American village as well as rubbish piles from the historic site. The report estimated that the size of the prehistoric site was 910 meters (2,986 feet) north-south and 370 meters (1,214 feet) east/west (Levy et. Al 1984). The Levy report also gives the first systematic investigation of the historic Wilson and Burnham cemeteries, as well as suggestions for future work.

Ten years later, in 1992, New South Associates conducted a survey of the Burns site. Their work consisted of twenty-six shovel tests on transects along the Banana River and around the burial mound. Within the shovel tests they found both prehistoric artifacts dating to the Malabar II period, along with historic artifacts from the 19th and 20th century occupation (Cantley et. Al 1993). New South Associates also redefined the site boundary to a smaller area than Resource Analysts Inc. did in 1984. Instead of a semi-circular boundary, New South Associates based their range of the boundaries of 8BR85 off the results from the transects they dug parallel to the Banana River. In these new boundaries, the site narrows considerably at its southern boundary. However, they did not confirm sterile shovel tests at all of the locations they excluded from the previous site boundary, so it remains possible that the site boundaries extend beyond the 1993 estimate.

Next, Janus Research dug five 1 x 1 m test pits at 8BR85 in 1995 (Bellomo 1996). All five test pits were located at the proposed locations of the future power line poles in an effort to mitigate damage caused by the construction of a new power line. All of their test pits were conducted in a disturbed context, as the previous construction of a power line had caused the soil to be disturbed in the area surrounding the poles. The disturbed context of the village component of the Burns site is well documented, as all modern archaeological excavation have noticed disturbed layers in their excavations and shovel tests. In addition to previous archaeology, the burial mound has been bulldozed, according to Long (1966). There is also the issue of the Burnham family occupation of the site, which used the area as an orange grove, unaware of the larger village component of the burial mound.

Archaeological Consultants, Inc. were the next to conduct research at 8BR85. In 1999, they conducted Phase II archaeology along the Banana River. In addition to surface collection, twelve 50 x 50 centimeter shovel tests and four 1 x 1 meter test pits were dug within site boundaries. Archaeological Consultants, Inc. determined that the only undisturbed midden layers found within their excavations were the ones directly along the Banana River, once again finding that disturbance of the Burns prehistoric site was severe and widespread. They also concurred with New South Associates on the location of the site boundaries – with the addition of the area around the Wilson cemetery, as the historical content of 8BR85 appeared to extend into the Wilson cemetery area.

Archaeological Consultants Inc., along with Resource Analysts Inc. and New South Associates, agreed that both the prehistoric burial mound and the two historic cemeteries of 8BR85 should be considered for the National Register of Historic Places. Deming (1999) states, “Both the prehistoric and historic components of 8BR85 are considered eligible for listing in the

NRHP under the Criteria A, B, and D. The Burnham cemetery... is also considered NRHP eligible in accordance with Criteria Considerations C and D.” Criteria A concerns sites in which “events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” have occurred. Criteria B states that sites may be included if they “are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past.” Criteria D is for sites “that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory” (Andrus 2002). The prehistoric component of the Burns site is a representation of the broad cultural period of the late Malabar II period, and holds important information about burial practices of that time. The historic component of 8BR85 holds the grave of Mills Burnham, the first settler on the Cape and the lighthouse keeper for most of the late 19th century. His life is tied into much of early Floridian settlement and the continuing expansion of American settlers into Florida in the 19th century.

In the 21st century, the focus turned towards a more methodical approach for archaeology at Cape Canaveral. The position of Cultural Resource Manager (CRM) was created and has been filled by Thomas Penders since 2006 (Doran 2014). Under the new administration, the focus has been on preserving and recording known historic and prehistoric sites, along with undertaking the first archaeological investigations on the Cold War missiles and launch pads scattered across Cape Canaveral. The most recent survey, conducted in spring 2017, focused on shovel testing along transects extending from the Banana River, examining the size and cultural remains of the Malabar II period village. The spring 2017 season also focused on recording both the Wilson and Burnham Cemeteries, and creating an accurate map of the burial mound and the location of shovel tests. All three of these activities were necessitated by the previous research conducted on 8BR85.

Previous excavations and shovel tests suffered from either a lack of recording or a lack of in-depth survey. The burial mound at 8BR85 was excavated by Woodbury in the 1930's, but lack of planning and funding resulted in minimal reporting and almost no analysis of the excavated remains. Furthermore, conflicting reports exist on the actual excavation itself – was the burial mound fully excavated, or only half excavated? The shovel tests undertaken by the private Cultural Resource Management companies did provide a more formalized recording and systematic archaeology, unlike their predecessors. However, their research questions were very limited and focused solely on the specific problem they were hired to research. Most were focused on whether 8BR85 was eligible for the NRHP, and Janus Research was concerned with the location of a new telephone line running through the site. For an archaeological site to be truly understood, it is necessary to do more than simply collect findings – there must be analysis involved. Otherwise, the data is collected but little is learned about the actual people who occupied and built this site. While a huge number of shovel tests and excavation are not needed or recommended for all archaeological research, for the current questions about the size and length of occupation at the site, the current research has not gathered enough information and/or recorded that information for present researchers. The 2017 season aimed to rectify lack of archaeological testing by conducting 46 shovel tests on the Burns site, with more planned in future seasons.

Next, recording the cemeteries and mapping 8BR85 are two activities important to ensure that the site is properly documented for the future. Previously, the cemeteries had been located on a larger map of the Cape, but the specifics of the dimensions of the cemeteries and the gravestones, along with the writing etched onto the gravestones, had not been recorded. Also, while maps have been made of 8BR85, an accurate map made using Geographic Information

Systems (GIS) had never been drawn. In addition to a map with exact coordinates, GIS allows for topographical maps to be made of the Burns burial mound. The size of the mound has varied in several historical reports, most likely due to the actual change of size as the mound was disturbed on several occasions, but also due to human error and variability. An accurate topographical map will allow future generations to compare natural and human impacts made on the mound throughout the 21st century.

The late 20th and early 21st century has made available many new technologies that aid archaeologists in accurately mapping and collecting information on site. Current laws such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) may restrict excavation in 8BR85 and similar sites, but modern tools such as Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) allow such sites to be examined without causing irreplaceable damage to the archaeological remains. In the past, such as when Woodbury was conducting his excavation of the Burns mound in the 1930s, archaeologists were focused conducting full excavations to learn about sites. With both new laws and ethics in archaeology, this model of excavation is mostly outdated. Instead, the focus is on the preservation of remaining sites and analysis with the least amount of destruction.

Boyton, a graduate at the University of Central Florida, surveyed several Cape Canaveral cemeteries, including the Burnham cemetery, using GPR. Historical accounts tell of possible unmarked graves within the Burnham cemetery, and while Boyton's work did not provide a definite answer on the presence of unmarked graves at Burnham cemetery, future GPR work has the possibility of building on the work started by Boyton (2005). In addition, GPR work on the burial mound itself could answer important questions of the level of disturbance of the burial mound, and the burials that remain there.

The most pressing danger to archaeological sites, however, is natural processes. The current aim of the current CRM at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station is to preserve known sites at Cape Canaveral in addition to locating new sites and conducting archaeological testing. Penders, in 2015, wrote on the preservation of the current grave sites on Cape Canaveral, including the Wilson and the Burnham cemeteries, along with the burial mound at 8BR85. Perseveration and upkeep include: mowing the grass and trimming growing plants within the cemetery walls, cleaning historic markers, and ensuring protection from possible looters. While recording is important to the archaeologist, it is also important to ensure that future generations of archaeologists, with advanced tools and methods, also have the chance to examine the site in the most well-preserved state as possible. While the time remaining for study may be limited due to natural processes such as sea level rise or unpredictable natural disasters such as hurricanes, current study also demands a well-maintained area that is well-marked and kept from decay. It is important to keep the preservation of sites for their current value to the community, as both the Wilson and Burnham families have living relatives.

The hope for future seasons at 8BR85 is not just to record as much as possible, but to record accurately and in-depth, so that future generations can fully understand the cultural significance of the Burns site, and know just as much as present archaeologists do. While 8BR85 has a storied history of archaeological work, unfortunately current levels of sea level rise threatens the integrity of the site for future archaeologists. It is entirely possible that current excavations will be the last, and so it is vital that future work on the Burns accurately records all present findings. 8BR85 is a site that has been looked at through the lens of many different time periods and archaeological styles – and it is important to preserve that history to truly understand the nature of present archaeological survey at the Burns site. By looking at the past, present

archaeologists can build upon previous work and ensure that the future holds all relevant knowledge of a culturally significant Native American burial mound and two historic cemeteries, each one holding a bit of the history of Cape Canaveral within them.

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