

NEW DATES FROM EASTERN CITRUS COUNTY

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Several radiocarbon and thermoluminescence dates were recently obtained as a result of the Florida State Museum-Withlatchoochee River Archaeology Council excavations at two eastern Citrus County sites. Three radiocarbon dates were obtained from two features at the Bayonet Field site (8Ci197), a shell midden. Two of the dates were based on charcoal samples from a probable hearth (Feature 7), which was filled with burned freshwater shell, food bone, and charcoal. These samples yielded ranges of dates of 1000 ± 60 B.P., or A.D. 890-1010 (Beta-12679); and 630 ± 50 B.P., or A.D. 1270-1370 (Beta-12680). The wide discrepancy in the dates makes interpretation difficult, but we are inclined to accept the former date as more accurate since part of the second sample had been exposed to the elements for two weeks. The feature was located on the edge of an excavation unit, so only half of it was excavated to begin with. The first sample (Beta-12679) came from this half. Later, we were able to excavate the adjacent unit, recovering the remaining feature contents and the second charcoal sample. In the interim, the edge of the charcoal mass had been left exposed in the profile. However, the actual sample did not include the exposed portion of the charcoal mass.

The third date was based on charcoal from a nearby hearth (Feature 13) containing well preserved food bone, ash, freshwater shells, and a Pinellas projectile point. The sample yielded a date range of 1050 ± 90 B.P., or A.D. 810-990 (Beta 12681). Artifacts from the portion of the midden where these samples were collected clearly indicate mixed Weeden Island-related and Safety Harbor components, which are supported by all three of the dates. The

Pinellas Point (Bullen 1975:8) from Feature 13 also supports this interpretation.

One radiocarbon and two thermoluminescence (TL) dates were obtained from the Tatham Mound (8Ci203), a Safety Harbor burial mound. The radiocarbon date was determined from a charcoal sample recovered from mound fill about 50 cm below the mound surface. It yielded a date range of 730 ± 60 B.P., or A.D. 1160-1280 (Beta-12678). Because of associated Spanish Artifacts and a TL date from the same stratum (see below), this date must be in error. Spanish artifacts from nearby date the level to the first two-thirds of the sixteenth century. The discrepancy is probably due to the "old wood" problem (Johnson et al. 1985), the accidental inclusion of part of an old post or very old charcoal in the fill used to construct the mound.

The two TL dates were obtained from pottery sherds with associated soil samples. One of these was from the original (pre-mound) ground surface, and the other was from the top stratum, about 9 cm below the surface of the mound summit. The first of these (the pre-mound sample) yielded a date range of 740 ± 100 B.P., or A.D. 1110-1310 (Alpha-1940). The second sample (top stratum) yielded a date range of 330 ± 50 , or A.D. 1570-1670 (Alpha-1939).

The availability of three independent methods of dating (radiocarbon, TL, and European artifact dating) for the Tatham Mound provides a rare opportunity to test the efficiency of radiocarbon and TL dating, and also results in a higher level of confidence in dating the mound. The close similarity of the radiocarbon date and the TL date from the pre-mound surface strengthens the

interpretation of the charcoal sample as accidentally included in the mound fill while collecting soil from around the mound. The lower end of the TL date range from the top stratum (A.D. 1570) fits with the date range provided by the glass beads from the same level, A.D. 1500-1580 (Mitchem et al. 1985:40-41).

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