



# Revisiting Brays Island: Spatial Analysis of Legacy CRM Data from Coastal South Carolina

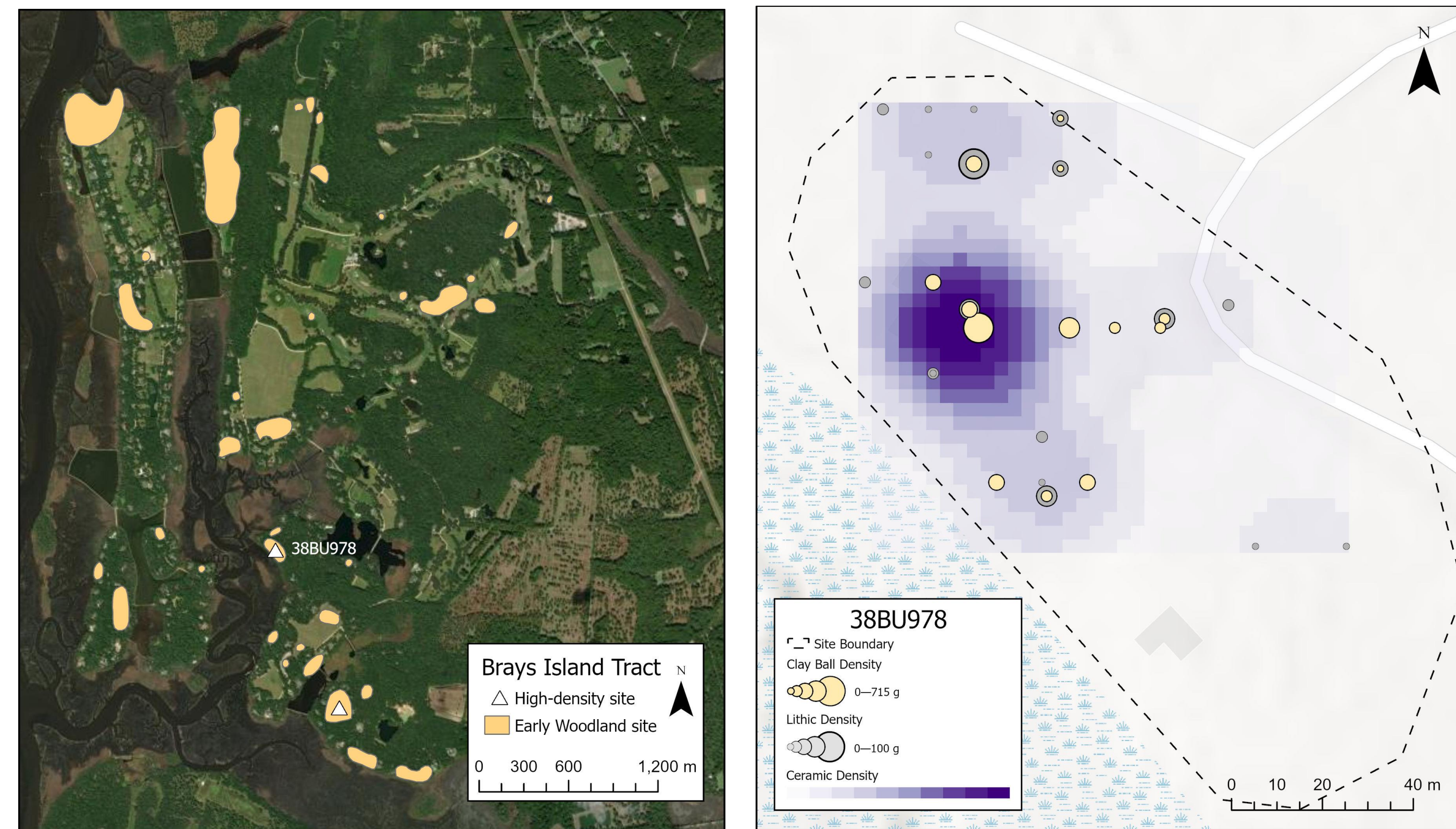
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## Project

We use GIS to reanalyze 36 archaeological sites from the 4,500-acre Brays Island tract in Beaufort County, South Carolina, originally subjected to Phase I survey and limited Phase II testing by Florida Archaeological Services in 1988. Our spatial analysis compares site locations across temporal phases to illuminate how settlement and subsistence strategies shifted over time within the same riverine and estuarine landscape.



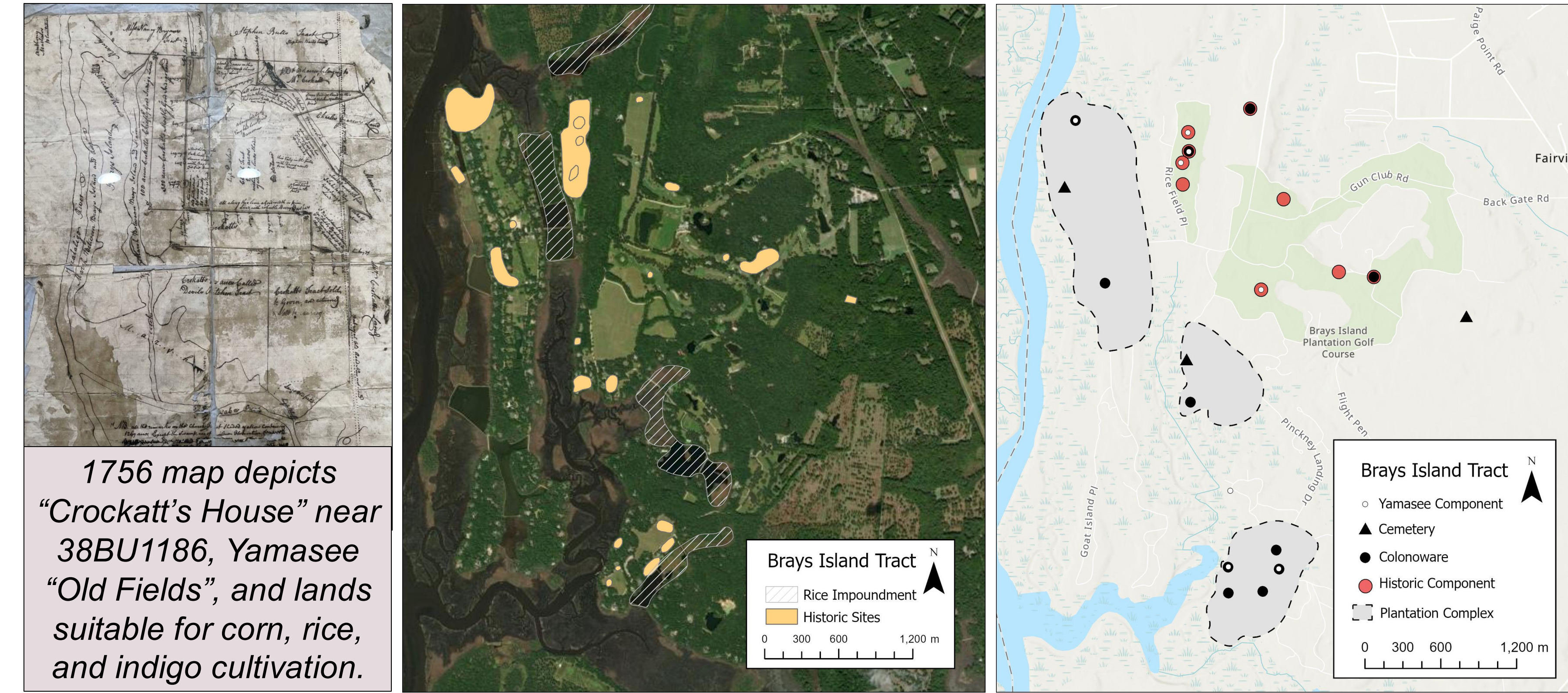
## Early Woodland



Sites are numerous but generally ephemeral with the exception of two that show more substantial occupation. 38BU978 contains more than 80 clay ball fragments, dense concentrations of fiber tempered pottery, lithic debitage, a refuse pit, and a posthole. Across Early Woodland sites, shell is notably absent.



## Colonial and Historic Period

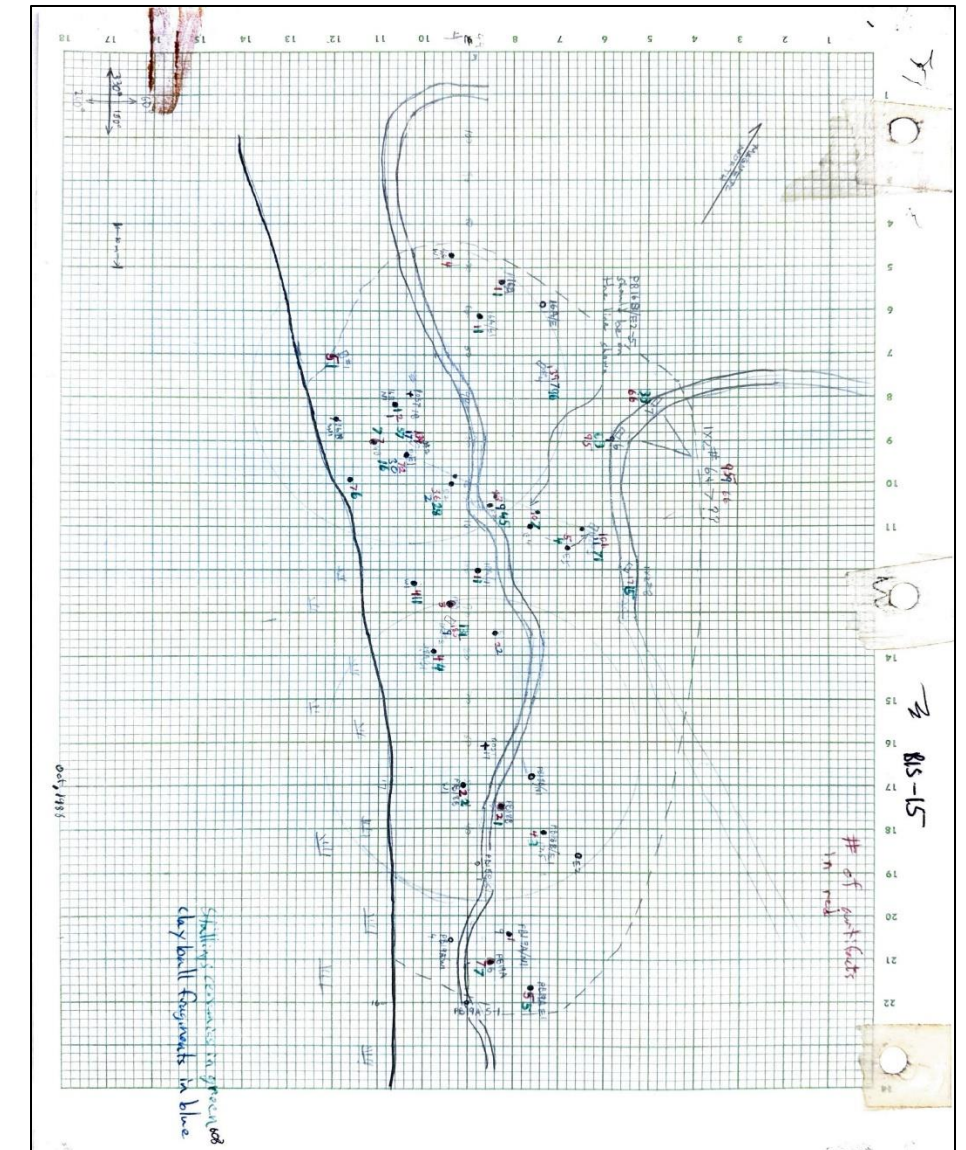


Several sites have early 18<sup>th</sup> century Yamasee components. Archival records indicate multiple plantations with changing ownership and boundaries through time, beginning around 1740. Colonoware was recovered across the tract. Archaeological remains suggest at least three 19<sup>th</sup> century plantation complexes. Maps and large-scale landscape modifications indicate intensive rice agriculture. Additional components include a Civil War campsite (38BU1180) and sites associated with post-emancipation tenant farmers, including two cemeteries.

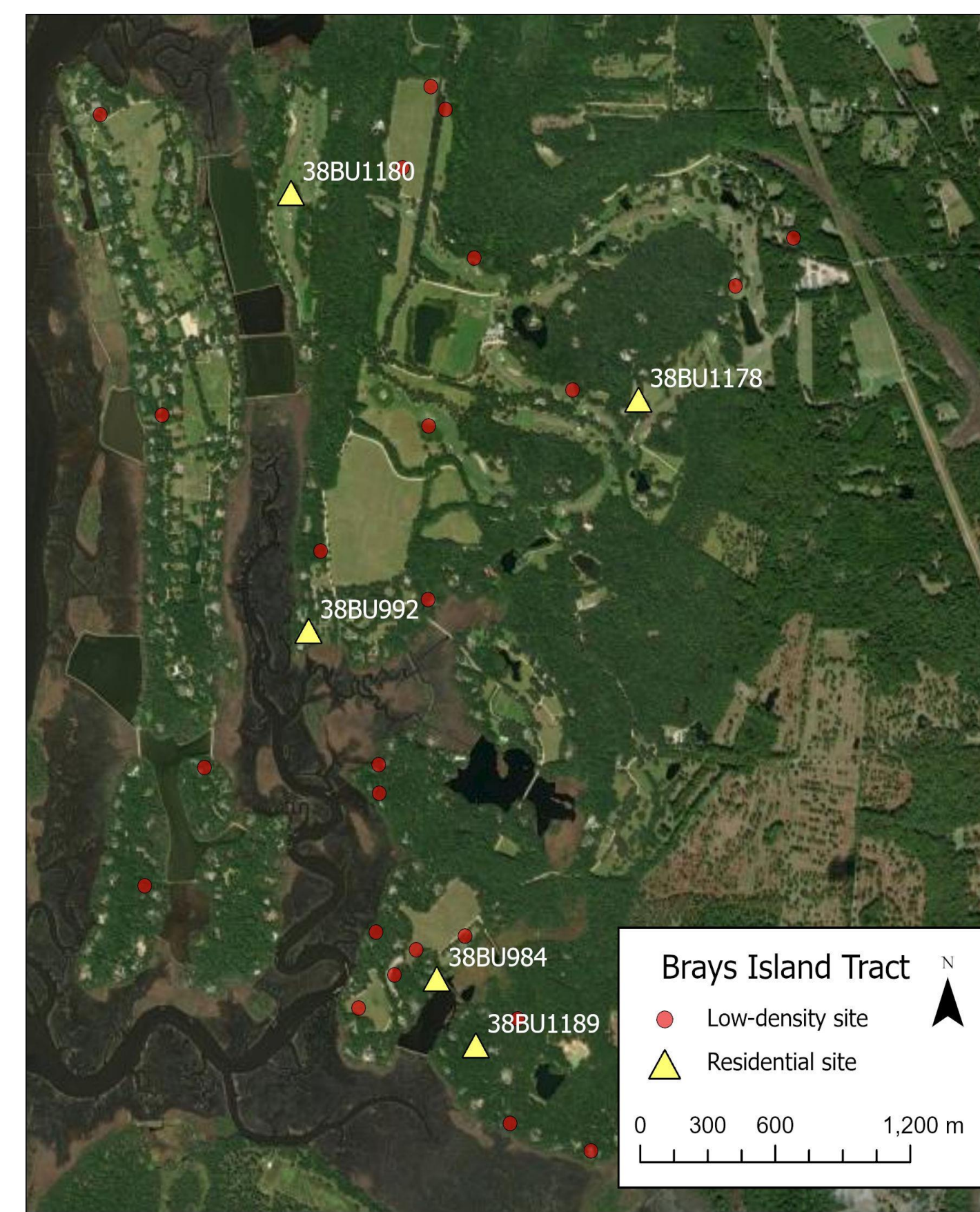
## Methods

Artifacts were removed from field collection bags, sorted, and cataloged by material and type. Field notes and photographs were digitized, and excavation maps were georeferenced in ArcGIS. Site chronologies were updated based on diagnostic artifacts, and botanical and faunal remains were analyzed for select sites.

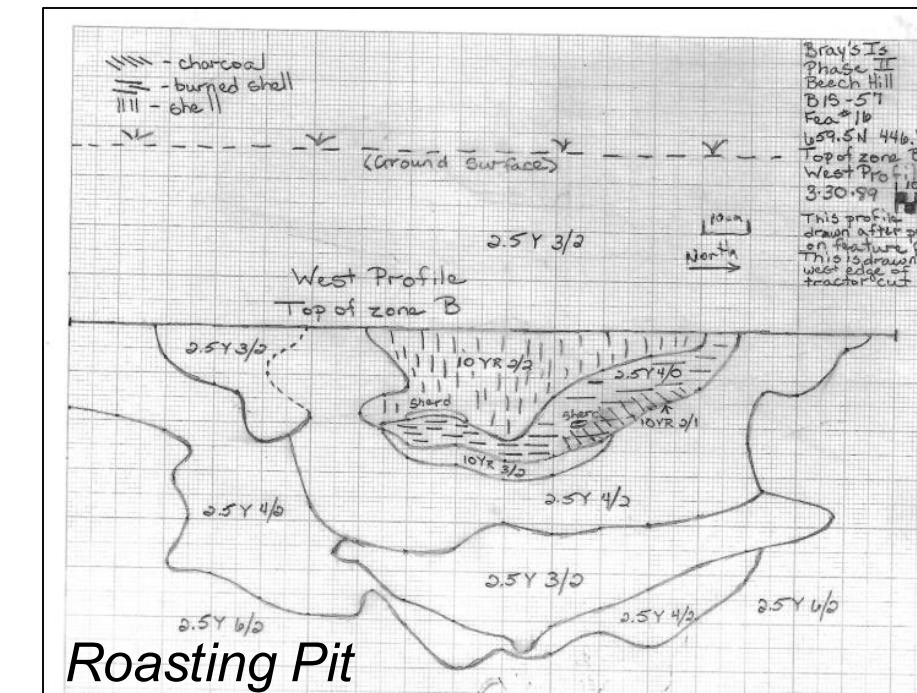
Example of field documentation  
38BU978



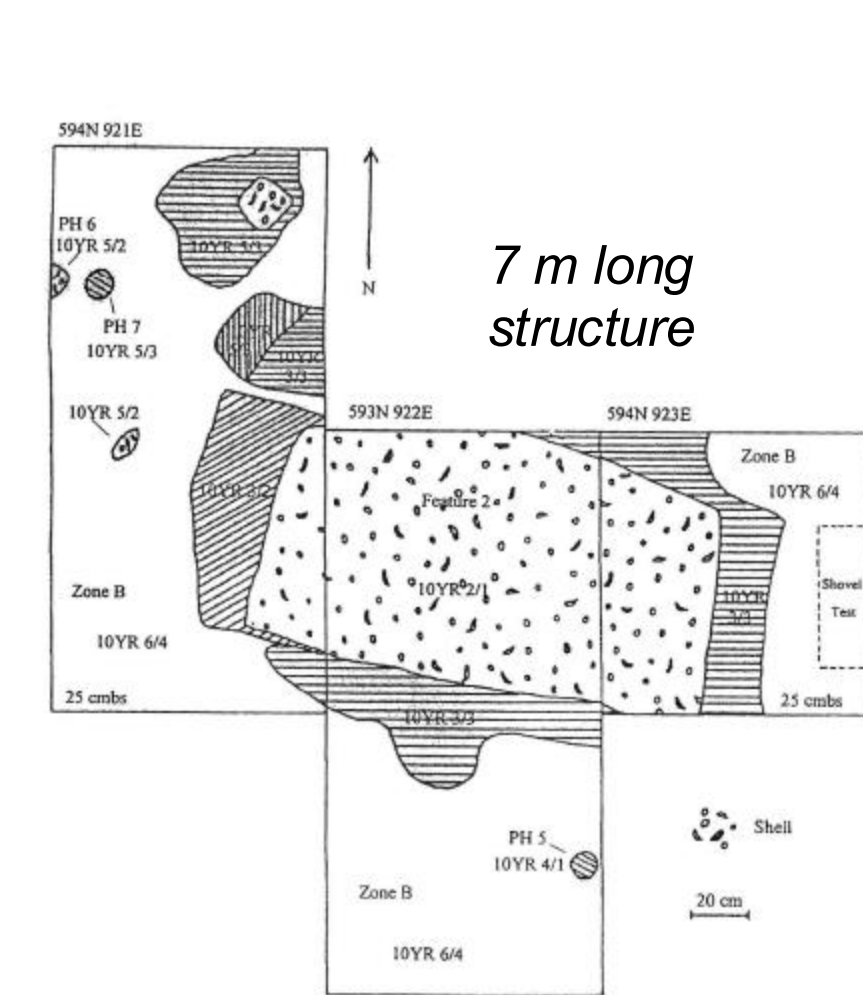
## Middle Woodland



**38BU1180**  
Deptford and Wilmington components on a tidal creek, with shell roasting pits, post holes, and ecologically diverse food remains, including cultivated plants.



**38BU1178**  
10 ha Deptford village on a swamp terrace with two identified structures, refuse pits, and cooking areas.



## Findings

- Most sites are multi-component; 33% have Woodland and Historic components.
- The same estuarine and upland resource zones were exploited throughout the Woodland period, with Middle Woodland as the most archaeologically dense phase
- Evidence for several high-density sites spanning the Woodland period.
- Yamasee components co-occur with mid to late-18<sup>th</sup> century Euromerican sites.
- Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century African American tenant sites and cemeteries located near older plantation complexes.

## Future Directions

Future work will include AMS radiocarbon dating of high-density Woodland sites, continued botanical and faunal analysis, and reanalysis of historic pottery to refine site chronologies.

Several sites could be revisited to explore new questions:

- Early Woodland: cooking practices; early ceramic transitions
- Middle Woodland: settlement pattern, subsistence (e.g., cultivation, catchment areas)
- Historic: early colonists, rice agriculture, tenant farming

## References

Archaeological Survey and Testing of the Brays Island Plantation Tract, Beaufort County, South Carolina. 2000. Report Prepared for Brays Island Company by Florida Archaeological Services.

Archaeological Revisit of 27 Sites on the Brays Island Development. Beaufort County, South Carolina. 2001. Reported prepared for Brays Island Plantation by New South Associates.

Phase II Testing of the Brays Island Plantation Boat Shed Site (38BU1192), Beaufort County, South Carolina. 2024. Report Prepared for Brays Island Plantation Colony, Inc. by Hannah Hoover.

## Acknowledgements

Brays Island Stewardship Fund, College of Charleston HSS Student Travel and Research Award, Dr. Maureen Hays, Dr. Sarah Platt

Period	Date	Diagnostic Artifacts
Late Archaic	3800 – 1000 BCE	Square stemmed and contracting stemmed points (e.g., Savannah River Point)
Early Woodland	1000 – 100 BCE	Fiber (Stallings Phase) and sand tempered (Refuge Phase) punctate and dentate stamped pottery; stemmed and triangular points
Middle Woodland	100 BC – 500 AD	Cord-marked and simple stamped pottery, coarse sand (Deptford Phase), grog (Wilmington Phase), and fine sand (St. Catherines); stemmed and triangular points
Late Woodland	500 – 1000 CE	Complicated stamped pottery, fine sand (Savannah Phase), coarse sand (Irene Phase) and sand and grog (Altamaha Phase) tempered; triangular points
Mississippian/ Colonial	1000 – 1750 CE	Complicated stamped pottery, fine sand (Savannah Phase), coarse sand (Irene Phase) and sand and grog (Altamaha Phase) tempered; triangular points
Historic	1730 – 1950 CE	Colonoware, European and Euroamerican pottery, glass, metal, etc.