

Plantation Point The Early Inhabitants of Plantation Point

The Plantation Point Development is not a new occupation of the lands along Harrison Creek. Prior to development, archaeologists from Florida Archeological Services of Jacksonville identified the presence of three archaeological sites on the property. The research was conducted in close coordination with Plantation Point, the archaeologists and the Florida Division of Historical Resources in Tallahassee.

In recognition of the fact that archaeologists of the University of Florida had been conducting investigations at the Spanish Mission of Santa Catalina de Guale located on the adjoining lands of Amelia Island Plantation for several years, the developers of Plantation Point wished to take into account the possibility that prehistoric and early historic occupants of the area may have also utilized Plantation Point. Upon identification of significant archaeological resources on the development, construction plans were changed to allow the archaeological team to excavate portions of the sites in order to save for future generations the information that these early occupants left behind in the archaeological sites on the property.

The results of archaeological investigations on Plantation Point indicate that Native Americans of the Orange Period and the St. Johns Period once inhabited the land. It appears that these and other Indians may have lived intermittently in small camps or villages for short periods of time over several thousand years. The presence of peoples of the Orange Period was demonstrated by the recovery of fragments of Indian pottery generally known as fiber tempered ceramics, the oldest known pottery type in North America. It appears that these peoples inhabited Plantation Point at some time between 1000 and 2000 B.C. The Indians of the St. Johns began to occupy the tract perhaps as early as 500 B.C. As indicated by a plain, chalky-ware pottery type known as St. Johns Plain.

Later, after 800 AD, the St. Johns people began making a new pottery type known as St. Johns check-stamped, indicated by the presence of a waffle shaped design used to decorate the external portion of their pottery. The St. Johns period Indians subsisted on local plants and animals including fish, deer and shellfish, the remains of which can still be seen in the form of scattered oyster shells over several areas of Plantation Point. It also appears that sometime in the later stages of the St. Johns period, Indians from the lower coast of Georgia, known as the Savannah culture, came to harvest the abundant game, fish and shellfish of the area leaving behind shells, fish bones and pottery decorated with small, cord-marked designs.

In addition to the Savannah culture, Plantation Point has also yielded the presence of Spanish and Indian artifacts associated with the Mission of Santa Catalina de Guale, located just south of Plantation Point. Although the majority of the mission settlement lies on the lands of Amelia Island Plantation, the most significant discovery in Plantation Point was the identification and excavation of the small kitchen and well associated with the Spanish and Guale Indian occupation which lasted from 1686 to 1702. In addition to Spanish and Guale Indian artifacts, the Plantation Point dig has yielded the remains of plants and animals that the Spaniards and Indians ate during the occupation of the mission. The study of these and other remains are ongoing and promise to yield new and important information regarding the Spanish and Indian way of life on Amelia Island.

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