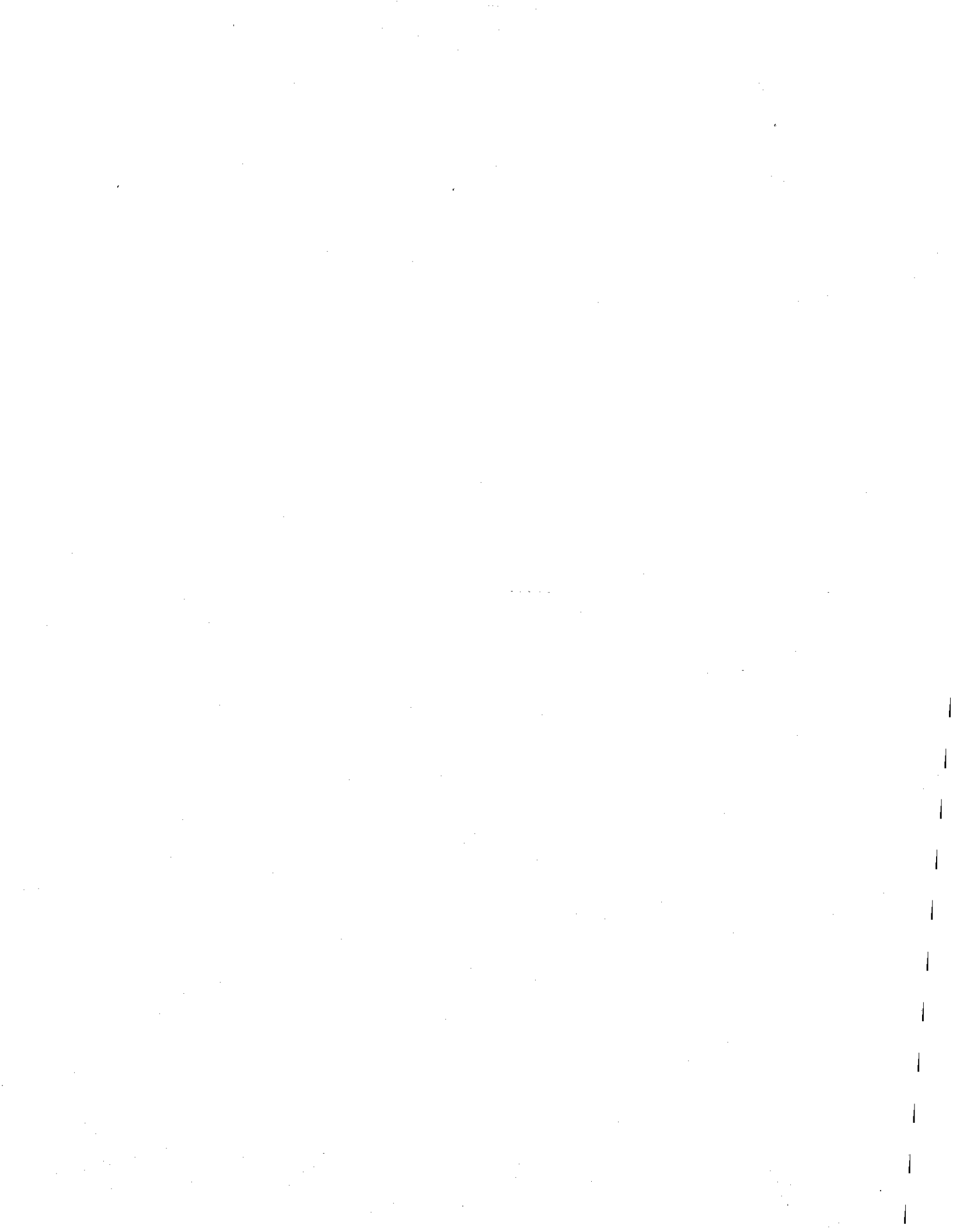


# LOWER MISSISSIPPI SURVEY



## TRUDEAU AN 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY TUNICA VILLAGE

Jeffrey P. Brain



## FOREWORD

This pamphlet is the second in a series designed to stimulate widespread interest in the extraordinary collection of 18th century European and native Indian artifacts known as the "Tunica Treasure."

This bulletin briefly reports the archaeological and historical research that has been carried out to identify positively the provenience of the collection, updates the potential of the overall project, and outlines the ultimate objectives which can and must be achieved.

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The Lower Mississippi Survey, Peabody Museum, Harvard University conducted test excavations at the Trudeau site in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana during the period August 7 through 29, 1972. The purpose of the test was to verify that this site was the provenience from which the vaunted "Tunica Treasure" had been removed, and in that case to establish the archaeological context.

Adequate proof constituting verification of the site required three discrete sorts of evidence: archaeological retrieval of artifactual material comparable to that already contained within the Tunica Treasure collection, in-ground evidence in the form of recently dug holes testifying to the removal of the collection, and the example of an undisturbed situation (presumably a burial with accompanying grave goods). In the course of these investigations, the archaeological context could be sorted out from the possible total of cultural components.

The excavations consisted of a total of 15 pits, ranging in horizontal dimensions from 1 x 2 meters to 2 x 3 meters. Depths varied according to the situation, but in no case was it necessary to go deeper than 1 1/2 meters. These pits were placed in six distinct locations where it was thought most likely that the information sought could be recovered (Fig. 1). The locations were chosen through a combination of visual observation, magnetometer instrument survey, and educated guesswork. Each was relatively productive and contributed important information, so that the overall objectives were successfully achieved.

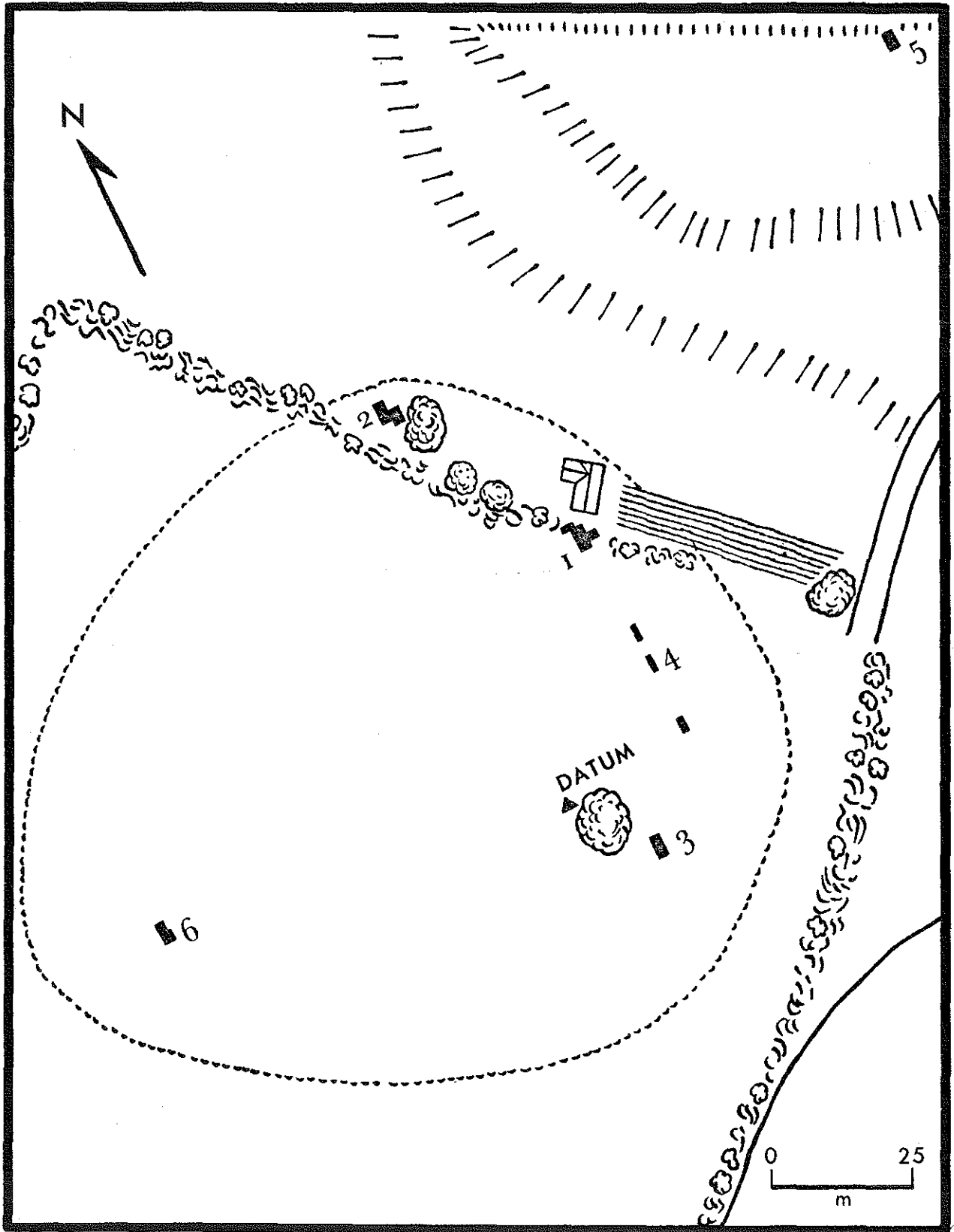


Fig. 1. The Trudeau site, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. Plan of excavations carried out by the LMS during August 1972.

At all locations material appropriate to the particular Indian and historic contexts was discovered. Furthermore, although fragmentary, most specimens were similar to artifacts contained within the Tunica collection (e.g., see Fig. 2). The best sample came from location 3 where a trash pit containing a large amount of refuse was found. Two smaller trash pits were also discovered at location 4, and scattered midden was present at location 1.

Locations 1, 2 and 5 produced evidence of recent disturbance: specifically, of crude pits dug from the present ground surface to an average depth of approximately one meter (Fig. 3). These pits were cleaned out and found to contain fragments of human bone and scattered artifacts, indicating the former presence of burials with associated grave goods. In most cases, portions of the original burial pits could also be observed.

Location 6 provided the final necessary bit of proof: an undisturbed burial (Fig. 4). This burial was one meter deep, and was comprised of a single adult male accompanied by the remains of a French musket, a pike head, a clasp knife, two unidentified bits of iron, an extra gunflint, and the residue from a small amount of gunpowder. Surprisingly, no other metal, ceramic or glass artifacts were present. However, the definite presence on site of burials containing the appropriate artifacts was verified.

With this accumulation of evidence, the archaeological context was securely established as a native Indian village and cemetery. Thus identified, it was then possible to date the site independently through cartographic research. Two

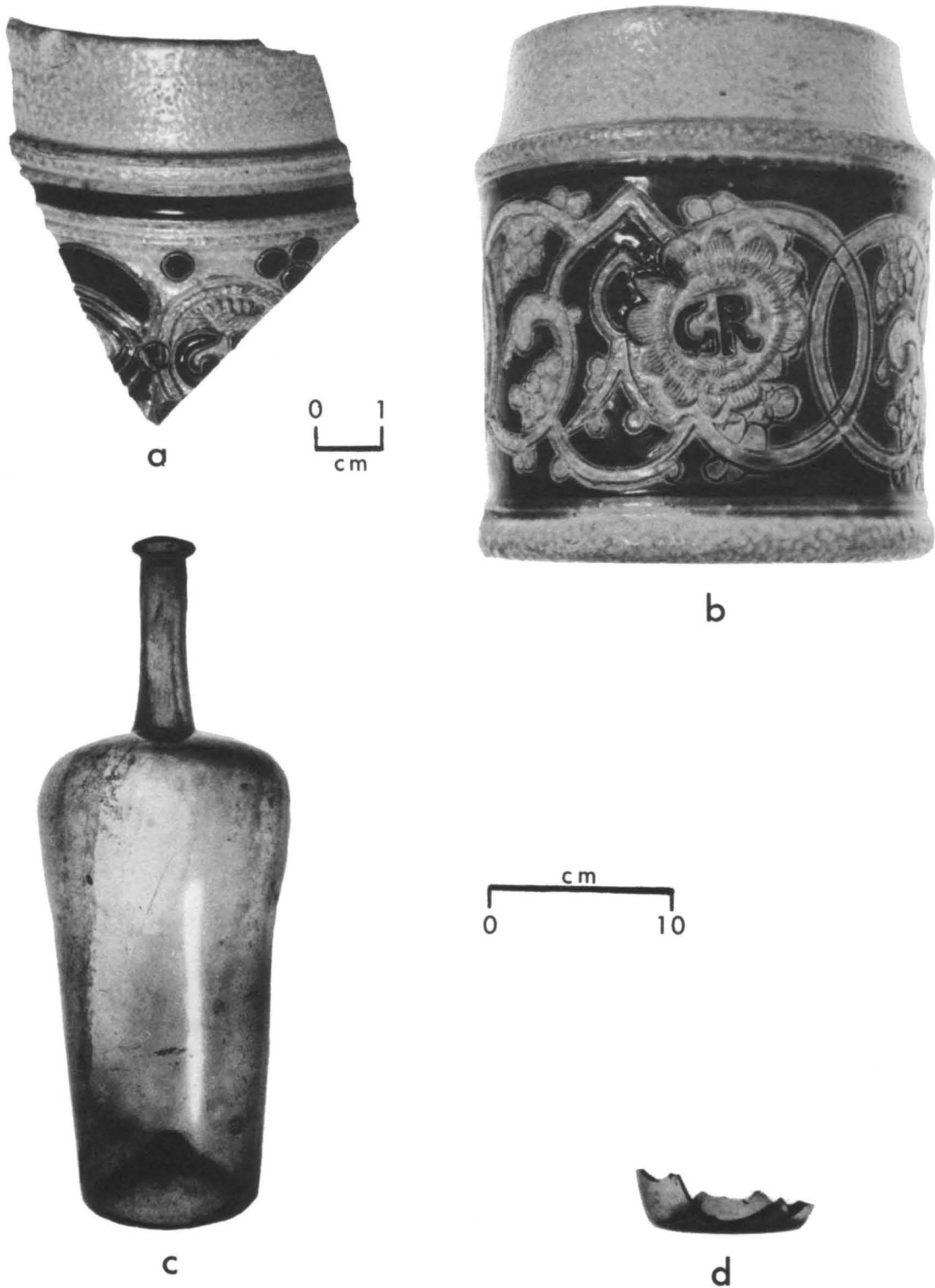


Fig. 2. Distinctive artifacts from the "Tunica Treasure" and fragments of similar artifacts from the excavations at Trudeau. a-b: Westerwald "GR" mug. c-d: unusually large blue-green glass bottle.





Fig. 3. Recent pit dug from present ground surface at a burial location.



Fig. 4. Detail of undisturbed burial at the Trudeau site (see cover).

contemporary French maps show a Tunica Indian occupation at this location around 1740 (Fig. 5). Supporting evidence from other maps suggests that the village was founded soon after 1731, and was abandoned by 1764. Allowing for a reasonable lapse between acquisition and deposition, these dates coincide very satisfactorily with the age of the European artifacts in the "Tunica Treasure," most of which were probably manufactured between 1720 - 1740, with a few earlier, and some as late as ca. 1760. The collection and its archaeological context could thus be given a very tight absolute dating, which invaluablely increases its utility as a prime point of reference for French colonial activity and interaction with the Indians in North America.

The results of our researches, then, have been highly satisfactory up to this point. The unique event of early French and Indian contact in the Lower Mississippi Valley has become an archaeological reality, and not just a vague historic reference. However, it is now most important that we exploit this advantage to the utmost. The very special potential we have at hand here presents the unparalleled opportunity to provide a secure archaeological background for the study of human events and interaction in the Lower Valley during the protohistoric and early historic periods. To capitalize fully on this opportunity, we must thoroughly develop the potential of the Trudeau site (and other newly discovered related sites) through complete excavation. We hope to proceed to this next most important step as soon as is practicable.

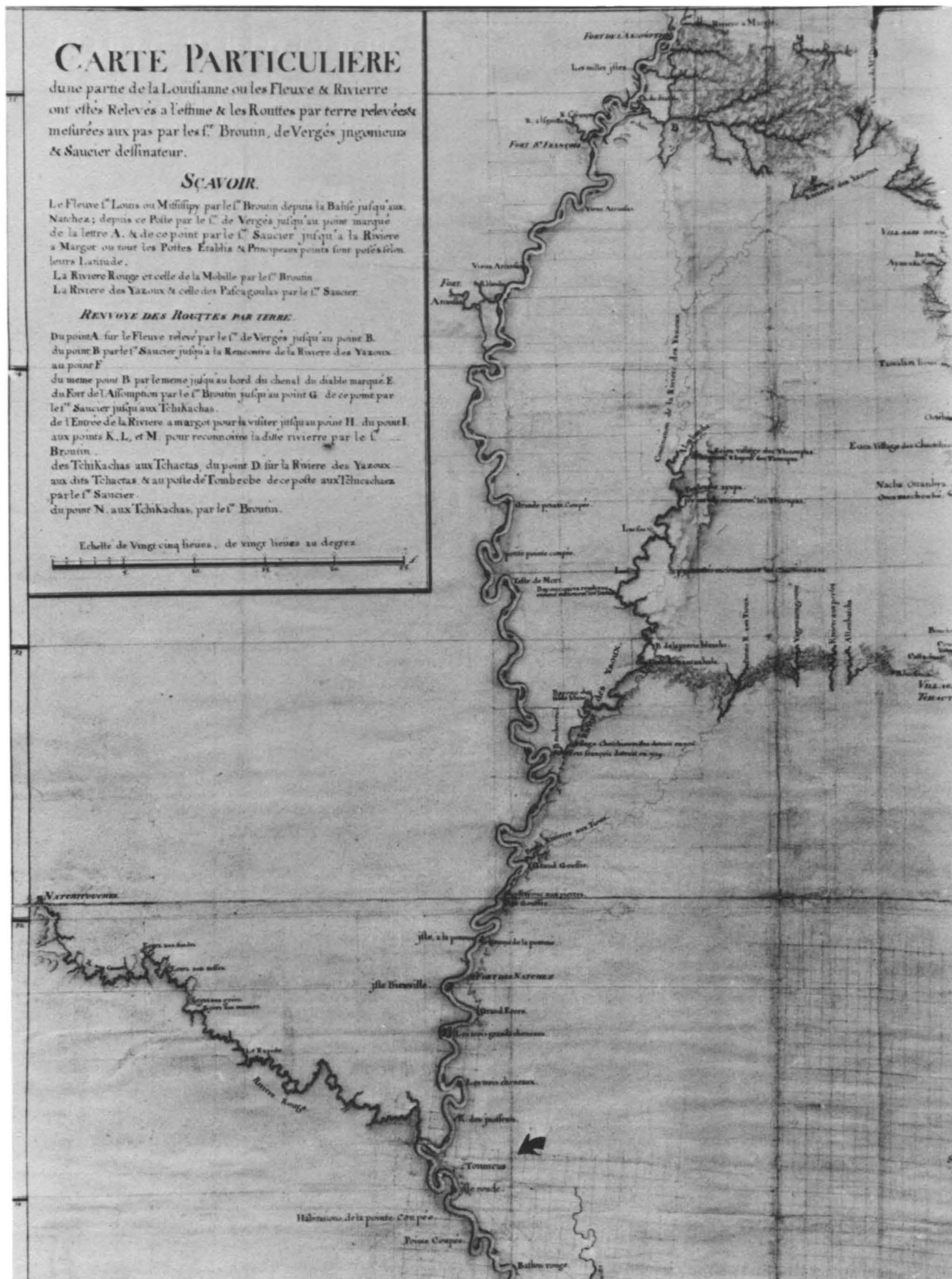


Fig. 5. Detail of "Map of Louisiana" prepared by Broutin, de Vergés and Saucier in 1740. Note that the locations are given for the various tribes, including the "Tonnicas" (Tunica).

