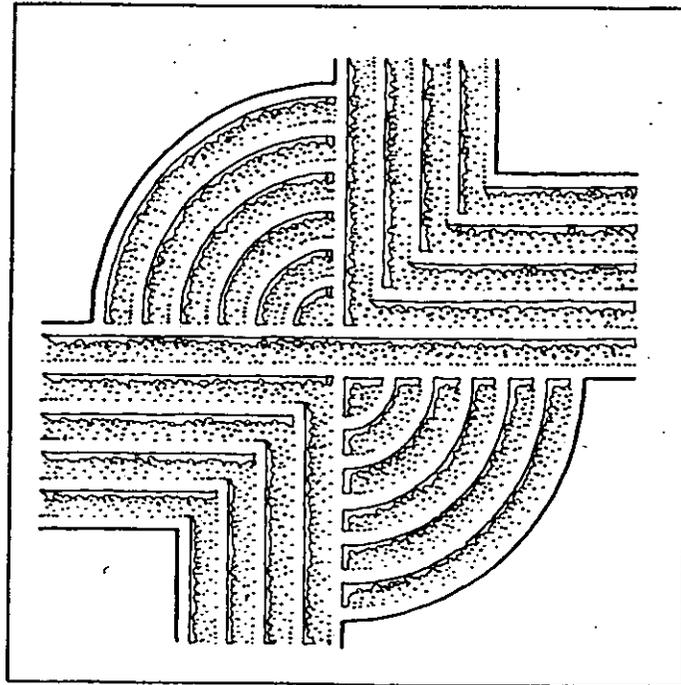


MANAGEMENT SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL
DATA RECOVERY AT A PORTION OF THE COTTON
HOPE PLANTATION (38BU96), HILTON HEAD ISLAND,
BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA



RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 44

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA RECOVERY
AT A PORTION OF THE COTTON HOPE PLANTATION (38BU96),
HILTON HEAD ISLAND, BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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Chicora Research Contribution 44

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Introduction

Site 38BU96 was first examined by Chicora Foundation, Inc. in 1987 as part of a reconnaissance survey of Hilton Head Island conducted for the Town (Trinkley 1987). Additional survey of the site, including the excavation of 53 shovel tests, was conducted by Chicora, again for the Town of Hilton Head Island, in 1988 (Trinkley 1988). Based on this survey, the State Historic Preservation Office concurred that the site was eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In early 1990, Mr. Robert W. Gerhart advanced plans to develop a 14 acre tract of land on which site 38BU96 is situated. At the same time, Mr. Gerhart verbally requested that Chicora Foundation prepare a data recovery plan for the site. This proposal, dated March 6, 1990, was submitted to Mr. Gerhart and to the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (S.C. SHPO). The data recovery plan was approved by the SHPO (letter from Dr. Patricia Cridlebaugh to Mr. Robert W. Gerhart, dated March 20, 1990) and a Memorandum of Agreement between the developer and the SHPO was signed on April 2, 1990. Chicora's proposal for data recovery was approved by Mr. Gerhart on March 12, 1990.

This management summary has been prepared immediately upon completion of the field work and does not contain information on artifact or subsistence analyses. It is intended solely to provide a brief descriptive statement of the work conducted by Chicora and to allow the SHPO to verify that the proposed work has actually been accomplished. The management summary is minimally necessary for Vanguard Realty to continue with the development of the land encompassing 38BU96. This construction will destroy large portions of the site and, of course, created the need for archaeological mitigation activities initially.

Archaeological investigations were begun at 38BU96 by a crew of crew (including the Principal Investigator) on March 26, 1990 and continued through April 20, 1990. A total of 671.5 person hours were spent in the field on this project and an additional 30 person hours were spent on field laboratory processing and analysis. As a result of this work 2020 square feet of site area were opened and 1329 cubic feet of soil and midden were moved in primary excavations, all screened through 1/4-inch mesh. A total of 14 features (not including post holes) were identified in this work and these were screened through 1/8-inch mesh. The architectural features were examined by Mr. Colin Brooker, an architectural historian, on April 16.

Mr. Gerhart was notified verbally on April 18 that the work was the was nearing completion and that the units could be

backfilled. He requested that the units be left open until they could be backfilled during construction. Chicora has therefore left the various units covered with plastic and has left up barricade tape around each excavation area.

Previous Excavations

Chicora Foundation has examined this site twice for the Town of Hilton Head Island (Trinkley 1988, 1989). In addition, we understand that the firm of Brockington and Associates also conducted some limited shovel tests and 1-meter excavations at the site, although no report of this activity could be located at the S.C. Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, the S.C. SHPO, or The Environmental and Historical Museum of Hilton Head Island.

The initial studies by Chicora identified the site as part of Cotton Hope, a major nineteenth century plantation owned by William Pope. The site is situated on a broad, relatively high (16 feet MSL) terrace overlooking Skull Creek. Adjacent to the creek there is an area of hardwoods where there has been only limited disturbance. Further inland (east) there is evidence of cultivation and the area is currently in planted pines. The soils of the site area are the well drained Wando series. The central UTM coordinates for the site are E524000 N3566550.

The 53 shovel tests excavated at the site revealed site boundaries measuring about 600 by 150 feet and artifacts suggestive of a low status, domestic occupation from the early nineteenth century (Trinkley 1989). This information, coupled with an 1862 plan of the plantation showing a series of eight structures in the site area, suggested a non-linear slave settlement with utilitarian structures.

Data Recovery Excavations

The grid at 38BU96 was established paralleling the Skull Creek shoreline and oriented S55°30'W. Grid north is therefore 55°30'northwest of magnetic north. This grid is tied into one permanent point; additional points were not established because of the extensive construction expected from development activities. Vertical control was maintained through the use of a mean sea level datum (iron nails in the base of two oak trees, one at 17.00 feet MSL and the other at 18.57 feet MSL).

The first phase of these investigations included an intensive auger test survey using a two-person power auger with a 10-inch bit. Auger tests were placed on the grid at 25 foot intervals with the tests number from the south to the north and the west to the east (excepting the south end of the site where the grid was extended and the numbering is therefore out of sequence). A total of 220 auger tests were excavated, each screened through 1/4-inch mesh and all materials collected for analysis. Shell, tabby rubble,

38BU96 - COTTON HOPE - HISTORIC ARTIFACTS

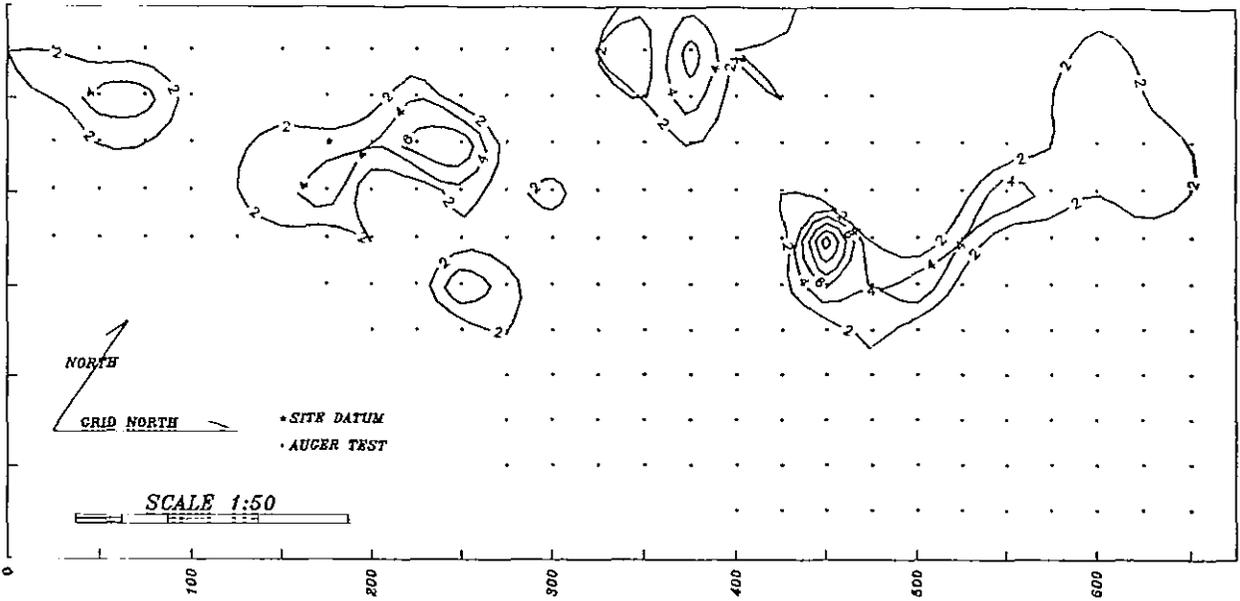


Figure 1. 38BU96, computer generated artifact density map.

38BU96 - COTTON HOPE - BRICK & MORTAR

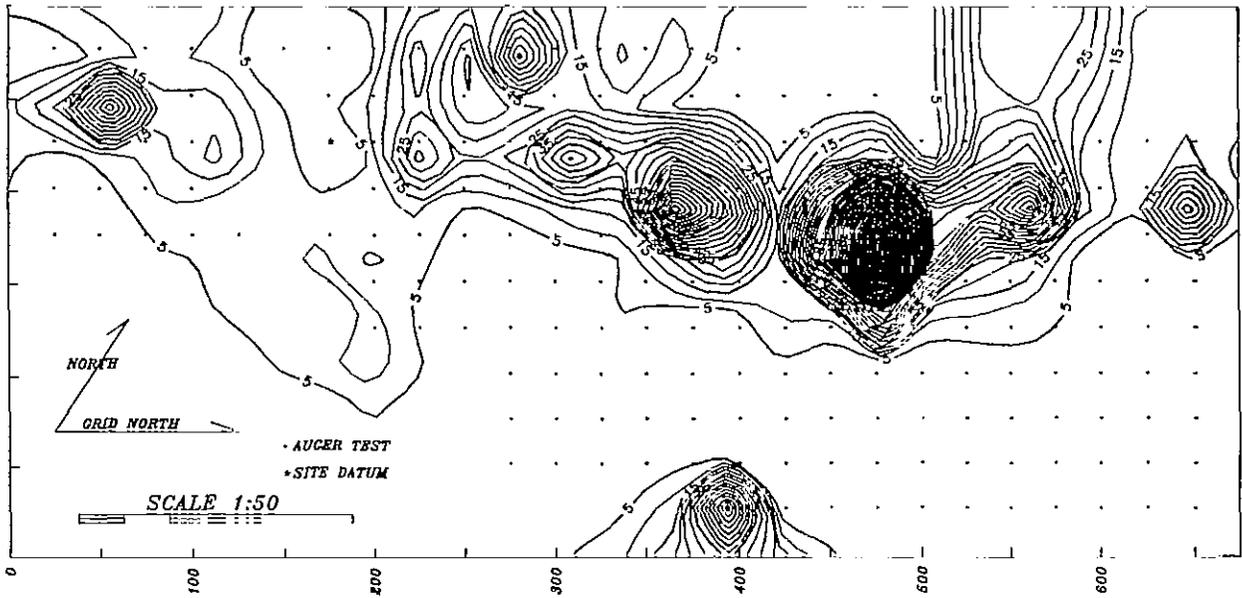


Figure 2. 38BU96, computer generated brick and mortar weight map.

mortar, and brick were weighed and discarded. Artifacts were tabulated for the development of computer based density maps (Figures 1 and 2). These maps were used to guide the placement of excavation units. In addition, the density maps indicated that our original assessment of site size and boundaries were essentially correct.

Units were established using a modified Chicago 10-foot grid, with each square designated by its southeast corner, from a OR0 point at the southwest corner of the site. Thus the southwest corner of square 10R20 would be located north 10 feet and right (or east) 20 feet from the OR0 point. Auger Test 3 was designated 500R100, while Auger Test 182 was designated 1000R100.

Soil from the various units was dry screened through 1/4-inch mesh using mechanical sifters. A 2.25 foot square sample of the two shell middens encountered was weighed prior to sifting and the shell collected for analysis by Dr. David Lawrence (Department of Geology, University of South Carolina). This provided a quantified statement of shell density for the middens. The shell sample will allow analysis of oyster habitat, collection and preparation methods, and seasonality statements. The middens were dry screened through 1/8-inch mesh to increase the potential for faunal recovery.

Units were troweled at the top of the subsoil, photographed in b/w and color slides, and plotted. Excavation was by natural soil zones and soil samples were routinely collected. The stratigraphy at the site was uniform, evidencing a brown humic sand (often associated with shell, mortar rubble, or tabby rubble) about 0.7 to 0.9 in depth overlying a mottled tan to yellow sand subsoil. Features were typically bisected, with both photographs and drawings made of the portion excavated prior to completing the excavation. Feature fill was dry screened through 1/8-inch mesh for improved recovery, with soil and flotation samples routinely collected. The flotation samples will be examined for evidence of carbonized floral remains by Dr. Patricia Cridlebaugh. Faunal samples will be submitted for detailed analyses to Dr. Jack Wilson and the shellfish remains will be examined by Dr. David Lawrence.

Field notes were prepared on pH neutral, alkaline buffered paper and photographic materials will be processed to archival standards. All original field notes, with archival copies, will be curated at The Environmental and Historical Museum of Hilton Head Island as Accession Number 1990.4. All specimens will be evaluated for conservation needs and will be treated prior to curation.

The twenty 10-foot units and one 4 by 5 foot inset may be conveniently combined into excavations at a series of eight different loci at 38BU96, each of which will be briefly discussed below.

Locus 1

This locus, at the south end of the site in an area of moderate to heavy disturbance caused by the construction of the Melrose dock at Salty Fare, was defined as an area of both dense artifact and rubble (see Figures 1 and 2). Given the extensive disturbance in this area, only one unit (390R80) was excavated in this locus. The excavations revealed a dense accumulation of primarily mid-nineteenth century remains, although brick and mortar was not as dense as anticipated by the computer mapping. No clear evidence of structural remains were encountered and no additional work was conducted in this area.

Locus 2

This locus, also at the south end of the site, was revealed by the auger tests to be an area of dense artifacts and rubble. Examination of the area, however, revealed that about half of the area is situated in the heavily plowed planted pine field, while the remainder is in the vicinity of a dirt road. This area had been previously defined by shovel testing in 1988. Excavations in this area included three 10-foot units (550-560R90 and 550R110). These units revealed the presence of a tabby fire box (Feature 5) measuring 5.7 by 4.1 feet which is designated Structure 1. In addition, a segment of a wall, evidenced by a mortar footing (Feature 6) was also found in this area, although it has a different orientation than Feature 5 and is therefore designated as Structure 2. Artifacts from this area are primarily mid-nineteenth century and are suggestive of a low status domestic occupation. Feature 7 was also identified in this area and consists of a mortar footing for a pier. Also poorly preserved, it is probably associated with Structure 2.

Locus 3

This locus, situated adjacent to the bluff edge at the south end of the site, was identified on the computer maps as an area of low artifact density but high brick and mortar density. One unit, 600R60, was excavated in this area. This excavation revealed a very low density of primarily nineteenth century remains, with a number of highly fragmented prehistoric sherds found toward the base of the unit. No historic features were found in this unit and it appears that the computer generated density is based on a single auger test.

Locus 4

This locus is situated in the central area of the site, adjacent to the marsh edge. It was originally shown on the computer generated density maps as an area of high artifact density but only moderate brick and mortar. A series to two units (690R70 and 704R70) and an inset (700R65) were excavated in this area.

Recovered were abundant domestic artifacts spanning the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In addition, evidence of two structures (Structures 3 and 7) were encountered. Structure 3 is documented by a series of postholes and a dripline (Feature 11), indicating a ground post structure with a gable roof. This structure architecturally appears to be a utilitarian structure, although the archaeological evidence is more suggestive of a domestic dwelling. Feature 10 is the corner of Structure 7, indicated by a shallow trench.

Locus 5

This locus is situated in the central area of the site, east of Locus 4. It was revealed during auger tests as an area of dense rubble, but low artifact content. The area was explored by the excavation of three 10-foot units (680R130, 690R105, and 700R115). These excavations revealed a small, tightly confined area of eighteenth century remains perhaps dating about 1750. The excavations also revealed clear evidence of a log dwelling (Structure 4) and equivocal evidence of a later building (Structure 5). The structure is documented by a shallow drip line (Feature 12), a hearth (Feature 14), and a burnt area where the chimney was constructed (Feature 13). This structure measured about 14 by 16 feet and appears to have had a hipped roof. Log construction is indicated by the presence of mortar chinking; a mortar floor was present, and the chimney was constructed from wood lath with mortar plastering. It is also possible that the interior of the structure was crudely mortared. Structure 5 is very similar to the colonial log slave dwellings identified at Haig Point (38BU961).

Locus 6

This locus is situated in the central area of the site and was identified in the auger survey as an area of dense artifacts and rubble. Brockington and Associates also apparently excavated a one-meter unit in this structure. We examined the area through the excavation of six 10-foot units (780R160, 790R160-180, 800R160-170). Recovered materials included both eighteenth and nineteenth century domestic material and a large quantity of tabby rubble, mortar, and fired brick fragments. The excavations revealed the presence of a tabby fire box (Feature 1) measuring 7.3 by 4.1 feet, a mortar wall segment (Feature 3), and abundant tabby rubble (Feature 2). This large fire box has been designated as Structure 6, although the excavations failed to find any other architectural evidence of the structure. Beneath Feature 1 was an earlier, and smaller tabby fire box, oriented 90° off Feature 1 and indicating an earlier building episode, designated Structure 8. Feature 9 appears to be a large "trash" pit in the southwest corner of unit 780R160.

Locus 7

This locus is situated in the north central portion of the site and was identified as an area of moderate artifact and dense rubble content. It was examined through the excavation of a single 10-foot unit (880R140). This excavation revealed evidence of mortar rubble, clearly indicative of a structure which was probably situated slightly to the southwest of the unit. This probable building has been identified as Structure 9. Artifacts from these excavations are primarily nineteenth century. Feature 8 was identified within this unit and was found to be a series of post holes merging together and probably indicating structure repair. Time did not allow the excavation of additional units to the southwest of 880R140.

Locus 8

This locus is situated at the north edge of the site and was revealed as an area of moderate artifact density and heavy rubble density by the auger tests. Shovel testing in 1988 had indicated the presence of a dense faunal midden in this section of the site. The area was examined through the excavation of three 10-foot units (950-960R110 and 960R140). These units failed to reveal clear evidence of structural remains and the 960R140 unit was heavily disturbed by unidentified construction activity. The 950-960R110 units, however, provided the opportunity to sample two different shell middens, one of which provided an excellent faunal sample as well. Artifacts in this area are primarily early nineteenth century. Feature 4 was a small shell pit in the northeast corner of unit 960R110.

Interpretations

The archaeological evidence gathered from 38BU96 indicates that this site was occupied from at least 1750 through 1860. The earliest occupation, evidenced by Structures 4 and 7 appear to indicate a colonial slave row of log structures with hipped roofs oriented approximately north-south. This discovery is of tremendous importance to our understanding of early slave life in the Beaufort area. The architecture is similar to that found on nearby Daufuskie Island and begins to establish a pattern of early slave architecture in this area of South Carolina. Further analysis of the cultural and subsistence remains will assist in our understanding of slave life and treatment. Structure 8 has a similar orientation and may represent an overseer associated with the nearby slave row. Structure 2 also has a similar orientation, although the recovered remains are insufficient to offer any real interpretation regarding either temporal period or function.

By about 1800 there is evidence, based on Structure 3, that the slave row was abandoned and that the use of the site was changing. Structure 3 was oriented parallel to the bluff edge

(roughly northeast-southwest), rather than north-south (at an angle to the bluff). Structures 1, 6, and 9 appear to be slightly later, perhaps indicating construction continuing in a rather disorganized manner through about 1840 or 1850. Of considerable importance is the indication that the basic nature of the site area was gradually changing. No longer was there evidence of the organized arrangement of a "typical" slave row. By the nineteenth century the arrangement was still nucleated, but the organization of a row had been lost.

The 1859 map of the site area shows a series of eight structure, with considerable variation in size. It seems likely that the site had been transformed from a slave settlement into a slave "work area." Although it is not currently possible to speculate on the activities taking place at this site, other than domestic life, it seems likely that the slaves were engaged in activities other than agriculture.

The excavations at 38BU96, while failing to provide the complete architectural evidence hoped for initially, have revealed a process of change on a plantation not previously recognized in South Carolina. Not only did the architecture change, including the orientation of the structures, but it is likely that the function of the settlement also changed.

Analytical investigations will focus on the collections, including artifact analysis, pattern analysis, and mean dating. In addition, subsistence remains, including shellfish, faunal material, ethnobotanical samples, will be examined. Historical research is still being pursued, although the archival evidence for eighteenth century Hilton Head is sparse.

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