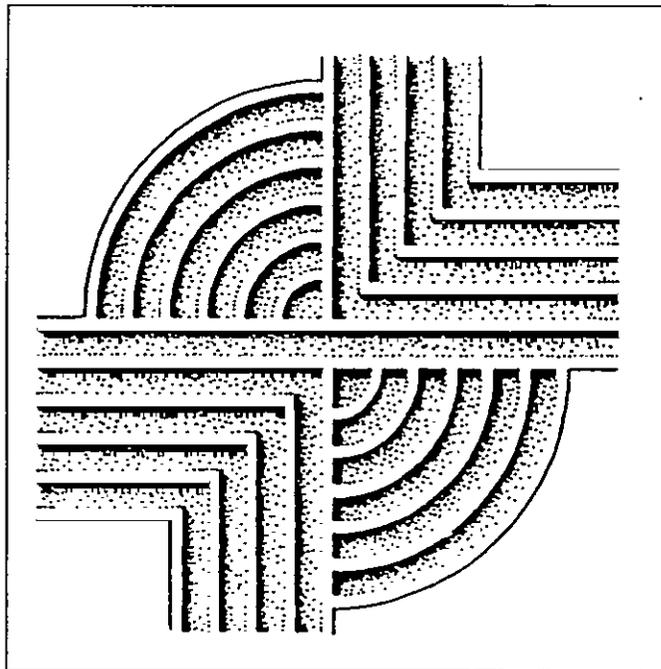


ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF FIVE ACRES AT STONE POINT FARMS DEVELOPMENT, CHARLESTON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA



RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 122

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF FIVE ACRES AT
STONE POINT FARM DEVELOPMENT,
CHARLESTON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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Introduction

The investigation of the five acre tract was conducted by Ms. Natalie Adams of Chicora Foundation for Mr. Jay Thrower of Land Planning & Design, Inc., Summerville, South Carolina. Chicora Foundation was requested to submit a budgetary proposal for an intensive archaeological survey of a five acre tract located approximately 16 miles northeast of the city of Mt. Pleasant in Charleston County. The proposal was submitted on September 30, 1993 and the investigations proposed by Chicora Foundation were approved by Mr. Thrower on October 1, 1993. The survey tract is to be developed for single family dwellings, with accompanying water, sewer, power, and road construction activities. These activities is likely to damage or destroy archaeological resources if such resources are within the tract and this study was conducted in order to allow the developer to obtain S.C. Coastal Council certification. This study is intended to provide an overview of the archaeological survey of the tract sufficient to allow the S.C. State Historic Preservation Office to determine the eligibility of sites for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

These investigations incorporated a review of the site files at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. A number of previously recorded archaeological sites were found in the vicinity of the project area, outside the survey boundaries. In addition, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History was contacted, requesting information on the identification of any National Register buildings, districts, structures, sites, or objects, or the presence of any structural surveys, in the vicinity of the five acre survey tract. No National Register sites on or in the vicinity of the area were found during this review.

The property is bordered to the north and west by a marsh slough, to the east by the intracoastal waterway, and to the south by privately owned property. Most of the parcel consists of high weedy grasses with occasional large live oaks. The shore along the intracoastal waterway contains thicker live oak growth. According to Mr. Jay Thrower the area was cleared of Hurricane Hugo debris which resulted in the removal of a substantial amount (two feet) of topsoil (Jay Thrower, personal communication 1993). Field investigations indicated that a large amount of topsoil had, indeed, been removed varying from about one to two feet in depth, depending on interference from surrounding vegetation. The lack of topsoil was identified not only through shovel tests, but also from surface examination, particularly around trees where it was clear that the ground level had once been slightly higher.

The field investigations were conducted October 18, 1993 by Ms. Natalie Adams. The field work involved four person hours. Laboratory analysis and report production were conducted at Chicora's laboratories in Columbia, South Carolina on October 25, 1993.

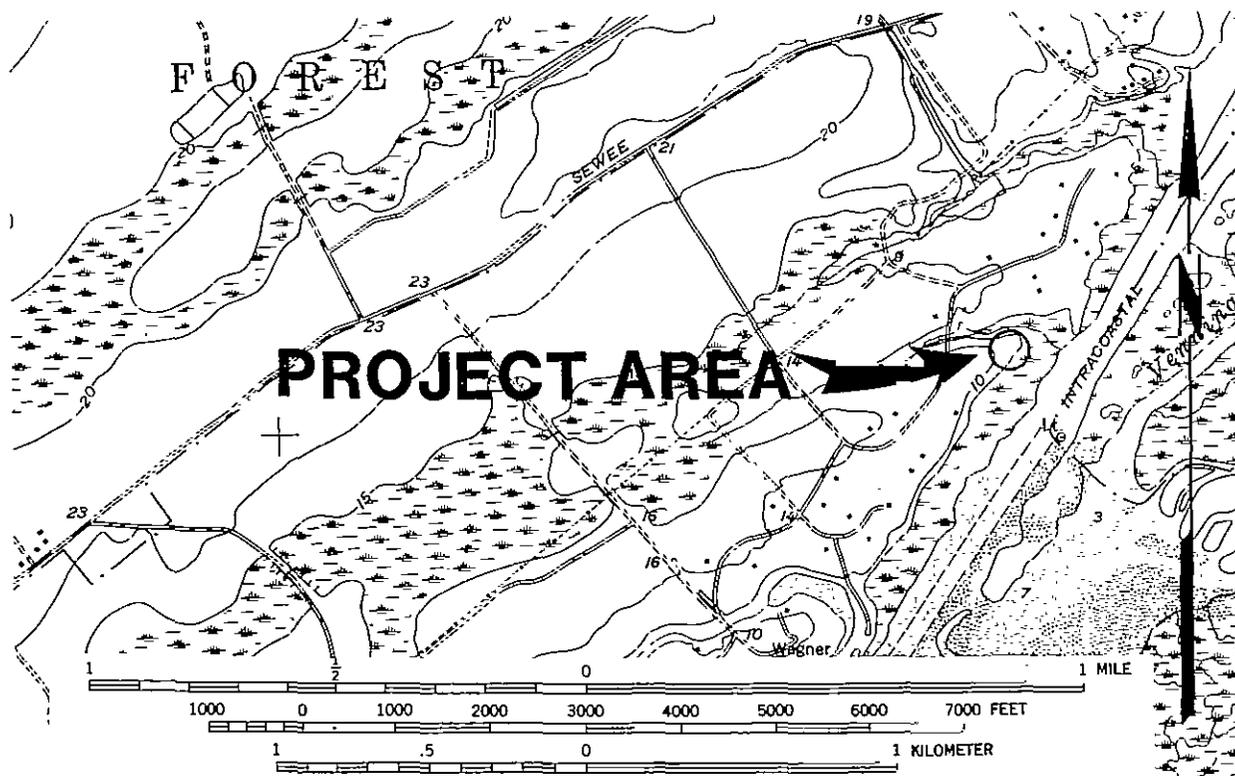


Figure 1. Location of the project area on the 1992 Seewee Bay Quadrangle.

Arrangements are being made to curate the collections from these investigations at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. Cataloging will be conducted to the facility's standards at the completion of the study. All field records will be provided to the institution on pH neutral, alkaline buffered paper.

Goals

The primary goal of this study, of course, was to assist the client, Land Planning & Design, Inc., in identifying significant archaeological resources which would be affected by the proposed activities. Consequently, the research design was essentially explorative and explicative, with the goal being to identify any evidence of prehistoric or historic sites which might be in the project area.

Once identification is achieved, however, it is essential to assess the significance of the sites. This involves determining whether any of the sites can be recommended as eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. According to National Register

Bulletin 16A, the eligibility of a property to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places is based on four criteria: a) association with historic events or activities; b) association with important persons; c) distinctive design or physical characteristics; or d) potential to provide important information about prehistory or history. The vast majority of archaeological sites listed on the National Register fall under criteria C or D.

Butler suggests that the only valid measurement of significance is based on what he calls the "theoretical and substantive knowledge of the discipline" at any particular point in time (Butler 1987:821). Glassow (1977) has advocated an even more widely used approach which encourages the evaluation of sites through the use of five properties or features: site integrity, site clarity, artifactual variety, artifactual quantity, and the site's environmental context. These qualities stress properties of the archaeological record at the site, rather than the site's ability or potential to assist in providing data to limited, and possibly transient, research designs. Nevertheless, no matter how well preserved a site may be, if no serious questions can be developed, then it seems unlikely that it can be considered eligible.

It should be obvious that rather than being mutually exclusive approaches, both are essential to protect significant archaeological or historical sites. There must be research questions and the site must likely be able to answer those questions. Situations exist where there are important questions, but the site is too badly disturbed to allow research, or alternatively where the site is perfectly preserved, but offers no new data or important cumulative data.

Effective Environment

Charleston County is situated in the central lower coastal plain of South Carolina and is bounded on the east by about 75 miles of irregular Atlantic Ocean shoreline and marsh, barrier, and sea islands. The mainland topography consists of subtle undulations in the landscape characteristic of ridge and bay topography of beach ridge plains. Elevations in the county range from sea level to about 70 feet mean sea level (MSL) (Mathews et al. 1980:133).

The county is drained by four primarily coastal (saltwater) river systems and three rivers with significant freshwater discharges (the Santee, Cooper, and South Edisto rivers). Because of the low topography, however, many broad, low gradient interior drains are present as either extensions of tidal streams and rivers or flooded bays and swales. There are many diverse wetland communities influenced by inundation and river flow. Upland vegetation in the county is primarily pine or mixed hardwood and pine, and only about 4.9% of the county is currently cultivated (while about 7.5% of the total land area is urbanized).

The geology of the county is characteristic of the coastal plain, with unconsolidated, water-laid beds of sands and clays up to 20 feet in thickness overlying thick beds of soft marl (Miller 1971). The Stone Point Farms tract is characterized by one soil series. This soil series is Seewee complex which consists of somewhat poorly drained to moderately well

drained acid soils that are sandy throughout (Miller 1971:27).

The survey tract is characterized by elevations ranging from about six to eight feet MSL, with the bulk of the property at or below 10 feet MSL. There is a gradual slope toward the toward the narrowest point of land. The topography is nearly flat.

Charleston County has a subtropical climate, characterized by warm summers, mild winters, and adequate precipitation fairly evenly spread throughout the year. Except in the summer, when maritime tropical air controls the climate of the area, the daily weather patterns are controlled by west to east moving pressure systems and associated fronts.

Yearly precipitation averages 47 inches, but ranges from 39 to 55 inches. The growing season, from April to September, receives an average of 31 inches or about 66% of the yearly total. The average length of the freeze-free growing season is approximately 260 days, although frosts can occur as early as October 26 and as late as April 15 (Long 1980:46).

Mills remarked in 1826 that Carolina was similar to European climates, lying at a similar latitude. He noted that:

in comparing the climate of South Carolina, with similar climates in Europe, we find it lying under the same atmospheric influences with Aix, Rochelle, Montpellier, Lyons, Bordeaux, and other parts of France; with Milan, Turin, Padua, Mantua, and other parts of Italy (Mills 1972 [1826]:133).

The coastal region is a moderately high risk zone for tropical storms, with 169 hurricanes being documented from 1686 to 1972 (0.59 per year) (Mathews et al. 1980:56). One of the most devastating in the eighteenth century was the hurricane of September 15, 1752. One report listed 92 people drowned, although the death toll, especially among the African American slaves was likely much higher. The storm also had considerable long-term effects and Calhoun notes that:

the destruction of trees was severe; one plantation owner's loss was assessed at \$50,000 and many of those trees which survived were "heart-shaken," and unfit for use. Crops were even more damaged as the storm followed a severe drought. It was necessary to enact laws to regulate the exportation and sale of corn, "Peafe," and small rice, so that "the poor may be able to purchase Provisions at a moderate Price" (Calhoun 1983:9).

Speaking of the coastal plain Braun observed that:

the vegetation of this region is in part warm temperate-subtropical, in part distinctively coastal plain, and in part temperate deciduous. It is made up of widely different forest communities - coniferous, mixed coniferous and hardwood, deciduous hardwood, and mixed deciduous and broad-leaved

evergreen hardwood - interrupted here and there by swamps, bogs, and prairies. The large number of unlike communities is related to the diverse environmental conditions of the region (Braun 1974:282)

Indeed, an examination of the region around Charleston County reveals tremendous diversity. One detailed study revealed a mosaic including the oak-hickory-pine forest common to upland areas, oak-gum-bald cypress forest typical of the southern floodplains, pine forests found in mesic to xeric upland sites, mesophytic broadleaved forests on more mesic slope sites, old rice fields, and a variety of swamp forests such as the tupelo-cypress, low hardwood, and ridge hardwoods (Federal Power Commission 1977). All of these forest types have different dominants and different understory vegetation (see Barry 1980).

Previous Archaeological Investigations

Previous archaeological investigations in Charleston County consist of a number of surveys as well as data recoveries. This work includes investigations of plantations (e.g. Carrillo 1980; Lewis and Haskell 1980; Poplin and Scardaville 1990) as well as a prehistoric sites (e.g. Espenshade and Brockington 1989; Trinkley 1980). A number of prehistoric sites were identified and recorded by Trinkley (1980) as a part of his dissertation research. Many of these sites are located near the survey tract, although none are located on the survey tract (Figure 2).

In neighboring Berkeley County Brooks and Scurry (1979) found that prehistoric sites are found on moderately well to well drained soils. Further, the bulk of the sites components will be Middle to Late Woodland, since the high sea level stands during these periods are thought to have restricted the dispersion of resources such as large mammals and forest products. Finally, sites are expected to be small and exhibit low artifact diversity since the use of extractive sites is brief, the sites represent a narrow range of activities, and group size was small.

For historic sites, South and Hartley (1980) found plantations to be located on high ground adjacent to deep water. This type of topography does not exist in the survey area which is characterized by relatively low ground adjacent to water. Mills Atlas (1965 [1825]) show two residents of Seewee Bay including Vanderhorst and Dr. Jervey (Figure). It is likely that there were additional inhabitants of that area that do not appear on the atlas.

Based on previous research, the area was believed to have a high potential for containing archaeological sites.

Brief Prehistoric and Historic Synopsis

Prehistoric Synopsis

The Paleo-Indian period, lasting from 12,000 to 8,000 B.C., is evidenced by basally

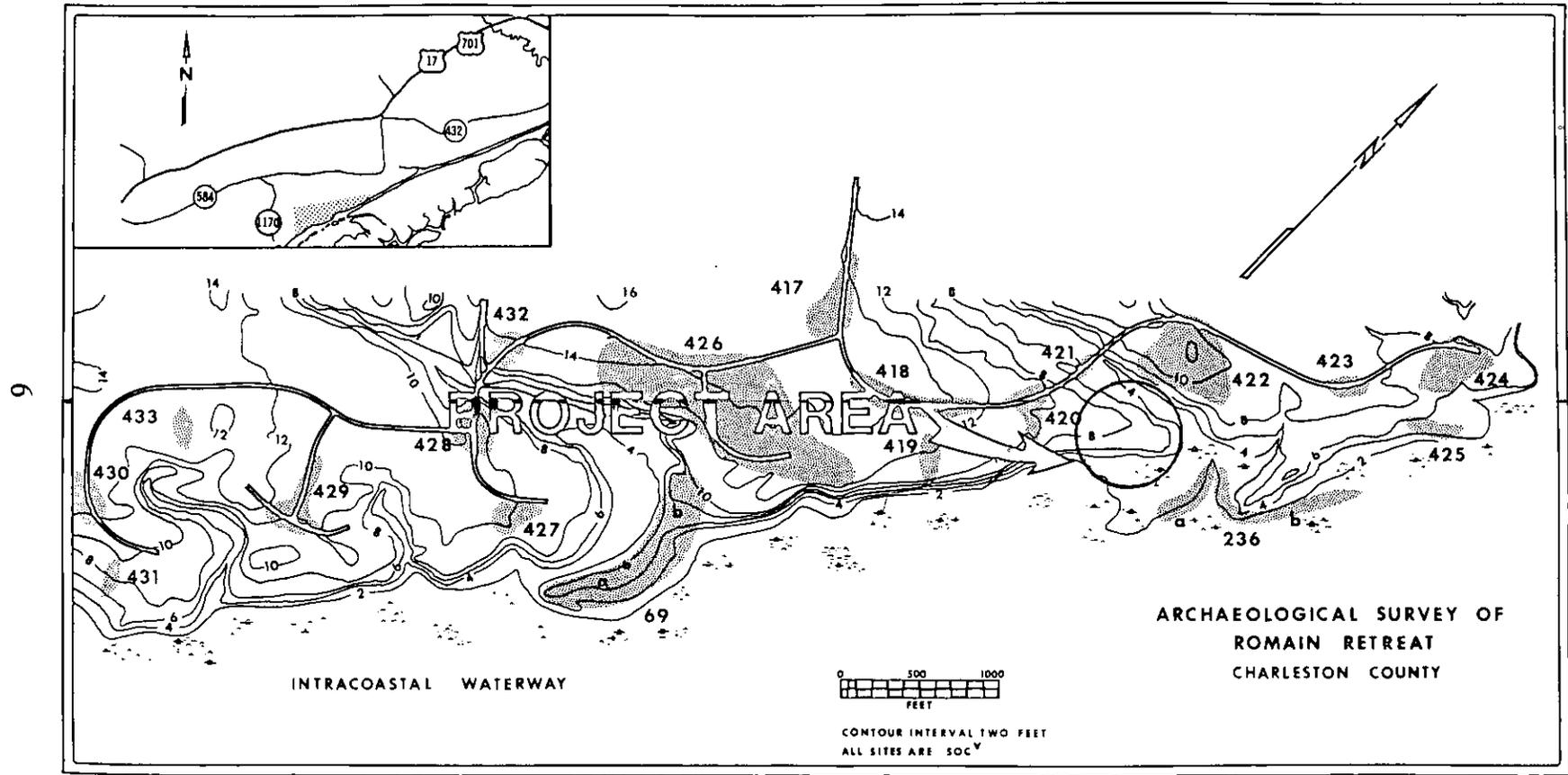


Figure 2. Archaeological sites within Romain Retreat (from Trinkley 1980: 443).

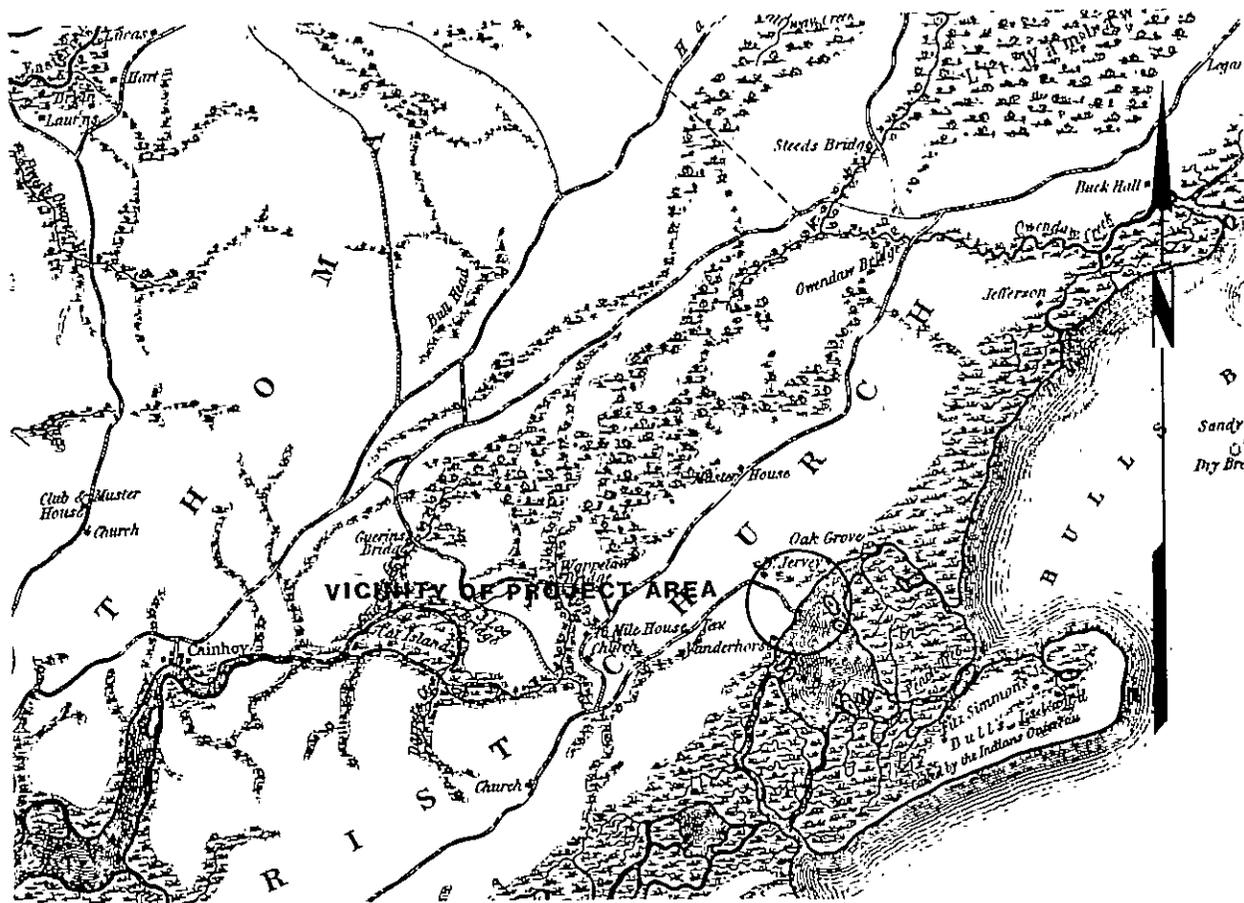


Figure 3. Mills Atlas of 1825 showing the vicinity of the project area.

thinned, side-notched projectile points; fluted, lanceolate projectile points; side scrapers; end scrapers; and drills (Coe 1964; Michie 1977). The Paleo-Indian occupation, while widespread, does not appear to have been intensive. Points usually associated with this period include the Clovis and several variants, Suwannee, Simpson, and Dalton (Goodyear et al. 1989:36-38). At least six Paleo-Indian projectile points have been found in Charleston County.

Unfortunately, little is known about Paleo-Indian subsistence strategies, settlement systems, or social organization. Generally, archaeologists agree that the Paleo-Indian groups were at a band level of society, were nomadic, and were both hunters and foragers. While population density, based on the isolated finds, is thought to have been low, Walthall suggests that toward the end of the period, "there was an increase in population density and in territoriality and that a number of new resource areas were beginning to be exploited" (Walthall 1980:30).

The Archaic period, which dates from 8000 to 2000 B.C., does not form a sharp

break with the Paleo-Indian period, but is a slow transition characterized by a modern climate and an increase in the diversity of material culture. Archaic period assemblages, characterized by corner-notched, side-notched, and broad stemmed projectile points, are common in the vicinity, although they rarely are found in good, well-preserved contexts.

The Woodland period begins, by definition, with the introduction of fired clay pottery about 2000 B.C. along the South Carolina coast and much later in the Carolina Piedmont, about 500 B.C. It should be noted that many researchers call the period from about 2500 to 1000 B.C. the Late Archaic because of a perceived continuation of the Archaic lifestyle in spite of the manufacture of pottery. Regardless of terminology, the period from 2000 to 500 B.C. was a period of tremendous change.

The subsistence economy during this early period was based primarily on deer hunting and fishing, with supplemental inclusions of small mammals, birds, reptiles, and shellfish. Various calculations of the probable yield of deer, fish, and other food sources identified from some coastal sites indicate that sedentary life was not only possible, but probable. Further inland it seems likely that many Native American groups continued the previous established patterns of band mobility. These frequent moves would allow the groups to take advantage of various seasonal resources, such as shad and sturgeon in the spring, nut masts in the fall, and turkeys during the winter.

The South Appalachian Mississippian period, from about A.D. 1100 to A.D. 1640 is the most elaborate level of culture attained by the native inhabitants and is followed by cultural disintegration brought about largely by European disease. The period is characterized by complicated stamped pottery, complex social organization, agriculture, and the construction of temple mounds and ceremonial centers. The earliest coastal phases are named the Savannah and Irene (known as Pee Dee further inland) (A.D. 1200 to 1550).

The history of the numerous small coastal Indian tribes is poorly known. As Mooney noted, the coastal tribes:

were of but small importance politically; no sustained mission work was ever attempted among them, and there were but few literary men to take an interest in them. War, pestilence, whiskey and systematic slave hunts had nearly exterminated the aboriginal occupants of the Carolinas before any body had thought them of sufficient importance to ask who they were, how they lived, or what were their beliefs and opinions (Mooney 1894:6).

In truth, our knowledge of these groups has also been limited because too few scholars have taken an active interest in the primary sources and there has been too little desire to evaluate critically the early research by Mooney (1894) and Swanton (1952). For South Carolina Anderson (1989:117-118) briefly notes the current status of ethnohistoric research.

Historic Synopsis

The English established the first permanent settlement in what is today South Carolina in 1670 on the west bank of the Ashley River. Like other European powers, the English were lured to the New World for reasons other than the acquisition of land and promotion of agriculture. The Lord Proprietors, who owned the colony until 1719-1720, intended to discover a staple crop whose marketing would provide great wealth through the mercantile system.

By 1680 the settlers of Albemarle Point had moved their village across the bay to the tip of the peninsula formed by the Ashley and Cooper rivers. This new settlement at Oyster Point would become modern-day Charleston. The move provided not only a more healthful climate and an area of better defense, but:

[t]he situation of this Town is so convenient for public Commerce that it rather seems to be the design of some skillful Artist than the accidental position of nature (Mathews 1954:153).

Early settlers came from the English West Indies, other mainland colonies, England, and the European continent. It has been argued that those from the English West Indies were the most critical to the future of the colony, as they brought with them a strong agrarian concept, involving both staple crops and slave labor. These settlers were called the "Goose Creek men", many of them settling near the present town of Goose Creek (Sirmans 1966).

Early agriculture experiments which involved olives, grapes, silkworms, and oranges were less than successful. While the Indian trade was profitable to many of the Carolina colonists, it did not provide the proprietors with the wealth they were expecting from the new colony. Consequently, the cultivation of cotton, rice, tobacco, and flax were stressed as these were staple crops whose marketing the proprietors could easily monopolize.

Although introduced at least by the 1690s, rice did not become a significant staple crop until the early eighteenth century. At that time it not only provided the proprietors with an economic base the mercantile system required, but it was also to form the basis of South Carolina's plantation system (Carpenter 1973). Over production soon followed, with a severe decline in prices during the 1740s. This economic down swing encouraged planters to diversify and indigo was introduced (Huneycutt 1949:33). Indigo complemented rice production since they were grown in mutually exclusive areas. Both, however, were labor intensive and encouraged the large scale introduction of slavery.

South Carolina's economic development during the pre-Revolutionary War period involved a complex web of interactions between slaves, planters, and merchants. By 1710 slaves outnumbered free people in South Carolina and by the 1730s slaves were beginning to be concentrated on a few, large slave-holding plantations. By the close of the eighteenth

century some South Carolina plantations had a ratio of slaves to whites that was 27:1 (Morgan 1977). The Charleston area had a slave population greater than 50% of the total population by 1790. This imbalance between the races, particularly on remote plantations, may have led to greater "freedom" and mobility (Friedlander in Wheaton et al. 1983:34). By the antebellum period this trend was less extreme.

Scholars have estimated that at the end of the colonial period, over half of eastern South Carolina's white population held slaves, although few held very large numbers. Hilliard (1984:37) indicates that more than 60% of the Charleston slaveholders by 1860 owned fewer than 10 slaves.

From another perspective Zierden and Calhoun note that:

Charleston was the economic, institutional and social center of the surrounding region. The necessity of transacting business in Charleston drew planters eager to transform their crops into cash or goods...it [was] virtually imperative for a planter interested in society to reside in Charleston at least occasionally (Zierden and Calhoun 1984:36).

They argue that Charleston provided an opportunity for conspicuous consumption, a mechanism which allowed the display of wealth accumulated from the plantation system (with this mechanism continuing through the antebellum period). Scardaville (in Brockington et al. 1985:45) notes that the plantation system which brought prosperity through the export of staple crops also "made the colony...highly vulnerable to outside market and political forces."

The most obvious example of this is the economic hardship brought on by the American Revolution. Not only was the Charleston area the scene of many military actions, but Charleston itself was occupied by the British for over 2½ years between 1780 and 1782. The loss of royal bounties on rice, indigo, and naval stores caused considerable economic chaos with the eventual "restructuring of the state's agricultural and commercial base" (Brockington et al. 1985:34).

One means of "restructuring" was the emergence of cotton as the principal cash crop. Although "upland" cotton was available as early as 1733, its ascendancy was ensured by the industrial revolution, the invention of the cotton gin in 1794, and the availability of slave labor. While "Sea Island" cotton was already being efficiently cleaned, the spread of cotton was primarily in the South Carolina interior. Consequently, Charleston benefitted primarily through its role as a commercial center.

Cotton provided about 20 years of economic success for South Carolina. During this period South Carolina monopolized cotton production with a number of planters growing wealthy (Mason 1976). The price of cotton fell in 1819 and remained low through the 1820s, primarily because of competition from planters in Alabama and Mississippi.

Friedlander, in Wheaton et al. (1983:28-29) notes that cotton production in the inland coastal parishes fell by 25% in the years from 1821 to 1839, although national production increase by 123%. Production improved dramatically in the 1840s in spite of depressed prices and in the 1850s the price of cotton rose.

The Charleston area did not participate directly in the agricultural activity of the state. Scardaville (in Brockington et al. 1985:35) notes that "the Charleston area, as a result of a large urban market and a far-reaching trade and commercial network, had carved out its own niche in the state's economic system." Zierden and Calhoun remark that:

[c]ountry merchants, planters, and strangers "on a visit of pleasure" flocked to Charleston. Planters continued to establish residences in Charleston throughout the antebellum era and "great" planters began to spend increasing amount of time in Charleston (Zierden and Calhoun 1984:44).

In spite of this appearance of grandeur, Charleston's dependence on cotton and ties to an international market created an economy vulnerable to fluctuation over which the merchants and planters had no control.

While the wealthiest farms were those on the sea islands producing cotton (such as Edisto Island where the value of the average plantation was over \$44,000), plantations in Christ Church (as well as other inland, non-cotton producing areas) had an average value of around \$7,000 (Scardaville in Brockington et al. 1985:39). Christ Church Parish grew only 1.7% of the district's cotton, although it formed 10.1% of the improved acreage. An examination of the agricultural schedules for the Charleston area in 1850 and 1860 provides evidence for this economic slump. Scardaville (in Brockington et al. 1985:39-40) notes that produce, farm, and livestock values for Christ Church Parish were below what would be expected and outputs of many crops had decreased over time. But most significantly, rice was no longer an economically significant crop, production dropping by over 81% from 1850 to 1860.

The Charleston area response to the reduction in rice was a shift to ranching and livestock production as a substitute. Between 1850 and 1860 the value of livestock increased by 120%, corn increased by 44%, wool production increased by 126%, and the value of animals slaughtered increased from \$0 to over \$5,000 (Scardaville in Brockington et al. 1985:41).

While the fortifications and numerous battles fought around John's, James, and Folly islands during the Civil War are well known, the other defenses of Charleston are perhaps less understood. One author has suggested that, "it is doubtful if any city in the Confederacy had more or stronger defenses than those around Charleston" (Burton 1970:132). In Christ Church parish, about five miles north of Mount Pleasant, the Confederate forces built a line running from the headwaters of the Wando River to the Atlantic Ocean marshes.

It wasn't until 1865, at the very end of the war, that this line was "tested." A Union assault on Bull's Bay was begun on February 13, although weather, poor planning, and shallow water prevented a landing until February 17, when the troops were put ashore at Graham's Creek near Buck Hall Plantation, several miles northeast of the line. It was that same day that Confederate forces retreated from Charleston and the assault on Bull's Bay accomplished little other than preventing the Confederate troops from marching north to Georgetown (Burton 1970:316).

After the Civil War Charleston and the surrounding countryside lay in waste. Plantation houses were destroyed, the city was in near ruins, the agricultural base of slavery was destroyed, and the economic system was in chaos. Rebuilding after the war involved two primary tasks: forging a new relationship between white land owners and black freedmen, and creating a new economic order through credit merchants.

In terms of relative importance, cotton and livestock were the two most important agricultural activities in Charleston County, followed by truck farming and grain production. During the early postbellum period there is also evidence of some land consolidation -- the four tracts in excess of 1,000 acres in 1870 had increased to 151 tracts by 1880. Probably caused by high property taxes, foreclosures, and low selling prices this trend continued only for a decade (Scardaville in Brockington et al. 1985:57). During the late postbellum tenancy increased dramatically throughout South Carolina, except for several coastal areas where Scardaville suggests black farmers were able to purchase small tracts. Where tenancy did exist, it was largely cash rental, not sharecropping, and Scardaville argues that this formed the vital link allowing black ownership (Scardaville in Brockington et al. 1985:62).

Beginning shortly after the Civil War, truck farming became one of the primary agricultural activities of area farmers. The combination of soil fertility, climate, and proximity gave truck farming an edge in the effort to supply Charleston with produce. As a result many blacks were employed as wage laborers. Produce increased from about one-quarter of the county's agricultural production in 1890 to over three-quarters by 1930 (Scardaville in Brockington et al. 1985:74). Much of this prosperity, however, disappeared during the Great Depression, when trucking in the area declined by 75%.

Field Methods

The initially proposed field techniques for this intensive survey level investigation involved the excavation of shovel tests at 100 foot intervals on transects at 100 foot intervals since previous research indicates that the area had a high probability of containing archaeological sites. The minimal definition of a site in this study was two or more artifacts within a 25 foot area.

Should sites be identified by surface collection and/or shovel testing, further tests would be used if possible to help obtain additional data on site boundaries, artifact quantity and diversity, site integrity, and temporal affiliation. The information required for

completion of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology site forms would be collected and photographs would be taken, if warranted in the opinion of the field investigator.

All soil from the shovel tests would be screened through ¼-inch mesh, with each test numbered sequentially. Each test would measure about 1 foot square and would normally be taken to a depth of at least 1 foot. All cultural remains would be collected, except for shell, mortar, and brick, which would be quantitatively noted in the field and discarded. Notes would be maintained for profiles at any sites encountered. Actual field techniques did not deviate significantly from those additionally proposed.

Curation

It is anticipated that field notes will be accessioned for curation at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. Field notes have been prepared for curation using archival standards and will be transferred to the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology as soon as the project is complete.

Results and Conclusions

The archaeological survey of the Stone Point Farms tract identified no archaeological sites in the study area. Clearing after Hurricane Hugo would have likely obliterated any evidence of sites which may have originally existed on the tract since a large amount of topsoil was removed. A total of 25 shovel test were excavated in the project area. Soil profiles indicated that in some areas approximately 0.3 feet of phosphate had been used to fill in areas. Below this (or humus in other areas), soils were damp and were dark grayish-brown (10YR4/2) in color. Occasionally, the soils were mottled brown (10YR5/3). This indicates that the Ap horizon which normally consists of a black loamy fine sand had been removed.

It should be noted that a small shell midden (approximately five by five feet) was located adjacent to the intracoastal waterway. However, these shells were in exceptional condition and had not been discolored by long exposure to soil. Five shovel tests were excavated in its vicinity at 25 foot intervals. These tests yielded no other cultural remains. It is believed that this midden is modern.

As a result of the intensive survey of the Stone Point Farms tract, no archaeological sites were discovered. No further consideration of this property is recommended.

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