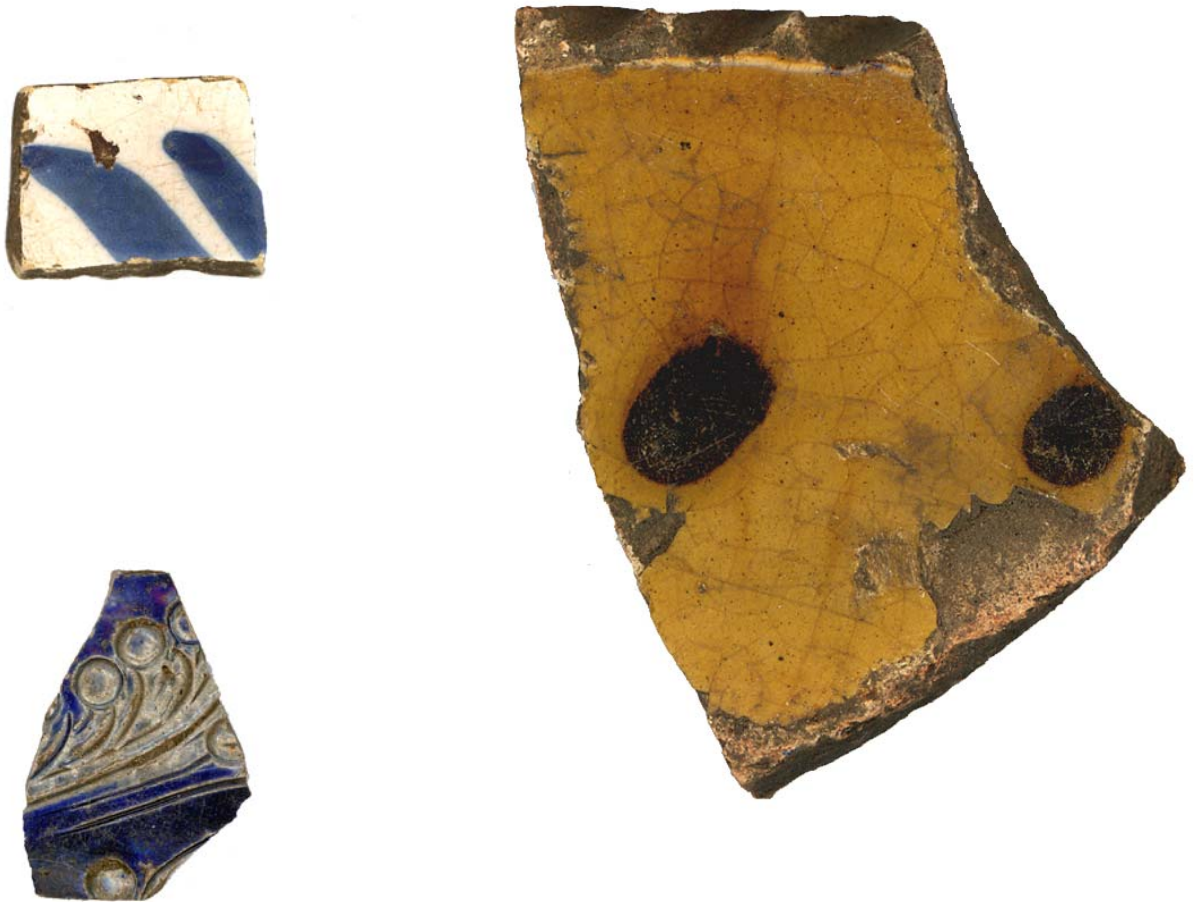


**INVESTIGATION OF AN  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEER  
SITE (38CH1278), CHRIST CHURCH  
PARISH, CHARLESTON COUNTY,  
SOUTH CAROLINA**



**INVESTIGATION OF AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEER  
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CHARLESTON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA**

**Research Series 64**

Michael Trinkley  
Debi Hacker  
Sarah Fick

With Contributions by:  
Linda Scott Cummings

Chicora Foundation, Inc.  
PO Box 8664 ▪ 861 Arbutus Drive  
Columbia, SC 29202-8664  
803/787-6910  
[www.chicora.org](http://www.chicora.org)

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There is nothing which can better deserve our patronage than the promotion of science and literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness.

-- George Washington



## ABSTRACT

This study provides the results of data recovery excavations at 38CH1278, the remains of an early eighteenth century plantation settlement attributed to an overseer. The site is situated on modern-day Belle Hall Plantation, north of US 17 and east of the Mark Clark Expressway in what historically has been known as Christ Church Parish. The investigations were conducted by Chicora Foundation during July and August, 2004 for Mr. Mark Regalbuto of Plantation Partners. This work was proposed, and approved, under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management (OCRM).

Historic research reveals that the plantation's earliest ownership can be traced to a grant to John Stephenson in 1682. The property passed to Stephenson's widow and second husband, who sold the 600-acres to Joshua Wilks. Wilks passed the property to his son, also Joshua. The younger Joshua Wilks is described in various records as a planter and he probably resided in Christ Church Parish. In 1744 Wilks sold the property, by that time up to 837-acres, to John Daniel for £2400. Daniels was a Charleston merchant and shipwright. At his death in 1747, Daniel's inventory reveals 49 slaves and various plantation products, such as potatoes, hogs, cattle, sheep, and fowl. There is, however, no evidence of a dwelling house. We believe that Daniel was an absentee owner, using the services of an overseer to manage the operations.

Historic research undertaken during these investigations included additional research into eighteenth century overseers, including analysis of newspaper ads, plantation accounts, and letters dating to the period prior to the American Revolution. These data were used to develop a historic context for eighteenth

century overseers and the associated archaeological data.

Site 38CH1278 produced a mean ceramic date of 1741 and an assemblage that was intermediate between what has been documented from eighteenth century slave and overseer sites. Research at 38CH1278 focused on the collection of information suitable for better understanding a site type for which there is very little historic or archaeological documentation.

The data recovery included close interval (10-foot) 12-inch power auger testing in the site core, originally defined as 60 by 60 feet. This was expanded in the field to cover an area 80 feet east-west by 140 feet north-south, for a total of 134 auger tests. These tests were used to define areas of high artifact density. This work explored three concentrations using a total of 775 square feet.

The excavations revealed extensive plowing across the site, with plow scars consistently running northwest-southeast. In addition, we identified what we believe are nineteenth century agricultural features representing cotton rows, which are cut through by the more recent twentieth century agricultural plowing.

The excavation units revealed only two possible cultural features - a shallow pit and a section of what may be a wall trench with interior post holes.

Artifacts include ceramics, primarily lead glazed slipware and Colono ware, tobacco pipe stems, buttons, lead flint wraps, a gun flint, a thimble, and similar items, generally in low densities, but clearly concentrated in the

primary excavation area at 165-175R140-150, 185-195R150.

Mechanical stripping took place in four areas to further explore isolated auger tests producing dense remains, as well as the possible wall trench section. This work continued to reveal nineteenth and twentieth century agricultural activity, and one additional feature.

We believe the absence of “English” architectural remains may be explained by the structure’s above grade construction using small piers. Similar architectural findings have been identified by Chicora at the dwelling of a yeoman planter in Christ Church Parish from the late eighteenth century.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures		v
List of Tables		vi
Introduction		1
<i>Background</i>	1	
<i>Development of Research Questions</i>	3	
<i>Proposed Data Recovery</i>	6	
<i>Curation</i>	6	
<i>The Natural Setting</i>	6	
Historic Synopsis of the Project Tract		15
<i>Early History</i>	15	
<i>The Hibben Ownership</i>	18	
<i>The Eighteenth Century Plantation</i>	21	
A Context for Eighteenth Century Overseers		23
<i>Introduction</i>	23	
<i>The Legal Origin of South Carolina Overseers</i>	25	
<i>Colonial Overseers as Portrayed in Newspaper Advertisements</i>	26	
<i>Henry Laurens and his Overseers</i>	33	
<i>Other Eighteenth Century Overseer Accounts</i>	39	
<i>Synthesis</i>	40	
<i>Summary</i>	44	
Excavations		47
<i>Methodology</i>	47	
<i>Results of Close Interval Testing</i>	49	
<i>Results of Excavations</i>	49	
<i>Results of Mechanical Cuts</i>	55	
Artifacts		59
<i>Methodology</i>	59	
<i>Analysis</i>	62	
<i>Summary</i>	72	
Floral and Faunal Remains		75
<i>Faunal Remains</i>	75	
<i>Floral Remains</i>	75	
Summary and Conclusions		79
<i>Historical Conclusions</i>	79	
<i>Floral Remains</i>	80	





## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	
1. Sites 38CH1278 and 38CH1282	1
2. Site 38CH1278 from the original Brockington survey	2
3. Sketch map and typical shovel testing profile of 38CH1278 from the Chicora survey	3
4. View of the site area	6
5. Boundaries of Christ Church Parish	8
6. Soils on the 1757 plantation	11
7. Plat for the 1757 plantation	17
8. 1801 plat for Wells of lands acquired from Snowden	19
9. Use of a bobcat for auger testing	47
10. Hand excavation	48
11. Troweling units at the base of Level 1	48
12. Artifact density based on the auger tests	50
13. Excavation units	51
14. Base of excavations in 165R140	52
15. Feature 2, S½ excavated	52
16. Excavations in the east central area (165-175R140-150, 185-195R150)	53
17. Plan and profile drawings of features	54
18. Excavations in the west central area (150R100)	56
19. Excavations in the southeast quadrant (130R150-155)	57
20. Artifacts from 38CH1278	73

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1. Previously published artifact patterns compared to 38CH1278 survey data	4
2. Soils on the 1757 plantation	10
3. Brief view of plantation owners during the eighteenth century	21
4. Newspaper advertisements examined	27
5. Analysis of ads	29
6. Estimates of mean total wealth per white inhabitant	40
7. Brick and shell weights	55
8. Proportion of Colono at Eighteenth Century sites in the project area	63
9. Types of European ceramics present	64
10. Shape and function of ceramic vessels	65
11. Mean ceramic date for 38CH1278	67
12. Buttons	69
13. Artifacts recovered from 38CH1278	71
14. Comparison of artifact patterns	72
15. Faunal remains by provenience	75
16. Results of flotation analysis	76

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The data recovery investigations were conducted by Dr. Michael Trinkley of Chicora Foundation, Inc. for Mr. Mark Regalbuto of Plantation Partners, LP of Charleston, South Carolina. The field studies were conducted from August 17 through September 1, 2004 with a crew of four archaeologists (Tom Covington, Katherine Morse, Julie Poppell, and Nicole Southerland), plus the Principal Investigator (who was on-site throughout the project). A total of 349.5 person hours were spent conducting the data recovery work. Additional eighteenth century documentary research was conducted by Charleston historian, Sarah Fick; overseer data was collected by Sarah Fick and the senior author.

Site 38CH1278 was first encountered during a 1991 survey of the Belle Hall tract by Brockington and Associates. The site was situated in an old agricultural field adjacent to a farm road on moderately well drained to somewhat

poorly drained Charleston Series soils. The site is about 1,000 to 2,000 feet southwest of the marshes of Rathall Creek to the west and Foster Creek to the northeast (Figure 1) in the Mount Pleasant area of Charleston County, South Carolina. Historically the plantation was situated in what was known as Christ Church Parish - one of the eight parishes established by the Church Act of 1706.

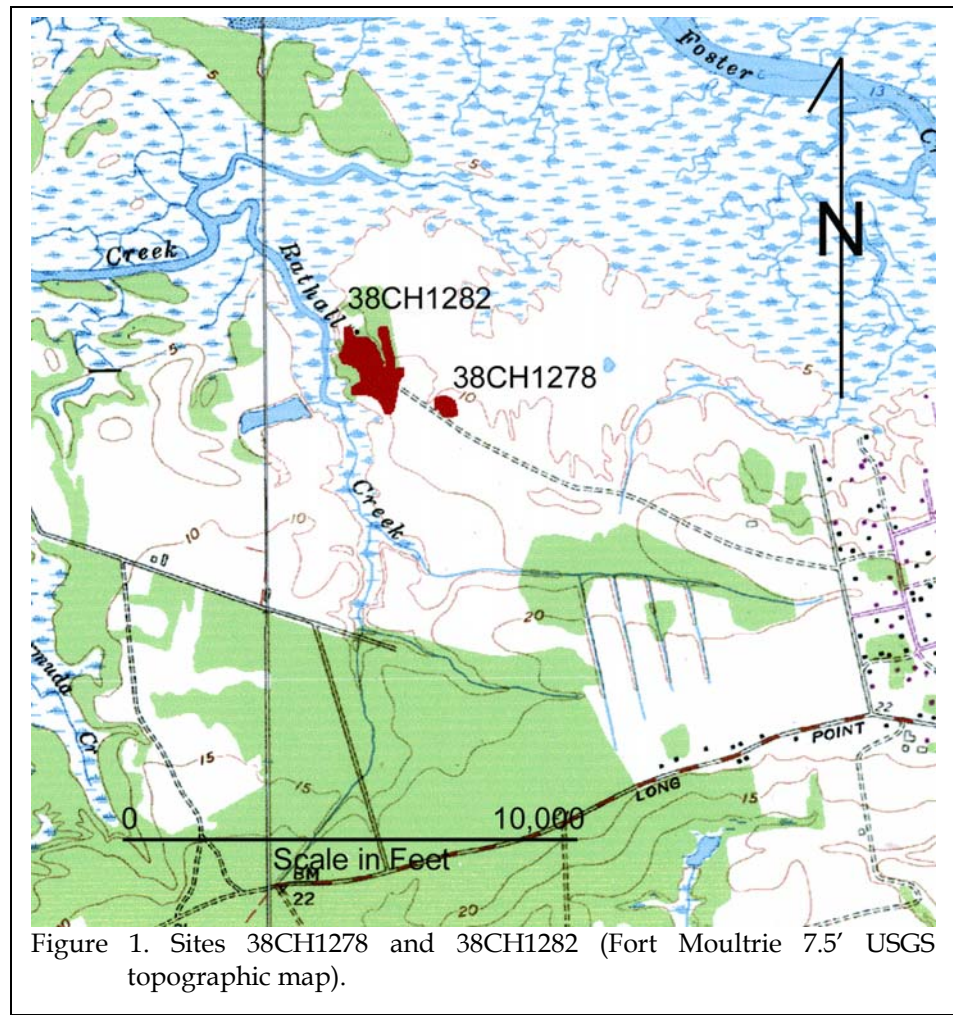


Figure 1. Sites 38CH1278 and 38CH1282 (Fort Moultrie 7.5' USGS topographic map).

INVESTIGATION OF AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEER SITE

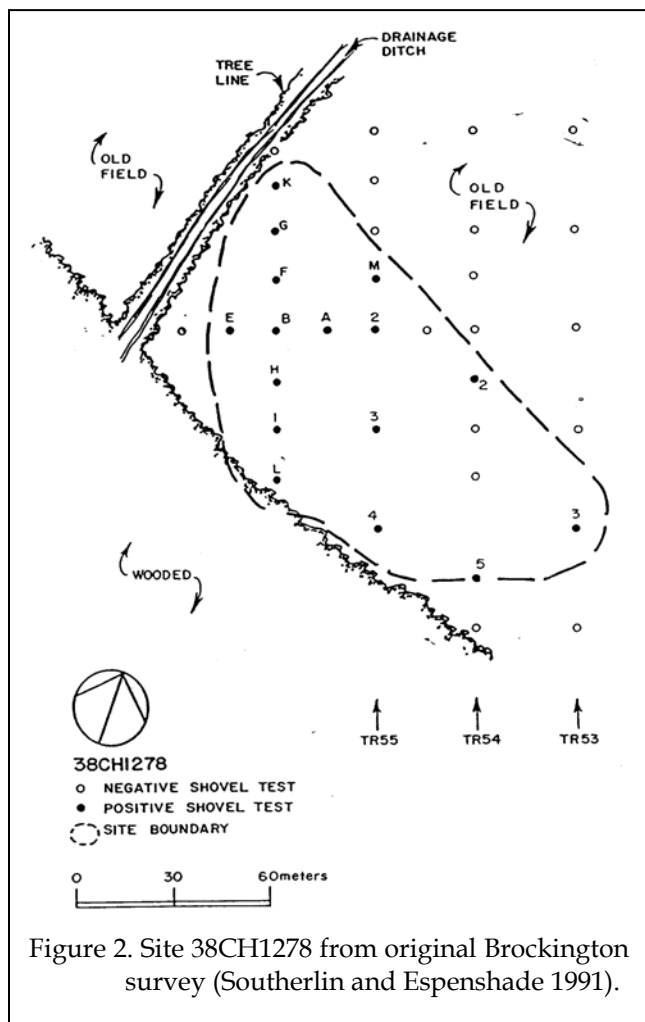


Figure 2. Site 38CH1278 from original Brockington survey (Southerlin and Espenshade 1991).

Testing of the site during the initial Brockington survey was limited to 19 shovel tests, 15 of which were positive (Figure 2). Although the artifacts are not available for examination, the site form specifies that they include Colono, slipware, and white salt-glazed stoneware. The site is identified as a “domestic slave/overseer occupation with intact midden” (Southerlin and Espenshade 1991).

A Memorandum of Agreement covering this particular site, identified as potentially eligible, was developed and signed in June 1992. In December 2001 Chicora was requested to prepare a testing plan for 38CH1278 by Plantation Partners. The resulting data recovery

plan was approved and the testing (in conjunction with another potentially eligible site, 38CH1282) was conducted in June 2004 (Trinkley et al. 2004).

The Chicora testing program used 131 shovel tests placed at 25-foot intervals coupled with the excavation of three 5-foot units (Figure 3). The site was found to be defined by 67 shovel tests, 54 (81%) of which were positive. Materials were found scattered over an area measuring about 250 feet (east-west) by 275 feet (north-south). Within this scatter, however, there was a clearly defined site core, represented by a cluster of 13 positive shovel tests with five or more artifacts, between Transects 4 and 5.5, Shovel Tests 3 to 5.5. Generally, shovel tests that radiated away from this nucleus contained four or fewer artifacts.

The recovered ceramics produced a mean ceramic date of 1741 and included Chinese porcelain, stonewares, lead glazed slipwares, delft, lead glazed earthenwares, and creamware. A very low incidence of pearlware and whiteware was noted and these nineteenth century ceramics do not appear to be significant contributors to the site.

When the resulting artifact pattern was examined, it did not reveal a “perfect” fit to any previously established pattern, although it is close to the Carolina Slave Artifact Pattern, characterizing eighteenth century slave settlements with abundant kitchen remains, but few architectural items because of the ephemeral construction techniques. Arms, Tobacco, Personal, and Activities-related items, however, were far higher than should be expected for a slave settlement – and in those specific categories the assemblage more closely resembled an eighteenth century overseer site identified by Chicora in Goose Creek (Trinkley et al. 2003). In these categories the 38CH1278 survey assemblage is also similar to what has been found on a small eighteenth century yeoman planter farm in Christ Church Parish (Trinkley and Hacker 1996).

INTRODUCTION

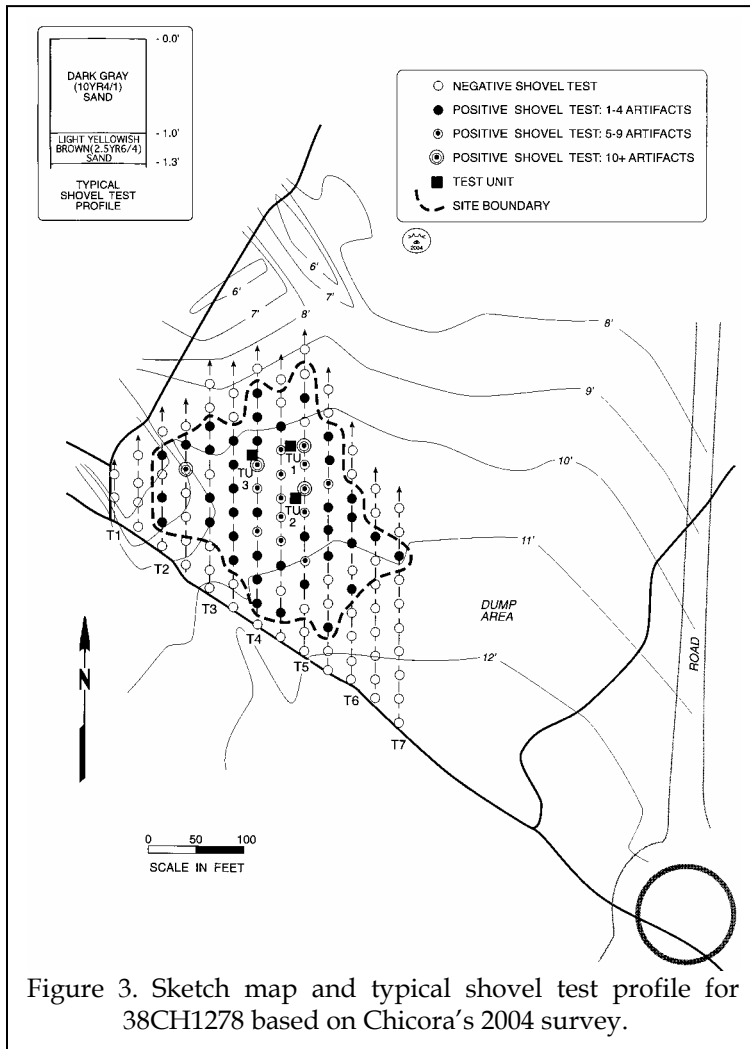


Figure 3. Sketch map and typical shovel test profile for 38CH1278 based on Chicora's 2004 survey.

We noted at the time that the interpretation of the site as a possible overseer was consistent with the very detailed historic research that suggested while its early owner was engaged in active planting, he did not live on the tract.

The site, based on the Chicora investigations, was recommended eligible for inclusion on the National Register. The State Historic Preservation Office concurred in their letter of July 27, 2004 (letter from Mr. Chad Long to Dr. Michael Trinkley). We were requested by Plantation Partners to prepare a data recovery plan for 38CH1278 since the site's location at the

entrance to a new development phase precluded green spacing. A data recovery plan was prepared and approved by Plantation Partners in mid-July. Approval was obtained from the State Historic Preservation Office shortly afterwards (letter from Mr. Chad Long to Dr. Michael Trinkley dated August 2, 2004).

**Research Questions**

As previously mentioned, our research at 38CH1278 focused on our belief that the site represents the settlement of an eighteenth century overseer, based on the available archaeological evidence and its congruence with the historical documentation. This presumption, however, was consistently challenged throughout the work and refined as data analysis was conducted.

There is considerable historical documentation concerning nineteenth century plantation overseers. Their lives are detailed by a variety of historical overviews, such as Bassett's (1925) *The Southern Plantation Overseer As Revealed in His Letters* or Scarborough's (1966) *The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South*. Locally, Clark explored antebellum overseers in his 1966 thesis, *Plantation Overseers in South Carolina, 1820-1860*. This historical focus on nineteenth century overseers is more than a coincidence.

The vast majority of plantation accounts, daybooks, journals, diaries, and letters come from this period. We have extraordinary census records for free and slave alike in 1850 and 1860. There was an effort at agricultural reform in the antebellum that put overseers in the spotlight, further contributing to our understanding of their activities. In addition, virtually all of the various agricultural journals date from the antebellum - *The American Agriculturist* began in 1843, *The Carolina Planter* dates from 1844,

*DeBow's Review* dates to only 1846 (at the time called *Commercial Review of the South and West* at the time), *The Farmer and Planter* dates no earlier than 1850, *The South Carolina Agriculturalist* was first published in 1856, *The Southern Agriculturist and Register of Rural Affairs* is among the earliest - beginning in 1828, *The Southern Cabinet of Agriculture, Horticulture, Rural and Domestic Economy* began in 1841, and *The Southern Cultivator* began in 1843.

In other words, historians focused on the antebellum because it was during this period that significant documents - either for specific plantations or as artifacts or letters in agricultural journals - were available. As we move back from 1820 into the eighteenth century the records become far less common - and far less revealing.

Of these published sources, only Scarborough provides even the briefest mention of overseer antecedents, focusing on Virginia where he claims the overseer class came from the indentured servants whose terms of service had expired (Scarborough 1966:3). He also suggests that Colonial overseers, rather than being paid a set wage, received a third of the net proceeds from the plantation they managed (Scarborough 1966:4). It was this practice, according to Scarborough, that led to the ruin of plantation lands and the early death of overworked slaves. Otherwise he comments that, "the managerial system in the pre-Revolutionary period differed in no important

respect from that employed in the nineteenth century" (Scarborough 1966:4).

Given the paucity of eighteenth century information this statement, on its face, is difficult to believe. In addition, when we consider that the economy and nature of agricultural production changed, it is difficult to reconcile that managerial practices remained static.

Another troubling feature of the secondary accounts of nineteenth century overseers is that they too easily fall into the position that overseers comprised a separate "mud-sill" class, mid-way between planters and slaves. Reading Bassett, and even Scarborough, one comes away with a rather one-dimensional view of overseers. It is some of this simplicity that authors such as Steffen (1996) challenge.

While our research is at best preliminary we, too, must agree that eighteenth century sources are scarce and often provide little revealing information. This condition is supported by the research of Tristan Stubbs (personal communication 2004) who is independently exploring eighteenth century overseers in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Nevertheless, we can draw on several sources to at the very least suggest there were some differences not reported by Scarborough.

For example, recently Morgan has explored a unique eighteenth century diary of a cow pen overseer in Jamaica (Morgan 1995). While there are certainly substantive differences between a Jamaican pen and a Carolina rice plantation, we wonder if the underlying economic and managerial aspects were not very similar. Morgan notes that there was constant interaction between the overseers and the slaves involving sex, trade, and provisions. The result was, according to Morgan

Table 1.  
Previously published Artifact Patterns compared to 38CH1278

	38CH1278	Carolina Slave Artifact Pattern	38BK1900 Area B 18 <sup>th</sup> c. overseer	38CH1471 Late 18 <sup>th</sup> c. small planter
Kitchen	74.9	70.9-84.2	65.2	77.4
Architecture	9.9	11.8-24.8	21.2	17.9
Furniture	0.1	0-0.1	0	0.1
Arms	1.1	0.1-0.3	0.3	0.1
Tobacco	9.1	2.4-5.4	10.2	1.4
Clothing	0.3	0.3-0.8	0.1	1.4
Personal	0.3	0-0.1	0.1	0.3
Activities	4.3	0.2-0.9	2.9	1.4

(1995:69) a “familiarity and mutuality.” He notes that this familiarity (with exploitation):

owed much to the isolation and lonely existence of its overseer who, despite his formal powers, depended on the slaves for fellowship, even for friendship. In some ways the pen was a more insular place for the manager than the slaves (Morgan 1995: 71).

Morgan would agree that eighteenth century slave and overseer – at least in this one Jamaican case – had a unique relationship based on isolation, as well as mutual needs and expectations.

This historical interpretation is provided some American support through Walsh’s (1997) Virginia research. She found that one of Virginia’s most thoroughly researched planters, Robert (King) Carter, “supplied the white overseer with little more in the way of domestic goods than he did the slaves: nothing more than basic bedding, cooking pots, and usually a gun” (Walsh 1997: 90). She goes on to suggest that the historic documents reveal eighteenth century housing not dissimilar from that provided to the slaves and that these early overseers were the only whites on the plantation, were often single, and that they had few items to be pilfered by the slaves.

The congruence of data from Jamaica and Virginia suggests clear archaeological implications – slave and overseer in the eighteenth century archaeological record could well blur one into the other, with only minor differences in key areas of personal goods, weapons, and perhaps clothing.

When we turn away from historical data and look to comparative archaeological research, we find virtually nothing for South Carolina or Georgia. The overseer’s research that is the basis of our “perception” is entirely nineteenth

century. Examples include the work by Otto on the Georgia coast (Otto 1984; nicely summarized by Otto and Burns 1983) and Michie on the South Carolina coast (Michie 1990). Both follow the historical approach that places nineteenth century overseers squarely midway between the wealth of the planter and the abject poverty of the slave.

The only South Carolina study that examines an eighteenth century overseer dwelling is Chicora’s work at the Mazyck plantation in Goose Creek (Trinkley et al. 2003). There we found an assemblage that, as previously mentioned, was very similar to that of a slave when only kitchen and architectural items are considered, although distinct when other minor percentage items are also examined. This one archaeological assemblage provides considerable support to the historical views of Morgan and Walsh, who note that the white overseer lived in a manner far more similar to a slave than a planter.

This forms the core of our research at 38CH1278. How did the eighteenth century overseer live and what can archaeology tell us about that lifestyle? We are approaching those questions from both the perspective of additional historical research, as well as the examination of the material remains from this site.

The data recovery excavations were directed toward two goals:

- ❖ the collection of a larger sample of artifacts, suitable for better pattern studies, dating, and other research, and
- ❖ the identification, if possible, of architectural remains that might help identify the occupants of the site.

The artifact sample is key to the identification of the site occupants – it provides the data to compare to other eighteenth century sites of known function, ranging from slave





Figure 4. View of site looking north from road at the southern boundary.

settlements to yeoman farmers to the Charleston town houses of the very wealthy.

The architectural remains might likewise be an important element in this study. We have excellent architectural studies for both the masters and the enslaved – and these will serve as the basis for comparison.

#### **Proposed Data Recovery**

The testing at 38CH1278 did not reveal any clearly defined intrasite patterning – only a small core area that we interpret to represent the dwelling and primary activity area of the overseer.

In an effort to better define that area and perhaps even identify architectural elements, we thought it would be useful to begin by conducting a very close interval auger survey. Our initial study was conducted at 25-foot intervals, so the auger study was to be done at 10-foot intervals. We proposed the use of a mechanical 12-inch auger, with all fill being screened through ¼-inch mesh. Brick and shell would be quantified in the field and discarded.

This auger testing was proposed for an area measuring about 60 feet square, resulting in 49 tests. The resulting density data will be used to place five 10-foot units that will be hand excavated. At the conclusion of this work, we then proposed to use a track hoe to strip areas where there was evidence of structural remains.

Features identified in the work would be plotted. The extent of their excavation would depend on the nature of the feature and the materials recovered. Some might be

excavated in their entirety, others may only be sampled. Five gallon flotation samples would be taken of features having dark, organic fill indicative of carbonized floral materials. Other features would have a similar volume of soil retained for water screening through 1/16-inch mesh.

#### **Curation**

An updated site form reflecting this work has been filed with the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA). The field notes and artifacts from Chicora’s data recovery at 38CH1278 will be curated at SCIAA. The artifacts have been cleaned and cataloged following that institution’s provenience system. All original records and duplicate records will be provided to the curatorial facility on pH neutral, alkaline buffered paper. Photographic materials include B/W negatives and color transparencies – both of which are being processed to archival standards.

### **The Natural Setting**

#### **Physiography**

Charleston County is located in the lower Atlantic Coastal Plain of South Carolina and is bounded to the east by the Atlantic Ocean and a series of marsh, barrier, and sea islands (Mathews et al. 1980:133). Elevations in the County range from sea level to about 70 feet above mean sea level (AMSL). The mainland topography, which consists of subtle ridge and bay undulations, is characteristic of beach ridge plains.

Seven major drainages are found in Charleston County. Four of these, the Wando, Ashley, Stono, and North Edisto, are dominated by tidal flows and are saline. The Wando forms a portion of the County's the interior boundary northeast of Charleston, while the Ashley flows west of the peninsular city of Charleston. The three with significant freshwater flow are the Santee, which forms the northern boundary of the County; the South Edisto, which forms the southern boundary; and the Cooper, which bisects the County.

Because of the low topography, many broad, low gradient interior drains are present as either extensions of the tidal rivers or as flooded bays and swales. Extensions include Hobcaw, Rathall, Foster, Horlbeck, Boone Hall, Wagner, Toomer, and Allston creeks that flow west, north, or northeast into the Wando. Flooded bays and swales are equally common in the project area, typically being shown on historic plats as "galls" or "swamps." While these areas often exhibit productive soil, they must be drained and the drains kept open - both laborious and unhealthy tasks assigned to African American slaves.

The project area is situated just 6 miles from Charleston in what historically was known as Christ Church Parish (Figure 5). It is protected from the Atlantic Ocean by Dewees

Island, the Isle of Palms, as well as a host of small marsh islands and large bays. Behind this marsh fringe is what historically has been called the "Sea Shore" - an area of mud and sand beaches that gradually rise to relatively poorly drained interior "high lands."

Elevations in the general area are about 10 feet AMSL, although much of the original eighteenth century plantation included lands ranging from near sea level to slightly over 20 feet AMSL. The study site is situated on a broad interior plain that is relatively low and, today, dissected by drainage ditches. From a broader prospective, the site is situated on a sandy ridge that runs to the east, with the elevations gradually increasing. Topography to the north slopes gradually down to the marshes of Rathall Creek and the Wando River beyond. To the south elevations increase beyond a tributary of Rathall Creek.

While the site area is not especially high, it does represent some of the highest ground centrally located in the original plantation. Elevations increase, but they are peripheral to the central area - and very far removed from the slave settlement identified at 38CH1282, on the western edge of the plantation.

#### **Geology and Soils**

Coastal Plain geological formations are unconsolidated sedimentary deposits of very recent age, primarily Pleistocene and Holocene. They are found lying unconformably on more ancient crystalline rocks that are rarely exposed by nature (Cooke 1936; Miller 1971:74).

The soils formed from these Holocene and Pleistocene soils were typically deposited in various stages of coastal submergence. Soil formation is affected by the parent material (primarily sands and clays), the temperate climate (discussed later), the various soil organisms, the flat topography of the area, and time.

INVESTIGATION OF AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEER SITE

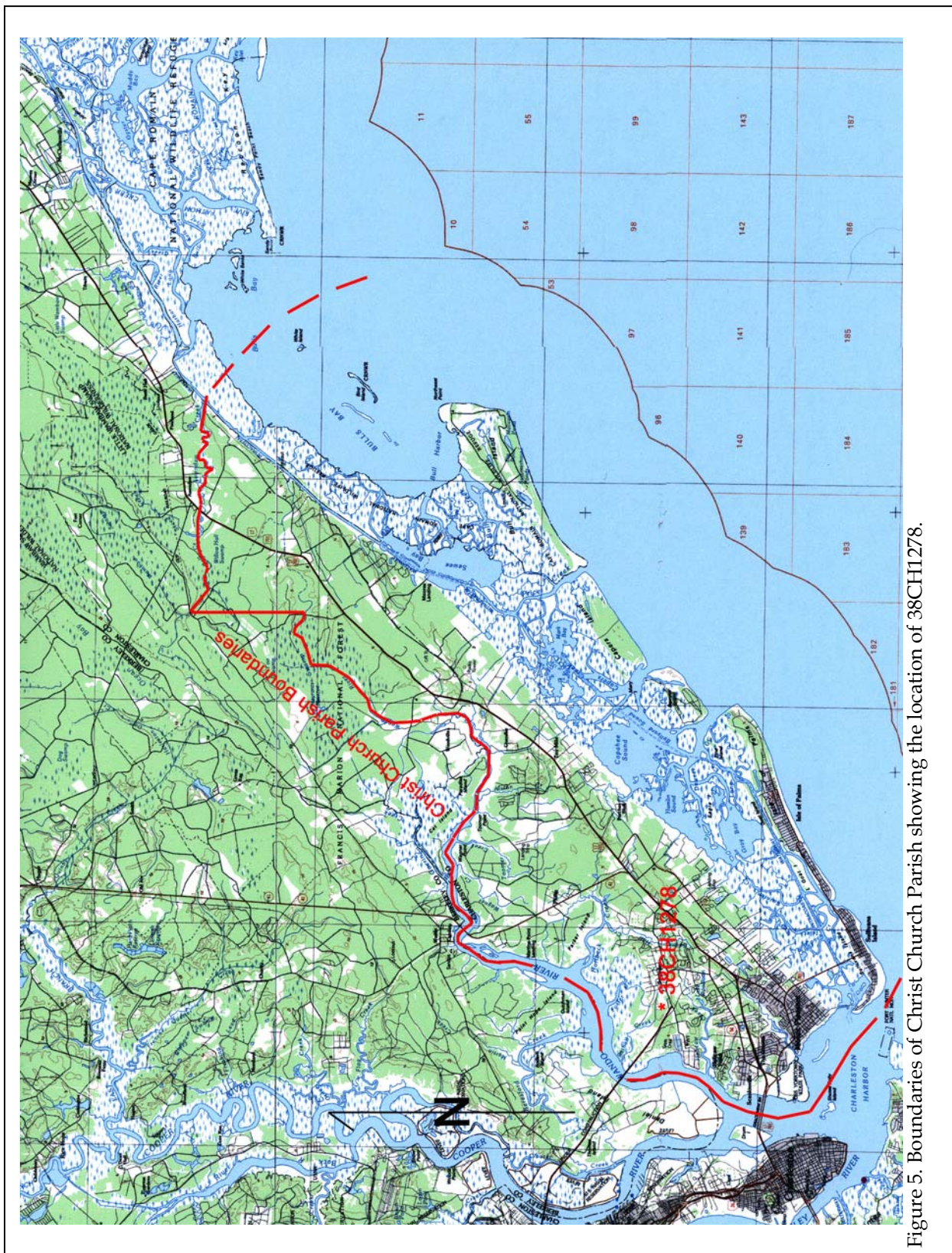


Figure 5. Boundaries of Christ Church Parish showing the location of 38CH1278.

## INTRODUCTION

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Mainland soils are primarily Pleistocene in age and tend to have more distinct horizons and greater diversity than the younger soils found on the sea and barrier islands. Sandy to loamy soils are dominant in the level to gently sloping mainland areas. The adjacent tidal marsh soils are Holocene in age and consist of fine sands, clay, and organic matter deposited over older Pleistocene sands. These soils are frequently covered by up to 2 feet of saltwater during high tides. Historically marsh soils have been used as compost or fertilizer for a variety of crops, including cotton (Hammond 1884:510) and Allston mentions that the sandy soil of the coastal region, "bears well the admixture of salt and marsh mud with the compost" (Allston 1854:13).

As the colony was being settled and promoted, the soils were described simply. John Norris told his readers in 1712:

the Soil is generally Sandy, but of differing Colours, under which, Two or Three Foot Deep, is Clay of which good Bricks are made (Greene 1989:89).

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, William DeBrahm's Report provides little more information, stating only that, "the Land near the Sea Coast is in general of a very sandy Soil" and noting that this soil "along the Coast has as yet not been able to invite the industrious to reap Benefit of its Capacity" (DeVorse 1971:72).

By the nineteenth century, Robert Mills in his *Statistics of South Carolina* provides slightly more information concerning the current understanding of the soils:

Lands here [in Charleston District] may be viewed under six divisions in respect to quality; 1st, Tide swamp; 2d, Inland swamp; 3d, High river swamp (or low ground, commonly called second low

grounds); 4th, Salt Marsh; 5th, Oak and hickory high lands; and 6th, Pine barren. The tide and inland swamps are peculiarly adapted to the culture of rice and hemp; they are very valuable, and will frequently sell for \$100 an acre; in some instances for more. The high river swamps are well calculated for raising hemp, indigo, corn, and cotton; and where secured from freshets, are equally valuable with the tide lands. The oak and hickory highlands are well suited for corn and provisions, also for indigo and cotton. The value of these may be stated at from ten to twenty dollars per acre. The pine barrens are not worth more than one dollar an acre (Mills 1972:442-443 [1826]).

Even the detail of this account, however, fails to provide a very clear picture of the soils in Christ Church where the sands were low and commonly interspersed with galls or small inland swamps. Here the property, even the supposedly good hickory and oak lands, were poorly drained.

A number of period accounts discuss the importance of soil drainage. Seabrook, for example, explained in 1848:

subsoil so close as to be impervious to water; so that the excess of the rains of winter cannot sink. Nor can it flow off, because of the level surface . . . . The land thereby is kept thoroughly water-soaked until late in the spring. The long continued wetness is favorable only to growth of coarse and sour grasses and broom sedge . . . acid and antiseptic qualities of

the soil . . . sponge-like power to absorb and retain water . . . is barren, (for useful crops) from two causes - excessive wetness and great acidity. The remedies required are also two; and neither alone will be of the least useful effect, with the other also. Draining must remove the wetness - calcareous manures the acidity (Seabrook 1848:37).

Hammond was still providing a somewhat similar account in the postbellum:

drainage . . . has of necessity always been practiced to some extent. The remarkably high beds on which cotton is planted here, being from 18 inches to 2 feet high, subserve this purpose. The best planters have long had open drains through their fields. These were generally made by running two furrows with a plow and afterward hauling out the loose dirt with a hoe, thus leaving an open ditch, if it be so termed, a foot or more in depth (Hammond 1884:509).

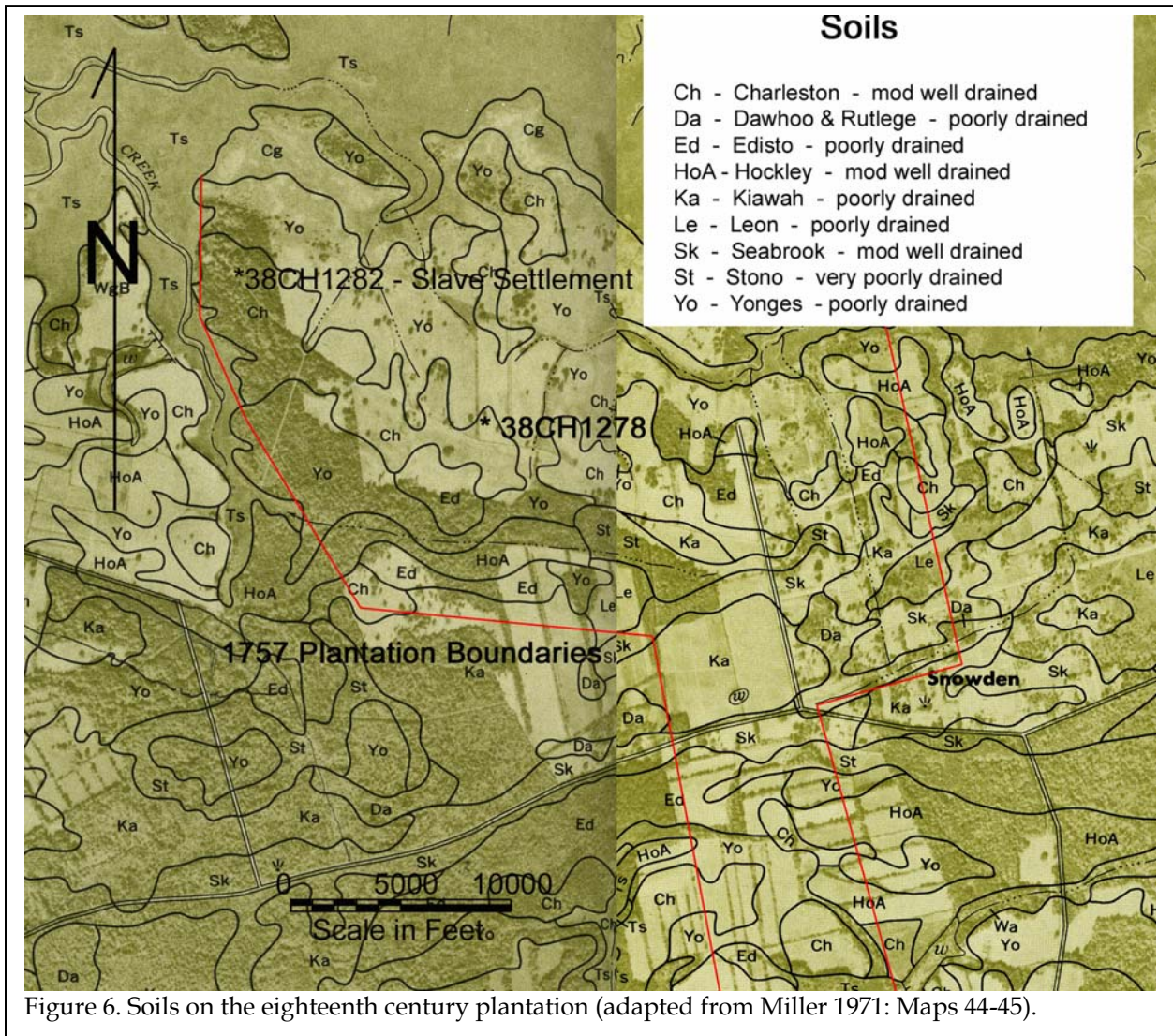
encountered on these soils and their efforts to make the land productive. These problems have also been briefly mentioned by Hilliard, who comments that soils in the region were, "seldom well enough drained for most crops" (Hilliard 1984:11).

If the soils from the 1757 plantation tract vicinity are examined (see Figure 6), nine series are encountered: Charleston, Dawhoo and Rutlege, Edisto, Hockley, Kiawah, Leon, Seabrook, Stono, and Yonges. Of these, only the Charleston, Hockley, and Seabrook soils are moderately well drained. The remainder of the soils range from very poorly drained to somewhat poorly drained. Table 2 reveals the percentages of these various soils on the eighteenth century plantation and we can see that just a third of the plantation was even moderately well drained - the vast majority of the tract was poorly drained. Both the overseer's site and the slave settlement took up small portions of the better drained soils. Consequently, the planter would have been confronted with either finding crops suitable for these wet soils or devoting considerable effort to developing and maintaining drainage systems.

The Charleston soils have an Ap horizon of dark brown (10YR3/3) loamy fine sand about 0.7 foot in depth overlying an A2 horizon of yellowish brown (10YR5/4) loamy fine sand to a depth of about 1.3 feet. Below this is a B21t horizon of dark brown (7.5YR4/4) fine sand loam to 2.0 feet. The Charleston soils are typically level to gently sloping and while most are moderately well drained, some are noted as somewhat poorly drained. The depth to a seasonal high water table varies from 2 to 5 feet in the Charleston series (Miller 1971:9).

Soil Series	Drainage	% of tract
Charleston	moderately well drained	21.3
Dawhoo & Rutlege	poorly drained	2.0
Edisto	somewhat poorly drained	9.9
Hockley	moderately well drained	6.5
Kiawah	somewhat poorly drained	9.1
Leon	somewhat poorly drained	2.0
Seabrook	moderately well drained	5.7
Stono	very poorly drained	3.8
Yonges	poorly drained	39.6

The number of drainages found in the vicinity offers mute testimony to the problems planters



The current information and the historical documentation reveal low, poorly drained soils with only limited agricultural productivity. The impact of this on the agriculture and wealth of the eighteenth century plantation will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

### Climate

The weather was all important in Colonial society, affecting the crops that in turn affected trade and wealth. Just as importantly, the Carolina climate affected, usually for the worse, the planter's health. Greene notes that:

the prospects of obtaining wealth with ease . . . meant little in a menacing environment, and both Nairne and Norris took pains to minimize the unpleasant and dangerous features that already had combined to give South Carolina an ambiguous reputation. They had to admit that throughout the summer temperatures were "indeed troublesome to Strangers." But they contended that settlers had quickly found satisfactory

remedies in the form of "open airy Rooms, Arbours and Summer-houses" constructed in shady groves and frequent cool baths and insisted the discomfitures of the summers were more than offset by the agreeableness of the rest of the seasons. [They also suggested] that ill-health was largely limited to newcomers before they were seasoned to the climate, to people who insisted in living in low marshy ground, and to those who were excessive and careless in their eating, drinking, and personal habits. "If temperate," they asserted, those who lived on "dry healthy Land," were "generally very healthful" (Greene 1989:16).

While making for good public relations, the reality was far different. Roy Merrens and George Terry (1989) found that in Christ Church Parish, 86% of all whose births and deaths are recorded in the parish register, died before the age of twenty. Equally frightening statistics have been compiled by John Duffy (1952), who found that the average European could expect to live to the age of about 30 in South Carolina during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Yellow fever, smallpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, malaria, dysentery all were at home in Carolina. Using the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) records, Duffy found that from 1700 to 1750, 38% of the missionaries either died or were compelled to resign because of serious illness within the first five years of their arrival. Within 10 years of their arrival, 52% had died or resigned because of their health. After 15 years in the colony, the combined death toll and resignations from sickness reached 68% - two out of every three missionaries.

African Americans fared no better. Frank Klingberg (1941:154), using SPG records

found that in a single four month period over 400 slaves died of "distemper." William Dusinger, exploring rice plantations along the Carolina coast, entitled one of his chapters "The Charnel House" - a reference to the extraordinary morbidity of African Americans on rice plantations. He reports that on some plantations the child mortality rate (to age sixteen) was a horrific 90% (Dusinger 1996:51), while the probable average for rice plantations was around 60% (Dusinger 1996:239). Cotton plantations were healthier, but even there fully a third of all slave children did not live to see their sixteenth birthday.

Beginning in the last third of the eighteenth century the life expectancy began to increase. Merrens and Terry suggest that this was the result of the occupants beginning to understand the cause of malaria:

During the middle of the eighteenth century South Carolinian's perception of the wholesome environment of the lowcountry swamps began to change. People no longer preferred these areas on the score of health as a place of summer residence. Instead, residents began to view the lowcountry as fostering both mosquitoes and death (Merrens and Terry 1989:547).

The Charleston climate, with its moderate winters and long, hot summers, affected not only the health of the population and the crops grown, it also influenced the politics of Carolina. The summer climate of Carolina, while causing the Barbadian immigrants to feel that they had resettled in the tropics, also convinced most that slavery was inevitable. Not only was slavery the accepted order to the planters from Barbados, Jamaica, Antigua, and St. Kitts, it seemed impossible for white Englishmen to work in the torrid heat - making African American slaves that much

more essential (Donnan 1928). Even in Christ Church parish, which in 1720 had a very low settlement compared to other parishes, slaves comprised 85.6% of the population.

### Vegetation

Just as the early explorers described the climate as healthful, the Carolina vegetation was usually described as bountiful and fruitful. Catesby described the swamp lands, typical of many areas in Christ Church, in the first decade of the eighteenth century:

before they are prepared for rice, are thick, over-grown with underwood and lofty trees of mighty bulk, which by excluding the sun's beams, and preventing the exhalation of these stagnating waters, occasions the lands to be always wet, but by cutting down the wood is partly evaporated, and the earth better adapted to the culture of rice (Catesby, quoted in Merrens 1977:93).

He also mentions that these swamps, filled with "a profusion of fragrant and beautiful plants give a most pleasing entertainment to the senses, therein excelling other parts of the country, and by their closeness and warmth in winter are a recess to many of the wading and water-fowls" (Catesby, quoted in Merrens 1977:93).

The study tract, on the interior of Christ Church, while being low and generally unfavorable to agriculture, incorporated a number of distinctly different ecotones, many of which are actually very productive. Along the northern edge of the property, for example, would have been the salt marsh and its border zonation. The upper marsh would have been dominated by marsh elder, sea myrtle or groundsel, and marshhay cordgrass. Slightly lower marsh areas might be dominated by glasswort, smooth cordgrass, and sea oxeye.

Regardless, these communities are almost entirely dependent on the duration of flooding and the salinity of the water.

Just behind the marsh, and only slightly further inland, would be the maritime forest, where the salt spray is enough to influence the development of the climax vegetation (Barry 1980:178). Here live oaks, palmettos, and slash pines are most frequently found. Other species might include the loblolly pine, turkey oak, red bay, and wax myrtle. Principal lianas, the curse of coastal archaeological surveys even today, might include yellow jessamine, greenbrier, Virginia creeper, and poison ivy.

Further inland there would likely be a mixture of different communities, many influenced by the action of humans – earlier by the Native Americans and later by the English planters. Areas of mesic mixed hardwood and pine might be found on the better drained soils. The dominant species would be white oak, often in combination with loblolly pine. Found as occasional overstory trees would be sweetgum, beech, southern red oak, post oak, maple, and hickory. Understory plants would include dogwood, redbud, and holly.

While classic cypress-tupelo swamps are found in some areas along the coast, the study tract does not exhibit areas of alluvial soil with an open circulation of water. Instead, what are called upland swamps are present. While still having acid conditions and wet soils, the vegetation is often very different. The upland swamps are dominated by pond cypress, pond pine, and slash pine (Barry 1980:150-151).

Also present would be old growth pine communities, created by disturbances such as fire or clear cutting the hardwoods. In these areas longleaf pine culminates in a closed canopy with a very sparsely populated understory. Hardwood introductions are exceedingly uncommon, but where present may include sweetgum, persimmon, and hickory (Barry 1980:172-173). These areas presented the



pine flat woods shown on many plats and mentioned by many early accounts as being unproductive (even along the coast being called "pine barrens"). These are closely related, biologically, to the pine savannahs that might best be described as longleaf pine pyric climax forests.

While Christ Church has historically presented a challenge to planters, it is clear from even this general account of its vegetation, that there is tremendous diversity. Unfortunately, it was that diversity, engendered by the soils and climate, which made the area seem so unproductive. Although planters could fathom draining huge acreage of river swamps for rice, there was little interest in draining the seemingly infertile pine barrens that dominated Christ Church. We suspect that it was one thing to drain large expanses where profit was assured; it was another to drain small galls and ponded plains when there was no clear profit in doing so. Consequently, the unique combination of physiography, soils, climate, and vegetation dramatically affected the development of the area.

## HISTORIC SYNOPSIS

### Early History

Before 1700, Joshua Wilks assembled an 837-acre plantation on Wando River. One parcel, 600 acres between a "great marsh on Wando River" and Rowser's Creek, had been first granted (1682) to John Stephenson, and sold in two conveyances (1692 and 1698) by Stephenson's widow Mary and her subsequent husband, brick maker John Bell, to Wilks(Charleston County RMC, DB Z, pp. 294-297).

The adjacent plantation south of the Stephenson grant had been originally granted (1677) to Mary McMervill, and described as being "at the head of Rowsers Creek." McMervill held the land for a decade, then sold it in 1688 to Nathaniel Law, who conveyed it to Joshua Wilks in 1692.

Finally, there was a small tract of 67 acres, which had been granted to Wilks himself (Charleston County RMC, DB Z, pp. 294-297). The 837-acre plantation passed to Wilks's son, also Joshua, at his father's death.

We have found little information about the occupations or residences of Joshua Wilks, Sr. or Jr. We cannot be certain whether Wilks Sr. or Jr. settled their tract on Rowsers Creek. However, the younger Joshua Wilks was a planter, and he resided in Christ Church Parish for most of his life. The parish church registry recorded the births and deaths of Joshua and Joan Wilks' children between 1728 and 1748, and their own deaths, both in 1748 (Webber 1917, 1919).

In August 1735 a list of plats was published in the South Carolina Gazette as having been "laid aside on account of several objections." Among the dozens of names listed was Joshua Wilks, whose plat for 800 acres was to be removed. (*South Carolina Gazette*, August 9, 1735). The following year, Wilks sold a tract of land "by estimation 600 acres" to Elizabeth Hill, the widow of Charles Hill. That property was described as west of lands owned by Matthew Smallwood and by Mary McMervil, bounding "west on a great marsh of Wando River" (Charleston County RMC DB P, p. 246).

In 1739 Wilks offered for sale 800 acres of land in Christ Church Parish, seven miles from Charleston. "Whoever has a mind to purchase the said tract or part thereof may treat with Joshua Wilks on the said plantation." (*South Carolina Gazette*, April 26, 1739). However, deed indexes at the Charleston County RMC do not indicate that he sold any land between 1736 and 1744, when he sold a 768-acre tract in Prince George, Winyaw, Parish. (Charleston County RMC DB AA, p. 342).

The land advertised as 800 acres in 1739 appears to be the tract conveyed as 837 acres to John Daniel in April of 1744. Daniel paid "£2,400 good and lawful money of the Province of South Carolina" to Joshua Wilks and his wife Joan, for the 837-acre combined plantation on Wando River. (Charleston County RMC, DB Z, pp. 294-297). If the Wilks family had made their residence on this plantation, they might then have moved to town or to the home of an adult child (both Joshua and his wife died in 1748).

John Daniel, purchaser of the plantation, was a Charleston merchant and shipwright who

died only a few years after his purchase of the Wilks plantation. In his will (Charleston County Wills and Miscellaneous Records, Book 90, p. 74), written and proved in 1747, Daniel left his house in Broad Street to his widow Mary (Heskett) for life, then to his surviving children. He further directed that his executors should divide all his real estate among his children when sons Adam and John had attained the age of 21 years. Adam and John Daniel were twins born in 1734 (Edgar and Bailey 1977:179) and would not be adults until 1755, a decade after their father's death.

The inventory of goods and chattels belonging to John Daniel of Charles Town (Charleston County Inventories Book 74, pp. 303-304) includes a great deal of cloth (osnaburg [coarse linen], duck, linen, calico, dimity [fine cotton], chintz, lawn [a sheer cloth made of linen or occasionally very fine cotton]), threads, ribbons and lace, suggesting ownership of a dry goods business. There were also adzes (carpenter's and cooper's), axes, claw hammers, augers, pit saws and a cross-cut saw, and eight slaves itemized as carpenters. The occupations of forty-one other slaves, including 20 children, were not specified. The inventory listed plantation tools, 200 bushels of potatoes, nineteen hogs and pigs, eleven horses, 29 cattle, 36 sheep, and an assortment of fowl, indicating that Daniel's plantation was settled and in production. However, it is not clear that there was a dwelling house on the property. The advertisement for the public auction of "a parcel of choice Slaves, Cattle, Horses, Plantation Tools, and sundry other Things" belonging to the estate of John Daniell at his plantation near Hobcaw does not clarify the issue, although no structure is mentioned. (*South Carolina Gazette* February 1, 1748).

Like other prospering merchants, John Daniel seems to have acquired plantation land in order to establish his sons as planters, not with the intention of settling his residence in the countryside. However, as an absentee owner, Daniel would have employed a resident

overseer on the plantation, and he would have required a dwelling.

John and Mary Daniel's son Adam (who spelled his surname Daniell) became a planter in St. George, Dorchester, Parish, near the village of Dorchester (WPA Wills 11:130; Edgar and Bailey 1977:179). The younger John Daniel made his home in Christ Church Parish with his wife Mary, a daughter of Algernon Ash. They might have occupied his father's plantation.

When John Daniel the younger wrote his will (WPA Wills 8:80) in May 1757, he was only 23 years old. He directed his executors (his brother Adam Daniell, George Barksdale, Richard Cochran Ash, and Joseph Ash) to sell all his lands and real estate in order to make a division between his wife Ann and his young daughters Mary and Elizabeth. Daniel had died by August 1757, when his will was probated. On August 18, 1757, his executors Joseph Ash and Richard Cochran Ash advertised for sale "a tract of good land, pleasantly situate on a river on Wando neck, containing about 950 acres, proper for indigo, rice and corn, with a large parcel of timber thereon fit for sawing, and a good dwelling house and other buildings." (*South Carolina Gazette* 8/18/1757)

We have not determined the location of this "good" dwelling house. It could have been built by Joshua Wilks in the 1720s or 1730s, or by John Daniel in the mid-1750s. It is unlikely to have been an overseer's residence: early advertisements often specified that a house was intended for occupancy by an overseer - by inference, smaller than one to be inhabited by a plantation's owner (see for example Stephen Mazyck's advertisement: "to be sold, a plantation in St. John's Parish . . . on which are two new houses, one for an overseer, the other for drying of indigo, and one set of good vats . . ." [*South Carolina Gazette*, February 13, 1762]). Like slave cabins, barns, and work buildings, the overseer's house on the Daniel plantation was probably one of the "other buildings" cited in the 1757 advertisement.

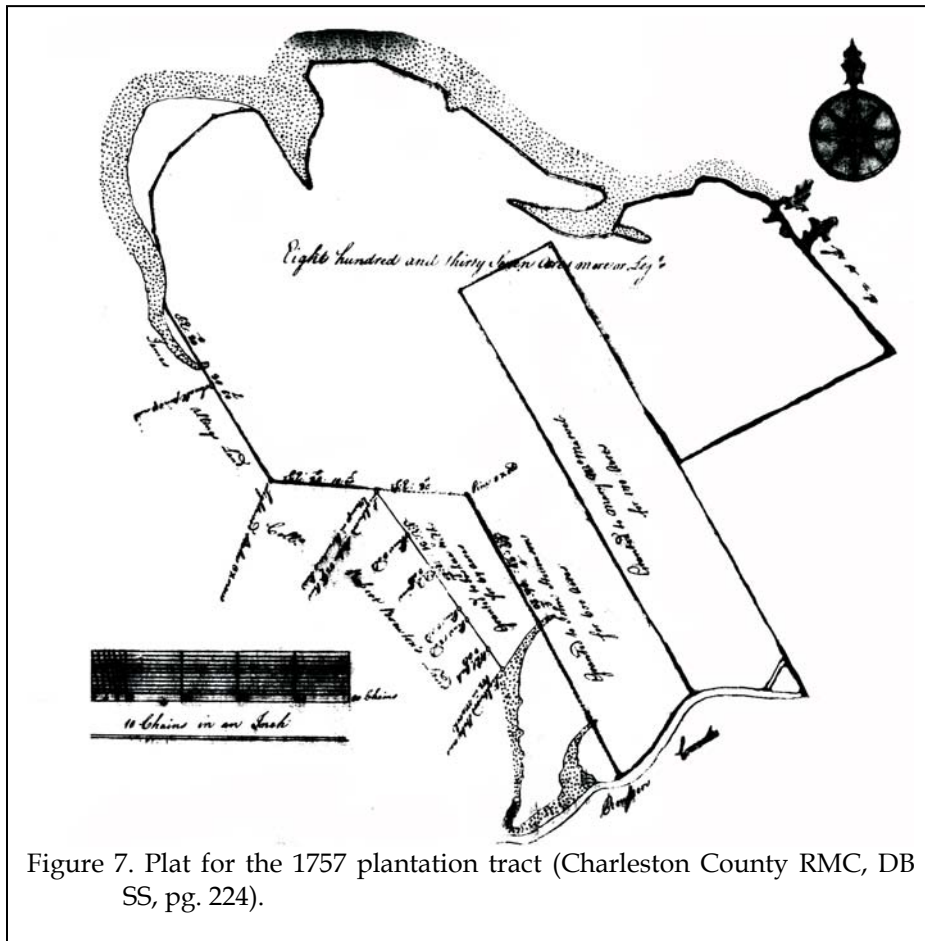


Figure 7. Plat for the 1757 plantation tract (Charleston County RMC, DB SS, pg. 224).

(Charleston County RMC, DB SS, pp. 224-226; Figure 7).

John Rose was a prominent shipbuilder, one of several operating at Hobcaw Point, which faces the Wando River south of Hobcaw Creek. Henry Laurens had commented favorably upon John Rose as "an honest and sensible man" in April 1757, when the ship *Cowper River* was being repaired at Rose's yard (Hamer 1970:532). Through his 1754 marriage to Hester Bond, a daughter of Jacob Bond of Hobcaw Point, Rose was connected to Richard l'On and Clement Lempriere, and a member of the early elite in Christ Church Parish (Rogers 1969:15, 24-25)

In November 1757 Daniel's executors conveyed the plantation to John Rose, ship carpenter of Christ Church Parish (Charleston County RMC, DB SS, pp. 224-226). On December 12, 1757, less than a month after the sale to Rose was complete, John Daniel's widow Ann married her cousin Richard Cochran Ash of Toogoodoo (Holcomb 1983:6).

With his prosperous shipyard, he would not have managed his plantation himself, and indeed might have bought it for the value of its standing timber. If crops were produced here during Rose's ownership, the work was entrusted to an overseer.

Regardless of the description of 950 acres in the 1757 sale ad, the conveyance to Rose was for 837 acres, for which he paid £4,000. The plantation lay between the creeks and marshes of Wando River to the north and Rouser's Creek to the south. A plat filed with the deed shows the three tracts of which the plantation was composed, but does not indicate any cultural or geographical features other than the waterways

In February 1769 John Rose, now described as a shipwright "of Charles Towne," sold most of the Daniel plantation to merchant Sims White, also of Charles Towne. White paid £3,800 for the 663-acre north portion of the tract, lying at the south side of the marshes and creeks of Wando River. Rose retained for himself the portion of the plantation (about 174 acres) south of "a straight line run across the said 837 acres from east to west following the path leading from Mrs. Crofts to Christ Church" (Charleston County RMC, DB F7, pp.196-202). This path

appears to lie along the route of today's Long Point Road. We have not traced the subsequent history of the land retained by John Rose in 1769.

Three years after Sims White's purchase of the property, he was arrested for non-payment of debts, and assigned Charles Pinckney, John Rose, and Andrew Lord to sell his real and personal property. The legal notice described two plantations: one of 1,060 acres on Peedee River, "whereon the said Sims White lately planted," and the other in Christ Church Parish. This tract of 663 acres was described as "well wooded, on a good landing, and not above 10 or 12 miles from Charles Town, . . . lately the property of Mr. John Rose . . . and said to be valuable." To be sold for the benefit of White's creditors were also a small stock of cattle and hogs on each plantation, about 35 slaves, a pew in St. Philip's Church, and the plate and household furniture at the dwelling house at the north end of the Bay in Charleston (*South Carolina Gazette* February 28, 1771). Given White's city occupation, his debt problems, and the auction notice remarking that the land was "said to be valuable," it seems that the plantation might have been unused during his ownership.

Stephen Townsend, planter "of the Province of South Carolina," paid £2,020 for the 663 acres in Christ Church Parish at auction in May 1772 (Charleston County RMC, DB F7, pp. 203-205). After a brief ownership, in 1775 Townsend and his wife Ann conveyed the plantation to Andrew Hibben, Esq., who paid them £2,750 (Charleston County RMC, DB F7, pp. 208-210). Neither of these sale prices approached the £3,800 White had paid in 1769.

### **The Hibben Ownership**

The Andrew Hibben who acquired a 663-acre plantation from Stephen Townsend in 1775 was already settled on his own plantation, married since 1766 (Holcomb 1983:119) to Elizabeth Barksdale (who was a daughter of George Barksdale and the widow of John S.

Wingood), and the father of several children (Webber 1920). His acquisition of the Wando River plantation must have been motivated by the desire to provide legacies to his children as well as by its perceived value as investment or income-producing property. Unfortunately, Hibben's use of the land has not been determined by this study.

At his death in September 1784 (Webber 1918), Andrew Hibben owned the important ferry tract at Haddrell's Point (and 14 slaves employed there), his residence plantation "commonly called the Sea Side near Copahee Sound," where there were an additional 16 slaves, and the Stephenson plantation on Wando River. His wife having died in 1781 (Barksdale 1940), Hibben devised his home plantation to his son James. To his two daughters Elizabeth and Hannah, he left the 663-acre Wando River plantation, to be equally divided between them when they married or attained the age of eighteen (WPA Wills 21:468; Charleston County Inventories Book A, p. 278).

Hannah and Elizabeth Hibben, heirs to the subject property, were quite young when their father died. Management of their property probably fell to their brother James for the next decade. In March 1797 Hannah married Arnold Wells, son of Samuel and Sarah Margaret Wells of St. Thomas and St. Denis Parish (Webber 1923; Bailey 1984:593). Wells was a close relative, probably a brother, of Sarah Margaret Wells, who married James Hibben in 1788 (Bailey 1986:722-723), and became prosperous at a young age. At his death in 1805, he was 26 years old, the father of five, and a large landowner who had already served in the General Assembly (Bailey 1984:593).

In September 1797, soon after Hannah Hibben married Arnold Wells, her sister Elizabeth (who married John Williams Allan in 1807) released to Wells "of St. Thomas Parish" all her right in the tract on Wando River. He paid her £500 (Charleston County RMC, DB F7, p. 166) much less than half what Andrew Hibben

had paid for the tract in 1775 (there may have been other considerations not mentioned in the deed.) By 1799, Wells owned 1,891 acres in Christ Church Parish (Bailey 1984:593).

A few years later, in November 1801, Wells "of Christ Church Parish" acquired a 255-acre plantation at the east side of the Hibben tract. Charles Snowden of the City of Charleston conveyed the property to him for £250. The plat attached to this deed (Charleston County RMC, DB F7, p. 166-168; Figure 8) indicates that the plantation also included "about three hundred and eighty acres of hard and soft marsh," and

depicts a clearing with several buildings.

Arnold Wells was in poor health in July 1805 when he wrote his will. He devised the "tract of land whereon I now live including the tract I purchased of Charles Snowden, which is to be considered as one tract" to his wife and children, and expressed the wish that his wife, during her widowhood and the minority of the children, should reside on the plantation and keep the family together. Further he directed that the "business of the plantation be continued as heretofore for the mutual benefit and advantage of my wife and children" (WPA Wills

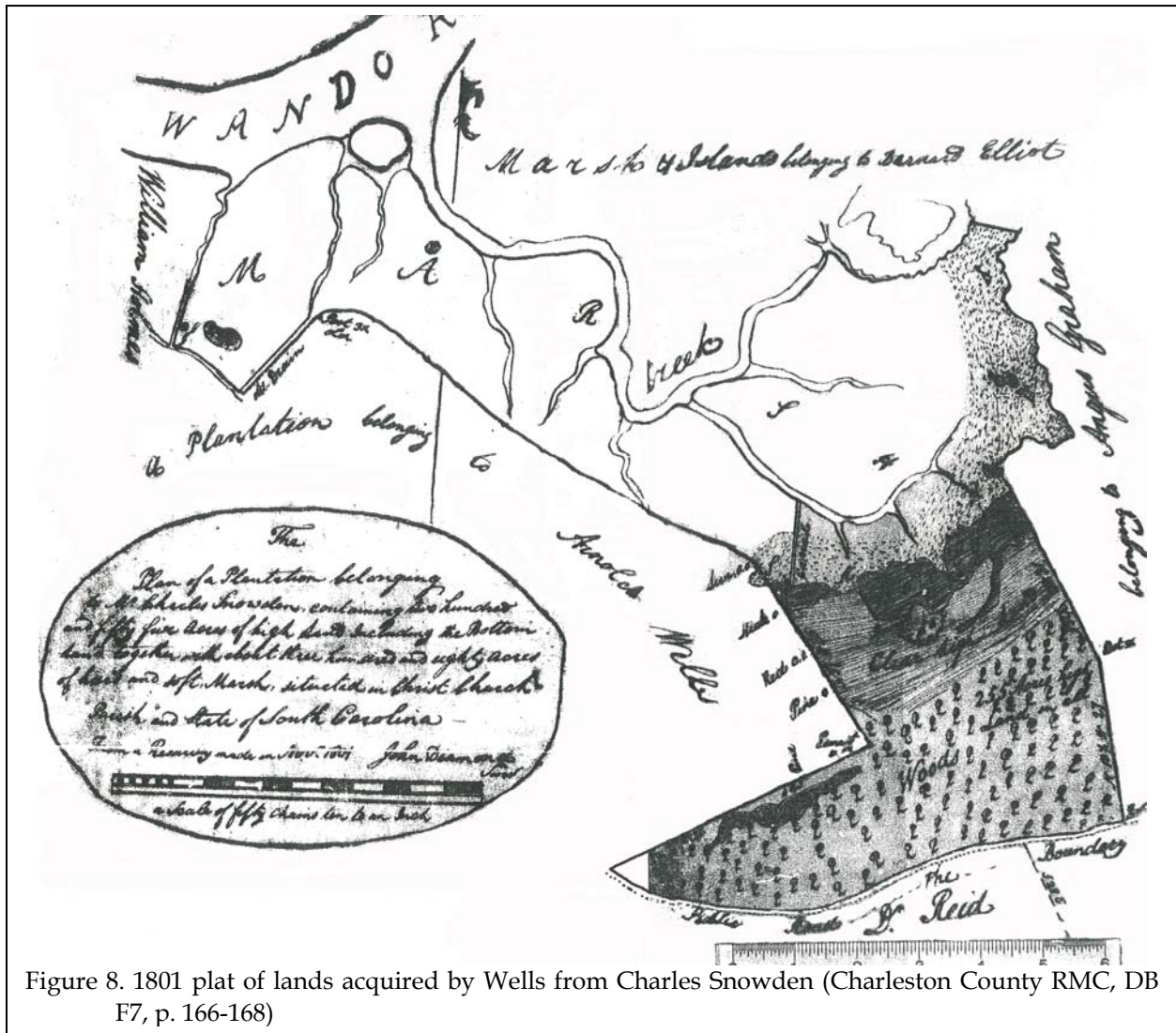


Figure 8. 1801 plat of lands acquired by Wells from Charles Snowden (Charleston County RMC, DB F7, p. 166-168)

30:896). The inventory of his personal estate in Christ Church Parish included the typical furnishings of a well-off planter: queensware, Japan ware, China ware, Windsor chairs, mahogany tables, silver spoons, looking glasses, etc. There were also 72 volumes of books, a fowling piece and a pair of pocket pistols, a sloop, a flat, and two cotton gins. Wells had evidently carried on a mixed agriculture: on hand were 7,000 tons hay, 600 bushels of potatoes, 30 bushels of corn, and six bushels of peas. He owned 28 head of sheep, 26 hogs, 2 horses, 35 cattle, and 11 oxen. The inventory also lists the names of his 43 slaves (Charleston County Inventories, Book D, p. 377).

After Arnold Wells' death, his widow Hannah Hibben married Henry Bennett, a deputy collector with the Custom House in Charleston (Hagy 1995), and moved to the city with her five children. Under the marriage settlement, recorded in December 1807, she put into trust with James Hibben all the real estate to which she was entitled under Arnold Wells' will (Charleston County RMC, DB W7, p. 312). James Hibben, a politician, planter, real estate developer, and father of nine children (Bailey 1986:722-723), again managed his sister's property. The income seems not to have been enough for Henry Bennett, who was supporting his own children (both with his first wife and with Hannah Hibben), along with the Wells children. In 1819 when Bennett wrote his will, he cited money he had advanced to "the Estate of Arnold Wells in paying the debts, supporting and bringing up the Children of Wells," which his records showed amounted to nearly \$10,000 (WPA Wills 34:223).

Henry Bennett died in Charleston in November 1819 (Wilson and Grimes 1984:56). On January 19, 1826, acting on a petition from Hannah Bennett as executrix of Arnold Wells' estate, the Charleston District master-in-equity sold the 938-acre Wells tract on Wando River at auction. It was then described as:

that plantation or tract of land, in Christ Church Parish, now, and for some time, occupied by Mrs. Bennett, being part of the estate of Arnold Wells... about eighth miles from Hibben's Ferry, and two miles from Milton Ferry. A part of this land touches on Wando River, and the settlement is located on a bold and navigable creek, leading into the same [Wando River] and about half a mile distant from it; bounded on the north by an island owned by Mr. Holmes, on the west by lands of Mr. Venning, east by lands of States Rutledge, and south by lands of Quentin Smith, containing about nine hundred and sixty acres, more or less, a small proportion of which is marsh, convenient for manuring. The greater portion of this tract is prime Cotton and provision land, and the wood on the place convenient for market. Taking into consideration its proximity to the city, and the character of the soil, it is one of the most valuable places that has been offered for sale for a long time, or indeed one of the most so in the state (*Charleston Mercury*, December 29, 1825).

At the same time as the land auction, 19 slaves ("a large portion of workers, among them an excellent driver, five boat hands and two house servants") and a sloop. The week before the land and slaves were sold, there would be a sale of the crop, stock, and equipment at the plantation. Included in this auction were the present year's crop of cotton, corn, potatoes, blades, etc.; two saw gins, a barrel gin, ten pair horsepower rollers [gins], cart and dray wheels, a canoe; and two horses, one mule, 35 cows and

HISTORIC SYNOPSIS

steers, and 20 hogs (*Charleston Mercury* December 29, 1825).

This advertisement indicates that, whether or not it produced income sufficient for the Bennett family, the Wells plantation had been kept in production. James Hibben, who had probably managed the plantation during his sister's tenure, bought it at the auction for \$7,335. Despite being advertised as 960 acres, the property was described in the deed as 938 acres (Charleston County RMC, DB T9, p. 94).

Although we did not find the deed, James Hibben (1766-1835) must have conveyed the Wells tract to his son Andrew (1808-1872). Andrew Hibben never married, and occupied a house in Mount Pleasant near his sisters. He spent much of his life in the South Carolina General Assembly and Senate (Bailey 1986:721-722), and planted on a moderate scale. His census return for 1850 shows only 75 of his 1,550 acres being improved land. He kept two horses, 10 milk cows, 12 working oxen, 50 stock cattle, 50 sheep, and 60 swine, and in 1849 had produced 400 bushels of corn, 200 of oats, 100 of peas/beans, and 900 of sweet potatoes, and

"farmer," Andrew Hibben owned two horses, 12 oxen, 13 milk cows, 60 stock cattle, and 35 swine. With 28 slaves he had increased production to 1,000 bushels of corn, 200 of peas, and 1,500 of sweet potatoes. As in 1850, he reported no rice and no cotton.

Andrew Hibben's will, written in 1867 and probated in 1872 (recited in Charleston County RMC, DB F24, p.426), devised the "rest and residue" of his property, including the Wando River plantation, to his nephew Andrew Hibben DuPre and the children of his niece Mrs. Ann Alston Leland. Warren A. Leland bought the rights of the other heirs in 1904 (Charleston County RMC, DB F24, pp.426-431). The property was then described as 700-acres of high land and 104-acres of marsh, butting and bounding north by Dock Landing Creek and the marshes of Wando River, east by lands of Ann A. Kennedy, south by lands of Amanda Switzer and the Lesesne Tract, west by lands of T. G. Main, Rat Hall Creek, and the marshes of Wando River. At some point and through undetermined means, the tract became known as Andrew Hibben's "Egypt Plantation."

Table 3.  
Brief View of Plantation Owners During the Eighteenth Century

Date	Grantor	Grantee	Price	Activities by Grantee?	Grantee Resident?
By 1698	Joshua Wilks, Sr. assembles the tract			Unknown	No?
1744	Joshua Wilks, Jr.	John Daniel	£2,400	Planting	Possibly
1747	John Daniel	John Daniel the younger	will	Planting	Yes
1757	John Daniel the younger's exec.	John Rose	£4,000	Lumber?	No
1769	John Rose	Sims White	£3,800	None?	No
1772	Sims White	Stephen Townsend	£2,020	Planting?	No
1775	Stephen Townsend	Andrew Hibben	£2,750	Planting	No

claimed ownership of 23 slaves.

By 1860 Hibben, a bachelor at age 55, had put more land into cultivation, reporting 300 acres as improved (the total acreage had decreased to 1,497 acres; we did not research his real estate transactions, if any, for this period). Described by the census enumerator as a

**The Eighteenth Century Plantation**

The implications of this historical research are clear and unfortunately are typical of much eighteenth century Christ Church Parish research.



The plats available provide little information on either plantation activities or even plantation settlements. The 1757 plat provides neither and the 1801 plat, while providing general information concerning both is far distant from our study tract.

The historical documents themselves are ambiguous. Table 3 provides a truncated view of property owners and their activities on the plantation. In terms of residency, John Daniel might have lived on the tract, but we know for certain only that his son had built a “good dwelling house” by the time of his death in 1757. It seems that with the acquisition by John Rose that the property became an investment and for the remainder of the eighteenth century was held by absentee owners. There was also a period in mid-century when the plantation may have been allowed to lapse into disuse – during Rose’s ownership the tract may have been primarily attractive for its timber and then during the following ownership by White we can find little evidence for any activities on the parcel.

In addition, none of the owners left diaries, plantation papers, letters, or other accounts that might help us refine our understanding of the economic activities that took place on the property. The two inventories available for the tract – one in 1757 (for John Daniel the younger) and the other in 1771 (for Sims White) suggest rather generic plantation activities focused on subsistence crops and ranching. Neither indicates either tools or produce associated with either rice or indigo. Instead, in 1757, there were potatoes, hogs, horses, cattle, sheep, and fowl. In 1771 there were only cattle and hogs.

Even the value of the plantation seems to have declined over time. After an initial increase probably as the result of Daniel’s improvements, the plantation ended the pre-Revolutionary period at very close to what the property brought at its organization 30 years earlier.

Taken together, all this suggests that the eighteenth century plantation was of modest means, supporting a relatively small slave population and producing a small cash income. It might be characterized as a “starter plantation,” ready for development that seems not to have happened.

## A CONTEXT FOR EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEERS

### Introduction

The literature on plantation overseers is dominated by two secondary sources. The earliest of these, *The Southern Plantation Overseer As Revealed in His Letters* (Bassett 1925) is based entirely on the letters of overseers on James Polk's absentee cotton plantation in Yalobusha County, Mississippi and the research dates exclusively to the nineteenth century. While many find Bassett's work not only complete, but also ground breaking, in today's light it must also be criticized as creating a stereotype that has lasted well into the twenty-first century. Bassett claims that the overseers came from small farmers with little education and comments that "I can think of no other form of industry in which so much property was under the management of such illiterate men" (Bassett 1925:9). He sees nineteenth century plantation white society as consisting of essentially two classes - planters and overseers and comments that "each was a class in society and between them in social matters was a frozen ocean" (Bassett 1925:2). He notes that few of the overseers were of an "ambitious and advancing class" and that most were "unimaginative" and uninterested in the future. Bassett seems to do much to create the current view of overseers as "white trash."

This view was only partially moderated by the work of William Scarborough (1966). This work, too, is focused on the nineteenth century, although it pulls from far more diverse and representative primary documents. Scarborough asserts that the overseer system was introduced into America by the Virginia Company and was modeled on the English practice of using bailiffs to manage estates in Britain (Scarborough

1966:3). He claims that early overseers, presumably in Virginia, were known as bailiffs, although we have not found the term in any of the South Carolina records. He also asserts that the early overseers were indentured servants whose terms of service had expired.

Scarborough claims that a "unique" feature of the colonial overseer system was "the practice of leasing developed plantations, with slaves and stock, to overseers for a share of the crop." In exchange for the management and care of the plantation and its slaves, the overseer would receive "one-third of the net proceeds from the sale of the crops" and Scarborough claims that long-term leases of up to 21 years were "common." Moreover, he states that this practice disappeared by the end of the colonial period "primarily because it encouraged methods resulting in soil exhaustion" (Scarborough 1966:4). Otherwise, he reports "the managerial system in the pre-Revolutionary period differed in no important respect from that employed in the nineteenth century." He repeated Bassett's origin from farmers assertion stating, "springing largely from the yeoman farmer class of society, the overseer was not noted for his erudite comprehension of principles of scientific agriculture," although he does note that many overseers were the sons of planters. He also believes that all overseers could be divided into three classes (although it isn't clear if this division began in the eighteenth century): those who were the sons of planters who took on overseeing as training for later careers as planters, those who were "amateur" overseers that consisted of a fluid population of limited competence who could do little else and who offered their services at very low rates, and the

“professional” overseers who “energetically and conscientiously pursued their profession” (Scarborough 1966:5-6).

Scarborough suggests that the class of amateur overseers was the primary reason that the profession was so vilified by planters. Moreover, he claims that the task of directing (and thereby associating with) slaves was “distasteful” to most whites and was “held in social disrepute by a large segment of the general public” (Scarborough 1966:196). Consequently, the overseer was “relegated to a status in southern society far beneath that of the planter and even below that of the small independent farmer.” He believe that, at least for the nineteenth century,

With few exceptions, members of the propriety class failed to accord their overseers the respect to which their responsible positions entitled them and did little to encourage them to take pride in their profession. Moreover, many planters imposed demands upon their subordinates which few men could reasonably be expected to meet. Few plantation owners really appreciated the difficulties faced by those who directed their agricultural enterprises. Another factor which lessened the attractiveness of the occupation was the social isolated which the overseers were obliged to endure. Shunned by his employer, forbidden to fraternize with the slaves, discouraged from entertaining company, and obliged by the nature of his arduous duties to remain constantly at his post, the overseer lived in a virtual social

vacuum (Scarborough 1966:197).

He also believed that these factors, coupled with the lack of opportunity for advancement, caused the best overseers to seek other fields or to become owners themselves. In the nineteenth century Scarborough also identified differences in overseer quality within different regions, with those in rice and sugar areas “superior” to those in “any other staple area” - with the demand for superior overseers highest along the rice coast of South Carolina (Scarborough 1966:199). Unfortunately, he provides little evidence to support this position.

Much of these observations are repeated by Clark (1966) who examined overseers on South Carolina plantations during the mid to late antebellum. Clark believes the overseer “class” came from the small farmer and landless whites, carrying with themselves the burden of “questionable ability and character” (Clark 1966:91). He notes that in the nineteenth century the “overseer class as a whole had a bad reputation, perhaps with some justification” (Clark 1966:92). He notes that the reputation came from several factors - one was that the bad overseers attracted much attention, another is the planter often used the overseer as the scapegoat for the inhumanities present on the plantation. He also notes that the qualities of the overseer were based almost exclusively on the individual’s productivity - which led to many of these inhumanities.

Clark also believes that during the nineteenth century the overseer began to take on more oversight of slave life, ranging from food to shelter to religious training to medical attention (Clark 1966:94) - and this of course is consistent with archaeological thought that suggests through the eighteenth century into the nineteenth many Africanisms were likely replaced by molded behavior.

More recent studies of antebellum overseers include Schantz (1987) who examined

the Ball papers to reconstruct their nineteenth century overseers and Steffen (1996) who explored the relationship between overseers and the agricultural reform movement of the 1820s and early 1830s. While all of these works provide interesting and informative views of nineteenth century overseers, one wonders whether these nineteenth century generalizations are appropriate for eighteenth century circumstances. The difficulty in understanding the eighteenth century overseer is, in many respects, similar to the problems facing any detailed analysis of nineteenth century overseer lifeway – few left any accounts beyond simple economic statements associated with the plantation operation and slave activities. The overseer is, in many respects, just as invisible as the slaves themselves.

In addition, research on colonial overseers is further hampered by dearth of agricultural literature – all of which dates to the early and mid-nineteenth century. There are no journals such as *The American Agriculturalist* (begun in 1843), *DeBow's Review* (begun in 1846), *The Farmer and Planter* (begun in 1850), *The South Carolina Agriculturalist* (begun in 1856), *The Southern Agriculturalist and Register of Rural Affairs* (begun in 1828), or the *Southern Cultivator* (begun in 1843). There are also far fewer plantation records surviving from the eighteenth century.

And when we examine the literature looking for analyses of eighteenth century overseeing we find much archaeological literature exploring antebellum overseers (for example, Otto and Burns 1983), but virtually no archaeological literature for the colonial period (except our own work at the Mazyck Plantation [Trinkley et al. 2003]) and very little historical documentation. One interesting exception is the work by Walsh (1997) in Virginia, where she attempts to place the early overseers of “King” Carter in perspective. She notes that Carter supplied these overseers with little more in the way of domestic goods than he did his African American slaves. Using inventories, account

books, and other documents she finds that Carter provided only basic bedding, cooking pots, and usually a gun. She notes that that a 1733 inventory of overseer goods reveals that only 33% of the overseer houses had a bed, only 28% had blankets, 42% had bed rugs, and only 5% had a table, chest, or chamber pot (Walsh 1997:91). Based on this inventory she suggests that the overseers had only a few cast-offs and hand-me-downs. She also observes that on outlying quarters, white overseers and their families lived in “crude houses of similar construction [to the slaves, i.e., small, earthfast structures built of logs standing or lying directly on the ground or erected in postholes, with wooden, clay-daubed chimneys];” the only noticeable difference was that the overseers were afforded more space, typically a two-room house measuring about 16 by 24 feet (Walsh 1997:181).

An interesting historical account is provided by Morgan (1995) who examined an eighteenth century account of the Vineyard Pen on Jamaica. There he found the isolated white overseer had constant interaction with the slaves that included sexual relations, trade of goods and products, and especially the trade and purchase of provision crops. He suggests that the “familiarity of the pen owed much to the isolation and lonely existence of its overseer who, despite his formal powers, depended on the slaves for fellowship, even for friendship” (Morgan 1995:71). In many ways it appears that the pen was a more insular – and isolated – place for the overseer than for the slaves, who at least had their own community. Morgan notes that this extraordinary account reveals that exploitation and mutuality coexisted, with both parties working out the arrangements necessary for daily life.

### The Legal Origin of South Carolina Overseers

In 1712 a law was passed making it a legal obligation for many South Carolina plantations to employ overseers:

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that no person whatsoever, after the ratification of this Act, shall settle or manage any plantation, cow-pen or stock, that shall be six miles distant from his usual place of abode, and wherein six negroes or slaves shall be employed, without one or more white persons living and residing upon the same plantation, upon penalty or forfeiture of forty shillings for each month so offending (Cooper and McCord n.d.:363).

The 1712 date is no accident. It was about that time that the number of slaves imported dramatically increased to about 600 a year and just a year earlier Governor Robert Gibbes made a strong speech to the Commons House concerning the “great quantities of negroes” that were being brought into South Carolina, their increasing tendency to be “insolent and mischievous” and the threat their majority posed to white Carolinians (Edgar 1998:69).

With minor alterations this act continued until the Civil War. For example, in 1726 the act required owners to employ one white person for every 10 slaves (Cooper and McCord n.d.:272). Nevertheless, it appears to have been frequently ignored and in 1742 a letter to the *South Carolina Gazette* (November 8, 1742) complained that the act met with much “discouragement” and “various Pretences” aimed at its subversion. This was in spite of no fewer than at least five slave conspiracies between 1702 and 1737 (Wallace 1951:185).

### **Colonial Overseers as Portrayed in Newspaper Advertisements**

While it would be easy to suggest that most eighteenth century plantation overseers were sought and hired through newspaper ads (like those we examined in the *South Carolina*

*Gazette* and are discussed below), such is almost certainly not the case, given the relatively few advertisements and the great many plantations. We cannot, of course, claim that the ads are representative – such advertising required money on the part of the owner, access to papers on the part of both the potential overseer and the owner, and an ability to read. Moreover, there are clearly cases, such as Henry Laurens, where no advertising ever took place at least in the *South Carolina Gazette* (there is a note that Laurens placed a blind ad in the *Country Journal* [Rogers et al. 1977:251n; no such paper is listed in Moore 1988]). Nevertheless, the *South Carolina Gazette* does provide at least a small sampling of what might have been the prevailing attitude regarding what made a good overseer, what qualifications were needed, and how such individuals were hired.

Recognizing these limitations we examined the indices for the *South Carolina Gazette* prepared by John H. and Gary S. Wilson (ESCN Database Reports, Mount Pleasant) and pulled out those listings under “overseer – employment.” The selected years were 1734-1738, 1744-1748, 1754-1758, and 1764-1768. A total of 206 potential ads were identified (Table 4). These were then examined, with complete transcriptions made of all identified ads. Since there were often multiple names referenced (and indexed) in a single ad and there were ads by overseers seeking employment, the actual sample consists of 125 advertisements. Some are for well-known Carolina planters, such as John Drayton, but more are from smaller planters and are perhaps a little more reflective of local expectations.

Most ads were repeated on three consecutive weeks, although a few ran only one week or as many as nine weeks. We are unfamiliar with advertising costs or possible discounts, so the importance of this is unclear – except that it was a practice that continued over the 40 year span, suggesting that multiple week ads tended to be more successful in generating responses. During this time period ads were

A CONTEXT FOR EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEERS

Table 4.  
Newspaper advertisements examined in this research.

Name of Plantation Owner	Date of Ads (South Carolina Gazette)				Name of Plantation Owner	Date of Ads (South Carolina Gazette)			
Codin	08/24/1734	08/31/1734	09/7/1734		Beresford, Richard	01/27/1757	02/3/1757	02/10/1757	
Baker	09/7/1734				Moore, John	02/3/1757	02/10/1757	02/17/1757	
Wright, R.	10/5/1734	10/12/1734	10/19/1734		Russ, Rachel	02/3/1757	02/10/1757	02/17/1757	
Beal	11/2/1734	11/16/1734			Timothy (publisher)	03/3/1757	03/10/1757	03/17/1757	
Lucas	11/2/1734	11/9/1734	11/16/1734		Customs House	07/21/1757	08/4/1757		
Broughton, Nath.	07/5/1735	07/12/1735	07/16/1735	07/26/1735	Russ, Rachel	08/25/1757			
Mazyck, Isaac	11/8/1735				Pinckney, William	08/4/1757			
Ravenel, Rene	11/8/1735				Boate, John	10/13/1757			
Whitaker, Benj.	10/25/1735	11/1/1735	11/8/1735	11/15/1735 11/22/1735	Drayton, John	10/13/1757			
Hume, Sophia	12/27/1735				Lake, Richard	10/13/1757			
Godfrey	12/6/1735	12/13/1735	12/20/1735		Peronneau, Elizabeth	10/13/1757			
Lake	12/6/1735	12/13/1735	12/20/1735						
Yeomans, William	12/6/1735	12/13/1735	12/20/1735		Lowndes, Charles	09/27/1758	10/2/1758		
					Smith, Benjamin	09/27/1758			
Hume, Sophia	01/31/1736	01/10/1736			Beane, Thomas	10/2/1758	10/6/1758		
Saunders, Roger	01/31/1736	02/7/1736	02/14/1736		Colleton	10/2/1758	10/6/1758		
Hall	03/20/1736	03/27/1736	04/3/1736		Philp, Robert	10/2/1758	10/6/1758		
Osmond, James	03/20/1736	03/27/1736	04/3/1736		Raper, Robert	10/2/1758	10/6/1758		
Peronneau, Henry	03/20/1736	03/27/1736	04/3/1736		Burn, John	10/27/1758	11/3/1758	11/10/1758	
Codin, Benjamin	03/6/1736	03/13/1736	03/20/1736		Lake, Richard	11/10/1758	11/17/1758	11/24/1758	
Hume, R.	08/7/1736				Mayne, Charles	11/3/1758	11/10/1758		
Cooper, Tho.	09/4/1736	09/11/1736	09/18/1736		Cahusc, Peter	12/15/1758	12/22/1758	12/29/1758	
D'Harriette, Benjamin	12/4/1736	12/11/1736	12/18/1736		Grimke, Frederick	12/22/1758			
Cattell, Wm.	12/4/1736	12/11/1736	12/18/1736						
					Simmons, James	01/7/1764	01/14/1764		
Elliot, Thomas	02/16/1738	02/23/1738	03/2/1738		Smith, Henry	10/22/1764	10/29/1764		
Grimke, Frederick	02/16/1738	02/23/1738	03/2/1738		Blind Ad	10/22/1764			
Baker, Dr.	05/11/1738				Blind Ad	10/29/1764			
Roger	05/11/1738	05/18/1738	05/25/1738		Blind Ad	11/12/1764			
					Blind Ad	11/19/1764			
Izard, Charles	01/2/1744	01/9/1744			Blind Ad	11/26/1764			
Jensy, Thomas	01/30/1744	01/23/1744			Lowndes, Rawlins	11/5/1764	11/12/1764	11/19/1764	
Edwards	06/11/1744				Blind Ad	11/5/1764			
Beauchamp, Adam	07/9/1744	07/16/1744	07/23/1744		Blind Ad	12/10/1764			
Whitaker, Benjamin	09/24/1744	10/1/1744	10/8/1744	10/15/1744	Blind Ad	12/17/1764			
Fowler, James	10/8/1744	10/15/1744	10/22/1744		Grimke, Frederick	12/24/1764	12/31/1764		
					Marion, James	12/24/1764	12/31/1764		
Whitaker, Benjamin	07/13/1745	07/22/1745	07/29/1745		Blind Ad	12/24/1764			
Rufledge, Andrew	08/5/1745	08/26/1745	09/2/1745		Blind Ad	12/24/1764			
Bendon, Stephen	12/16/1745				Blind Ad	12/3/1764			
					Blind Ad	12/31/1764			
Rutledge	08/4/1746	08/11/1746	08/23/1746		Deas, John	01/12/1765	01/19/1765	01/26/1765	
Freeman, William G.	10/18/1746	10/27/1746	11/3/1746		Lowndes, Rawlins	01/12/1765	01/19/1765	01/26/1765	02/2/1765 02/9/1765
					Matthewes, Anthony	01/19/1765	01/26/1765	02/2/1765	
Hill, Elizabeth	02/9/1747	02/16/1747	02/23/1747		Blind Ad	01/19/1765			
Timothy, Peter	10/19/1747	10/26/1747			MacKenzie, John	01/26/1765	02/2/1765	02/09/1765	
					Blind Ad	01/26/1765			
Allen, John	01/25/1748	02/1/1748	02/8/1748		Marion, James	01/7/1765			
Fenwicke, Edward	02/15/1748	02/22/1748	02/29/1748		Smith, Henry	02/9/1765	02/16/1765	2/23/1765	
Stoutenburgh, Luke	10/17/1748	10/24/1748	10/31/1748		Lejac, Francis	03/9/1765	03/23/1765		
					Brewton, Miles	05/18/1765	06/1/1765		
Harris, Richard	01/29/1754	02/5/1754			Lynch, Thomas	06/22/1765	06/29/1765	07/6/1765	
Timothy (publisher)	01/29/1754				Gadsden, Christopher	06/8/1765	06/15/1765	06/22/1765	
Timothy (publisher)	02/12/1754	02/19/1754			Raper, Robert	07/13/1765	07/20/1765	07/27/1765	
Stoutenburgh, Luke	02/19/1754	02/26/1754			Stoutenburgh, Luke	07/27/1765	08/3/1765	08/10/1765	08/24/1765 08/31/1765
Timothy (publisher)	07/4/1754				Harvey, John	09/21/1765	10/5/1765		
Beresford	12/26/1754				Smith, Henry	09/21/1765	09/28/1765		
Lloyd, William	12/26/1754				Blind Ad	07/14/1766			
Logan, William	12/26/1754				Blind Ad	07/21/1766			
Pickering, Joseph	12/26/1754				Blind Ad	07/27/1766			
Wright, James	12/26/1754				Harleston & Bonneau	10/27/1766	11/3/1766	11/10/1766 11/17/1766 11/24/1766 12/1/1766 12/8/1766 12/15/1766	
					Smith, George	11/10/1766			
Bee	01/16/1755	01/23/1755			Hume, Robert	11/17/1766	11/24/1766		
Logan, William	01/2/1755	01/9/1755			Parker, William	11/17/1766	11/24/1766		
Pickering, Joseph	01/2/1755	01/9/1755	01/23/1755		Quash, Robert	11/17/1766	11/24/1766	12/1/1766	
Lining, John	01/9/1755	01/16/1755	01/23/1755		Smith, Benjamin	11/17/1766	11/24/1766	12/1/1766	
Simmons, William	01/9/1755	01/16/1755	01/23/1755		Blind Ad	12/01/1766			
Wright, Charles	02/20/1755	02/27/1755			Blind Ad	12/22/1766			
Timothy (publisher)	03/13/1755	03/20/1755	03/27/1755		Beresford, Richard	12/29/1766	01/5/1767	01/12/1767	
Gaette, George	03/27/1755	04/3/1755	04/10/1755						
Beresford	04/3/1755				Harleston & Bonneau	01/5/1767	01/12/1767		
Logan, William	04/3/1755				Blind Ad	02/16/1767			
Timothy (publisher)	06/19/1755	07/3/1755			Blind Ad	02/2/1767			
Heyward, Henry	07/17/1755	07/31/1755			Blind Ad	02/9/1767			
Timothy (publisher)	07/3/1755				Manwell, Walter	06/15/1767	06/22/1767		
Drayton, John	09/19/1755	09/25/1755	10/2/1755	10/9/1755 10/16/1755	Stoutenburgh, Luke	07/6/1767	07/13/1767	07/20/1767	
Timothy (publisher)	09/19/1755				Corbett, Thomas	08/24/1767	08/31/1767		
Mayne, Charles	10/23/1755	10/30/1755	11/6/1755	11/13/1755	Thomson, George	08/3/1767	08/10/1767	08/17/1767	
Middleton, Henry	11/13/1755	11/20/1755	11/27/1755		Blind Ad	11/23/1767			
Rutledge, Andrew	11/6/1755	11/13/1755	12/1/1755		Pringle, Sam.	12/12/1767	10/19/1767	10/26/1767	
Timothy (publisher)	11/6/1755	11/13/1755			Blind Ad	12/14/1767			
Fauchereaud, Charles	12/25/1755				Gibbes, William	12/7/1767	12/14/1767		
Pinckney, William	12/25/1755				Blind Ad	12/7/1767			
Smith, Henry	12/25/1755				Blind Ad	01/18/1768			
Timothy (publisher)	11/27/1755	12/4/1755	12/11/1755		Blind Ad	01/25/1768			
					Gadsden, Christopher	01/4/1768			
Pinckney, William	01/1/1756				Blind Ad	01/4/1768			
Johns, John	01/15/1756	01/29/1756			Beresford, Richard	05/9/1768	05/16/1768	05/23/1768	
Lining, John	01/22/1756	01/29/1756			Logan, William	05/9/1768	05/16/1768	05/23/1768	
Dannom, James	02/19/1756	02/26/1756			Pringleau, Samuel	07/18/1768	07/25/1768	08/1/1768	
Simmons, William	02/19/1756				Blind Ad	11/14/1768			
Smith, John	02/19/1756	02/26/1756			Cannon, Daniel	11/21/1768	12/1/1768	12/8/1768	
Pringle, Robert	02/26/1756	03/11/1756			Blind Ad	11/21/1768			
Bullock, James	02/5/1756	02/12/1756	02/19/1756		Gibbes, William	12/1/1768			
Branford, William	03/25/1756	04/8/1756			Blind Ad	12/1/1768			
Holman, Thomas	03/25/1756	04/1/1756	04/8/1756		Blind Ad	12/15/1768			
Hutchinson, Thomas	03/25/1756	04/1/1756			Blind Ad	12/22/1768			
Lloyd, William	09/2/1756	09/9/1756	09/16/1756		Blind Ad	12/29/1768			
					Blind Ad	12/8/1768			

almost always signed by the owner or his agent. In the 125 ads, only 22 (about 18%) were blind ads with respondents contacting the newspaper publisher. However, fully half of these ads (11) appeared from 1764 through 1768 – suggesting that toward the end of the century there might have been an increase in blind ads. This in turn may mean that planters were becoming reluctant to deal with those unqualified applicants or, alternatively, that the number of applicants had increased to the point where planters could be far more selective and chose to weed through the applicants without taking the time of a face-to-face meeting.

We also found that there were very few ads during April, May, and June – the major crop season – and began to pick up in July and reaching their peak in October through March. Planters appear to have stuck it out with even poor overseers until the crops were harvested and then began looking in earnest for replacements during cool weather when, if need be, they could manage the plantation activities themselves. There were relatively few ads placed during the planting season that asked for immediate replacements – and those that occurred were found only in the 1764-1768 period. This may suggest that the number of potential overseers was increasing and that planters were less willing to suffer along with a poor manager, realizing that replacements could be obtained fairly quickly.

Of course, we have few contract examples, so it is uncertain whether planters might be forced to keep even bad overseers to see out a contract. We are inclined, however, to believe that most overseers served at the will of the owner, subject to dismissal at any time (based primarily on the Laurens papers, where overseers seem to be dismissed quickly, without any comment concerning their contract).

As the ads were read, we identified six areas of special note. The first category was the position being advertised. The next were the various qualifications or requirements. We

abstracted out family ties. Although these are certainly specified requirements, they seemed to us to be in a different category; reasonably one could be “responsible” with or without a wife. We believe there are other factors at play causing owners to be specific in terms of family. There were also some ads where knowledge of specific crops or activities (such as brick making or sawing) was specified. Again, this information could reasonably have been included in the qualifications section, but we again felt that there were some specific driving forces that caused owners to note specific crops or activities. There was the category we termed “rewards,” or compensation for the job. And finally, there was a category – appearing only in the last decade of our research – where owners were providing specific information on slaves either on the plantation or that the overseer might bring with him.

#### **Position Advertised**

We find that most (110 or 88%) specifically use the term “overseer” with no other qualifier. An additional eight ads (6%) request a “manager” or an individual to manage the plantation. While the importance of this distinction is unclear – at least in the ads themselves – the choice in words might well be important (as suggested by the Henry Laurens papers). The request for managers is so small that nothing can be made of the different dates – managerial ads are found scattered in 1744, 1757, 1758, 1764, and 1765. The remaining ads used no specific term, but reading made it clear that the owner was applying for someone to “oversee” planting, plantation activities, and slave management.

#### **Qualifications or Requirements**

During the first few years of our sample we found a very few ads that specified only “any person wanting” an overseer’s position should apply. This very quickly gave way to far more specific requirements. Review of Table 2 reveals that there was a significant period of





INVESTIGATION OF AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEER SITE

Table 5., cont.  
Analysis of Ads

Date	Position Offered										Requirements										Family Ties		Rewards			Specific Crops		Slaves				
	overseer	manager/master	sup person working	qualified	experienced	good character	good and faithful	sober	industrious	obedient	can read	capable able	can write	well recommended	understands plantation business	understands planting	understands sawing	understands brick making	understands husbandry	understands gardening	with wife/family	single only	environment	shares	10% wt indigo on hire	share	suitable wages	indigo	rice	indigo & rice	on plantation	any/ being own
1/1764	x																															
10/1764	x																															
10/1764	x																															
10/1764	x																															
11/1764	x																															
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11/1767	x																															
10/1767	x																															
12/1767	x																															
1/1768	x																															
8/1768	x																															
11/1768	x																															
11/1768	x																															
12/1768	x																															

advertising (from 1746 through 1756) when very few specific requirements were itemized. Before that time owners specified that potential overseers be experienced or qualified and have good character in about equal proportions. A few were somewhat more specific, asking for individuals who understood the operation of a plantation. Only one owner specifically demanded an individual with knowledge in planting or sowing, while another wanted an overseer with knowledge of gardening.

What was common during this early period - as well as later - was the requirement that the prospective overseer come with good recommendations. Throughout the sampling period, we found that 85 of the 125 ads (68%) specifically mention that applicants must have recommendations. This emphasis on

recommendations seems to increase through time; while only 11 of the 28 ads up to 1746 (39%) mention recommendations, 84% of the ads from 1746 through 1756 and 72% of the ads from 1757 through 1768 require recommendations.

The number of additional requirements for employment also increases through time. During the period from 1746 through 1756 only four ads placed other demands on applicants - that they understand the plantation business, understand planting, or understand husbandry. By 1757, however, the demands were far greater, expanding to include faithfulness, sobriety, industry, the ability to read, discretion, and faithfulness. Demand also dramatically increased for overseers with experience in sawing, planting, and brick making. For example, sobriety is not mentioned in any of the

ads prior to 1757; from that date on it is found in 10 ads (17%). Two ads demand discretion and one calls for an individual who is “not passionate.” These all appear to refer to the treatment of slaves, with “not passionate” most likely used in the context of slow to anger.

Sawing is not mentioned until 1764 and brick making is not mentioned until 1766 – suggesting that both of these activities were perhaps very minor undertakings earlier in the Colonial period. Alternatively, earlier in the period these specialized activities may not have been auxiliary to cropping and the property owner might have sent out not an overseer, but a brickmaker. As the activities became more common and were associated with cropping, it might have been necessary to advertise for an overseer who also had special skills. Regardless, it suggests a basic change in the plantation economy.

While the ability to read might seem to be a significant issue for plantation management (receiving instructions from the owner, reporting plantation activities, keeping track of plantation accounts), only one of the ads specifically mentions this issue and it is a very early ad (from 1736).

### **Family Ties**

Less than a quarter (23%) of the ads has any mention of family ties. Of these 14 (or 48%) prefer (or don’t object to) a man with a wife. Seven of these ads focus specifically on the wife’s ability to manage or tend a dairy or poultry yard. This suggests that at least a few planters looked for, or at least approved of, a team – one to handle planting and slaves and the other to focus on dairy and poultry operations. In addition, single men would typically require a housekeeper – necessitating the assignment of a slave minimally for cooking and washing tasks. The plantation owner would not lose slave labor if the overseer came with his own housekeeper.

There were, however, those ads that called specifically for a single man and an explanation here is uncertain. It may be that owners felt white women would agitate for their husbands to leave the plantation and move to where there were whites and better housing. Regardless, there does not seem to be any change in the frequency of single overseers through time, suggesting that this may have been entirely idiosyncratic.

### **Rewards**

The ads provide relatively few details concerning payment – an area where individual plantation papers provide far more information. The one statement frequently repeated is that the selected candidate would receive “encouragement.” This might be phrased in a variety of ways – “find Encouragement,” “meet with very good Encouragement,” “may meet due Encouragement,” “will meet with great Encouragement” – but some version is found in 62% of the ads. Its use does vary over time. During the initial period from 1732 up to 1746, it is found in 61% of the ads. Between 1746 through 1756, when requirements were rarely mentioned, the term is used in 94% of the ads. Then in the later period, from 1757 through 1768, it is found in only 52% of the ads. The term is used with other trades, such as a June 15, 1767 advertisement seeking, “A person properly qualified to teach reading, writing and arithmetick, in a private family in the country, may meet with suitable encouragement.” But the phrase is found very infrequently outside of the overseer trade – suggesting that it is a “code” or had a meaning that is not entirely clear today.

Only two of the 125 ads (2%) mention that the overseer would be paid in “shares,” or a share of the plantation’s crop – a form of payment that previous researchers claim was common during the Colonial period. A single ad, from 1757, specifies that the overseer “may have in lieu of wages 10 lb weight for every 110 lb which shall be made of both good and bad

quality" indigo on the plantation. The first ad mentioning wages ("will give suitable wages") was also listed in 1757. Four additional ads after 1757 again specifically mention wages, for example "may depend on very good wages," or "extraordinary wages will be given."

Interpretation is difficult, but we are inclined to believe that the single reference to "in lieu of wages," coupled with the infrequent mention of a practice that was supposedly common, indicates that Colonial overseers operated far more often on wages than on any share of the plantation's profits. This is further supported by the individual contracts we have been able to identify, as well as the various letters and comments by Henry Laurens. At least in Colonial South Carolina there seems to have been little hiring based on "shares."

Finally, as will be discussed in greater detail below, there were different arrangements concerning living expenses. Some owners were liberal in what would be provided in addition to wages, while others required their overseers to pay their own living costs, sometimes at least as advances on their wages.

### Specific Crops

During the earliest period from 1732 through 1746 none of the ads mention the crops being planted or require the overseer to have specific crop experience. From 1746 through 1756, however, fully 94% of the ads mention a specific crop - rice, indigo, or both. After 1756 there seems to be a gradual decline in this practice, with only 52% of the ads mentioning a crop (although as previously noted there were more common mentions of brick making and sawing).

Taken together, indigo alone is specifically mentioned in 24 ads, while rice alone is mentioned in only eight. While swamp cultivation of rice was certainly a specialized skill (one 1767 ads calls for an overseer, "well acquainted with the management of river

swamp lands"), indigo appears to have been a far more difficult crop to raise and, especially process. One ad, for example, specifically calls for an overseer capable of "managing 7 or 8 vats."

### Slaves

The final category includes mentions of slaves - either slaves on the plantation or the overseer's ability to bring with him slaves. These are issues that appear only late in the advertisements. Beginning in 1764 there are occasional mentions of the number of slaves on the plantation - ranging from only a "few" to as many as 60. Only seven of the ads mention a number, but this practice seems to be something that was gaining in popularity during the late Colonial period - perhaps indicating that some owners were concerned that their prospective overseers understand the extent of his duties. The numbers, however, are much greater than individuals such as Laurens suggested were appropriate and this may indicate a market pressure - owners may have been attempting to cut production costs by requiring fewer overseers to manage larger labor pools. Alternatively, we can't dismiss that Laurens "guidelines" may have been prescriptions that bore little resemblance to reality.

Another issue that comes up very late in the ads is the owners' willingness to accept overseers bringing their own slaves onto the plantation. There are four ads that specifically allow the overseer to bring a "few," "one or two," or in one case "less than eight" slaves to work on the plantation either on shares or for hire. This may signal that late in the Colonial period more overseers were accumulating wealth and directing it toward the purchase of slaves from whom they could significantly supplement their income - a situation that has been suggested by some plantation accounts. Here an alternative explanation is that in the late eighteenth century into the nineteenth century, more individuals were entering the ranks of overseers who already had a few slaves. Why

smaller planters or yeoman farmers would turn away from independence to pursue overseeing is uncertain, although the economic pressures before and after the Revolution may have been contributory.

### **Overseers Advertising for Themselves**

In the sample of 206 ads there are seven where individuals are seeking employment as overseers (about 3%). These fall into three categories. One is a general advertisement – someone seeking employment as an overseer – which accounts for three ads. For example there is the 1758 ad stating, “Any gentleman that hath occasion for an overseer, the subscriber’s time being near elapsed in Watboe employ, is willing to undertake the management of a plantation on reasonable encouragement.” A second category, in which two ads fall, are those for individuals specifically knowledgeable concerning indigo production. An example of this class is the 1754 announcement, “Pierre Fore, . . . having been to several years employed in the making of Indico [in] St. Domingo, for which he flatters himself he is fully qualified, is desirous of employ in that business in this province.” The final class of ad is by those who recently arrived in South Carolina and by virtue of their farming experience were seeking employment. One such ad (from 1765) states, “A Farmer, just arrived from England, will be glad to serve under any gentleman Planter, as an Overseer in a plantation for one to two years, on reasonable terms.”

These ads are so infrequent that relatively little can be made from them, except perhaps that the market was sufficient tight that few had the motivation to advertise, thinking they would find employment through word of mouth.

While difficult to interpret, those ads of “recently arrived” farmers might suggest that they felt one or two years of overseeing would better qualify them for the operation of their own plantation. Or the time limitation may

simply have indicated a reluctance to commit for a longer period.

### **Henry Laurens and His Overseers**

Henry Laurens (1724-1792) was a successful and wealthy merchant and planter in South Carolina. His papers, largely published, provide a wealth of exceptional information on his attitudes toward, and dealings with, his various overseers. He is, however, somewhat unusual in not only being a planter, but also a factor.

### **Hiring and Salaries**

There are relatively few occasions where Laurens outlines what he wants from an overseer, but one occurs in a 1765 letter where he states, “a capable, discreet Man, and excellent hand at damming & ditching, one that would abide diligently & soberly at his work shall have great encouragement from me & I am sure that it must be either his own fault or because of promotion if we should afterwards part” (Rogers 1976:6). The similarity to the wording of newspaper advertisements can’t be accidental – certainly the issues of capability, discretion, diligence, and sobriety have to have been at the forefront of all overseer requirements. In another letter, which actually explains his reasoning for firing an overseer, he remarks that “merely Sauntering about a field for the part of a day was but a very Small part of the business of a Man who had a large family of Negroes under his care” (Chestnutt et al. 1988:374).

Laurens sought his overseers from a variety of sources. When James Brenard at his Wambaw Plantation gave his notice, Laurens apparently valued his skill sufficiently to request that Brenard “look about & recommend a person in your stead” (Rogers 1974:580). At another time he comments to a friend, “pray send none [overseer applicants] but honest Men, good planters & such as love work, for I can pick up enough of a different stamp every day” (Rogers et al. 1976:146).

When an overseer was on the horizon Laurens provides clear evidence that the decision was not made quickly. During his effort to replace Brenard at Wambaw, a Mr. Myers “offers his service,” but Laurens wrote his friend Joseph Brown in Georgetown, asking if he knew anything of the man and remarking, “but as I am willing to pay well I will have none but such as are at least well recommended” (Rogers 1974:583). He also expected good recommendations, revealed by a 1768 letter concerning a Mr. Littleton who “produced to me a Certificate from under the hand of Robert Raper, Esquire (who he says directed him to apply to me) setting forth, that he served Mr. Raper two Years upon a Rice Plantation as an Overseer, behaved very well, made good Crops, & understands his business” (Rogers 1977:221-222). Not only does this tell us something of the typical recommendation, but we discover that this same individual a few years earlier was advertising himself as teaching geometry, trigonometry, surveying, mensurating, arithmetic, writing, and bookkeeping (Rogers 1977:222).

There are indications that overseers had some bargaining room. For example, in 1768 Laurens wrote a potential new overseer a letter of introduction that explained, “the bearer of this is Mr. William Cantey who has promised to become an Overseer for me if he likes the Land & he is therefore going immediately to view that & the State of the Buildings” (Rogers et al. 1976:562).

In another case Laurens writes a sick overseer that he would “gladly pay the expenses of an assistant for you if you could get one to your liking until you were quite recover’d” (Rogers et al. 1976:6).

These examples suggest that the pool of highly qualified individuals was sufficiently small that they could make at least some demands on the owners and that owners would make considerable allowances to retain seemingly satisfactory employees.

In a more detailed discussion Laurens outlines the exceptional range of negotiation possible, noting the overseer he wants is “for an out Plantation where he will be Master & have the Command of Cattle & Hogs & may use all that he reasonably can desire nor shall I differ with him about Rum, Sugar, & even Tea. I would have him to Live well to take good care of my Interest in general & particularly of my Negroes. He may enter his also upon shares or Wages, but the former will be best. The Wages come last but I shall also acquiesce in this demand provided he is a clever fellow & equal to the charge he is to undertake & in a few Years to do me a real service & acquire an independence for himself” (Rogers et al. 1976:16-17). This short passage provides several important pieces of information. First, it specifies that at least in this case (in 1765) Laurens preferred to compensate his overseer using shares, although he was willing to consider straight wages for the best kind of individual. Whether shares or wages, however, payment would also include luxuries, such as rum, sugar, and tea (the latter being a very expensive Colonial commodity). In addition, the account would indicate that the overseer would have use of the plantation’s stock, never being in want of fresh meat. Finally, the reference to independence probably means that the overseer would become more independent of Laurens’ constant supervision, being able to make sound decisions that brought in a good crop and succeeded in looking after the owner’s best interests.

Although Laurens seems to have paid wages frequently, there are relatively few mentions in his letters. However, on one occasion he does specify paying Mark Noble, overseer at Broughton Island, wages of £767.2.8 for two years and seven months – or about £25.11.0 per month or £294.12.0 per year (Rogers et al. 1977:126n). In another case he reports that the overseer salary would “commence” at £550 per year (Chestnutt et al. 1988:373). In a third letter, we have the very brief contract with one overseer:

Agreed the 13<sup>th</sup> february 1777 in presence of Mr. Zahn with [blank] Marlin to act as Overseer & Indigo Maker at Mount Tacitus to dwell on the East side in the House where Jo. Gaillard lived which Burnet is to put in good order. Wages £250 per Annum. Twelve Gallons Rum & plantation food which he Says he will be very frugal in" (Chestnutt et al. 1988:374).

The letter goes on to itemize that Marlin drew goods against his wages, including a "duffel blanket" and "high heeled shoes." One wonders how this ability to draw against wages (or even shares) might have affected the rapid turn over of overseers – just as it later affected the rapid departure of tenant farmers. It is likely that it would have been difficult – perhaps even impossible – to collect when an overseer's draw was greater than his ultimate share in the plantation's profit. Most certainly this approach limits the ability of most overseers, at the end of the year, to make any substantial improvements to their household or place in society – what money they might have earned would likely have already been spent. Therefore, we can't help but wonder if overseers were much like tenant farmers, always moving on in the hopes of something better elsewhere, often with feelings that the last owner cheated them out of their labor.

On another occasion Laurens specified that what he terms an inferior or second rate overseer, one who would be reporting to a manager who also resided on the plantation, "may be procured in South Carolina without much difficulty & at moderate Wages, of £150 Currency of South Carolina, together with plantation provision, twelve Gallons of Rum, & as many pounds of Muscovado Sugar per Annum" and even mentions that he had "often known Such hands . . . hired at £100 per Annum" (Rogers et al. 1981:316).

### Working Conditions

Laurens also provides documentation concerning the issue of an overseer's own slaves, noting in another 1763 letter that, "the overseer if he employs any Negroes of his own to draw a share of the Crop of Rice in proportion to the number of such his Negroes & no more" (Rogers et al. 1974:59).

In 1765 Laurens asked his acquaintance James Marion in St. Thomas Parish to visit his new overseer, a Mr. Horlbeck. Laurens notes that while Horlbeck was "honest & sensible" he was not an expert planter and perhaps needed some oversight. He advises Marion that Horlbeck "has a general knowledge of farming, very quick of apprehension, & will readily catch your orders & I believe he has good nature & docibility enough to put them in execution without murmuring (Rogers 1974:585). Horlbeck's lack of expertise is clearly indicated by Laurens' letter, "I shall send you two dozen Hoes if they are wanted but you must enquire into the matter yourself & not trust to the driver" (Rogers 1974:588).

There were also some plantations where Laurens apparently had more than one overseer. For example, in discussions about housing at Wambaw, Laurens specified that his older overseer, Abraham Shad, should have his preference of housing over the newly hired overseer, James Brenard (Rogers 1974:590). In a 1766 discussion of how to set up a plantation Laurens comments on the usefulness of retaining both a "property manager" and also an "inferior Overseer," but provides no cogent discussion of either position (Rogers et al. 1976:159). In a letter concerning his Florida operations, Laurens does explain that a "Second rate Overseer" should be "a sober well disposed Man capable of following the Negroes in the Field, of marking out their respective Tasks & attending to the performance, according to directions which he will receive from the principal Manager on the Spot" (Rogers et al. 1981:315).

Consequently, the inferior or second rate overseer would be little more than a driver or foreman – a white who received orders from a more experienced overseer, or manager. Presumably, since Laurens mentions that the second rate overseer would be responsible for no more than 30 hands, there would be multiple inferior overseers on an especially large plantation, all reporting to a single Manager. In another letter Laurens tries to further explain his system of plantation management:

. . . two good Overseers provided to take charge of them, & as it will be considerable charge, one of the Overseers Should be a person Some what above the inferior Class. If there are 100 people three White Men will be required at the first outset, & they ought to be divided into two or more Classes according to the number of working hands (Rogers et al. 1981: 395-396).

It seems that Laurens, at least for some overseers, would go out of his way to promote or further their education or refinement. In 1767 he wrote his Altamaha overseer, Mark Noble, “the Books that I send you, Vizt. Anson’s Voyage, Charles 12<sup>th</sup>, Rebellion in 1745, Law of Consideration, Quincey Sermons, History of the Pilgrim, keep in the House & do not lend them abroad on any Account” (Rogers et al. 1976:590). This is an interesting mix of historical, political, and religious literature – books that seem certain to have been selected to encourage refinement and sophistication.

A far different view – one of isolation – is offered by a 1765 letter to an overseer at the Ball Plantation (which he has oversight of), “if you apprehend a want of Provision it will be proper to purchase of your own Negroes all that you know Lawfully belongs to themselves at the lowest price that they will sell it for” (Rogers et al. 1976:41). This comment is vaguely suggestive

of the interdependence of slave and overseer on at least some plantations. So, too, is one from 1766 where Laurens comments, “if you have no Neighbors or no good ones your Negroes will be exposed to the arbitrary power of an Overseer & perhaps sometimes tempted to knock him in the head & file off in a Body” – clearly documenting not only the constant fear of slave rebellion, but also acknowledging that a single white man – absent other white neighbors – had little power to control slaves. Taken together the two comments pose a careful balancing act of interdependence on one hand and repression on the other – likely a tough middle ground for any overseer to walk.

### Firing and Friendly Departures

One of the earliest references was Laurens’ 1763 letter to James Lawrence, his Mepkin Plantation overseer, relieving him of his job. Laurens wrote, “the true reason of my taking this step is your familiarity with Hagar with besides being wrong & unwarrantable in itself must be extremely offensive to me & very hurtful to my Interest, as it must tend to make a good deal of jealousy & disquiet amongst the Negroes . . . . I chose to have a Man of more experience & one that has a Wife” (Hamer et al. 1972:248).

This letter clearly emphasizes an issue that is found in Laurens’ letters frequently – he expected his overseers to be constantly mindful of his business “interests” and to act in a manner that furthered those interests. In 1765 Laurens reproached his overseer at Mepkin, John Smith, concerning this issue of watching out for Laurens’ interests: “as you have undertaken the care of my Mepkin Plantation & for which I have agreed with you upon your own terms & something better by no abatement; I shall expect you will in every respect study & promote my Interests & behave like an honest Man” (Rogers et al. 1974:632). A similar comment was made in 1768 when he comments on the spending habits of one of his overseers, “he does me an Injury & himself greater” (Rogers et al. 1976:590).

The comment concerning his choice of a married man is also interesting, since it may help explain the newspaper advertisements that specify a man with a wife (although it certainly doesn't explain the number of ads asking only for single men). The dismissal also documents that unions between white overseers and black slave women occurred, harkening back to Morgan's (1995) observations concerning familiarity and domination at the Vineyard Pen in Jamaica.

This is a topic briefly mentioned by a variety of sources, including Pease and Pease (1990:142) and Morris (1996:24). Morgan suggests that colonial South Carolina adopted a "relaxed, tolerant view of miscegenation" and that there were abundant, public cases of mulatto children borne of slave women (Morgan 1998:406-408).

At other times the firing was conducted second hand. For example, in 1766 Laurens got a report concerning the excesses of his overseer. He wrote James Grant, "I am sorry to see that Harvie does not behave well. He produced me Certificates of his former conduct that were very satisfactory but every Planter experiences such disappointments in that class of people. It is best to refer him to me for Payment of his Wages" (Rogers et al. 1976:197). This suggests that it was recognized that even good recommendations were not always enough - as well as overseers as early as mid-century already having a reputation of being a distinct under class ("this class of people").

In one case Laurens provided a rather detailed explanation for his release of Mark Noble (to whom he had loaned an eclectic library) at Broughton Island:

. . . several parts of Mr. Noble's behaviour came to my knowledge which had been hid from me before, which added to the complaints alledged against him at Broton Island, convinces

me that he is not competent for the charge the he has undertaken. He wants diligence & he wants sincerity. The first deficiency renders his knowledge of Planting business so much or so little as he has of it, almost useless, & the latter exposes me to unknown dangers of Loss whenever his own Interest or his vanity may prompt him to do amiss. Every person who has been at the Island impute Idleness & vanity & obstinacy to him, & the loss of my Canoe, Horse, Cattle, Tools, &ca., &ca., give me convincing proofs thereof, & I find that under the sanction of Jonathan Bryan, Esquire he has petitioned for a Warrant to Survey a parcel of that Marsh Land adjoining to the College Land pretending that he had eight or ten Negroes & that he can direct those in the ditching & banking his Tract without inconvenience or loss of time in my affairs. This Plan of *his*, he ought *at least* to have communicated *to me*; especially as I took occasion to chide him among other things for neglect of business by too frequent absence from his duty (Rogers et al. 1977:444-445).

There were occasions when Laurens' overseers left on far better terms. For example in 1765 James Brenard, at the Wambaw Plantation, announced his intention to leave. Laurens responded, "I have fully consider'd the notice you gave me of your intention to remove & Settle upon a plantation of your own . . . . If you go, you shall not want my good wishes that your change may be for the better" (Rogers 1974:579). In 1769 Laurens grumbled that he had been out of town, "fixing a New Overseer" at his Mepkin Plantation, noting that the



previous overseer had “grown Rich & set up for himself” (Rogers et al. 1977:251). These brief accounts reveals that there were overseers, fairly early in the eighteenth century, that achieved adequate wealth to move from managing other people’s lands and slaves to managing their own. Another Laurens overseer moving on to create his own plantation was Peter Horlbeck, who became a planter in St. George, Dorchester Parish, after leaving Laurens’ employ (Rogers et al. 1974:575n). Laurens comments, while guarded, seem to suggest his displeasure with the change in social context, as well as the inconvenience such advancements caused him.

### Attitudes

Laurens frequently remarked to his overseers about the need to care for his slaves. In one instance he reminds his Wambaw overseer, Abraham Shad, “take care of him & let him rest with very little work until I come. You say you don’t like him but remember he is a human Creature whether you like him or not” (Rogers et al. 1974:666). Whether this concern was based on the value of African American slaves as property, a sincere Christian concern, or simply a concern that the overseer was such a low sort as to take pleasure in hurting the slaves is unclear – but it is a reoccurring theme in Laurens’ letters.

On several occasions Laurens provides rather candid statements concerning overseers. For example, in 1766 he notes that “I observe that every Man [applying as overseer] thinks himself entitled to the best Wages” (Rogers et al. 1976:120). In another letter, also from 1766, he vaguely comments, “I have experienced too many disappointments by Overseers,” making one wonder if Laurens was simply unlucky, or if “that class of people” was perhaps as bad as implied.

On another occasion he scolded an overseer, “I hear that you entertain much company & live in a manner unbecoming your station but I will not believe all that is said of

you for I know that some people speak thro’ envy. However let this be a caution to you to walk honestly & discreetly, whereby your conduct will put to silence all evil report” (Rogers 1976:91).

The complaint of entertaining excessively is frequently associated with the issue of sobriety as well as budgeting. Of equal interest, however, is the concern that he was living beyond his “station,” suggesting that the overseer was “putting on airs” and behaving like a planter rather than an overseer.

In 1777 he wrote of the “roguery” and villainy of the overseers, their having “taken base advantages of his neglect,” and how “some of whom had been wasting & others appropriating” the funds and resources of the plantation. Because of these problems, Laurens estimated that his absence from direct oversight would result in upwards of 40% losses (Chestnutt 1988:293, 329). Whether these complaints signals a decline in the overseers’ reputation or whether this might be associated with the Revolution is unclear, but this is Laurens’ strongest condemnation of overseers and 40% losses would certainly have not only been deeply disturbing, but would likely have put many plantations in the red.

Another equally damning letter dates from 1772 and was written by John Lewis Gervais to Laurens, detailing the problems on one of Laurens’ plantations. Gervais notes that the overseer acted “Unkindly” and “Ungratefully” towards Laurens, and that his excuses were “pueril.” He found the lands “not in order” and that the overseers employed no fewer than five slaves “about his house.” Gervais found that the tasks laid out for the slaves fell short by nearly a fifth of what they should have measured and that a great quantity of seed rice could not be accounted for and was presumed stolen. The plantation lacked provisions – “neither beef, pen fowls big or small, Rice, Sugar, Rum, &ca.” Gervais found further that the Negroes were being seriously

underfed, that they had received no boots or caps the previous winter, and that only a few received blankets. Gervais goes on to note a vast amount of provisions that had been sent, but seem never to have been distributed to Laurens' slaves. He also notes that the overseer had begun his own plantation and there is a veiled reference to the probability that all of these missing supplies had been sent by the overseer to his own plantation. In fact at one point Gervais states clearly that the overseer "plundered the plantation" and had recently been seen with other overseers in the neighborhood "dancing and drinking for three four days together" (Rogers et al. 1980:287-291).

This long litany of problems is perhaps the clearest documentation of the losses that could be suffered at the hands of an unscrupulous, dishonest, and incompetent overseer.

But we must also realize that the problems were in a sense encouraged by the low wages offered and the owners perhaps unwittingly placing their white overseers in direct competition with their slaves for food, shelter, and clothing (discussed in more detail below).

#### **Other Eighteenth Century Overseer Accounts**

While Laurens seems to be the most detailed and prolific writer concerning eighteenth century overseers, there are other accounts and letters that provide additional details, often confirming Laurens' observations. For example, in the Robert Pringle letters there is an exchange over a period of several years as Pringle sought to have an English colleague help a local overseer, Field Cossett, dispose of an inheritance. In the initial letter from 1742, Pringle notes that Cossett was "a person that has us'd the Sea, & but in Low Circumstances here, being only in the Station of an Overseer" (Edgar 1972:474). The next year Pringle explains again that Cossett has "no fix'd or Certain abode of his Own, being in Low Circumstances, and in the

Station only of an Overseer, and Oblidg'd often to Shift and move about" (Edgar 1972:577).

These letters seem to suggest that the position of an overseer – even in the first half of the eighteenth century – was seen as a "low circumstance" resulting in frequent moves and no real home – something akin to a tenant farmer of the twentieth century. In addition, it causes us to wonder how easily the overseer was able to move even a few accumulated goods from plantation to plantation.

The James Glen papers also provide some minor details concerning overseer contracts. Glen and John Drayton, between 1761 and 1766, were involved together in a rice plantation. Glen provided the management and kept the books, periodically providing Drayton with an accounting. Review of these documents reveals that the return was prorated based on the involvement of each party – actually the number of slaves owned by each individual. The overseer's pay was based on the number of slaves supervised and was pretty consistently £5 per slave. While the total number of slaves – and hence the total contract for the overseer – is unknown, Drayton was contributing about £60 per year (James Glen Papers, South Caroliniana Library). Assuming that Glen was an equal partner, the overseer was working for as little as £120 – consistent with Laurens' observations that an inferior overseer could be found to work for as little as £100.

The Ball family papers provide a glimpse of overseer issues at the end of the eighteenth century. In September 1786 David Franklin was retained as the overseer for the Hyde Park plantation at a salary of only £38 per year. Moreover, all but £11.48 was advanced through purchases of 5 gallons of rum, beef, bacon, a fat wether [ewe], and cow. There is evidence that in 1791 Franklin was supplementing his wages by hiring out (probably on shares) his two slaves, so that at the end of the year he received not only his salary minus advances (£40), but also £30 for "all

claim for Tom’s share in crop of 1791 and £12 for a year’s hire of Old Sambo.” Even into 1793 Franklin’s contract had not increased. A February 1793 memorandum states: “I do agree to give Mr. David Franklin £50 wages from 2/11/1793 on condition that he act as overseer of my Kensington lands in addition to his charge as overseer at Hyde Park. The rest of our agreement continues same as first made” (John Ball Account Book, 1786-1812 South Carolina Historical Society folder 11/515/6).

Similar wages were offered by John Ball to Joseph Clark, who was hired in September 1795 at 40 shillings a month, or £24 a year. Beginning in 1796 the wages were increased to £30. And while no wages were documented for a third overseer, it appears that he agreed to manage the fowl and hogs on shares. There was never a charge made to the overseer’s account for his share of the livestock, so it appears this was similar to later sharecropping, with all the goods supplied by the owner and a share of the proceeds going to the overseer for his management (John Ball Account Book, 1786-1812, South Carolina Historical Society folder 11/515/6).

The Ball salaries appear to be dramatically out of line with those being offered by Laurens. While it is entirely possible that such differences existed, it may be that Ball’s accounts were in £ sterling, while we know that Laurens’ accounts were in South Carolina currency. With an approximate 1:7 exchange rate (at least prior to the Revolution), Ball’s £30 might actually be £210 in South Carolina currency – and this would place the two accounts in far better agreement.

While there are a few other accounts, all are similar – providing primarily economic accounts of the overseer and providing little direct information concern the social life, status, origin or any eventual social or economic rise.

**Synthesis**

**Wages**

Henry Laurens paid wages of between £200 and £550, although he noted that some overseers could be obtained for as little as £100 to £150. All of these wages, however, were supplemented with housing and “plantation provisions.” It also appears that minimally rum and sugar were added to the salary. James Glen and John Drayton were paying perhaps £120 or more. A Carolina author in the English journal, *Gentleman’s Magazine* indicated a salary of £250 in 1755 and inclusive of rum and other items, consistent with that offered by Laurens (Merrens 1977:161). John Ball paid £24 to £38 – although if converted to South Carolina currency the range is likely £168 to £266. So, while we have a small sample and there is considerable variation, we can also see some agreement, with a probable average of around

Table 6.  
Estimates of Mean Total Wealth per White Inhabitant for the South Carolina Low Country.

Period	SC Currency	£ Sterling	2002 \$
1722-1726	£ 960.79	£ 146.68	\$21,980
1727-1731	926.30	134.44	20,150
1732-1736	1987.48	153.38	22,990
1737-1741	1139.57	149.75	22,450
1742-1746	1428.86	204.12	30,600
1747-1751	1814.23	248.52	37,250
1752-1756	1902.22	270.59	40,560
1757-1762	2125.34	303.62	45,510

£200 a year, with some making far less and a few perhaps more.

In addition, there are differences regarding other items provided. Laurens states that for a good overseer he would happily provide provisions, rum, and even tea. On the other had, Ball deducted any advances or provisions from his overseers’ wages, keeping a rather detailed account. So clearly there were differences in the “perks” that might be offered.

Regardless, it is difficult to understand these salaries without a better understanding of colonial salaries and wealth distribution in the Carolina low country. Two sources for such data are Bentley (1977) and Jones (1980) summarized by Coclanis (1989:85-90). Wealth is typically viewed in terms of both non-human (i.e., non-slave) and the total since most wealth was tied up in slaves (Coclanis [1989:87], for example, suggests that between 48 and 50% of total wealth was tied up in human bondage throughout the colonial period). In addition, wealth can be viewed as both per capita (encompassing the total population) or per probated wealth holders. Understandably there are significant differences - on a per capita basis the figures are reduced by inclusion of individuals with little or no wealth (such as children and many women). On the other hand, if only probated (or inventoried) wealth holders are examined the figures may be more accurate, but we discount a very large proportion of the population whose estates were never probated or inventoried for one reason or another.

We have chosen to present Table 6 that provides mean total wealth for white inhabitants - this includes wealth as personal property, slave property, and real estate; and it presents the data as per capita, thereby providing what is a relatively low estate of wealth.

It's realistic to temper this assessment by noting that in the period from 1722 through 1732, over half of the inventories revealed decedents with inventoried wealth of £100 sterling or less and that nearly four-fifths of the population had inventories for £200 sterling or less.

The point is that a few pounds (or a few slaves) one way or the other might be the difference between relative poverty or wealth in the early colonial period. Certainly an annual salary of £20 to £30 sterling minus living expenses would be very frugal and would likely result in most family heads falling into the

category of having an inventory of less than £100 sterling.

Another way of looking at overseer salaries is to compare their salaries with other occupations. Waller (2000:242) notes that during the eighteenth century merchants in England made between £200 and £400 sterling a year (£1,400 to £2,800 in South Carolina currency), although "a family of the lower-middling class could live comfortably on an income of £50 a year" (or £350 in South Carolina currency). We can also document that Ball was paying his children's tutor £100 a year - three times as much as his overseer.

Olsen 1999 provides additional salary data, noting that English agricultural laborers at the beginning of the eighteenth century averaged £18 sterling a year and that the end of the century the rate had increased to only £26. In comparison, a factory worker at mid-century made about £3 sterling a year. A London laborer could expect to make £25 sterling a year, while in rural areas the salary would drop to £11.

It seems that Carolina planters were paying overseers a wage only slightly better than an English laborer, far less than a shopkeeper and only a little better than a housekeeper. In other words, the salaries paid were exceedingly low. Such wages, whether by design or not, would have kept most overseers in something approaching poverty. Even with the supplemental food, rum, and sugar, most overseers would have been hard pressed to purchase their own slaves, much less their own plantation - and it is perhaps easy to see why individuals such as Pringle view overseers as in "low circumstances." It is also easy to understand why some overseers were enticed to steal labor and supplies from their employers - for some it must have been difficult to see so much wealth and to be paid so little.

There is another wage issue that deserves to be discussed in some detail.

Previous authors have suggested that early overseeing was done almost exclusively on the basis of a percentage of the crop brought in. We find very little evidence to support this view in eighteenth century Carolina. Such a proposition is mentioned in only one newspaper ad and “shares” are mentioned in only two other ads. In all of his writings Laurens mentions the idea only once and, even then, says that he will acquiesce to wages.

It seems reasonable that in a cash strapped society owners might well want to provide a percentage of the crop in lieu of wages. Moreover, the owner might reasonably expect the overseer to be more attentive if his income was dependent on the job done. On the other hand, this places an additional burden on the overseer who probably preferred cash and didn’t care to assume uncertain liabilities. That there are so few accounts of operating on shares suggests that overseer wages won out fairly early in Carolina.

### **Social Status**

While we can make informed salary judgments relatively easily, it is more difficult to evaluate status without falling into the traps of previous authors – for example assuming a clearly defined tripartite division in white society. Period commentators, however, do seem to place overseers – at least by mid- to late-century – in an under class. Pringle speaks of “low circumstance” and Laurens repeatedly speaks of “that class.”

The newspaper ads provide some clues. The frequent mention of sobriety suggests that drinking was an issue – it certainly was in England, where the “lower” classes were found of both beer and gin and the “upper” classes would boast of drinking multiple bottles of wine at dinner (Robert Walpole’s wine budget at his seat in Norfolk for one year was £1,500)(Olsen 1999:238-242). It is also curious that planters would advertise for sobriety and then include relatively large sums of rum in the inducements.

We speculate that alcohol was a drug of choice and like most drugs, as long as it was kept undercover by the overseer, the planter would tolerate considerable abuse.

Other requirements included a broad range of generic issues – good character, faithful, industrious, discreet, and understanding various aspects of plantation business. Laurens provides several examples of questioning the good character of an overseer – once because of the sexual relation with a female slave and often because of not looking out for his best interests.

Of course, most of these characteristics are not clearly obvious and the planter was forced to accept recommendations. We have previously mentioned that these recommendations might be of minimal value. We suspect that those writing recommendations had different motives, just as today.

Moreover, most of these characteristics are not clearly associated with a specific “class.” And, in addition, we wonder how planters could possibly expect to hire and retain the individual matching these expectations with the paltry salaries offered. Franklin and Schwenger clearly recount the expectations placed on the overseer:

Managers were asked to be firm, fair, and demanding as well as vigilant, compassionate, and strict. They were told to punish slaves who did not adhere to plantation rules but never to use threats or excessive force. They were expected to go to the fields with the hands; remain there until the end of each day; keep an eye on livestock, farm machinery, and the storehouse; and maintain accurate records of how slaves worked. They should do everything in their power [to protect the slaves]. They should

be knowledgeable about the plantation and know how and when to plant a crop, correct slaves, appoint drivers, organize a work routine, and produce a good crop (Franklin and Schweninger 1999:235-236).

They were, in essence, expected to manage plantations and slaves with values of hundreds of thousands of dollars in today's money, while being paid a wage typical of an ordinary laborer (\$3-4,000 in today's money).

Perhaps even more amazing is that owners, with such low wages, placed their overseers in the position of competing with slaves for food, shelter, clothing, and other necessities and luxuries.

While Bassett is incredulous that so much wealth was entrusted to "such illiterate men" (a proposition with which we disagree), we are far more amazed that the wealth was entrusted to individuals so extraordinarily underpaid. The planters, it seems, sought to create *and maintain* an "underclass" to deal with those issues they chose not to deal with. The maintenance of the overseer class, of course, was no different than what was happening in England at the same time. There - as in Carolina - there were constant concerns over anyone threatening "to mingle every man with the class that is superior to him, and . . . to support a gay and splendid appearance utterly inconsistent with their station and circumstances" (quoted in Olsen 1999:16). And this is certainly a theme found in Pringle ("low circumstances") and Laurens ("I hear that you entertain much company & live in a manner unbecoming your station").

If overseers broke out of their "station," then there were not only social problems (rank and its privileges were closely guarded), but also great inconvenience to the planter. Laurens, for example, seems to express some

consternation that an overseer had "grown Rich & set up for himself."

While certainly the wealthy were more literate than the poor, both Olsen (1999:160) and Taylor (1997:312) suggest that literacy was generally high throughout society. This seems to be supported by the act of advertising in a written medium, the constant reference to letters from overseers, and the requirement that they keep tract of plantation accounts.

McCurry comments that, contrary to the perceptions of authors such as Bassett and Scarborough, antebellum "white society in the rural Low Country included small planters with fewer than twenty slaves, great ones with more than one hundred slaves, and planter-merchants with all manner of property; tenant farmers, laborers, overseers, and all kinds of poor whites; and, as elsewhere in the South, a substantial class of yeoman farmers (McCurry 1995:47; see also Land 1969:2-3). Although the colonial period likely showed less variety, we believe the tapestry was far more complex than many authors have suggested.

### Origins and Advancement

We are able to offer relatively little new data on the origins of the low country's overseers. The newspaper ads certainly demonstrate that some of those entering the overseer market came either from Virginia or directly from England. And Pringle reveals that at least some entered overseeing since they had nowhere else to turn. Unfortunately Laurens provides few clues on the origin of his overseers. In our research we have found no evidence of sons of prominent families. We are also rather unconvinced that any significant proportion of the overseer profession could trace its origins back to prominence.

Additional research might be able to track names in the Laurens papers - or other correspondence - perhaps identifying their origin. Such research might even be expanded to

provide additional clues on such issues as wealth and status in society.

The potential for such efforts to succeed, however, seem slim. We briefly examined four individuals: Field Cossett (1742 – Pringle), James Brenard, James Lawrence, and Abraham Schad (1763 – Laurens). None are mentioned in Lesser's (1995) Proprietary period research. On-line sources such as Ancestry.com provided no listings for any of these individuals.

The Combined Alphabetic Index at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History provides only a little information. We can learn, for example, that Field Cossett and his wife sold 20 acres on the Ashley River in 1737 – perhaps contributing to his “low circumstances.” James Brenard was the possible owner of a small tract in Prince George by 1774. And Abraham Schad was granted 100 acres in 1759, sold a slave in 1773, and made some minor contributions to the American cause during the Revolution.

While it is possible that additional information might be forthcoming from church records, marriage and death records, and other untapped resources, we expect that most of the eighteenth century overseers will remain relatively unknown – further emphasizing the importance of archaeological research ferreting out and exploring their settlements.

As to advancement, when we look at the Laurens papers we find many more overseers who were fired or who are simply not heard from after one or two years, then we do overseers who left Laurens employ because they purchased their own plantation. This suggests – but certainly does not prove – that relatively few overseers were able to overcome the low wages and social pressures to advance from the “class” or “status” of overseer to small planter.

The documents do suggest that when such advancement was possible it was largely facilitated by the overseer owning one or two

slaves who he was able to either hire out or have work for shares. Thus, it seems the only documented way out of overseeing and to that of a small planter was by owning slaves. Hints of this approach come from the newspaper ads, where by the late colonial specific mentions are made of overseers bringing their own slaves to the plantation – a feature not observed earlier. Authors such as Chaplin (1993:280) provide accounts such as that of Virginia immigrant Francis Cox who came to Georgia with seven slaves, set them out on hire as he took an overseers position and with the resulting earnings was able to purchase his own plantation.

Given colonial purchase prices of around £20 to £50 sterling per slave (Carmen 1939:292-303, Merrens 1977:161, 182 – well above the typical annual salary of the overseer), advance through this process was likely difficult and reserved to the most industrious or most fortunate. We suspect that most remained, at best, yeoman farmers forming the basis of this rather large class by the antebellum (McCurry 1995).

### Summary

The historical documents that we have been able to identify suggest that eighteenth century overseers were more diverse than many might like to suggest.

It is relatively easy to outline what we don't know – even after this research. Where did the eighteenth century overseers come from – instate, out of state, England? What was their social status prior to taking on the occupation of an overseer? Was it an advancement from some even more lowly state?

Was there a difference in overseeing an absentee estate (such as those of Laurens), as opposed to those where the owner, if not on the property, was at least close by (such as those of the Ball family)? Were there detailed contacts and is there any eighteenth century law

concerning overseer and owner relationships or obligations? Was there a deliberate effort to keep overseers in a degraded state? What was the average length of a relationship between overseer and owner in the eighteenth century?

There is evidence that relatively few overseers operated on the basis of shares or a percentage of the total crop – a set salary seems far more common in the eighteenth century. We also have some evidence to suggest that most overseers were at least literate, if not well read.

The limited data available suggest that planters did look down on the profession of overseeing and the disdain in which they held overseers might have increased through the eighteenth century. Some of this disdain, however, was almost certainly an effort to maintain a rigid class system not untypical of eighteenth century England.

The accounts suggest that even with the occupation of overseer there were different levels, using terms such as “manager” and “inferior overseer.” These levels seem to have been based either on expertise or length of service (the two, we feel, were not always the same).

What we know with more certainty than anything else is that overseers in general received very low wages. Whether by design or circumstance, those wages certainly served to keep many (perhaps most) overseers in a state of poverty and dramatically reduced their potential for moving up the social or economic ladder.

When the historic accounts from South Carolina are added to the research from Virginia and Jamaica, we garner a sense that eighteenth century overseers were in constant competition with slaves for scarce resources, had very few material possessions, had very few opportunities to add material possessions, and had close interaction with their slave populations at a variety of levels.





## EXCAVATIONS

### Methods

A single vertical control point, at the entrance to the woods road was used for the excavations at 38CH1278. Established by Chicora, this point is a painted cross on the base of the concrete curb and the point has an assumed elevation of 18 feet above mean sea level (AMSL). All of the excavations' vertical elevations were tied into this datum and are

that point. This new grid is tied into the old shovel test grid (see Trinkley et al. 2004), with Transect 5, Shovel Test 3 being 100R150.

The minimal excavation unit was a 5 by 5 foot unit, although most of the excavations consist of 10-foot units. Chicora has adopted engineering measurements (feet and tenths of feet) for consistency in its work, especially on European sites where structural measurements are most often in feet.



Figure 9. Use of Bobcat and 12-inch auger to conduct close interval tests.

The auger tests were 1-foot in diameter (the equivalent of 0.8 ft<sup>2</sup>), with all tests penetrating the subsoil (to verify that the artifact bearing strata terminated at the base of the plowzone or A horizon). All soil was screened through ¼-inch mesh and all remains were retained except for rubble and shell, which were characterized in the field as light, moderate, or dense and discarded.

indicated by AE (assumed elevation).

Excavations at the site created a new grid that measures 80 feet east-west by 160 feet north-south, with a total of 134 auger points. This is significantly expanded from that originally proposed to ensure that we identified *all* aspects of the site core. We used a modified Chicago-style grid based on an arbitrary OR0 point located off the site tract. Units were designated by their southeast corner and 200R100 indicates a point 200 feet north of the arbitrary OR0 point and 100 feet right (or east) of

Formal excavations at the sites were conducted by hand, using mechanical sifters fitted with ¼-inch inserts for standardized recovery of artifacts. Excavation was conducted by natural soil zone. All of the site area exhibited a plowzone, generally 0.8 to 1.1 foot in depth, overlying a subsoil with clearly defined plow scars and plow ridges. Based on previous testing and shovel testing, we identified that all cultural remains were found in this plowzone. Consequently excavations were terminated at the subsoil. Munsell soil color notations were made during the course of



Figure 10. Hand excavation at 38CH1278.

Units were troweled and photographed using black and white negative and color transparency film at the base of the excavations. Each unit was drawn at a scale of 1 inch to 2 feet. Features were designated by consecutive numbers (beginning with Feature 1). Postholes were consecutively numbered by specific unit. Features, depending on the evaluation of the field director, were either completely excavated or bisected

excavations, typically on moist soils freshly exposed.

(i.e., partially excavated). Feature fill was screened through ¼-inch mesh and features, upon completion of their excavation, were also

All materials except brick, mortar, and shell were retained by provenience.

Rubble and shell were weighed and discarded on-site. A one-ounce soil sample was retained from each zone. We have previously retained much larger samples, allowing the luxury of a variety of soil studies. With the current curation issues at SCIAA, this is no longer practical and we have abandoned the retention of large samples.



Figure 11. Troweling units at the base of level 1.

photographed using black and white negative film and color transparencies. One ounce soil samples were obtained from all features. A 5-

## EXCAVATIONS

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gallon sample was also retained from each feature – those with dark organic fill will be floated using mechanically assisted water float equipment, those with a lighter sandy fill will be subjected to low pressure water screening through 1/16-inch mesh.

As a result of this work, three excavation areas were opened, each based on auger tests suggesting unusually high artifact density. A total of 775 ft<sup>2</sup> was opened at the site, with 550 ft<sup>2</sup> in the main area, and 100 ft<sup>2</sup> and 125 ft<sup>2</sup> in two smaller areas. A total of 718.2 ft<sup>3</sup> were excavated in primary work.

We also proposed, at the conclusion of the hand excavations, to mechanically strip areas that might produce structural remains. Only one such area, in the vicinity of 150R100, was identified. In addition, we also stripped areas around two isolated auger tests with dense remains. As a result four cuts, totaling 820 ft<sup>2</sup>, were opened. These cuts were made using a track hoe with a cutting bar welded to the bucket teeth. The equipment size allowed easy movement of the soil and roots and the cutting bar allowed a relatively smooth floor to be created, minimizing the need for shoveling scraping afterwards.

### **Results of Close Interval Testing**

Figure 12 illustrates the results of the auger testing. There is one relatively large area of dense remains in the central east side of the study area, covering an area measuring about 30 feet north-south by 20 feet east-west. Artifacts in this area ranged from five to seven items per auger test and brick remains were heavy to moderate. In fact, the densest brick remains were found in this northeastern quadrant, declining dramatically to the southwest.

A second, much smaller area, is found on the west central side, covering an area about 20 feet northwest-southeast by 10 feet. In this area brick was moderate to low in density and

artifacts range from five to six specimens per test.

A similarly confined area is found in the southeast quadrant of the study tract. In this area, however, artifact density ranged from six to 12 specimens, although brick was generally sparse.

In addition, there were two isolated auger tests that produced relatively dense remains. In both cases brick was very sparse or absent.

We interpreted the primary area on the east side of the study tract as perhaps a dwelling area and it was there that unit excavations were concentrated. More limited tests were conducted in the other two dense areas and the isolated auger tests were subjected to mechanical stripping.

The auger tests failed to identify any notable concentrations of faunal remains. In fact, no test produced more than two fragments and only nine of the 135 tests (7%) produced any faunal remains. It appears that the faunal remains are sparse and the plowing, combined with acidic soils, has significantly reduced their potential to contribute to this study.

### **Results of the Excavations**

#### **East Central Area (165-175R140-150, 185-195R150)**

As previously discussed, this area revealed the spatially largest concentration of remains and received the focus of the excavations, with the placement of five 10-foot units and one 5 by 10 foot unit, for a total of 550 ft<sup>2</sup> (165-175R140-150, 185-195R150).

These units revealed level 1 soils of dark brown (7.5YR3/2) sand ranging in depth from about 0.8 to 1 foot. This level is plowzone, with plow scars and ridges clearly evident that the

INVESTIGATION OF AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEER SITE

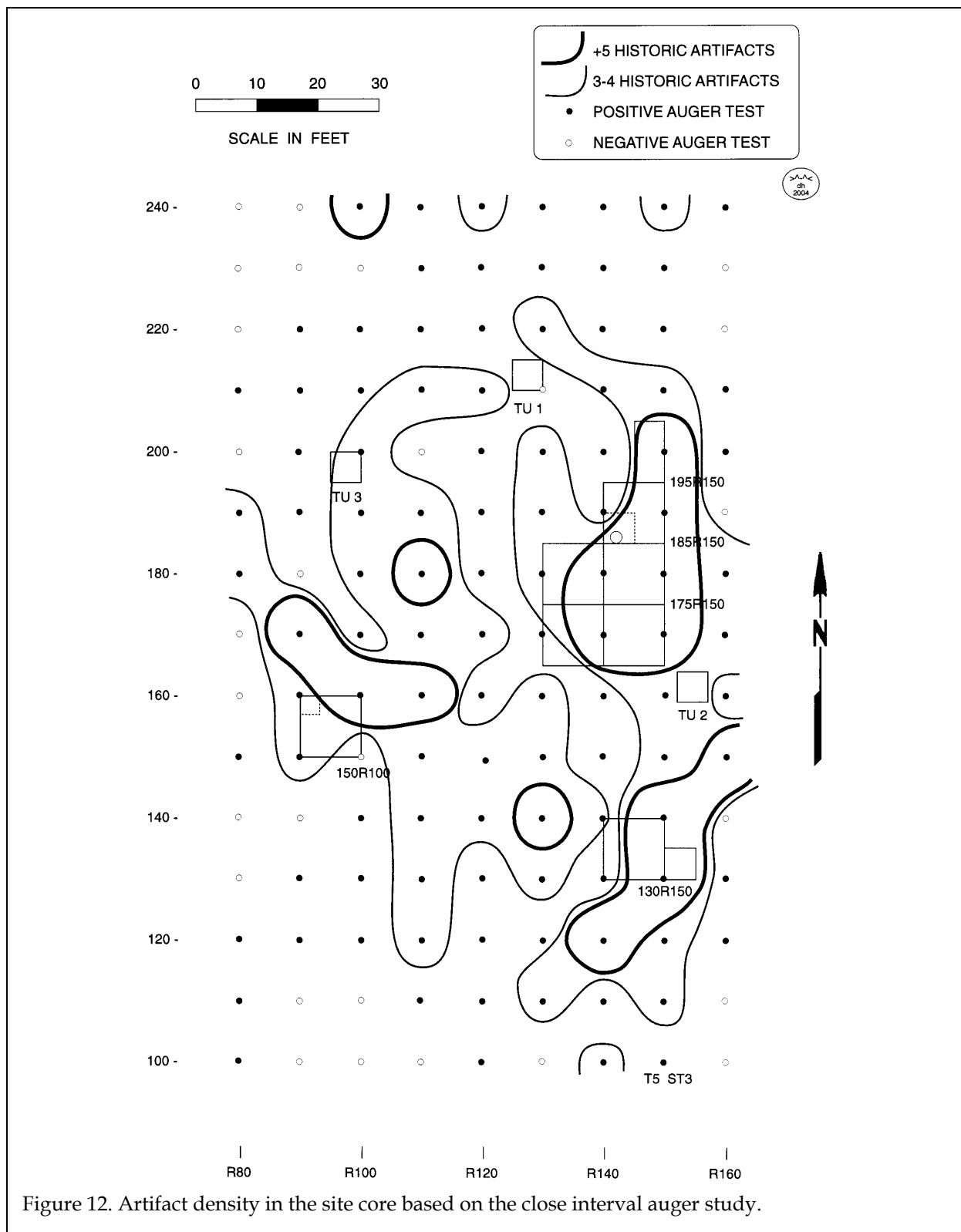


Figure 12. Artifact density in the site core based on the close interval auger study.

EXCAVATIONS

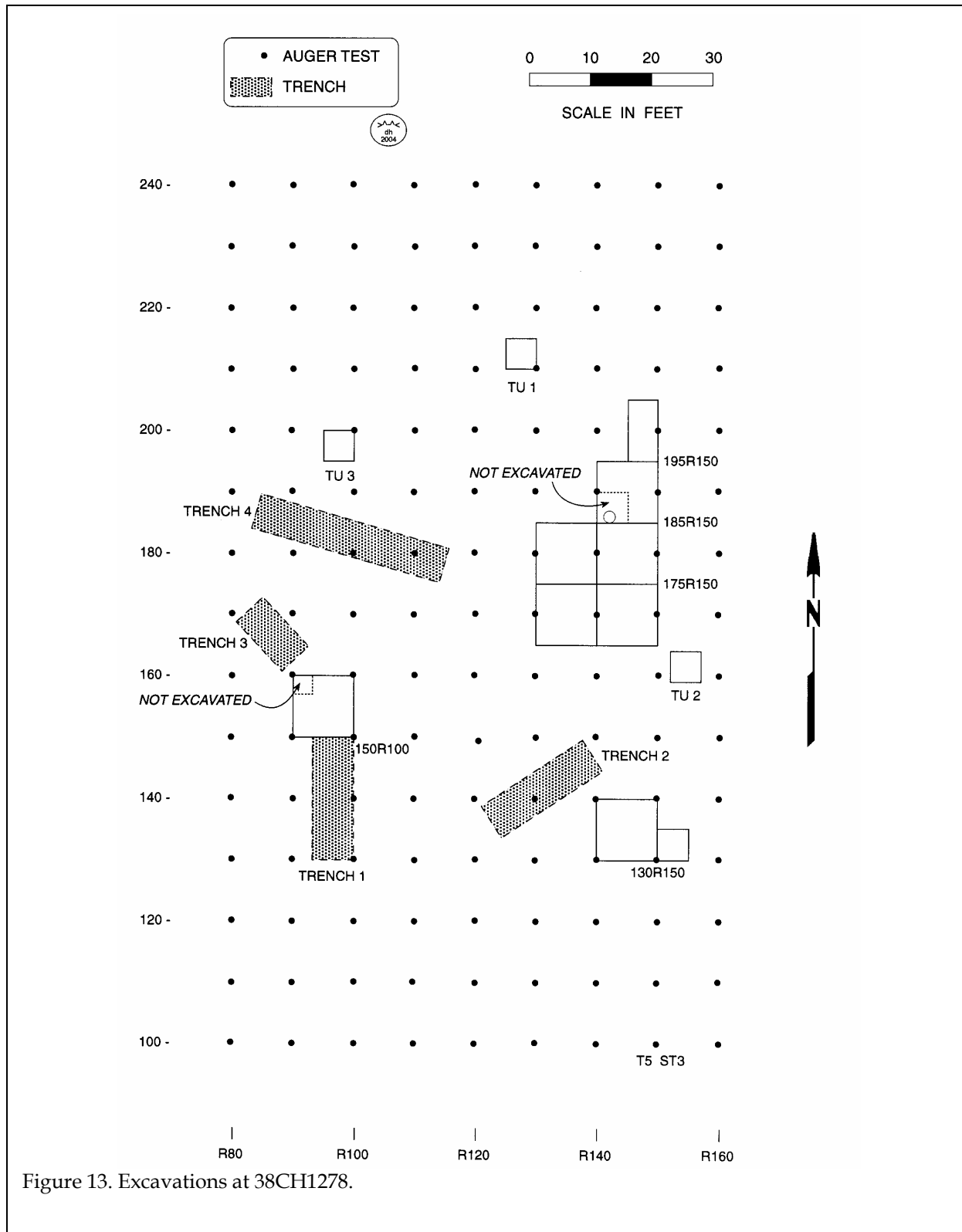


Figure 13. Excavations at 38CH1278.



Figure 14. Base of excavations in 165R140 showing plowscars and also larger nineteenth century agricultural features.

base of the excavations (see Figure 10). The subsoil was found to consist of a brownish yellow (10YR5/6) sand, although there was considerable mottling in some areas.

Shell was sparse throughout the excavations (see Table 7). Brick, however, was denser; although in no case would the remains have yielded more than four or five bricks based on weights.

The excavations in this area produced no architectural remains and only one feature suspected of dating to the site's occupation was found. Feature 1 is a shallow basin at 171.3R137.6 identified at the base of level 1 (plowzone). It measured 2.7 feet north-south and 1.9 feet east-west, and was 0.3 foot in depth. The fill was a very dark brown (7.5YR5/2) sand with no shell or brick. This shallow basin produced a low density of artifacts, including a pipe stem, nail,

and ceramics. No function is ascribed to the feature and it may represent an animal wallow or shallow erosional pit.

Two other numbered features are located in this block. Feature 2 (Figure 11) is situated in the southeast corner of the block (172R144) and consists of a broad trench-like feature running north-northwest by south-southeast, at an angle

different from the plowscars. In addition, plowscars ran through this feature. A portion was excavated and found to be a shallow (0.25 foot) flat bottomed depression. Feature 3 is situated in the northwest corner of the block (183R130.5) and was otherwise identical. Both features exhibited a very dark gray (7.5YR3/1) sand fill. Artifact density was very sparse.



Figure 15. Feature 2, S½ excavated, looking north.

# EXCAVATIONS

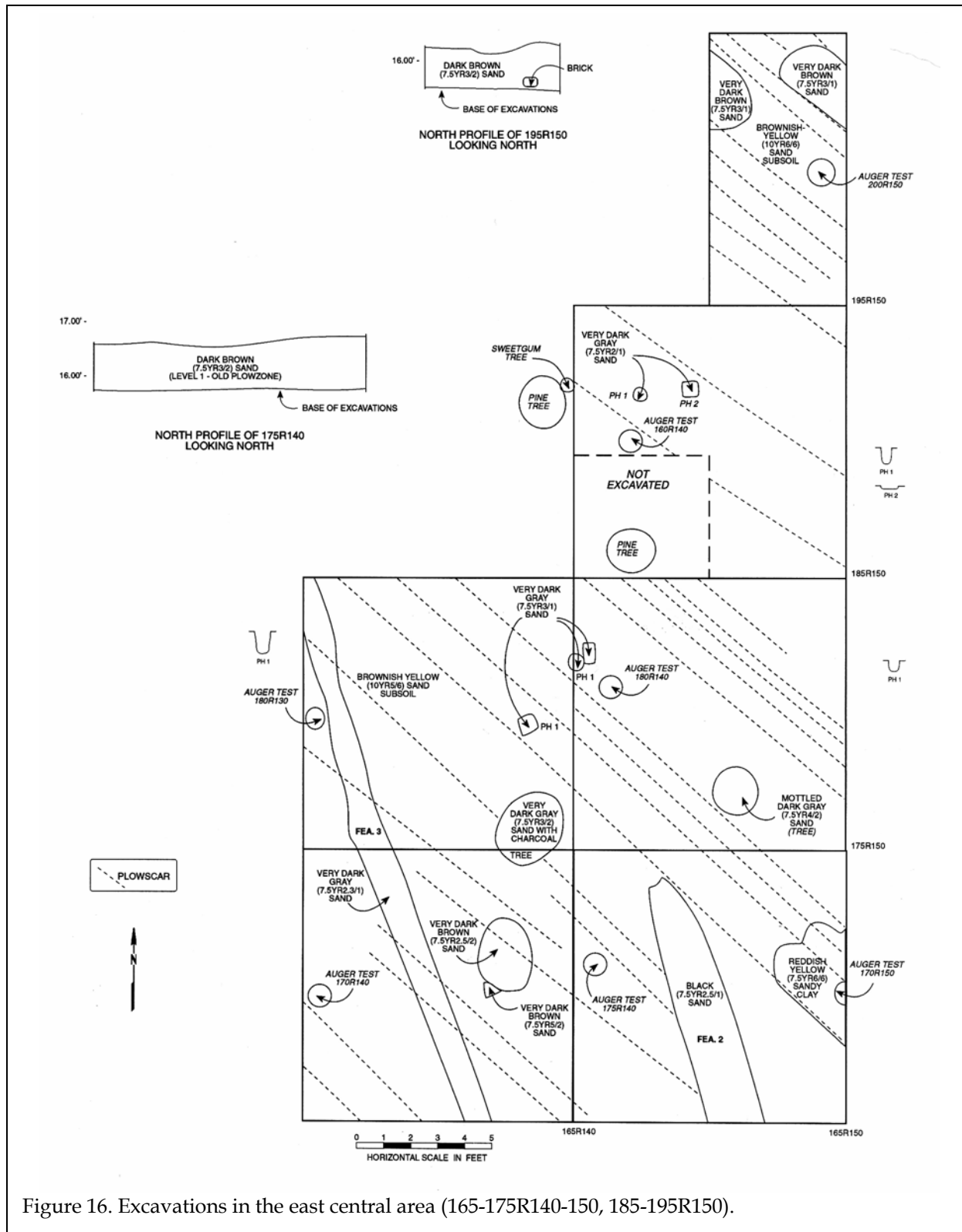


Figure 16. Excavations in the east central area (165-175R140-150, 185-195R150).



INVESTIGATION OF AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEER SITE

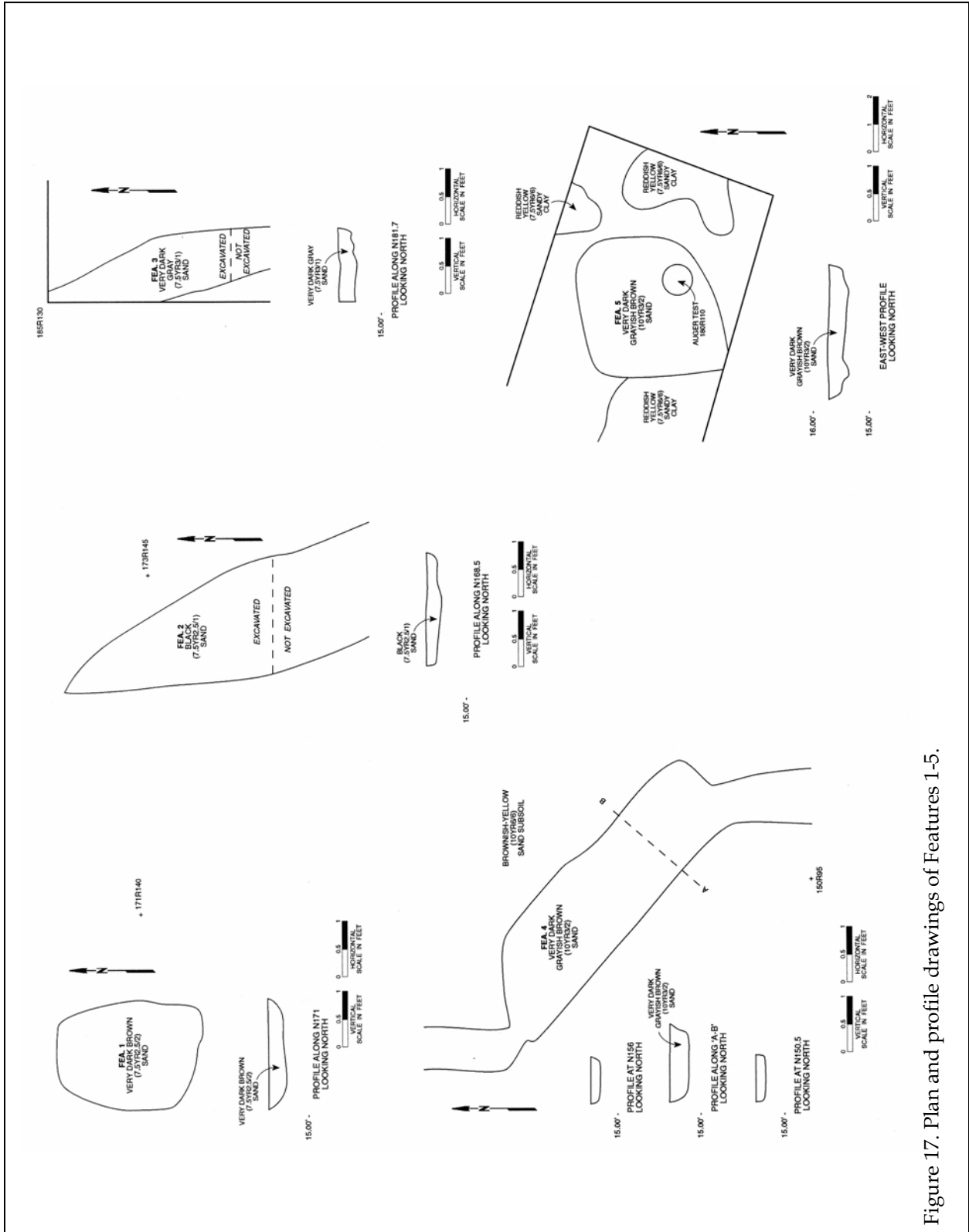


Figure 17. Plan and profile drawings of Features 1-5.

EXCAVATIONS

There were similar features in the block, all with same orientation and spaced about 3 to 4-feet apart. We believe that these features post-date the occupation of the structure and represent nineteenth century cultivation practices intruding through the earlier occupation. They have the approximate spacing and depth that would be appropriate for hoe mounding of soils for the cultivation of cotton and similar crops. Thus, while cultural in nature, they are not associated with the eighteenth

either the north or south excavation limits with no evidence of truncation. The fill is a very dark grayish brown (10YR3/2) sand, not too dissimilar to the posited nineteenth century agricultural ditches. The feature is 0.35 foot in depth and, at the base, we identified five round stains that are thought to be posts. Because of the very high water table, the bottom of these stains could not be identified with certainty. Each, however, appears to be about 0.6 foot in depth (below the base of the trench).

Table 7.  
Brick and Shell from Unit  
Excavations (weight in pounds)

Unit	Brick	Shell
150R100	29	2
165R140	38	2
175R140	40	3
165R150	42	2
175R150	46	2
185R150	30	2
195R150	40	3
130R150	55	2
130R155	18	1

century site occupants and represent an early agricultural disturbance of the site.

**West Central Area (150R100)**

A single 10-foot unit, 150R100, was excavated to examine the remains identified from this area by the auger tests. This unit produced a level 1 of dark brown (7.5YR3/2) sand representing plowzone over a brownish yellow (10YR6/6) sand subsoil.

At the base of level 1 we found similar plowscars and older agricultural ditching similar to the larger block. Also identified was a squared-off dark stain designated Feature 4.

Upon excavation this appears to be a wall trench section about 5-feet in length and 1.5-feet in width. The trench terminates before

If the interpretation of the stain is correct, its function is uncertain. We could identify no other structural features and the stain was not picked up in mechanical stripping (see below).

**Southeast Quadrant (130R150-155)**

Excavations in this area consisted of a 10-foot unit (130R150) and a 5-foot unit (130R155) placed to examine an area of dense remains identified in the auger testing. Level 1 consisted of a dark brown (7.5YR3/2) sand plowzone about a foot in depth over a yellowish brown (10YR5/6) sand subsoil.

At the base of the excavation these units also revealed modern plowscars and what we interpret as nineteenth century cultivation trenches. No cultural features, however, were identified.

**Results of Mechanical Cuts**

As mentioned earlier, no clearly architectural features were identified that especially suggested the need for mechanical cuts. Nevertheless, several were excavated using a track hoe with a cutting bar welded across the bucket teeth. We focused on unit 150R100, where possible architectural remains had been found, as well as the two auger tests that yielded high, but otherwise isolated, remains.

Cut 1 was placed south of 150R100 in an effort to determine if the posited wall trench

INVESTIGATION OF AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OVERSEER SITE

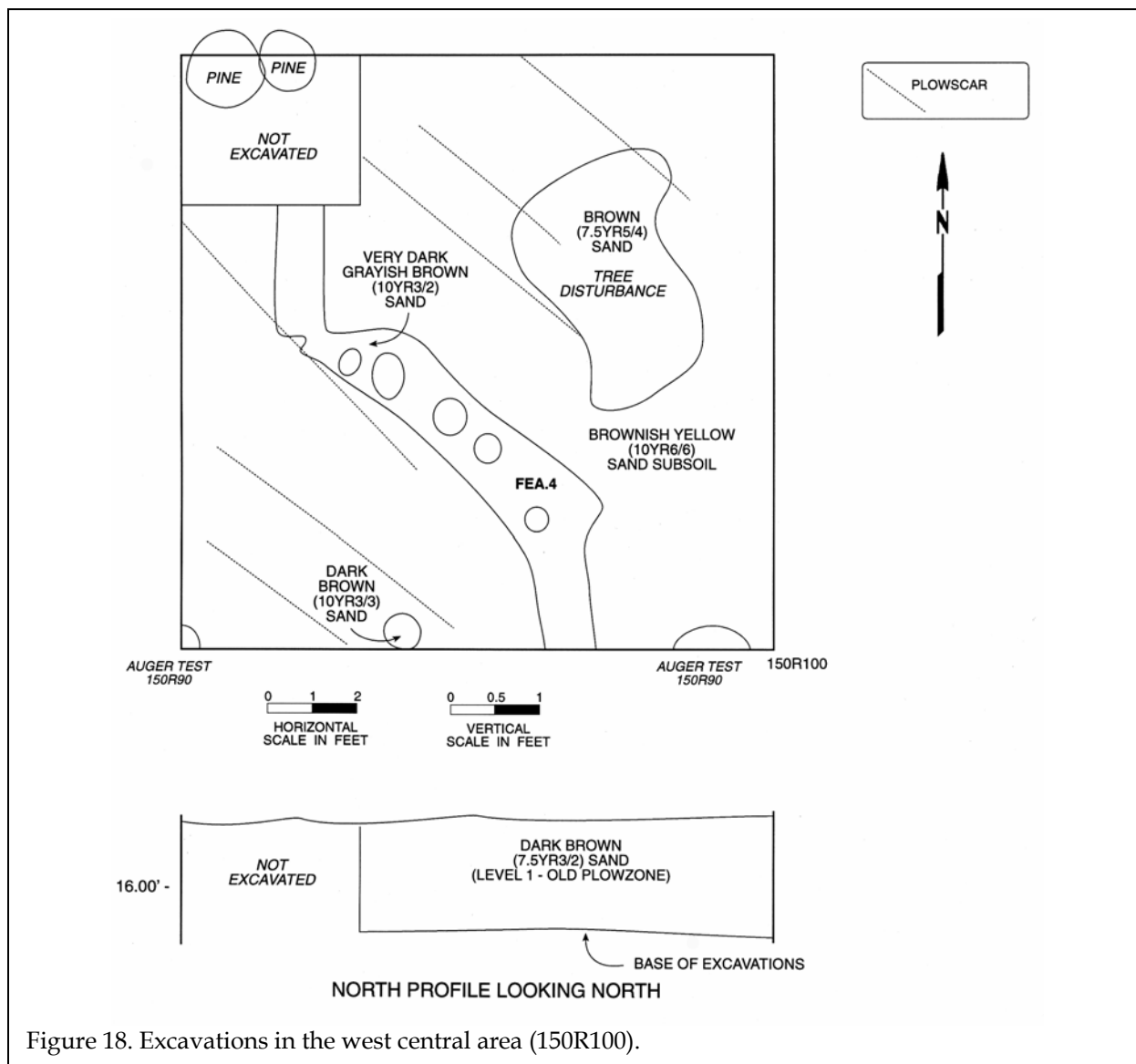


Figure 18. Excavations in the west central area (150R100).

(Feature 4) extended south or southeast. The trench measured 8 by 20 feet (160 ft<sup>2</sup>). Several tree stains (as well as ubiquitous plow scars and larger agricultural features) were identified, but there was no evidence of additional structural remains.

Cut 2 was placed to bisect the auger test at 140R130 that was identified as an isolated area of dense remains. The trench measured 8 by 20 feet (160 ft<sup>2</sup>). We identified no structural

remains or features that might account for the density of material.

Cut 3 was placed northwest of 150R100 and was intended to determine if architectural features related to the posited wall trench (Feature 4) in the unit might extend to the northwest. No evidence of other remains was identified in the trench.

Cut 4 was placed through the dense remains in the auger hole at 180R110. As the trench was opened, we identified a large feature

## EXCAVATIONS

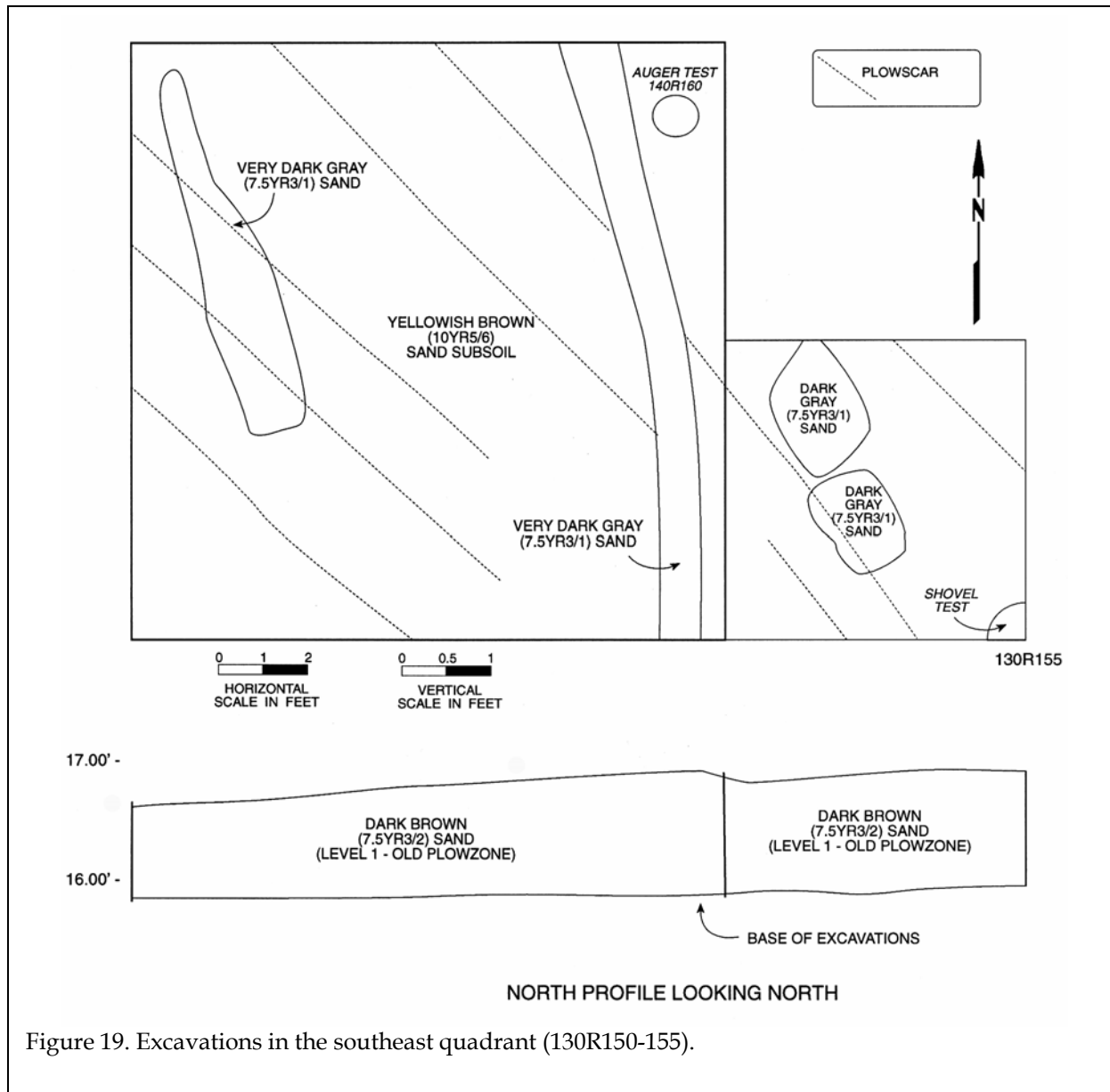


Figure 19. Excavations in the southeast quadrant (130R150-155).

(designed Feature 5) at the southern end of the trench. The feature consisted of very dark brown (7.5YR5/2) sand fill with dense shell and occasional brick. It measured about 5 feet north-northeast by south-southwest and 5 feet east-west, taking on a slightly ovoid to square shape. The auger test had caught the southeast edge of the pit, probably resulting in the very high artifact count for that test. Upon excavation the feature was found to be only 0.3 foot in depth and to contain an assemblage of nails, “black”

glass, Colono, calcined bone, and one small fragment of slipware. The function of the pit is indeterminate, although it appears too large to represent a “wallow” area and too shallow to represent a clay extraction pit. The brick identified in the pit lacked mortar, so it seems unlikely that it is a robbed architectural feature.

Although the mechanical cuts did not produce any exceptional results, they do buttress our interpretation of a site exhibiting

ephemeral architecture, sparse artifacts, and tight clustering of remains.

## ARTIFACTS

### Methodology

#### **Processing and Conservation**

Processing was begun in the field, but was completed at Chicora's labs in Columbia. During the washing, artifacts were sorted by broad categories - pottery, lithics, bone, ceramics, glass, iron, and other materials. Upon drying the artifacts were temporarily bagged by these categories, pending cataloging. Conservation treatments have been conducted by Chicora personnel at the Columbia laboratory intermittently from December 2004 through January 2005.

Brass items, if they exhibited active bronze disease, were subjected to electrolytic reduction in a sodium carbonate solution with up to 4.5 volts for periods of up to 72 hours. Hand cleaning with soft brass brushes or fine-grade bronze wool followed the electrolysis. Afterwards, the surface chlorides were removed with deionized water baths (until a chloride level of no greater than 1 ppm or 18  $\mu$ mhos/cm was achieved using a conductivity meter) and the items were dried in an acetone bath. The conserved cuprous items were coated with a 20% solution (w/v) of acryloid B-72 in toluene.

Ferrous objects were subjected to electrolytic reduction in a bath of sodium carbonate solution in currents no greater than 5 volts for a period of 5 to 20 days (or in a few cases far longer). When all visible corrosion was removed, the artifacts were wire brushed and placed in a series of deionized water soaks for the removal of soluble chlorides. When the artifacts tested free of chlorides (at a level less than 0.1 ppm, or 2  $\mu$ mhos/cm), they were

dewatered in acetone baths and were air dried for 24 hours. Afterwards, a series of phosphoric (10% v/v) and tannic (20% w/v) acid solutions were applied and the specimens were again allowed to air dry for 24 hours. They were finally coated with a 10% solution (w/v) of acryloid B-72 in toluene.

The materials have been accepted for curation by the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. The collection has been cataloged using this institution's accessioning practices. Specimens were packed in plastic bags and boxed. Field notes were prepared on pH neutral, alkaline-buffered paper and photographic materials were processed to archival standards. All original field notes, with archival copies, are also curated at this facility.

#### **Analytical Methods**

Analysis of the collections followed professionally accepted standards with a level of intensity suitable to the quantity and quality of the remains.

Very few prehistoric artifacts were identified at this site during either the initial survey (Trinkley et al. 2004) or the data recovery operations. The data recovery excavations produced only small, and generally isolated, sherds and occasional chert flakes. The prehistoric remains were not a contributing resource in terms of eligibility and the data recovery plan did not incorporate research questions focused on these sparse and highly disturbed remains.

The temporal, cultural, and typological classifications of the historic remains follow

such authors as Cushion (1976), Godden (1964, 1985), Miller (1980, 1991), Noël Hume (1978), Norman-Wilcox (1965), Peirce (1988), Price (1970), South (1977), and Walton (1976). Glass artifacts were identified using sources such as Jones (1986), Jones and Sullivan (1985), McKearin and McKearin (1972), McNally (1982), Smith (1981), Vose (1975), and Warren (1970). Additional references, where appropriate, will be discussed in the following sections.

The analysis system used South's (1977) functional groups as an effort to subdivide historic assemblages into groups that could reflect behavioral categories. Initially developed for eighteenth-century British colonial assemblages, this approach appears to be a reasonable choice for this early eighteenth century occupation since it allows ready comparison to other collections. The functional categories of Kitchen, Architecture, Furniture, Personal, Clothing, Arms, Tobacco, and Activities provide not only the range necessary for describing and characterizing most collections, but also allow typically consistent comparison with other collections.

Another important analytical technique used in this study is the minimum vessel count, as both an alternative to the more traditional count of ceramics<sup>1</sup> and also as a prerequisite to

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<sup>1</sup> Although counts are used in this, and virtually every study of historic wares, we know that they are biased as measures of the proportions of types. Simply put, the proportion by number of sherds of a particular type reflects two things: first, the proportion of that type in the population, and second, the average number of sherds into which vessels of that type have broken (known among some researchers as their brokenness) in comparison with the brokenness of other types. In general, however, brokenness will vary from one type to another and also from one size vessel of a particular type to another size vessel of the same type. Usually, types with a high brokenness will be over-represented in comparison to those with a low brokenness. More importantly, this bias not only affects the study of a single assemblage, but may also affect the study, or

the application of Miller's cost indices. The most common approach for the calculation of minimum number of vessels (MNV) is to lay out all of the ceramics from a particular analytic unit (such as a feature), grouping the sherds by ware, type, and variety (e.g., floral motif vs. pastoral). All possible mends are then made. Body sherds are, from this point on, considered residual and not further considered. Remaining rim sherds, which fail to provide mends, are examined for matches in design, rim form, colors, and other attributes that would indicate matches with previously defined vessels. Those that fail to match either mended vessels or other rims are counted as additional vessels. Since there were no closed features, such as wells or privies suitable for this level of analysis, the analytic unit used was all of the units from the excavations. These were combined for this analysis, using a minimum distinction method for the MNV, which tends to provide a relatively conservative count.

Although no cross mend analyses were conducted on the glass artifacts, these materials were examined in a similar fashion to the ceramics to define minimum number of vessel counts, with the number of vessel bases in a given assemblage being used to define the MNV. Attempts were made to mend and match vessel bases in order to ensure the accuracy of the count. If a glass artifact exhibited a different color and/or form not represented by the counted bases, then it was designated a separate vessel or container.

Mean dates rely on South's (1977) mean ceramic dating technique, using primarily the mean dates that he has developed. A very few of our colleagues occasionally use Carlson (1983) in addition to South. Carlson observes that a drawback to South's technique is that it gives the same weight to ceramics manufactured for long periods (say from 1700 to 1800, yielding a

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comparison, of different assemblages that may have a different level of brokenness.

mean date of 1750) as it does to those produced for only short periods (say from 1740 to 1760, with the same mean date of 1750). While this is true – and is certainly an understandable issue – it seems that overall it results in only a few years error. Moreover, it seems that relatively few investigators have chosen to implement the changes proposed by Carlson.

We have also chosen not to provide tobacco stem dates for several reasons. One is that pipe stem bore diameters are frequently not consistent throughout their length. There are also lingering concerns over the adequacy of various sample sizes – Noël Hume (1963), for example, argues that a minimum sample of 900 to 1,000 stems was necessary, while Hanson (1971) suggests that 30 stems were adequate. We are inclined to believe that larger figure is likely more viable – and even the entire 38CH1278 sample produced less than 500 specimens. There are other questions concerning when the dating technique begins to break down, with dates ranging from 1744 through 1800 having been offered. Since the current study may date into the period when the tobacco stem dates begin to degrade, their use is problematical. Finally, there are actually a variety of dating techniques – at least six variations having been proposed in the past. Pfiffer (1978) offers a review of the problems inherent in using pipe stems for dating. What we have done is to provide the raw data throughout our discussions, so that readers who may wish to compare more conventional dating techniques to pipe stem dating have the opportunity to do so.

Of greater importance to us at a site such as 38CH1278, where the property has been owned by several planters (and potentially several overseers), is the occupation span reflected by the ceramics. Knowing the span represented might assist us to gauge the contribution of different owners or occupants. One method used to determine the occupation span of the excavations is South's (1977) bracketing technique. This method consists of

creating a time line where the manufacturing spans of the various ceramics are placed. The left bracket is placed by determining where at least half of the ceramic type bars touch. The right bracket is placed the same way, however, it is placed far enough to the right to at least touch the beginning of the latest type present (South 1977:214). We have chosen to alter South's bracketing technique slightly by placing the left bar at the earliest ending date when that ending date does not overlap with the rest of the ceramic type bars.

Since South's method only uses ceramic types to determine approximate period of occupation, Salwen and Bridges (1977) argue that ceramic types that have high counts are poorly represented in the ceramic assemblage. Because of this valid complaint a second method – a ceramic probability contribution chart – was used to determine occupation spans. Albert Bartovics (1981) advocates the calculation of probability distributions for ceramic types within an assemblage. Using this technique an approximation of the probability of a ceramic type contribution to the site's occupation is derived. This formula is expressed:

$$P_j/\text{yr.} = \frac{f_j}{F \times D_j} \quad \text{where}$$

$P_j$  = partial probability contribution  
 $f_j$  = number of sherds in type  $j$   
 $F$  = number of sherds in sample  
 $D_j$  = duration in range of years.

Finally, after reviewing the collections, we have decided that there are no significant differences between the three excavation areas. The major block, identified previously as the east central area or 165-175R140-150, 185-195R150, likely represents the occupation core and the bulk of the artifacts came from these units. The remaining three units (two 10-foot squares and one 5-foot unit) contribute only a small amount to the collection. Consequently, this analysis combines all three areas.



### Analysis

The core area (165-175R140-150, 185-195R150) produced 3,009 artifacts, yielding a density of 6.3 specimens per cubic foot. The southeast quadrant excavations (at 130R150-155) were nearly as dense, yielding 639 artifacts or a density of 5.3/ft<sup>3</sup>. The single unit at the west central area (150R100) produced the lowest artifact density, with 2.2 specimens per cubic foot (the total number of artifacts was 102).

These densities are minimally half those identified at the eighteenth century Mazyck Plantation overseer settlement (38BK1900) where the density was 13.8 specimens per cubic foot (Trinkley et al. 2003:69). Likewise, the densities are much higher at most of the eighteenth century Broom Hall plantation structures. Even the slave settlements at Broom Hall exhibited higher densities (Trinkley et al. 1995). The densities are, however, considerably higher than found at the John Whitesides settlement (38CH1471) in Christ Church Parish (Trinkley and Hacker 1996:52). There, at a small planter's settlement, the densities were only 1.9 artifacts per cubic foot.

### **Kitchen Group Artifacts**

The Kitchen Group includes 3,096 specimens, primarily the remains of pottery – 1,159 specimens of European ceramics and 1,017 specimens of low-fired African-American produced Colono wares. The European wares, therefore, dominate the assemblage by a very narrow margin (53.3% - 46.7%). Combined, these two forms of pottery account for 70.3% of the Kitchen Group.

### **Colono**

The proportion of Colono ware to European ceramics for a few selected sites is shown in Table 8. This table suggests that there is considerable variability and the cause is far from clear. The differences may be a factor of occupation span or the strength of the African-

American presence. Lees (1980) from work at Limerick, plotted the frequencies of Colono ware through time, focusing on main settlements. This research suggests that when the plantation was pioneered, planters may have relied on Colono wares since manufactured items were difficult to come by, especially the further one was from a trade center (like Limerick). During the 1740s, rice prices plunged which caused plantations to become more self-sufficient. It is likely that this could also account for the larger quantity of Colono wares during this period. When the low country economy became more established by the mid-eighteenth century, money was more abundant and manufactured items were easier to obtain. This may account for the drop in Colono wares at this time. The increase in use around the turn of the century is perhaps due to the effects of the American Revolution. Again, the economy was in ruins since during the war the exportation of both rice and indigo were drastically curtailed (Lees 1980). After the war, the indigo market never recovered and it was not until the turn of the century that a new staple crop was identified. Eventually, as European ceramics became cheaper, the need for Colono wares diminished.

While diachronic issues can't be dismissed, Table 8 also suggests that the proportion of Colono when compared to European wares may also be related to the status of the site's occupants.

At eighteenth century main settlements in the Charleston area (to hold market access relatively stable) Colono ranges from a high of 30% at Broom Hall to a low of 12% at Green Grove, with a mean of nearly 23%. Presumably these figures reflect the use of Colono by the planter and his family.

At eighteenth century slave settlements, again considering only the Charleston area, Colono ranges from 73% at Yaughan/Curriboo to 96% at Crowfield Plantation. The mean at the

## ARTIFACTS

Table 8.  
Proportion of Colono at Eighteenth Century Sites in the Project Area.

Site	Settlement Type	Mean Date	European Wares	Colono Wares	Source
Liberty Hall Area D	Slave	1736	11.2	88.8	Trinkley et al. 2003b:76
Crowfield 38BK1011, Struct 1	Slave	1741	3.9	96.1	Trinkley et al. 2003a:93
Crowfield 38BK103, Struct 8	Slave Work Area	1743	10.0	90.0	Trinkley et al. 2003a:86
Broom Hall 38BK600, Area AA	Slave	1746	10.9	89.1	Trinkley et al. 1995:163-165
Crowfield 38BK103, work area	Slave Work Area	1748	16.4	83.6	Trinkley et al. 2003a:90
Yaughan/Curriboo 38BK76	Slave	1773	9.7	90.3	Wheaton et al. 1983
Yaughan/Curriboo 38BK75	Slave	1790	26.5	73.5	Wheaton et al. 1983
<b>Mean for 18th century slaves</b>			<b>12.7</b>	<b>87.3</b>	
Lynch Plnt. 38CH1479	Mixed	1713	60.1	39.9	Poplin and Huddleston 1998:63
Liberty Hall 38BK1900	Overseer	1734	56.8	43.2	Trinkley et al. 2003b:69
Belle Hall 38CH1278	Overseer	1738	53.3	46.7	
Starvegut Hall 38CH1398, Struct A	Overseer ?	1784	68.7	31.3	Wayne and Dickinson 1996a
Archdale Hall, 18th c. only	Flankers	1761	57.4	42.6	Zierden et al. 1985:91
<b>Mean for 18th century overseers</b>			<b>59.3</b>	<b>40.7</b>	
Lynch Plantation 38CH1585	Owner	1726	67.2	32.8	Poplin and Huddleston 1998:63
Broom Hall 38BK600, Area C	Owner Flanker	1744	69.8	30.2	Trinkley et al. 1995:102-104
Limerick Plnt. 38BK223	Owner	pre 1750	77.5	22.5	Lees 1980:139
Elfe Plnt. 38BK207	Absentee Owner	1751	74.9	25.1	Trinkley 1985:26-27
Parsonage 38CH1088	Owner	1775	76.2	23.8	Wayne and Dickinson 1996b
Whitesides Plnt. 38CH1471	Yeoman Owner	1779	84.3	15.7	Trinkley and Hacker 1996:75
Green Grove 38CH109, Struct A	Owner	1788	87.8	12.3	Carrillo 1980:71
Wappoo Plnt. 38CH1199/1200	Kitchen	1792	79.6	20.4	Gardner and Poplin 1992:B-14
<b>Average for 18th century owners</b>			<b>77.2</b>	<b>22.9</b>	

sampled sites is 87.3% -- significantly higher than the planters' residences.

The overseer sample is smaller, consisting of two relatively well identified sites (including the one discussed in this study) and one probable site. In addition, we include the flanker assemblage from Archdale Plantation. There the Colono comes primarily from four proveniences - one is an "administrative building, another is a probably slave dwelling, a third is a post-1750 hospital, and the final represents yard deposits. Overall, these contexts seem to be of a lower status than the main settlement. The range of Colono at overseer sites ranges from 31 to 47%, with a mean of 40.7%.

This sits midway between the very low incidence of Colono at main settlements and the very common occurrence of Colono at slave settlements - reflective of the middling status of overseers. Colono would have represented an inexpensive and readily available alternative to the more expensive European wares.

### European Ceramics

Table 9 illustrates the different types of European ceramics present in the assemblage. Porcelains account for a very small proportion of the collection, with earthenwares accounting for over 85%. Of these earthenwares the most common are lead glazed slipwares, accounting

for 63% of the total assemblage. The next most common earthenware, delft, accounts for less than

Table 9.  
Types of European Ceramics  
Present at 38CH1278

Pottery Type	#	%
Porcelain	50	4.3
Stoneware		10.1
Brown	49	
Blue/Gray	12	
White	37	
Other	19	
Earthenware		85.6
Slipware	731	
Refined	19	
Coarse	84	
Delft	90	
Creamware	57	
Pearlware	4	
Whiteware	7	
Total	1159	

8% of the total collection.

If the collection is examined by function (see Table 10), we find that utilitarian wares account for about 20.8% of the assemblage. This is lower than identified at the Mazyck overseer's site (Trinkley and Hacker 2003b:70; 29.2%), but still relatively high. We suspect that middling and lower status sites will exhibit a higher proportion of vessels used in food preparation and storage (excluding Colono) than higher status sites. For example, the proportion of utilitarian wares is consistent with findings at the Thomas Lynch overseer settlement (Poplin and Huddleston 1998: 66; 14.6%) and at the yeoman planter John Whitesides settlement (Trinkley and Hacker 1996:53; 20.1%).

The most common eighteenth century pottery was lead glazed slipware. As Noël Hume notes this ware has a red (or salmon)

colored body, is coated with a white slip through which patterns were incised. The result was then covered with a clear to pale yellow lead glaze that produced a "rich yellow surface and light-brown ornament where the body color showed through" (Noël Hume 1978:104). Principal forms were plates, trenchers, mugs, and pitchers. As John Cushion observes, the slipware potters were "primarily concerned with producing the everyday necessities for the more humble table" (Cushion 1976:79).

During the eighteenth century utilitarian slipwares made in Staffordshire and other parts of England were exported to the colonies in huge numbers. These were often offered for sale in newspapers and while no examples are immediately available from Charleston, Jefferson Miller cites several examples from elsewhere:

in 1757 a New York merchant offered for sale ". . . Crates Common yellow Wares both cups and Dishes . . ." Another New York vendor, in 1768, advertised "yellow Dishes by the Crates . . ." (Miller 1974:2).

The assemblage includes 15 bowl forms, ranging in size from 3½ to 6 inches and eight pans, ranging in size from 8 to 13 inches.

The next most common ceramic is delft (Cushion 1976:52; Noël Hume 1977; 1978:105-111). Of the 90 specimens identified, two-thirds are undecorated. Throughout the seventeenth century the flow of Chinese porcelain into Europe spurred demand and encouraged potters to find the secret of this pottery so they, too, could cash in on its great popularity. One of the earliest attempts was delft - a tin-glazed ceramic. Soon the English, too, were manufacturing delft. The forms include plates, jugs, teapots, chamber pots and apothecary jars, although at 38CH1278 most fragments were very small and vessel form could generally not be determined. The only vessel identified is a 4½

inch undecorated bowl. Decorations present are the common blue on white motif, as well as polychrome hand painted.

Table 10.  
Shape and Function of Ceramic  
Vessels

	#	%
Tablewares	33	68.7
Plates/saucers	12	
Bowls	21	
Serving	0	
Tea & Coffeeware	5	10.4
Utilitarian	10	20.8

Other eighteenth century ceramics such as white salt-glazed stoneware, Jackfield, and Westerwald are less common. The salt-glazed stoneware was developed to appeal to the increasing interest in the social habit of tea drinking. The relatively refined wares had a hard white paste and nearly uniform salt glaze (Cushion 1976:81). The collection includes four plates ranging from 5 to 9 inches and one bowl with a diameter of 6 inches. The single Jackfield vessel was a cup. No Westerwald vessel forms were recoverable, although this gray salt-glazed stoneware with cobalt blue or purple decoration was often produced as mugs, tankards and chamber pots and less commonly as storage jars and porringers.

The last category of eighteenth century ceramics are the porcelains, represented by Chinese and possibly English examples. James Deetz observes that at least by 1780 the porcelain found in colonial inventories is largely limited to:

tea sets, and probably demonstrates the adoption of the full-blown English tea ceremony for the first time. This custom can be considered a good indicator of the re-Anglicization process that was

at work at the time (Deetz 1977:60-61).

He points out that porcelain is therefore a socio-technic artifact and therefore less likely to be broken, and enter the archaeological record, than more technomic artifacts. Henry Hobhouse describes this ritual, as well as the ceramics associated with it:

The eighteenth century Europeans, like the Japanese but unlike the Chinese or the Russians, regarded tea making as a ceremony. There was the boiling water, not boiled for too long. There was the specially warmed pot. There was the infusion time. There was the pouring, a little bit of a ceremony all on its own (Hobhouse 1987:111).

Richard Waterhouse (1989) explores the structure of values in Carolina society, noting that "the behavior patterns of the wealthy eighteenth-century Carolinians were based on luxurious living and imitation of upper-class English taste and manners" (Waterhouse 1989:103). The reasons for this "exaggerated imitation of the . . . English gentry" (including the adoption of the tea ceremony) were complex, but seem to involve the high mortality of the new colony, the long-established links between Carolina's elite and the English gentry, the close trading (and economic) ties between the two groups, and the desire for the Carolina elite to establish itself as a ruling class which was rigidly hierarchical and mobility was severely limited. Waterhouse also contends that the "black majority" of Carolina "deepened the psychological need for South Carolinians to adhere to the normative values of English culture" (Waterhouse 1989:108). The tea ritual, and the associated very expensive imported porcelains were one aspect of this overall process.

There are some components of the tea ceremony at 38CH1278, such as the small quantity of porcelain, but not too much should be made of this. Breen notes that there were reasons, other than social emulation, for the poorer classes to drink tea, including that it was a mild stimulant (Breen 1994:457). And Breen and Bushman both reveal that the eighteenth century working poor strived hard to add genteel amenities to their households (Breen 1994:456, Bushman 1992:184).

At 38CH1278 six porcelain vessels were identified. Blue hand-painted Chinese porcelain accounted for one cup, one saucer, and two plates ranging from 7 to 8 inches. White porcelain vessels include one undecorated saucer and one poly hand-painted over glaze saucer.

In the 1760s cream-colored earthenware, creamware or "Queensware," began to replace the tin glazed earthenwares in the world markets. The creamwares were fine lead glazed ceramics with a light-colored body and a slight yellowish to green glaze. While the earliest documented English example has an underglazed blue hand painted design and is dated 1743, the ware was not perfected until the work of Josiah Wedgwood in the 1760s. It wasn't until the 1790s that much was seen in North America.

Peter Walton notes that there are four major decorative styles for creamware – colored glazes (including many molded examples and some of the so-called "clouded wares"), enamel hand painting, transfer printing, and slips (Walton 1976:73). The transfer printed wares, beginning perhaps as early as 1761, were printed in either an Indian-red, black, or lilac enamel. Subjects included pastorals, coats-of-arms, figures, landscapes, birds, and flowers (Cushion 1976:88).

At 38CH1278 undecorated creamwares are the most common, with only very minor amounts of cable and hand painted wares. Nine

vessels were identified in the collection with eight being undecorated (or exhibiting only molding). These undecorated specimens include one cup and two mugs, one 7 inch bowl, one 3 inch lid, and three plates ranging from 8 to 10 inches in diameter. The one hand painted vessel form could not be determined.

Table 11 reveals a mean ceramic date of about 1739 for the collection. South's bracketing technique reveals a date range of about 1740 through 1790, extending to 1830 if the beginning date of the most recent ware is included. Bartovics' (1981) date range is dominated by a dramatic peak between 1670 and 1795, with only a minor blimp from 1795 to 1820.

We believe that the small amounts of both pearlware and whiteware in the assemblage are the result of accidental intrusions – there are a number of sites in the area, this particular site is immediately at the edge of a main farm road, and the vicinity has been cultivated for a number of years. If these late ceramics are ignored, we have a fairly well established occupation range from the early to mid-eighteenth century. This corresponds to the ownership of the tract by Joshua Wilks, Jr., John Daniel, or John Daniel the younger – or perhaps all three since they all were likely planting the tract and may have had need for an overseer.

Table 10 reveals bowl forms account for nearly two-thirds of the tablewares, dominating the collection. Bowls have been taken by archaeologists to be evidence of foodways. In particular, bowls and slavery have been linked – with the vessel form taken to be indicative of "one-pot" meals, stews, and pilafs. This linkage, while certainly useful, fails to recognize that there were also foodways among English yeoman that similarly focused on the use of bowls.

Bushman notes that the meals of upper and lower classes were general very similar, with only one important difference – the upper classes tended to eat much more meat while the

ARTIFACTS

Table 11.  
Mean Ceramic Date for 38CH1278

Ceramic	Date Range	Mean Date (xi)	(fi)	fi x xi
Underglazed blue porc	1660-1800	1730	35	60550
Nottingham stoneware	1700-1810	1755	1	1755
Westerwald	1700-1775	1738	12	20856
White salt glazed stoneware	1740-1775	1758	36	63288
White sg sw, scratch blue	1744-1775	1760	1	1760
Lead glazed slipware	1670-1795	1733	731	1266823
Jackfield	1740-1780	1760	9	15840
Clouded wares	1740-1770	1755	4	7020
Decorated delft	1600-1802	1750	30	52500
Plain delft	1640-1800	1720	60	103200
Creamware, cable	1790-1820	1805	5	9025
Creamware, hand painted	1790-1820	1805	2	3610
Creamware, undecorated	1762-1820	1791	50	89550
Pearlware, blue hand painted	1780-1820	1800	2	3600
Pearlware, blue trans printed	1795-1840	1818	1	1818
Pearlware, undecorated	1780-1830	1805	1	1805
Whiteware, annular	1831-1900	1866	1	1866
Whiteware, undecorated	1813-1900	1860	6	11160
Total			987	1716026
Mean Ceramic Date	1738.6			

frumenty. Gruel was made from a thick dark water poured off the grains after they had been steeped but not yet boiled into porridge and then allowed to ferment slightly in a wooden bowl. It was drunk straight with a dash of liquor or ale or thinned down and heated. The high tables, by contrast, provided strange mixtures of spices, mashed meats, and sometimes vegetables in "made dishes" (Bushman 1992:455-456).

Cary Carson observes that the new foods were an integral part of the consumer revolution in British America. These new foods, he notes:

more common people "mostly ate grain, prepared in various ways as bread, gruel, or porridge" occasionally garnished by vegetables, meat, or cheese (Bushman 1992:74). He notes that:

[s]poon meals, the name given to soups, gruels, porridges, and similar infusions, were well liked and prepared the year around. The more important ones, made with cereal grains, were porridge, gruels, and brose. Oat porridge when boiled until a thick, stiff jelly was called flummery and was highly esteemed. A similar dish made out of whole wheat was called

begot a bewildering array of new tableware. Traditional "country fare" had usually been served in wooden bowls and trenchers before the sixteenth century. Thereafter, improving standards of living and rising expectations had set many farmers' tables with pewter and earthenware as well. Still and all, eating and drinking vessels had been as few as need be and strictly utilitarian – bowls and deep dishes for everyday stews and pottages, a few plates and platters for roasted meats, and sundry jugs, bottles, tankards, and flagons to pass around

home-brewed beverages  
(Carson 1994: 597-598).

We have previously illustrated yeoman foodways at John Whitesides' plantation (Trinkley and Hacker 1996) and it appears that a similar pattern can be seen at 38CH1278. Bushman observes, "the line that once divided gentry from the rest of society now dropped to a lower level and separated the middle class from workers and marginal people" (Bushman 1992:xv). What this suggests of course is that overseers had a diet not too different from either slaves or yeoman farmers.

### Other Kitchen Items

The collection of glass from 38CH1278 includes 886 specimens, largely fragments of "black" glass (772 specimens or 87.1%). This category consists primarily of wine and beer bottles - the minimum vessel count reflects, however, only seven bottles, ranging in basal diameter from 90 to 153 mm. Without intact or reconstructable bottles it is difficult to translate these sizes into meaningful vessel forms, but the research of Jones (1986) suggests that we are probably dealing with several different styles. The most common (six specimens) is what Jones calls the "undersized beer style," with a mean diameter of 104 mm. Having a date range of 1765 to 1805, they are consistent with the identified ceramics. While Jones believes they generally held beer, she also acknowledges that they may be the "commons" often mentioned in advertisements and could have held wine. The final specimen is a bottle with a diameter more consistent with so-called "onion" bottles, generally thought to hold wine.

The other glass present includes light green, aqua, and clear fragments, but all are so small that vessel identification is not possible.

There are seven tableware specimens in the collection, all of clear glass. These include one plain tumbler with a 2½-inch rim, two goblet bases with diameters of 2½ and 3-inches,

one plain stem goblet, and one 1-strand spiral stem. While the tumbler and stemware are certainly items of wealth and prestige, the quantities are low. Accounting for 0.3% of the Kitchen Group collection, this represents less than half of the tableware items identified from the yeoman planter John Whitesides (Trinkley and Hacker 1996:56-57).

The 27 kitchenware items consist entirely of iron kettle fragments and feet. This assemblage, too, is different from that found at John Whitesides. There the kettle fragments are much less common and there is at least some variety with a Dutch oven fragment also present. It appears that in the overseer's context, the kettle was the primary cooking tool, supporting the predominance of open bowls and one-pot meals.

This supports our earlier discussion of overseer foodways based on the ceramics vessels present. Henry Miller found that while 99% of the early colonial lower Maryland households had kettles, only 50% had the implements to road meat (quoted in Yentsch 1994:155-156). The English historian Stephen Mennell echoes the importance of stews to the masses: "the method of slow boiling dominated the cooking of all but the richest" (

### Architectural Group Artifacts

The collection consists of 351 artifacts, representing about 8.9% of the total collection. Within this category unidentifiable nail fragments are the most common item - accounting for 90% of the assemblage. An additional 23 nails can be identified as wrought, with 18 of those identified by size.

When the nails are examined by size, relatively few are attributed to lathe or shingles (2d to 5d, 3 or 13%). More common were those probably used for sheathing (6d-8d, 8 or 35%) or framing (9d to 12d, 10 or 43%). Heavy framing nails (16d and larger) are uncommon.

The sample is so small that any conclusions are, at best, speculative. More to the point, we believe, is that timber framing, throughout most of the eighteenth century, relied on labor intensive mortise-and-tenon joinery. Pegs, also called treenails or trunnels, were wooden pins used to secure framing members together at their joints. Similar pegs might even be used to anchor floorboards to sleepers, plank sheathing to wall framing, or wood shingles to joists (Lounsbury 1994:264, 379). Consequently, it is possible to have eighteenth century structures built with virtually no use of metal nails or spikes. Nevertheless, the small assemblage is suggestive of a frame structure with little or no interior trim.

The 38CH1278 structure was also constructed with few or no glassed windows - we collected only 11 fragments of light green window glass. The only structure hardware recovered was one fragmentary strap hinge.

**Furniture Group Artifacts**

Three furniture items, accounting for less than 0.1% of the total collection, were identified. All three are brass tacks with round heads. Such items might have come from either furniture or trunks.

**Arms Group Artifacts**

Arms artifacts at 38CH1278 include seven gun flints and one flint wrap, accounting for 0.2% of the collection.

The flints include five gray specimens and seven brown to honey colored examples. Both Emory (1979:37-48) and Noël Hume (1978:220) agree that English flints tend to be gray or black, while French flints tend to be brown or honey-colored, with the majority of flints found on colonial sites coming from France

because of their superior quality. This site breaks with that generalization, perhaps indicating that the overseer was unable to afford "superior" quality and made do with the less expensive English flints. The wrap was used to cushion the flint and prevent it from shattering.

**Tobacco Group Artifacts**

The collection includes 450 tobacco items: 139 pipe bowl fragments and 311 stems. Most of the stems (196 or 63%) have a diameter of 5/64-inch. Those with a diameter of 4/64-inch account for an additional 34% (107). An additional four specimens measure 6/64-inch and four are fragmentary. Although most of the stems are plain, a few were decorated, primarily with dots, dots and cross-hatching, or incisions around the circumference. One specimen exhibited a somewhat unusual shell and cloverleaf design. One specimen revealed bite marks at the tip.

Table 12.  
Buttons Recovered from 38CH1278

Type	Description	#	Other (measurements in mm)
1	brass oval	1	14.4 x 12.4
6	cast brass spun white metal/brass	1	14.6
7	with eye cast in place	3	16.6, 17.6, 24.1
18	stamped brass	1	18.3 "Orange.Color.[ ]"
23	porcelain 4-hole	1	10.8

The 139 pipe bowls are also primarily undecorated. Two exhibit a portion of a lion and crest, two are "T.D." pipes, and four have portions of an incised circle on the bowl. None are temporally diagnostic.

**Clothing Group Artifacts**

There are seven clothing artifacts recovered from excavations at 38CH1278 - all buttons. These can be classified according to South's (1964) types and are briefly summarized in Table 12.



South's data suggest that Types 1, 6, and 7 are all characteristic of the period from 1726 to 1776, while Types 18 and 23 are more characteristic of a date in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

The size ranges follow generally accepted concepts of use, with those buttons 6 mm and under being associated with undergarments or delicate outer garments, those between 7 and 13 mm used on shirts and pants, and the larger buttons being used for coats. If this is the case then we have no evidence of undergarments or delicate clothing and relatively little indication of shirts or pants. The bulk of the buttons are associated with coats.

#### **Personal Group Artifacts**

Seven personal items were recovered from 38CH1278 - four beads and three other items. Together these account for just under 0.2% of the total assemblage.

The beads include two wire wound translucent white glass examples (Kidd and Kidd W1b), one tube bead of cobalt blue translucent glass (Kidd and Kidd 1a), and one tube bead of opaque blue and red glass (Kidd and Kidd 1b).

The other items include a brass thimble, a fragmentary earring or "ear bob" consisting of a clear glass (or paste) gem in a brass setting, and a unidentified brass coin. This coin has a diameter of 22 mm and the only identifiable writing is "... IIII ROY ..."

The assemblage of personal items presents some interesting contrasts. The beads are typically associated with an African American slave presence, while the other items are all suggestive of a somewhat higher status white presence. We believe that this contrast may reflect the close proximity of overseer and enslaved. The collection also indicates the presence of females in the overseer household.

#### **Activities Group Artifacts**

This final group contains a broad range of materials that don't easily fit elsewhere. It includes two toys - a doll's teapot fragment and a clay marble; a fishing item - a round lead weight with a diameter of 5/8-inch; two storage items -- both fragments of strap metal between 1 and 2½ -inches in width and probably intended for barrels; and three miscellaneous hardware items - a nut, a swivel hook, and a staple fragment. The remaining 34 items fall into an "other" category that includes 11 fragments of melted or cut lead, one white metal fragment, and 22 iron fragments.

While rarely mentioned in any detail, fishing weights seem ubiquitous at low country plantation settlements. The size of the weight suggests it could be used either on a line or a net. While from the antebellum, Thomas Chaplin's diary (Rosengarten 1987) reveals many references to line fishing, with takes of drum, trout, bass, and whiting. Chaplin's account suggests that line fishing was a distraction or sport - something done for reasons other than subsistence, although certainly the fish found their way to the table. There is also at least one mention of Chaplin also owning a net. Casting, it seems, would have been more consistently productive and might have been more often done for basic subsistence.

#### **Pattern Analysis**

Table 13 provides a complete listing of artifacts recovered from 38CH1278 by artifact group, revealing that kitchen group artifacts account for over 78% of the assemblage. The next most common artifacts are not those associated with architectural remains, but rather tobacco smoking, with pipes accounting for over 11% of the collection and architectural items, predominately nails, accounting for less than 9%. Other artifact groups contribute very small proportions of the total collection.

## ARTIFACTS

Table 13.  
Artifacts Recovered from 38CH1278

	Group Total	Percent of Total
Kitchen	3096	78.10
Ceramics	1159	
Colono	1017	
Glass	886	
Tableware	7	
Kitchenware	27	
Architectural	351	8.85
Window glass	11	
Construction hardware	1	
Hand wrought nails	18	
Hand wrought nail frags	5	
UID nail frags	316	
Furniture	3	0.08
Furniture hardware	3	
Arms	8	0.20
Flints	7	
Lead flint wraps	1	
Tobacco	450	11.35
Pipe stems, 4/64	107	
Pipe stems, 5/64	196	
Pipe stems, 6/64	4	
Pipe stem frags	4	
Pipe bowls	139	
Clothing	7	0.18
Buttons	7	
Personal	7	0.18
Beads	4	
Other personal items	3	
Activities	42	1.06
Toys	2	
Fishing gear	1	
Storage items	2	
Misc. hardware	3	
Other	34	
Total Artifacts	3964	

Table 14 compares the pattern from 38CH1278 with several established patterns. In some respects the pattern is similar to the Carolina Slave Artifact Pattern - characteristic of

eighteenth century African American slave settlements where there is an abundance of kitchen-related materials but a very low incidence of architectural items because the housing was ephemeral. The 38CH1278 pattern, however, is distinct in the exceedingly low architectural contribution, the modestly high activities contribution, and the very high tobacco contribution.

The pattern from 38CH1278 is also distinct from that identified at the Mazyck overseer settlement, where there was a lower incidence of kitchen artifacts and a higher incidence of architectural remains. At both sites, however, there were high ratios of activity-related items and tobacco remains.

Clearly the samples are too small to offer any definitive new pattern specific to overseers. In combination with the other research there are two pertinent observations.

First, overseer sites seem to exhibit relatively large kitchen collections. In contrast, the architectural remains are variable. Some sites, such as the Mazyck settlement, reveal relatively formalized architecture. Other sites, such as 38CH1278, reveal very ephemeral remains suggestive of impermanent or very early construction techniques. This suggests the variability of overseer sites, providing a caution not to assume the same degree of homogeneity that has been found in, for example, slave settlements.

Second, tobacco and activity remains seem to be consistently high. The presence of activity artifacts is almost certainly related to the managerial responsibilities of the overseer. The dominance of tobacco pipe remains is almost certainly an indication of status. As Olsen (1999:242) observes, the pipe was far more often used by simple shopkeepers and the working

Table 14.  
Comparison of Artifact Patterns

	38CH1278 Pattern	Revised Carolina Artifact Pattern <sup>1</sup>	Georgia Slave Artifact Pattern <sup>3</sup>	Carolina Slave Artifact Pattern <sup>1</sup>	38BK1900 Area B Overseer <sup>5</sup>
Kitchen Group	78.1	51.8 - 65.0	20.0 - 25.8	70.9 - 84.2	65.2
Architectural Group	8.9	25.2 - 31.4	67.9 - 73.2	11.8 - 24.8	21.2
Furniture Group	0.1	0.2 - 0.6	0.0 - 0.1	0.1	0.0
Arms Group	0.2	0.1 - 0.3	0.0 - 0.2	0.1 - 0.3	0.3
Tobacco Group	11.4	1.9 - 13.9	0.3 - 9.7	2.4 - 5.4	10.2
Clothing Group	0.2	0.6 - 5.4	0.3 - 1.7	0.3 - 0.8	0.1
Personal Group	0.2	0.2 - 0.5	0.1 - 0.2	0.1	0.1
Activities Group	1.1	0.9 - 1.7	0.2 - 0.4	0.2 - 0.9	2.9

<sup>1</sup> Garrow 1982

<sup>3</sup> Singleton 1980

<sup>5</sup> Trinkley et al. 2003

classes, while snuff was the tobacco of choice for the wealthy. The very high incidence of tobacco remains, therefore, sets overseer sites apart from the owners (who preferred snuff) on the one hand and the slaves (to whom smoking tobacco and its accoutrements were special privileges) on the other.

### Summary

The collections from 38CH1278 provide an interesting view of the site occupants. Artifact density is low for most eighteenth century sites - much lower than would be expected for a wealthy planter's residence and lower than would be expected even for a slave settlement. The density is also lower than found at another overseer's settlement in nearby Berkeley County. This provides a first clue that the site occupants had scarce resources.

The ceramics present reveal a large proportion of hollow wares - bowl forms for "one-pot" meals, stews, and pilafs. These were the dishes of not only African American slaves, but also lower class Englishmen and yeoman farmers. The most common ceramic in the assemblage is slipware - a type of pottery

commonly found on the "humble" tables of the poor and working classes.

We have also compared the ratio of slave-made Colono ware to European ceramics at this site to other eighteenth century settlements. We found that the incidence of Colono is typically high (averaging about 87%) at slave settlements and low (averaging about

23%) at the planter's residence. At sites identified as overseers' residences, however, the occurrence of Colono is mid-way between these two extremes - representing an average of about 41%. At 38CH1278 the Colono accounts for 46.7% of the total ceramic assemblage.

The collections also reveal an early eighteenth century occupation. The mean ceramic date is 1739, while date ranges suggest focused occupation between about 1670 and 1795.

The rest of the assemblage is consistent with that date range. Architectural artifacts are sparse. The few nails present are consistent with an eighteenth century structure and their scarcity suggests a building constructed using craft traditions. The absence of glass suggests the use of shutters. Taken together the architectural remains suggest a yeoman farmer or individual of lesser means.

There are a large number of tobacco pipe fragments - far more than expected for either enslaved Africans or wealthy planters. Likewise, the quantity of activity-related items is far beyond what is typically expected for either

ARTIFACTS



Figure 20. Artifacts from 38CH1278. A-B, Colono rim sherds; C, Colono with scraped exterior; D-E, incised Colono body sherds; F, Colono with rim wear; G, Colono with decorated lip; H, salt-glazed stoneware handle; I, Jackfield with white slip; J, stem of wine glass or similar item; K, gray flint gunflint; L, unidentified coin; M, opaque blue and red tube bead (Kidd & Kidd Type 1b).

slaves or owners. We have suggested that both are, however, consistent with the situation of an overseer.

The pattern analysis, while inconclusive, seems distinct from both owner and slave. We believe that the pattern – coupled with that from Mazyck's overseer site – provide a glimpse of what we might expect from a poor white overseer.

In fact, this archaeological assemblage seems entirely consistent with the historical documents placing the overseer at a level far closer to the enslaved than the owner. The assemblage suggests that while a freeman, the overseer in diet and possessions fared little better than the slaves he supervised. There seems to be ample evidence that, as Morgan (1995) has suggested, the overseer and slave were intimately connected through “familiarly and mutuality” so that both exploitation and cooperation existed on a daily basis. And certainly the archaeological evidence from 38CH1278 supports the contentions of Walsh (1997) that early overseers relied largely on cast-offs and hand-me-downs, having little in the way of materials possessions.

## FLORAL AND FAUNAL MATERIALS

### Faunal Remains

Nine of the 16 proveniences produced faunal remains. Unfortunately, the quantities from any one provenience were very small (an average of 12.3 g; see Table 15) and the remains within the different proveniences were also very fragmentary. As a result, the bulk of the materials are mammals (109.36 g) and the only provenience producing other remains is Feature 5, which yielded unidentified turtle (1.58 g). Over a third of the mammal remains (42.89 g or 39.3%) are tooth fragments, primarily enamel fragments. Those which are identifiable represent pig, *Sus scrofa*. The remainder of the mammal remains are fragmentary long bones, almost all of which are calcined or burnt. It is this burning that probably allowed the remains

Provenience	Total Wt.	Weight of Teeth (as % of Total Wt.)
130R150	1.81	
130R155	2.54	70.4
165R140	7.44	46.9
165R150	4.75	45.3
175R140	11.38	59.3
175R150	33.75	80.5
185R150	8.63	17.6
195R150	37.88	
Feature 5	2.76	

to be preserved in the plowed and acidic soils.

While much could be made of the teeth representing poorer meat cuts, we believe that

this is an artifact of preservation. Likewise, the dominance of burnt bones could be interpreted to reflect a reliance on roasted meats, rather than stews, but again, we believe this is no more than an artifact of preservation. As a result, the faunal remains are able to address few research questions. The only identifiable remains present are pig and turtle – both relatively common to eighteenth century plantation tables. The small and poorly preserved sample is unsuitable for any detailed analysis or comparison with other collections.

### Floral Remains

Ethnobotanical remains were recovered from both feature contexts and a single unit provenience at 38CH1278. A very small quantity of material was available as a handpicked sample from 130R150 and as flotation samples from the five features. Features 1, 4 and 5 are presumed to be associated with the overseer's settlement, while Features 2 and 3 are thought to represent nineteenth century agricultural ditches.

Flotation samples, offering the best potential to recover very small seeds and other food remains, are expected to provide the most reliable and sensitive subsistence information. Samples of 10 to 20 grams are usually considered adequate, if no bias was introduced in the field. Popper (1988) explores the "cumulative stages" of patterning, or potential bias, in ethnobotanical data. She notes that the first potential source of bias includes the world view and patterned behavior of the site occupants – how were the plants used, processed, and discarded, for example. Added to this are the preservation potentials of both the

plant itself and the site's depositional history. Of the materials used and actually preserved, additional potential biases are introduced in the collection and processing of the samples. For example, there may be differences between deposits sampled and not sampled, between the materials recovered through flotation and those lost or broken, and even between those which are considered identifiable and those which are not. In the case of 38CH1278 the soil samples were each 5 gallons in volume and were water floated (using a machine assisted system) at the completion of the field investigations.

Handpicked samples may produce little information on subsistence since they often represent primarily wood charcoal large enough to be readily collected during either excavation or screening. In addition, since the sample from 38CH1278 came from a plowzone context, it may represent a recent addition to the record.

### Procedures

The two flotation samples were prepared in a manner similar to that described by Yarnell (1974:113-114) and were examined under low magnification (7 to 30x) to identify carbonized plant foods and food remains. Remains were identified on the basis of gross morphological features and seed identification relied on Schopmeyer (1974), United States Department of Agriculture (1971), Martin and Barkley (1961), and Montgomery (1977). All float samples consisted of the charcoal obtained from 5 gallons of soil (by volume). The entire sample from this floated amount was examined for each feature.

The handpicked sample was also examined under low magnification with a sample of the wood charcoal identified to the genus level, using comparative samples, Panshin and de Zeeuw (1970), and Koehler (1917).

Table 16.  
Results of Flotation Analysis (wt. in grams)

Provenience	Wood Charcoal		Uncarb.		Total Wt.
	wt.	%	wt.	%	
Feature 1	8.89	77.5	2.58	22.5	11.47
Feature 2	2.68	42.6	3.61	57.4	6.29
Feature 3	2.10	26.5	5.83	73.5	7.93
Feature 4	8.65	69.5	3.80	30.5	12.45
Feature 5	8.59	80.8	2.04	19.2	10.63

### Results

The results of the flotation analysis are provided in Table 16. In no case did the floated material achieve the 20 gram "threshold" typically proposed as adequate. The two samples (Features 2 and 3) from posited agricultural ditches were especially deficit in ethnobotanical material.

None of the samples produced any plant food remains - the only material present in each case were small fragments of wood charcoal. Uncarbonized remains, primarily rootlets and similar "trash," comprise a fairly consistent 20 to 30% of the three eighteenth century samples (and considerably more in the two agricultural ditches).

The dominant wood species from the flotation samples was pine (*Pinus* spp.), followed by oak (*Quercus* spp.), with one sample producing a small quantity of hickory (*Carya* sp.) wood and another producing sweet gum (*Liquidamber* sp.). The rosin fragments in several of the samples suggests the use of heart wood, probably pitch pine. The one handpicked charcoal sample from 130R150 was also identified as pine.

### Discussion

The charcoal represents woods which could reasonably be associated with a rather broad area of upland forest near a wetland. The sweetgum may be found with oaks and

hickories in mesic mixed hardwoods. Pine, while suggestive of a disturbed habitat, is present naturally in the mesic fine sand ridges of many hardwood forests (Barry 1980:138). The abundance of pine, however, might also suggest a fire sub-climax pine forest.

While several different wood species have been identified in this collection, indicating that the occupants collected and/or used woods from relatively dry upland soils, more mesic soils, and even some wetland areas bordering on swamps, two species appear most significant – pine and oak. Both are species frequently found mentioned as either boundary trees or as components of broad acreage on the plats of Charleston area plantations. Commenting on the prevalence of pines, found usually with "only a very few black-jack oaks," Edmund Ruffin observed that they were found on "the driest [sic] land" whose surface is "sandy & dry" (Mathew 1992:74).

It may be significant that both pine and oak are frequently used fuel woods. On the average, a cord of air dried pine provides about 80% of the heat value of a short-ton of coal, while oak provides about 84% of the value. In contrast, sweetgum typically provides about 68%. Only the hickories (which were relatively uncommon in the area) consistently provide high heat values, averaging about 97% that of coal.<sup>1</sup> The choice of wood for fuel did not, however, depend entirely on its calorific power. Other factors likely included freedom from smoke, completeness of combustion, and rapidity of burning. Pine, for instance, gives a quicker, hotter fire, and is easier to ignite, but is consumed in less time than many other woods.

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<sup>1</sup> The varying quality of fire wood has long been recognized. For example, Reese notes: "The heavy and dense woods give the greatest heat, burn the longest, and have the densest charcoal. To the dense woods belong the oak, beech, alder, hazel, birch, and elm: to the soft, the fir, the pine of different sorts, larch, linden, willow, and poplar" (Reese 1847:116).

Oaks provide a more steady fire and heat than pine, but are difficult to ignite and not as easy to split (Graves 1919; Reynolds and Pierson 1942). In combination they form an almost perfect union.<sup>2</sup>

The 38CH1278 collection, when compared to other plantation assemblages, is rather barren. Gardner (1983) found the eighteenth century slave assemblages at Yaughan and Curriboo dominated by wood charcoal (almost exclusively pine), although a variety of food materials were also represented, such as corn, rice, hickory and walnut, peach, hawthorn, bramble, and beans. A number of weed seeds, such as *Polygonum*, goosegrass, and possibly *Setaria*, *Paspalum*, *Panicum*, and *Digitaria* were also recovered, although they were found in small quantities and were often very eroded.

At the early antebellum Lesesne and Fairbank plantations, Gardner remarked finding, "an impressive variety of plant remains" (Gardner 1986:F-9). These included corn, rice, peach, watermelon, peanuts, cotton, chinaberry, spurge, *Iva*, hickory, acorn, pecan, blackberry, grape, blueberry, hackberry, plum or cherry, persimmon, and maypops. While few were present as more than one or two examples, the variety is, indeed, impressive. Contributing to this variety, however, was the excavation of a well, which produced a number of species not found elsewhere on the plantation, such as watermelon, peanuts, cotton, pecan, plum or cherry, and maypops.

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<sup>2</sup> Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett goes to great lengths, however, to illustrate that even the perfect combination of fire woods, blazing in the perfectly constructed fireplace, often did little to warm, or light, plantation rooms. Even with fires, water, foods, ink, and even wines, froze overnight in deep winter. Thomas Chaplin, writing from his St. Helena, Beaufort County plantation in January 1857 that his thermometer was down to 20 degrees in the house at eight in the morning and that everything was frozen hard, including eggs, milk, and ink (Garrett 1990:189).



The sparseness of remains at 38CH1278 may reflect the plowing present, although the feature contexts should reflect preserved remains, or the small sample size. It seems more likely, however, that the lack of plant food remains indicates a diet that included few plants and those that were present were almost certainly boiled or otherwise processed in a manner that works against their preservation.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research was designed to focus on what was recognized as a relatively small site producing a rather vague assemblage of primarily eighteenth century remains. We believed, based on the assemblage present, as well as the location of the site, that it represented the dwelling of an overseer.

### Historical Conclusions

This project provided the impetus for a far more detailed exploration of eighteenth century overseers than has been available previously. While we found that the historical accounts and documents are sparse, it is nevertheless possible to reconstruct a view of the eighteenth century overseer. More complex and variable than many historians would have us accept, these individuals were living on a razor-thin line between polite white society and that of the African American slaves they oversaw.

At least a few historians have suggested that the cultural assemblage typical of these eighteenth century overseers would be Spartan, even impoverished. And some have suggested that this might well lead to a range of interactions between overseer and slave – the creation of a symbiotic relationship.

This study provides the first detailed analysis of newspaper advertisements for overseers, helping us to better understand what at least a portion of the planter elite felt were the critical characteristics of a “good” overseer. And we have these reinforced by at least a few period letters and accounts. We see that overseers were, in general, poorly paid (especially for the responsibility they possessed) and that much of

their pay might well have been provided in foodstuffs and alcohol – non-durable items that would leave little evidence in the archaeological record.

While we have a clearer view of the eighteenth century overseer and can better understand the origin of the nineteenth century overseer stereotype, there remain many unaddressed questions. For example, did eighteenth century overseers come largely from England as yeoman farmers, from out of state as yeoman farmers, or elsewhere (we tend to reject the idea that a significant proportion can from the ranks of the planters)? What was their social status prior to being overseers? How were the different classes of overseers related and how often were they employed? In fact, how often were overseers used to fulfill the requirements of South Carolina law that a white be on the plantation? And were overseers more commonly used by one “type” of owner as opposed to another?

Addressing these questions will be difficult, but not impossible. We have identified a number of resources that can be used to identify specific individuals who served as overseers. Additional research specific to these individuals, tracking down their introduction to Carolina and their presence in various parish records will provide the information to address at least a few of these questions.

In spite of this, it seems that our best understanding of eighteenth century overseers may come not from historic documents, but rather from the remains that these individuals left behind. And that brings us to our focus on the archaeological remains.

### Archaeological Results

Archaeological investigations revealed no clear archaeological footprint, although artifacts were found clustered tightly in one area that also exhibited a clear brick concentration. We discovered that there were nearly equal quantities of European ceramics and African American Colono wares. When this proportion was examined more closely we noted that it lay midway between what we see at eighteenth century slave sites and eighteenth century planter structures. Moreover, the proportions are duplicated by other eighteenth century sites that have clear overseer links. Consequently, we believe that the proportions of Colono and European wares may be one key to the identification of overseer sites.

We found that the European collection was dominated by lower status ceramics - wares such as slipware and delft, with a very low incidence of porcelains or white salt-glazed stonewares. In other words, we found indicators of a plebian table; even the vessel forms - with over two-thirds representing hollow wares - are characteristic of a common person's table, one-pot stews, and other simple fares. Even the small assemblage of tea wares does not change the overall impression of the assemblage as being that of a yeoman farmer, not a wealthy planter.

When the remainder of the collection is considered, for example using South's pattern approach, we see distinct differences between this collection and that of both slaves and masters. For example, this collection has an exceedingly low architectural contribution, similar to slave collections, but the modestly high activities contribution and the very high tobacco contribution set it apart.

When the assemblage is compared to the previously documented overseer collection from the Mazyck settlement in Goose Creek (Trinkley et al. 2003a) there are differences - for example at the Mazyck overseer site there was a lower incidence of kitchen artifacts and a higher

incidence of architectural remains. This, however, can be easily attributed to the presence of a somewhat clearer archaeological footprint - lacking at the Belle Hall site perhaps through years of cultivation. Nevertheless, the Mazyck and Belle Hall sites are similar to their high ratios of activity-related items and tobacco remains.

These archaeological remains support the historic documentation (and speculation), helping to support the idea that eighteenth century overseers were in constant competition with slaves for scarce resources, had very few material possessions, had very few opportunities to add material possessions, and had close interaction with their slave populations at a variety of levels. While these conclusions can be criticized for being based on sparse evidence, what is more regrettable is that often these seemingly small, inconsequential sites are ignored or missed in archaeological study. Without an intensified effort to identify, and study, these sites our understanding of eighteenth century overseers will remain rudimentary and one-dimensional.

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