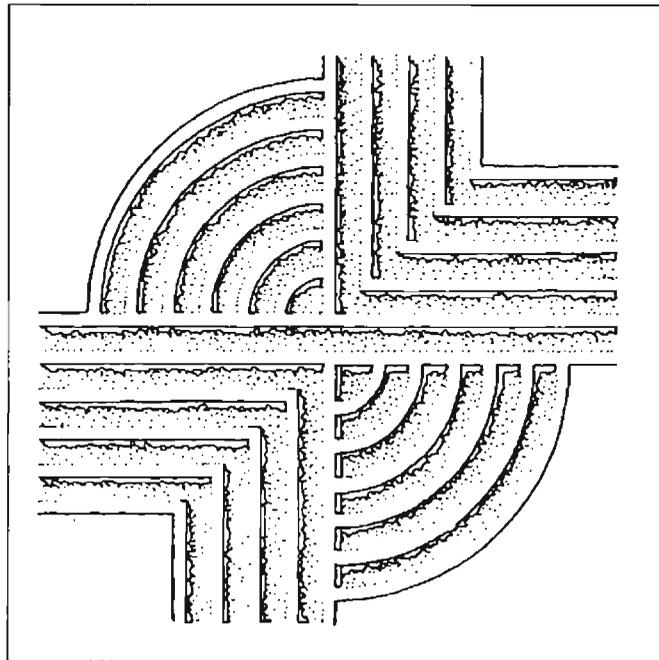


PRESERVING COLUMBIA'S PAST FOR FUTURE
GENERATIONS: IS IT STILL POSSIBLE?



RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 169

**PRESERVING COLUMBIA'S PAST FOR FUTURE
GENERATIONS: IS IT STILL POSSIBLE?**

Michael Trinkley, Ph.D.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 169

**Chicora Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 8664 □ 861 Arbutus Drive
Columbia, South Carolina 29202-8664
803/787-6910
E-mail: chicora1@aol.com**

September 6, 1995

This paper was presented as a program at the Richland County Public Library on September 6, 1995. It is printed on permanent, recycled paper. ∞

©1995 by Chicora Foundation, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transcribed in any form without the expressed written permission of Chicora Foundation, Inc., except for brief quotations used in reviews or technical studies. Full credit must be give to the author and Chicora Foundation, Inc.

The promotional material for my discussions tonight mentioned that my discussions would "challenge your ways of looking at the past and offer a new perspective on how to best preserve our fragile heritage." I hope to live up to this goal — we all know that it is easier to entertain than to challenge and it is much more tempting to show slides of artifacts than to remind people that archaeology — and preservation — is rapidly losing ground.

A central theme of my discussions will be that heritage resources — such as archaeological sites and historic buildings — aren't automatically important. Most of us probably take this for granted. Because we love the past, we are inclined to believe that it is important. But resources don't automatically have importance — they are ascribed importance by the public. If enough people believe that Mount Vernon, or the neighborhood McDonald's, is important, then it *becomes* important.

This means that archaeology must have a constituency and that this constituency must be vocal. In fact, the constituency must be down-right pushy and aggressive. But I will come back to this concept in a few minutes.

I would like to take you on a whirlwind tour of one archaeological site in Columbia. This single site can be taken as largely representative of the City's — and perhaps even the preservation community's — response to heritage issues. It can illustrate for us the way the system works, and doesn't work. It can perhaps help us to better understand how preservationists can focus and re-direct their efforts.

Palmetto Iron Works

In late April 1993 Chicora Foundation was asked to provide the City with a proposal for a survey of what was most commonly called "Arsenal Hill Park." Historically we knew, however, that this was the site of the Palmetto Iron Works — an important nineteenth century foundry which operated into the early twentieth century and which produced weapons, as well as a variety of other items.

We were informed by the City that the study was intended to evaluate the historic, architectural, and archaeological significance of the property *prior to any development activity*. Lacking any federal involvement or permitting, there was no requirement for any archaeological or historical investigation. The City stressed that since there was no requirement for an investigation, our proposal had to be modest and very inexpensive.

As a result we proposed three days of historical research coupled with one day of field investigation at the one acre site on the northeast corner of Laurel and Lincoln streets. This proposal was accepted by the city and we conducted our work in late April, with a report distributed in early May. Although published as a *Research Contribution*, with more limited distribution than our *Research Series* studies, this report was sent to the Richland County Public Library, the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, and the Search Room of the S.C. Department of Archives and History.

The study found that the foundry had a long and intriguing history. The Palmetto Foundry was built at least by 1850 and perhaps even slightly earlier by William Glaze (who incidentally owned the entire block bordered by Lincoln to the west, Laurel to the south, Park Street to the east, and Richland to the north). Dr. Jack Meyer has provided an insightful examination of Glaze's largely unsuccessful efforts to engage in arms manufacturing during the 1850s and early 1860s — a period during which we have relatively little information concerning the foundry or its appearance. Dr. Meyer's study is available from the South Carolina State Museum.

A photograph, reputedly dating from 1862, has been published by Russell Maxy, but we discovered that the original could no longer be found. This, of course, made it impossible to independently verify its dating. Personally, I am inclined to believe that it dates from perhaps the 1870s or 1880s, but that really doesn't concern us tonight.

Much of Columbia was burned the night of February 17, 1865. It seems, however, that the foundry was burned either the 18th or 19th, when military targets were carefully singled out for destruction. Even then it seems that the job was rather half-hearted, especially considering a photograph thought to have been taken just weeks after Sherman left Columbia.

It is clear that the foundry was repaired after the Civil War and was re-opened at least by 1868 when it was advertising in *The Daily Phoenix*. Although local legend says that the building was substantially changed, we found this to be wrong — the foundry was relatively intact after Sherman's visit and was rebuilt on essentially the same floor plan. By 1869 Glaze had subdivided his block, selling off portions. It seems, however, that he was never able to recoup from the Civil War and, by 1872, the foundry was sold to his partner, George Shields.

Beginning in 1884 there are a series of insurance maps which carefully, and accurately, depict the foundry and its progression through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These reveal with stunning clarity the industrial development on the site. The central building, shown in virtually all of the photographs and maps, contained a pattern and machine shop, a forge shop associated with the brick chimney stack, and a foundry with the cupola furnace and oven. These designations tell us quite a bit about the work carried on there. The "patterns" were those used in making the molds for castings. Through time we notice on the maps that storage area for these patterns

increases, suggesting that the shop did considerable business in casting work for Columbia citizens. The forge was the central element in blacksmithing, allowing metal to be heated sufficiently for working and even welding. The forge at the Palmetto Foundry was most likely a permanent affair. The foundry was where the casting took place. Associated with it was likely an area for storing and preparing the materials, where the molding sand could be laid down, and where coal would be stored. There was a "oven," most likely used for baking the molds used in casting. The cupola furnace was used to melt metals prior to casting. During this period they were usually made of boiler iron in the form of a cylinder 10 to 16 feet in height, 2 to 6 feet in diameter, and lined with fire brick.

Shields died in 1911 and the inventory of his estate revealed that the foundry included two small machine lathes, one 4-inch machine lathe, one 48-inch machine lathe, one wood turning lathe, a small shaper (used for planning keyways, slots, and similar small items) a large planner (designed to produce flat surfaces on metal stock), a milling machine (which allowed small items to precisely worked through rotary cutting), a keyseating machine (also known as a key-seat cutter, this allowed keyways for locks to be cut), a drill press, an anvil, fan, cupola, blast fan, other tools, and "two buildings assorted patterns."

Work continued at the foundry under the direction of its superintendent, L.P. Purse. The property was owned by Mrs. Charlotte Ella King, the daughter of George Shields. Her husband, Robert King, was the manager until this death, at which time his brother, David, assumed the duty. A 1924 photograph shows the foundry still in business and still appearing very much as it did at the time of the Civil War — it was a small time capsule of Columbia's history.

With the death of Charlotte Ella King in 1926, the foundry passed on to her children, who likely had more interest in the money selling it might provide than its continued operation. The business closed in 1927, although it took several years for the estate to be closed. During this interval much of the business was sold off as scrap. In 1941 the property was finally sold to the City of Columbia. Fortuitously, a topographic map was also made by the City in 1942. Only the main structure is shown, suggesting that the other seven buildings known to have been on the site was demolished, or allowed to rot, between 1919 and 1942. More importantly, we were able to use this map to show that the contours of the property changed little between 1942 and 1993.

A 1956 map of the property reveals that the City had demolished the eastern two-thirds of the structure, the associated stack, and had reworked the eastern elevation. The property, by this time, was labeled a community center. Glaze's original antebellum dwelling on the southeast corner of the block was demolished sometime between 1956 and 1970, as was the Mitchell/Bouknight house situated on the northeast corner. By 1970 the block consisted only of the remnants of Palmetto Foundry and an office building.

The field investigations consisted of series of 60 shovel tests placed at 25-foot intervals across the site. These tests revealed that the tremendous range of activities which took place on the site over its 78 year history. In some areas deposits to a depth of 2.1 feet were encountered and nowhere was the artifact bearing zone less than 0.5 foot in depth. This demonstrated that the site was essentially intact — that previous demolition had not significantly damaged the site. The tests even identified intact brick foundations in two locations — further confirming that considerable archaeological information was present. As previously mentioned, comparison of the modern topography with that in 1942 revealed almost no changes.

The artifacts found consisted of a wide range of primarily industrial items. Nearly 61% of the items represented specialized activities, with 31% representing architectural remains. Domestic items, as you might imagine, were relatively scarce. In spite of that, the ceramics identified were dated to 1865. The artifacts also suggested what archaeologists call "intra-site patterning" — that is, artifacts were clustered in certain locations. We suggested that these clusters were indications of additional structures, as well as rear and side yard trash disposal areas. There was even one area which appeared to represent a burned structure.

Based on this study we remarked that "additional investigations would yield further information on the nature of the foundry lot (including the location of structures and the types of activities which took place on the lot), as well as information on the nature of the industrial activities which took place in this and similar blacksmithing, casting, foundry, and metal working shops." We also observed that "it would not be difficult, based even on this reconnaissance level study, to support the eligibility of the associated industrial archaeological remains" to the National Register of Historic Places.

We recommended preserving the site intact, with no development. We noted that the building could serve as a focal point for the City's preservation efforts, perhaps being converted into a research center, archives, and museum. If that wasn't possible, we recommended additional study to explore some of the archaeological remains at the site. As a last resort, better than losing the entire site, we recommended monitoring during construction. We also recommended that the City undertake an archaeological preservation plan, so that it would be aware of important resources early in the planning process.

Expressed a little differently, we found that the site was intact, that it was well preserved, and that it represented an important aspect of Columbia's history. We also found that the site could help us better understand a part of the City's history for which there was no other source of information. The site was unique.

After the Foundation submitted the study I was called by a city official. I still remember the chilling conversation. I was told that the city intended to develop this site, regardless of what was found. I was told that there was no money for *any* further

investigation, not even monitoring — that the City Manager had absolutely no interest whatsoever in delaying the project or becoming "involved" in archaeology.

Construction went forward and within a matter of weeks the site, once a beautiful city park with a rich and exciting history, was converted into yet another uninspiring office building with an attached parking garage.

There was no cry from Columbia's preservation community. In fact, there was what I would describe as a deafening silence. Why? That, I don't know.

I was surprised to be contacted by one of the architects involved in the project, who commented that our study found "nothing important" at the site. I attempted to correct that misunderstanding, but suspect that I was largely unsuccessful. I doubt that he ever understood why an industrial site was considered important. *It was certainly clear that our report had never been read.*

The Implications of Palmetto Foundry

I think that what this tells us goes far beyond the treatment of this one, individual site. Certainly it appears that the City had no sincere or real interest in understanding the heritage resources present at the site. There was, in other words, no real desire to evaluate the site. The decision to destroy the site had already been made and there was no interest in learning more, or incorporating the site into the City's seemingly non-existent preservation plan.

I might mention that however harsh this evaluation may seem, it is borne out by the more recent effort to demolish the Confederate Printing Plant and the City's disregard for the National Register nomination of CCI.

Perhaps — although I doubt it — Glaze's foundry would have been given greater consideration if it was associated with some rich, famous person. Or perhaps it would have been preserved had it produced whole artifacts. Maybe there would have been interest had there been a beautiful building with white columns.

But as it was, the foundry and the archaeological site were seen, I believe, as "old and in the way." Things are only worth preserving if they represent the best, the richest, the biggest, the most famous. Even more distressing, in the rush to attract growth — to be "pro-business" (the newest catch phrase) — nothing can be allowed to stand in the way or distract us from "progress."

The Attack on Preservation

This insensitivity toward heritage resources has culminated in the past year in what can only be described as vicious attacks on the very basis of preservation. Beginning

at first with the efforts to justify greed using the tired and worn-out pretext of "regulatory takings," it has culminated in a hostility against science and learning in general. Anything which doesn't suit a narrow agenda is described as "revisionist" or "politically correct" — buzz words of the intellectually bankrupt which are used to justify the newest dark age.

If you think I am exaggerating I urge you to look no further than the attack on the Smithsonian's efforts to simply *explore* the use of the atomic bomb on Japan, or read Congress' uninformed and uncaring comments concerning the Historic Preservation Act, or explore the newest movement to drive historical teachings back to the stone age of famous people and significant dates. Or, you can simply look around at even local politicians.

I was invited to attend a county council meeting to provide, I thought, an overview of a project we had just completed for the county. I won't mention the county because I don't want the good citizens there to be stigmatized by the ignorance, rudeness, and pomposity of their council. I found that they had no interest in listening to the five minute presentation I had prepared. In fact, the only reason I was invited was so they could be abusive and rude. They didn't want to do archaeology — it was another regulation they were forced to spend money on — they weren't interested in black history — they weren't interested in history — they already knew that we had found nothing important — and besides, we hadn't found any whole pots.

I attempted to explore some of these issues and offer an explanation of the process and, more importantly, what we had found and *learned*. I wanted to explain that this was the oldest plantation site found in the county and one of the oldest in the state. I wanted to explain how the organization of features and trash in the yards of the slave houses helped us understand how these slaves lived. And I wanted to explain how the two different main houses we uncovered illustrated the growth of the plantation and the improvement of the status of the planter. I wanted to explain why understanding African American history was essential and could only be done through archaeology. I wasn't allowed — although there was plenty of time for the Council to rant and rave, there was no time to listen to reason or to engage in dialog.

Is There Any Hope?

Preservation has much to recommend it, if we are only able to find rational individuals willing to listen. I think that our first effort should *not* be to emphasize the intangible benefits of preservation, but rather to focus on the economic impact of preservation — the dollars and cents of preserving the past for future generations. It isn't that I don't believe the intangibles are important, but rather because I believe the economic arguments will most likely get developers, businessmen, bankers, and the like to stop, look, and listen. These economic arguments, at least initially, will be the most compelling.

In terms of architectural preservation we can perhaps focus on the University of Louisville study which found that \$100 million in rehabilitation efforts creates \$20 million in state and local tax benefits, while new construction generates only \$15 million. We can perhaps point out that rehabilitation reduces construction time by an average of 18% and that this time is the same as money. Or we can explain that preservation is the sustainable choice and that every year 3 billion tons of construction waste flows into our already overcrowded landfills.

In terms of economic development we have the National League of Cities study where mayors placed preservation as the seventh most effective tool for development — out of a field of 45 common tools. And we can also point to the fact of the 20 most successful cities undergoing economic redevelopment, 15 have focused *their* efforts on preservation. The top three — Baltimore, Boston, San Antonio — are very well known for their preservation initiatives.

In terms of heritage based tourism we might point out that the African American tourism market is a \$15 billion a year industry *and growing!* Or that in North Carolina, our sister state, tourism brought in \$7.9 billion in sales revenue and \$450 million in taxes last year alone. A survey found that 67.5% of the people visiting North Carolina did so for its scenic beauty. But the number two reason — cited by 58.9% of those responding — was that they came to North Carolina for activities, events, and features associated with historic preservation.

But don't we *need* development for our tax base? That is certainly the old tired story we hear from the pro-development forces. Yet, studies are beginning to show that sometimes rural *is better*. For example, several studies are revealing that developed areas require services which cost between \$1.06 and \$1.23 for every \$1 in taxes brought in. In contract, rural areas use about 12¢ to 74¢ of services for every \$1 of taxes they generate. Another study found that houses would have to be valued at over \$300,000 to break even with the services provided.

Frequently, then, development costs a community much more than it generates in return. Communities *might* be better off exploring the option of remaining rural — or carefully controlling development — than rushing headlong into a process which not only strips them of their heritage, but also condemns the citizens to countless tax hikes.

What is the Future of Preservation?

What is the future of preservation? Is it more regulation, more preservation ordinances, more rules telling people how they must treat standing structures or archaeological sites? That is certainly the conventional "wisdom" of agencies responsible for historic preservation. They, of course, have a vested interest in "business as usual."

I believe that there is a better idea. An idea which focuses on incentives rather

than the big stick of government regulation.

If preservation is important to society, if preservation packs an economic punch or if it offers inherent benefits to citizens, then preservation should be something that the public is willing to pay for.

Right now we pay for preservation through government regulations, bureaucrats, red tape, and pass-along costs from developers.

I wonder if it wouldn't be more intellectually honest to expect society to pay for preservation by offering landowners incentives for preservation. For example, tax abatements, assessment freezes, transfer of development rights, development of agricultural districts, and assessing land at actual use value rather than at market value. By providing land owners with incentives to preserve their property and the heritage sites they own governments would avoid the pitfalls of regulations and mandates. By offering incentives for preservation governments would be acknowledging that preservation is worthy of public support. And offering incentives, I believe, preservation would lose much of the stigma of governmental interference it has developed over the past 30 years.

I admit that this approach is radical. But it is honest and it is responsive to the current political climate.

Maybe if there was broad-based support for preservation efforts built on the concept of cooperation rather than regulations there would be a constituency to speak out for preservation. Maybe if we focused on the good that preservation can accomplish in turning our cities around, rather than whether or not a city has a preservation ordinance, it would be possible to obtain grass-roots support for preservation efforts. And maybe with that level of support cities like Columbia would treasure their history, rather than relegating it to oblivion as "insignificant," "old," and "in the way."

**Archaeological
Investigations**

Historical Research

Preservation

Education

Interpretation

Heritage Marketing

**Museum Support
Programs**



Chicora Foundation, Inc.
PO Box 8664 • 861 Arbutus Drive
Columbia, SC 29202-8664
Tel: 803-787-6910
Fax: 803-787-6910
www.chicora.org