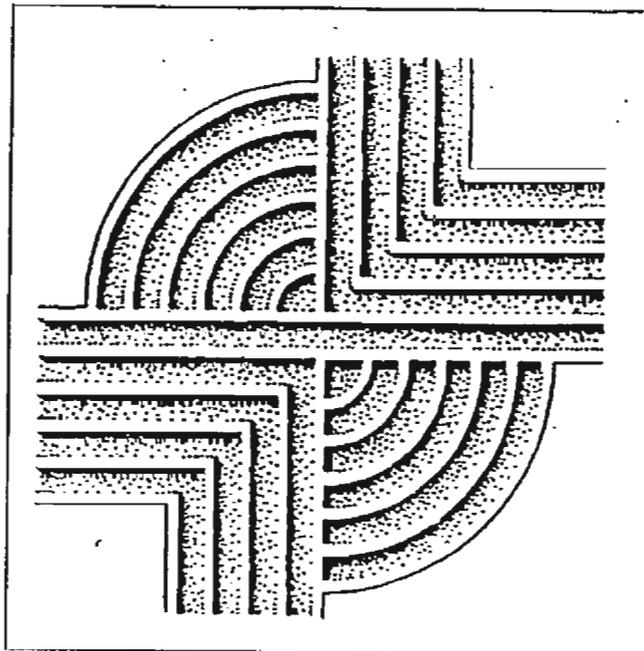


**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE AND  
EVALUATION OF THE STONY CREEK  
FORTIFICATIONS ADJACENT TO THE US HIGHWAY  
17/21 WIDENING, BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH  
CAROLINA**



**RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 68**

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECONNAISSANCE AND EVALUATION  
OF THE STONY CREEK FORTIFICATIONS  
ADJACENT TO THE US HIGHWAY 17/21 WIDENING,  
BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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**Chicora Research Contribution 68**

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## Introduction

Chicora Foundation was contacted by Ms. Cindy Cole, Director of the Beaufort Historical Foundation on July 1 regarding the archaeological site known locally as the Stony Creek fortification. This Confederate earthwork is situated on the north side of US 17/21, about -- miles north of Gardens Corners in Beaufort County. This section of highway is being widened by the South Carolina Department of Highways and Public Transportation as State Highway Project 545 (Docket 7.545) and the widening as currently planned would destroy a substantial portion of the site.

The potential impact to the site was first noted by Mr. Bill Olendorf, a concerned local citizen who has attempted to alert the public and a variety of heritage organizations (such as Historic Beaufort Foundation and the S.C. Department of Archives and History) to the site's importance.

Chicora Foundation, as a public, non-profit heritage organization with nearly a decade's experience in South Carolina archaeology, agreed to visit the site to assess its current condition and conduct a brief recordation project. This work was done by Chicora as a pro bono contribution to those working to preserve South Carolina's heritage. The goals of this project were:

1. to evaluate the site's archaeological significance,
2. to prepare a preliminary map of the site and its relationship with the proposed highway widening,
3. to examine the relationship of the known cemeteries to the proposed highway widening, and
4. to establish some general site boundaries.

The work was conducted by Dr. Michael Trinkley and Ms. Natalie Adams on July 5, 1991. A total of 12 person hours were spent at the site. Accompanying us during a portion of this visit were Mr. Bob Olendorf, who graciously agreed to show us the location of the site and several other sites in the project vicinity, and Dr. Steve Wise, Curator of the Paris Island Museum.

## History of the Site

According to Dr. Steve Wise, a recognized South Carolina military historian, there are relatively few mentions of this particular fortification in the Official Records, although there is likely additional information in the unpublished records at the

National Archives. No thorough search of unpublished accounts of the fortification has been undertaken, nor has a thorough historical review of the project vicinity been completed.

General Robert E. Lee took command of the Department of the South almost immediately after the fall of Hilton Head and Beaufort in November 1861. After establishing his headquarters at Coosawhatchie, Lee divided the area from North Carolina to Savannah into five districts, with General J.C. Pemberton commanding the Fourth District in the immediate area of the Coosawhatchie River (Evans 1899:37; Robinson 1950:12). Lee realized that it would be impossible to hold the Sea Islands with the available resources and chose to desert these islands to the Northern troops in an effort to save the mainland. Lee directed that:

outposts of small bodies of troops be placed near landings on the rivers and along the roads. From these pickets could be advanced to points closer to the danger points. . . . In case of attack the troops in that area were to hold as long as possible and retreat towards the railroad, fighting a delaying action until reinforcements were rushed to their aid. All other troops were to move quickly to the railroad to be transported to the danger point (Robinson 1950:13-14).

The Stony Creek fortifications discussed in this report were part of these Confederate Southern coastal defenses constructed in late 1861 and early 1862 under Lee's direction. Pemberton assumed Lee's command of the Department of the South in March 1862 and continued Lee's plan of defence. Command of the Fourth District was given to Colonel P.H. Colquitt who had only 1582 men to defend this section of South Carolina's mainland (Evans 1899:41-42).

The movement of troops in the area to defend different locations is illustrated by General W.S. Walker's "Memorandum for operations in case the enemy land at Port Royal Ferry," dated March 6, 1863. This directive reads in part:

Colonel Hill, Forty-sixth North Carolina Regiment, will command the right, with the two North Carolina regiments; Col. C.H. Stevens, Twenty-fourth South Carolina Regiment, the left. Colonel Hall will place one-half a regiment in rear of Fort Pochotaligo as support to batteries; one half- in rifle pits next to causeway. One-half of North Carolina regiment will be placed nearly Battery No. 2 and one-half near Battery No. 3. The supports will be close under cover until ordered out. Four companies of Colonel Stevens' regiment will be placed behind bank of reserve in the woods near Screven's road to support batteries when required. A section of Captain Preston's battery will be held in reserve near the same point. Three pieces of Captain Elliott's battery, Captain Trenholm's company,

Captain Colcock's company, and the remainder of the cavalry, under Colonel Rutledge, will be held in reserve behind or near Elliott's Mill. The brigadier-general commanding proposes to take position on Elliott's Mill. One piece of Campbell's artillery will be placed in position at Elliott's lunette, in garden, commanding causeway, and one on Port Royal road causeway. Captain Lamkin's battery will be sent to Mr. Daniel Heyward's road. If enemy's force advance by both Sheldon Church and Stony Creek roads, a section will be sent to Pemberton's battery on Stony Creek road and one to works at Mrs. Eustis, on Sheldon Church road, supported by Captain Lowry's company, and Captain Edwards, with two companies of the squadron, horses of cavalry to be well concealed in the rear (OR, Series 1, Volume 14, page 813).

This suggests that the Stony Creek fortifications, like most of the others in the area, may have seen periodic picket duty, but were not continuously manned.

In spite of the lack of troops, these lines, described by Lee as "another forlorn hope expedition," held the Union forces until General W.T. Sherman's march through the Carolinas in 1865. On January 14, 1865 the Confederate fortifications were out flanked by Sherman's troops and the positions were abandoned (see OR, Series 1, Volume 47, Part 2, page 1011).

Two maps have been identified which show the general location of the battery. One, a Map of a Part of Beaufort and Colleton, signed by Charles R. Suter, is undated and simply shows a fortification across a road in the site vicinity (Figure 1). The other, Map of the Rebel Lines of the Pocotaligo, Combahee & Ashepoo; South Carolina and dated 1865 shows Pemberton's Lines (Figure 2).

While not diminishing the importance of these fortifications in the defence of the South Carolina mainland, it is also useful to briefly note the place of entrenchments in Civil War tactical history. During the early nineteenth century the United States Army modeled its tactics on European practices. These Napoleonic tactics called for infantry attacks in close-ordered linear formations behind a screen of skirmishers. While this approach was generally successful, the introduction of rifled weapons, the increased use of artillery, and the use of entrenchments during the Civil War changed military tactics forever. As Donovan et al. note:

the ultimate effect of the increased lethality of arms was to restrict maneuvers by infantry and to cause armies to dig field fortifications whenever they halted. From the Battle of Fredericksburg to the end of the war, entrenchments became more and more important for survival



. . . In the age of the rifleman, the defence had become ascendant over the advancing formations of Napoleonic origin (Donovan et al. 1987:21).

This same view is presented in greater detail by McWhiney and Jamieson, who note that entrenchments were rarely used in the early Civil War years and that even Lee failed to use them to his advantage at Sharpsburg in September 1862 -- just six months after leaving the heavily entrenched South Carolina low country (McWhiney and Jamieson 1971:71).

### Archaeological Investigations

As previously mentioned, this assessment was at a reconnaissance level, although 12 person hours were spent at the site. The investigations consisted entirely of surface examinations -- no subsurface examinations were made.

The initial visual inspection of the site area largely confirmed previous published newspaper accounts and conversations with other professionals who had visited the area. The earthworks on the north side of US 17/21 were found to be in a good state of preservation and the cemetery known to exist on this side of the road was also located. Additional pedestrian survey identified earthworks continuing the fortifications to the east and, in addition, the fortifications were found extending southerly across US 17/21. A cemetery associated with the Beaufort Salem United Presbyterian Church was also found on the south side of the existing highway. Further reconnaissance survey also identified a late eighteenth - early nineteenth century domestic site on the south side of the highway and partially within the right-of-way.

After this initial pedestrian survey, our activities included preparing an initial transit and tape map of the site on both sides of the highway, location of graves in the vicinity of the earthworks, photographic recordation of the site, and further collection of surface materials at the domestic site. Each of these activities will be discussed in greater detail below.

### Fortifications

Our initial assessment revealed that the eastern end of the fortification<sup>1</sup> was intact and that the major earthworks continued for an unknown distance as a ditch or trench with a low breastwork. The major portion of the fortification consists of an earthen wall

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<sup>1</sup> There are a variety of technical terms for the components of the earthwork. These discussions will use very simplified terms for the convenience of those not familiar with military terminology. If additional information is desired, Mahan 1836, Viele 1861 or Williams 1861 may be consulted.

about 15 feet in width at its base, four feet in width at its summit or parapet, and about 8 to 10 feet in height. On the exterior of this wall was a ditch or trench about 10 to 15 feet in width and about 3 feet in depth. No evidence of a berm was observed, although this may have been obliterated by erosion. One gun emplacement with an embrasure was observed, marked by two traverses built to localize damage. One additional embrasure was observed in the embankment, although no evidence of a finished gun emplacement was observed (Figure 3).

The western end of the fortification has been damaged by previous borrow activities and the wall and ditch are bisected by the existing US 71/21 highway, providing a clean profile of the construction.

On the southwestern side of US 17/21 the fortifications were found to continue as a low breastwork with a trench or ditch on the exterior. In one location a trench was also observed on the "inside" of the earthworks, perhaps marking the location for additional field artillery.

The main fortification extends over a distance of 212 feet in three sections (Figure 3). It could not be determined from these investigations how much of the earthwork was destroyed by the original US 17/21 construction. Reference to the original construction plan may, however, provide some additional information. The low breastworks to the west and west extend for an unknown distance.

It is possible that the earthworks, like many others were originally built with a heavy timber casement. As previously mentioned, it is possible that a berm (intended to keep earth from eroding down to fill the ditch) originally existed. The width of the walls was sufficient to stop most artillery (Coggins 1962:101) which suggests that this earthwork was rather significant in the defensive line.

Archaeological remains identified in the vicinity of the earthworks are limited to a light scatter of fired clay bricks (largely confined to the vicinity of the gun emplacement), one semi-porcelain ceramic, and one metal fragment. Evidence of digging by collectors using metal detectors was, however, noted.

#### Cemeteries

The previously reported cemetery adjacent to and within the earthwork was identified during this survey. A series of at least four graves (Eva Johnson, d. July 2, 1970; Ethel Mae Bryan, d. April 25, 1967; Clarence Williams, 1919-1970; and Rosa Bryant, d. 1964) were found within a fenced off area which begins about 3 feet west-southwest of R/W station 1069+50. No graves were clearly within the proposed right of way, although Eva Johnson is very

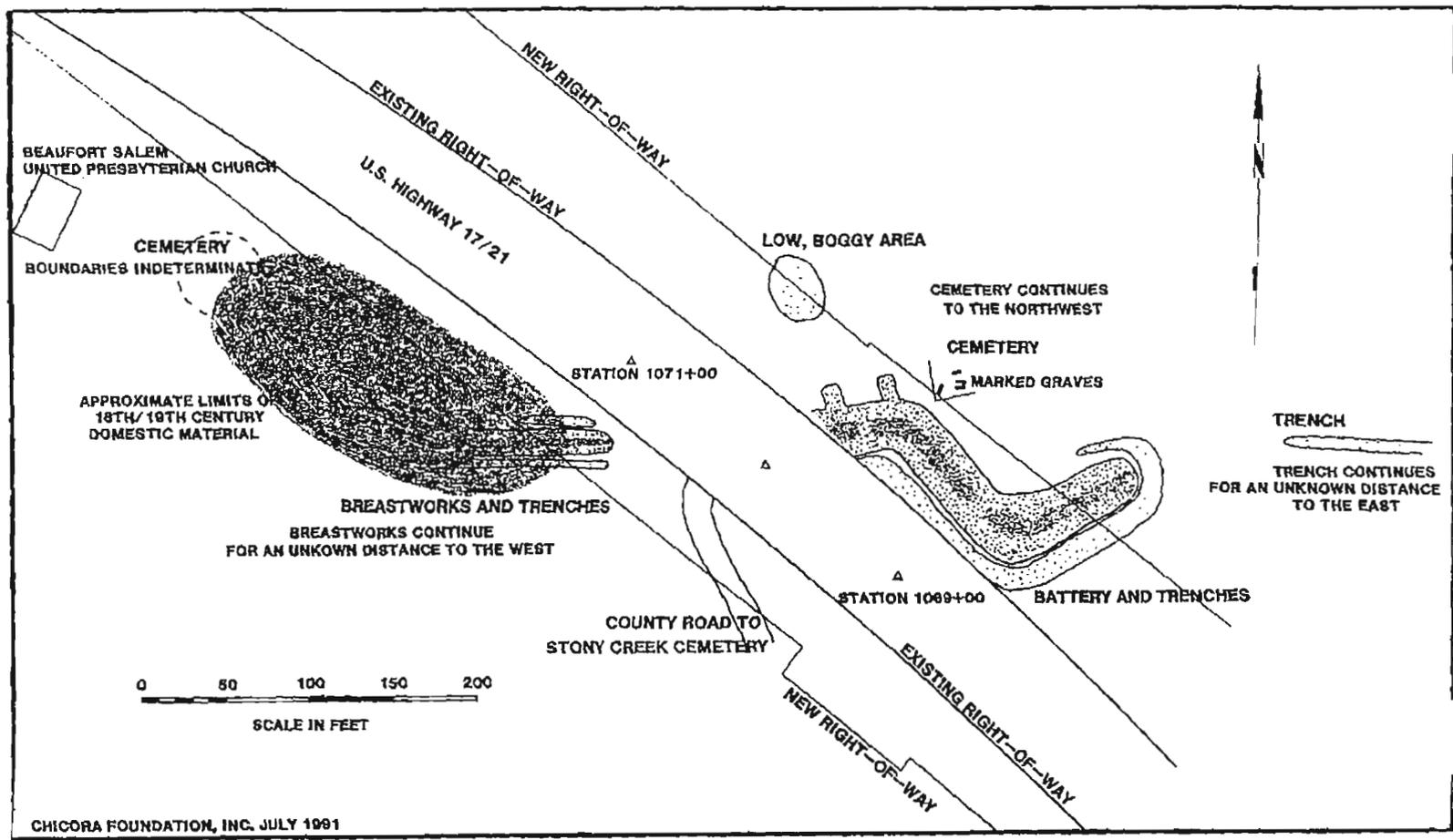


Figure 3. Map of the Stony Creek fortifications (based on a tape and transit survey).

close to the right-of-way line as currently defined.

Several areas were identified to us by Mr. Bill Olendorf as "probable" graves within the currently defined right-of-way. Our visual examination failed to reveal clear evidence for these locations being graves. While it is possible that additional graves exist outside of the fenced boundaries, only subsurface archaeological investigations will be able to determine their existence.

An additional cemetery was identified on the southwest side US 17/21 southeast of the Beaufort Salem United Presbyterian Church. This area is currently in knee-high weeds and ground visibility was limited. However, at least one grave was identified and it is likely that additional burials are present in this area, which is outside of the existing highway right-of-way. The existence of this cemetery, however, is not noted on the highway plan sheets.

No grave goods were noted with any of the graves, except for very recent items (wire flower frames, as well as clay and plastic pots).

#### Other Cultural Remains

During the investigation of the earthworks on the southwestern side of US 17/21 Ms. Adams and I identified a relatively dense scatter of late eighteenth through mid-nineteenth century domestic material. These items are scattered across an area approximately 200 feet northwest-southeast and at least 100 feet northwest-southeast. About half of the site is within the present right-of-way of US 17/21. These boundaries should be cautiously interpreted since this collection is based entirely on surface materials and surface visibility was generally poor.

The remains collected include 14 plain creamware, five plain pearlware, three edged pearlware, two hand painted pearlware, one polychrome hand painted pearlware, four plain whiteware, one edged whiteware, one Colono sherd, one fragment of aqua window glass, one gun flint, one flint spall, and a hand-made fired clay brick measuring 8-1/2 by 4 by 2-3/8 inches.

The ceramics from this site yield a mean ceramic date of 1807 (South 1977; see Table 1). This is consistent with the discovery of the Colono ware sherd. The collection appears to represent a late eighteenth century occupation which continued into at least the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It is unlikely that it is associated with the Civil War earthworks given the high percentage of creamwares (47%) and low percentage of whiteware (13%). The remains recovered from the site are consistent with those expected from a domestic occupation. Although the collection is small, the ceramics tentatively suggest a middling status (i.e., there are both high and low cost ceramics included in the collection).

Table 1.  
Mean Ceramic Date for Site on the Southwestern  
Side of US 17/21.

	Mean Date		
	(xi)	(fi)	<u>fi x xi</u>
Creamware, undecorated	1791	14	25074
Pearlware, poly hand painted	1805	3	5415
edged	1805	3	5415
undecorated	1805	5	9025
Whiteware, blue edged	1853	1	1853
undecorated	1860	4	7440

Mean Ceramic Date =  $54222 \div 30 = 1807.4$

The architectural material found at the site (brick and shell-lime mortar) suggest at least one structure. These architectural materials are concentrated in the northwest portion of the site, while the ceramics appear to be concentrated to the southeast (towards the marsh).

#### Assignment of SCIAA Site Number

Chicora has chosen to assign one South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology site number, 38BU1289, to the entire complex at Stony Creek, including the Civil War fortification, the late nineteenth century cemetery, and the late-eighteenth to early nineteenth century domestic site. Each of these components, while temporally and functionally distinct, occupies a very similar spatial area. As additional work is conducted, it may be appropriate to divide this area into distinct sites, rather than loci as has currently been done.

The general site boundaries have been defined based on all three components -- the Civil War earthworks, the cemetery on the northeastern side of US 17/21, and the late-eighteenth to early nineteenth century domestic occupation. These boundaries incorporate an area approximately 500 feet northwest-southeast by 500 feet northeast by southwest.

The boundaries of the earthwork, of course, are the most problematical. In theory, they could encompass the entire line of breastworks which may run for a mile or more. On the other hand, it seems more reasonable to center the site boundaries on the major fortification and incorporate a small sample of the breastworks on either "end" of the battery. This insures that the site incorporates at least some sample of all aspects of the Civil War fortifications.

I recognize the problems inherent in this approach, especially those problems which may arise from using these boundaries in the

context of the National Register of Historic Places. Clearly this approach is not based in direct documentation, natural topographic features, land disturbance, legal boundaries, or a field-verified model. On the other hand, it is a reasonable approach to the problem given the currently available information. It also ensures that not only the battery, but also the breastworks, which formed an integral component of the entire defence position, are considered.

### Evaluations

Site 38BU1289 represents at least three components: (1) a late eighteenth-early nineteenth century domestic occupation, (2) a Civil War earthwork, and (3) a late nineteenth century to twentieth century black cemetery.

One question which has naturally arisen is the significance of the site. Based on this reconnaissance level investigation, it is our professional opinion that 38BU1289 is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, **with each of the three components being considered a contributing resource.** Very simply, this means that each of three "loci," or different types of sites incorporated within the boundaries of 38BU1289 should be considered of equal significance and are independently worthy of inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

The fortifications themselves are considered eligible for the National Register under three separate criteria: (1) they are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (i.e., the site represents an example of the fortifications which served as the Confederate coastal defense system from 1862 through 1864 and which were at least partially delayed the Union land attack of Savannah and Charleston), (2) they are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past (i.e., the fortifications were at least initially conceived by Robert E. Lee), and (3) they are likely to yield information important to history (i.e., the fortifications can be explored archaeologically to provide information on camp life and the construction techniques).

The fortifications are considered to be well preserved and to have a high degree of integrity. This investigation found little evidence of extensive damage caused by either natural (i.e., erosion) or human (i.e., vandalism or logging) forces.

The late eighteenth-early nineteenth century domestic occupation is considered eligible for inclusion on the National Register under one criteria: that it is likely to yield information important to history (i.e., that the site may provide information on architecture, data on early antebellum plantation life, and possibly food ways). I recognize that this opinion is based on relatively limited data; however, the density and size of the

recovered remains, coupled with the occurrence of architectural remains, suggests that this opinion has some considerable basis.

The early antebellum occupation site is considered to have good preservation. A portion of the site has been damaged by the construction of the fortifications. Approximately two-thirds of the site, however, is found in the cleared area northwest of the breastworks. This area may have been plowed, although the surface materials do not appear excessively worn or damaged.

The late nineteenth to twentieth century black cemetery is considered eligible for inclusion on the National Register because it is likely to yield information important to history (i.e., forensic and osteological analysis of the human remains and examination of the burial items associated with the graves). Although cemeteries are generally not considered eligible for inclusion on the National Register, the National Park Service Departmental Consulting Archaeologist has recognized the importance of cemeteries, especially in terms of the data that detailed forensic anthropological research can contribute to our understanding of past lifeways. This cemetery is no exception.

The cemetery is similar to other black burial areas, reflecting a mix of both marked and unmarked graves. Its boundaries are presently poorly defined, again a condition common to this type of site. The relatively abundant marked graves, however, offer tremendous potential for oral history research combined with detailed documentary research.

#### Recommendations

Assuming that the site is accepted as eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (a decision which only the South Carolina Department of Archives and History can make), what alternatives exist for site 38BU1289? Typically, there are two options when a National Register eligible property is threatened by federal action: avoidance or data recovery.

In this case it appears that avoidance of the site is impossible. I make that assessment given the boundaries of the site, the proximity of natural areas such as coastal marsh, and my very limited knowledge of the requirements of safe highway design. **There seems to be no way that US 17/21 can be widened from two to four lanes without causing extensive damage to one or more components of this site.** Clearly widening to the northeast will impact the major fortification and may impact unknown graves. Just as clearly, widening to the southwest will destroy the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century domestic component and a portion of the breastworks associated with the battery. Moving the alignment to the southwest may also impact the cemetery at the Beaufort Salem United Presbyterian Church. Chicora Foundation considers damage to any component of the site, or to any aspect of

the various components, to be equally unsatisfactory.

Even if the highway project were to be abandoned, I am not convinced that this approach would ensure the long-term preservation of the site. While 38BU1289 has survived 130 years of natural effects, the recent publicity makes it difficult, if not impossible, to insure that the site is not vandalized in the future.

I know that the South Carolina Department of Highways and Public Transportation consists of trained professionals who are also concerned about the heritage of South Carolina. They, however, have a different mandated agenda -- the improvement of South Carolina's transportation system.

The most important, albeit most difficult, aspect of preservation is making tough decisions. Decisions regarding the preservation, recordation, or loss of sites are made on a daily basis across the United States. We at Chicora Foundation do not claim any expertise in the area of military history and therefore cannot evaluate this site on that basis, although certainly there are others who may be able to do so. As a professional archaeologist with 20 years of experience in South Carolina, I am able to address the archaeological issues inherent in this site and this particular situation.

Considering the unavoidable conflict between preserving South Carolina's heritage and providing safe, efficient transportation, **Chicora Foundation suggests that the most professionally appropriate and responsible course of action is data recovery.** Our archaeological evaluation of the site suggests that each of the various components is capable of being thoroughly and professionally investigated by existing archaeological techniques. Such an approach would insure that South Carolina's heritage is carefully studied and documented for future generations.

It is our opinion that data recovery of the fortifications could be accomplished by a five phase approach, involving:

1. a detailed examination of records at the National Archives,
2. construction of a detailed topographic map of the site at a contour interval of 0.5 foot and a scale no greater than 1 inch to 20 feet,
3. a detailed subsurface exploration using non-destructive techniques coupled with limited excavations of any identified features,
4. thorough documentation of at least four profiles through the fortification, and

5. careful monitoring coupled with any necessary excavations during construction.

Data recovery could also be conducted at the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century domestic occupation using standard archaeological techniques, including close interval auger sampling and large block excavations.

Chicora has contributed 30 person hours of professional time to this assessment. While Chicora Foundation is incapable of conducting the level of effort necessary to preserve the data at this site without significant outside financial support, we remain willing to offer consulting and advice.

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This study has been submitted to the following agencies and individuals: Ms. Cindy Cole (Historic Beaufort Foundation); Mr. Keith Derting (South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology); Mr. Charlie Hall (South Carolina Department of Archives and History); Mr. Wayne Roberts (South Carolina Department of Highways and Public Transportation); Mr. Steve Wise (Parris Island Museum); Mr. Bill Olendorf; David Culberson, Esq.; and Mr. Gordon Jones (Atlanta Historical Society).

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