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Applied Research

Military Sites Program Finishes Projects

By Steven D. Smith

The Military Sites Program (MSP) at SCIAA, under my direction, has completed several multi-year projects and is gearing up this fall to continue research on two additional projects. Last Fall and Spring, I completed technical reports of the archaeological work at the Revolutionary War Battle of Camden and test excavations at two Francis Marion sites—Wadboo Plantation and Dunham's Bluff, South Carolina.

The Battle of Camden took place on August 16, 1780, and has been described as the worst defeat of an American army during the war.

Research at Camden Battlefield, which began in 2003, has focused on defining the battlefield and attempting to learn how the various American and British units maneuvered during the battle. It began with interviews of relic collectors who described their collections and the location of their finds. Based on this research, the Palmetto Conservation Foundation received a grant from Save America's Treasures

to do additional archaeological research and reconstruct the battlefield. The MSP returned to the field in 2006, but postponed work to coincide with a major controlled burn in 2007, which exposed as much as one-third of the battlefield. From that point, the MSP conducted systematic metal detecting survey of 36.68 acres of the battlefield and collected 1,165 battle-related artifacts. These artifacts were plotted on

a two-foot contour map of the battlefield. The results confirmed the initial locations of the British and American lines and provided good evidence of the flow of battle and routs of retreat of the American forces. The full report is available for downloading at the SCIAA-MSP website <http://www.cas.sc.edu/sciaa/military-research.html>.

Wadboo Plantation, located in Berkeley, County, South Carolina, was the site of one of Francis Marion's camps from August of 1782 through December 1782, when Marion said goodbye to his

which made clearly defining each occupation problematic. Nevertheless, the MSP was able to define the battlefield, campsite, and location of the main plantation house.

Finally, the MSP conducted another survey and testing project at Dunham's Bluff, the site of a campsite associated with Francis Marion's occupation of Snow's Island. This camp is located across from Snow's Island and was probably constructed in early 1781. The presence of a redoubt was also confirmed. Like Wadboo, some of the components were

mixed with a farmstead, probably Ebenezer Dunham's farm, but the artifacts from the site in combination with other Francis Marion sites are revealing much about the material culture of partisans and militia during the American Revolution. This research was sponsored by the Francis Marion Trail Commission also, along with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Dunham's Bluff research will continue as part of my dissertation research on the archaeology of partisan communities and Snow's Island.

Two new projects are on going: one is continuing research in the Snow's Island area and another is a Civil War mapping project in Jasper and Colleton Counties. Both of these projects are sponsored by the American Battlefield Protection Program. The MSP is 100% funded by grants and gifts and welcomes contributions. It is especially seeking funding for research on Snow's Island as part of my dissertation topic.



James Legg and Gretchen Huggins reveal a slave quarter house at Wadboo Plantation. (SCIAA photo by Steven D. Smith)

troops and retired from the war. At the end of August of 1782, a detachment of British Dragoons attacked Marion but were defeated. The MSP conducted systematic metal detecting survey and test excavations at Wadboo Plantation in 2007, sponsored by the Francis Marion Trail Commission. The components of Marion's campsite were mixed by years of plowing with an earlier slave quarter occupation,