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## Santa Elena Project Laboratory Analysis

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## SANTA ELENA PROJECT LABORATORY ANALYSIS

By Chester B. DePratter and Stanley South

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Fieldwork! That's what archaeology is all about. What could be more fun than being outdoors, uncovering new and exciting finds with every scrape of the trowel? Visitors sit enthralled in the bleachers listening to lectures on the most recent discoveries and watching every move made by the field crew. News teams and ETV crews videotape our activities in order to capture the excavation process on tape and preserve it for eternity.

Actually, fieldwork is just the recovery process that begins a long period of laboratory analysis during which the most meaningful "discoveries" are made. News stories (both broadcast and in print) and documentaries most frequently focus on the fieldwork, and as a result the general public is most familiar with that aspect of our work. Archaeologists actually spend a much greater part of their time in the laboratory than they do conducting fieldwork. A research project that spends two months in the field will spend an additional 10 to 12 months conducting various analyses and writing the final reports. But even granting agencies are subject to biases created by our public image: it is much easier to get funding for fieldwork than for laboratory analysis and report preparation.

O u r current Santa Elena research is focused on collection processing and analysis in the laboratory. The collections involved in that

analysis are from three seasons of fieldwork. In 1993 and 1994, we excavated a sixteenth century Spanish pottery kiln and the surrounding area, a 40' X 70' block unit in the town of Santa Elena that included a well, and more than 1700 shovel tests in an effort to determine the extent of the town of Santa Elena. These various field projects produced in excess of 40,000 artifacts, not counting the tens of thousands of bone fragments recovered, or the more than 900 pounds of brick and daub from the kiln, or the 23 boxes of shell. Analysis of the artifacts is currently being conducted with funds provided by a U. S. Department of Defense Legacy Program grant. Beginning in October, 1993, we have employed three full-time lab crew members, Marianne Reeves, Patrice White, and Dennis Graham, to conduct the analysis of these collections, which include Spanish, Indian, Plantation period, and U. S. Marine Corps materials. These crew members have spent a total of 32 person months washing, sorting, counting, and bagging the collections.

Another lab crew member and permanent SCIAA employee, Harold Fortune, spent nearly six months sorting and gluing together the more than 50 whole and partial vessels recovered from the pottery kiln. Once those vessels were reconstructed, they were photographed in black and white and in color to provide a com-



*James B. Legg Drawing Ceramic Profiles  
from 16th Century Pottery Kiln*

## *Santa Elena Laboratory Analysis (Continued)*

plete documentation of this important collection. Color slides for use in lectures remain to be made. An archaeologist/draftsman, Jim Legg, spent three months making measured drawings of the pots for use in the project report and other publications.

Chester DePratter has been involved in the analysis of the Indian pottery from the collection, while Stan South has been busy compiling and computerizing the literally hundreds of pages of spreadsheets necessary to properly record and store all of the artifact counts resulting from the various analyses. As a result of the discovery of the pottery kiln at Santa Elena, we have reexamined and reclassified all of the Spanish ceramics previously discovered in excavation blocks in the town of Santa Elena, a total of an additional 15,000 sherds.

Plant parts and insect parts recovered from the well will be subjected to specialized analysis within the next couple of months. Food bone recovered during the 1993-1994 seasons will be analyzed and identified by Dr. Elizabeth Reitz of the University of Georgia. Her analysis will tell us what kinds of animals were being consumed by the Spanish and in what frequency. Shells from several features are being ana-

lyzed by Dr. David Lawrence, an USC geologist. His work will help us understand the source of the shellfish collected by the Spanish and perhaps the season(s) of the year in which they were being collected.

While all of these laboratory analyses have been taking place, Chester DePratter has been conducting library research on 16th century potting and pottery in an effort to better understand the kiln and the pots that were made in it. This process has necessitated obtaining literally dozens of books and articles in Spanish, French, and English through the Interlibrary Loan office at USC's Thomas Cooper Library.

Another aspect of our research has been the production of computer-generated maps showing the distribution of various artifact types recovered during excavation of nearly 1400 shovel tests excavated to discover the limits of the town of Santa Elena. This work, done by Dennis Graham and Patrice White in conjunction with the USC College of Humanities and Social Sciences Computer Lab, has shown that the town of Santa Elena covers an area of about 15 acres. Concentrations of pottery plotted within that area suggest that there may be about 40 household clusters within the town limits.

Archival research is an important part of research on historic sites, and Santa Elena is no exception. We have been working closely with Dr. Eugene Lyon of the Center for Historic Research at Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida, on this aspect of our research. We have already discovered some exciting new sources describing life at Santa Elena, and our graduate assistant, Susan Ball, is currently working on translating additional documents for us.

Laboratory analysis has been underway for more than a year, and there are still a multitude of additional tasks to be accomplished before the job is completed. At present, we have two full-time employees, Jim Legg and Dennis Graham, working on the collections and drafting figures for the report. We are just beginning the task of taking the results of these varied analyses and combining and interpreting them to produce the final reports. Our two final reports are due to be delivered to the appropriate officials on Parris Island in March and September, 1995, respectively. We have a long way to go before the task is completed, but we are looking forward to seeing the finished product which will be, in great part, the result of diligent effort by our colleagues.

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## **UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY CERTIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES**

**By Chris Amer**

Hobby (sport) diving has been licensed in South Carolina since the 1970s. With a hobby license, divers can collect fossils and artifacts, if they provide a list of items they collect to the Underwater Archaeology Division at the SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA).

To help divers identify and record their finds, SCIAA staff offer basic archaeological training, including a field manual. Divers attending annual field schools get classroom and laboratory instruction, swimming pool and open water sessions, and practical ex-

perience. The Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program (SDAMP) has also implemented a Workshop Series that deal with nautical skills, chart



*Carl Naylor and Joe Beatty  
Excavating Parris Island Canoe*

navigation, and historic ceramic and bottle identification, to name a few.

Several workshops in the SDAMP Workshop Series have been held and will be repeated in the future. While the workshops are open to the public, they are part of a four-tier educational program for the state's licensed hobby divers and consists of SDAMP Field Training Courses (FTC) which are a two-and-one-half-day program of lectures and pool training and introduces the participants to the concepts and principles of underwater archaeology, the legislation pertaining to under-