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Stanley South
University of South Carolina - Columbia, stansouth@sc.edu

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THE HISTORICAL ARCHEOLOGIST AND HISTORIC SITE DEVELOPMENT

Stanley South

In his little booklet *Archeology and the Historical Society*, J. C. Harrington has pointed out the increasing involvement of historical societies in historic sites archeology in the following words:

With the increasing interest throughout the country in the preservation and interpretation of historic sites and structures, historical societies are becoming more and more involved in historic sites archeology. It is hoped that this manual will help societies and other historical organizations meet this growing responsibility (Harrington 1965:4).

The historical archeologist who has been in a position to work with historical societies and commissions in their efforts at preservation and interpretation of historic sites in the past few years will surely affirm this statement. In fact, with the availability of grants and federal aid programs, there is a continuing florescence of such interest. Harrington has indicated that in many restoration projects the motivation has been

To preserve the physical remains of our past and to employ them in perpetuating our historical heritage. Concomitant with this—and in most instances an explicit objective—has been public indoctrination in the importance of historical preservation (Harrington 1965:8).

The thesis of this paper is that this public indoctrination of which Harrington speaks, includes the historical societies and commissions who are undertaking the development and interpretation of historic sites through evidence provided by the historical archeologist, often through on-site exhibits and interpretation, and that the historical archeologist is the person on whom the responsibility of such indoctrination and education often falls. A particular emphasis of this paper is to illustrate the responsibility of the historical archeologist in advising and guiding historic site development through his contact with historical societies and commissions.

Foley (1968:67) has pointed out that such activity is outside the strictly archeological activity of the archeologist:

He may, and when possible should, advise the people concerned with such activities, and he may even become actively involved -- but his doing so is *extra-archaeological*.
This writer agrees with Foley and has pointed out elsewhere some views on historic site development and archeology, emphasizing the fact, however, that the historic site archeologist is perhaps the most qualified man to make many of the judgments regarding development and interpretation of historic sites (South 1969:81). In Foley's point, and elsewhere (Cleland and Fitting 1968:124) there is an implication that archeologists who do become involved in guiding and advising local groups in their efforts at historic site development are somehow prostituting themselves to a less noble effort than one directed only at archeology and the interpretation therefrom. It is my view that "genuine research" goals and historic site development can be carried out on the same project, and are not mutually exclusive. "Long range research goals outlined by the archeologist are not prostituted by projects whose sponsors are primarily interested in developing a site for public use unless the archeologist himself limits his goals to the narrow scope of the project's sponsors. No competent archeologist would allow this to happen.

A classic example of on-site explanatory interpretive exhibit for public use is that carried out by J. C. Harrington at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site in North Carolina (Harrington 1962). This fort has been interpreted as an on-site exhibit by shaping a parapet embankment beside the archeologically revealed fortification ditch. A similar explanatory exhibit was developed at the site of the 1670 settlement at Charles Towne, South Carolina (South 1971:37).

Palisade construction based on archeologically revealed postholes has its classic prototype at Town Creek Indian Mound State Historic Site near Mount Gilead, North Carolina, where an Indian ceremonial center was surrounded by a protective palisade (South 1959, 1965:27). Similar interpretive palisades have been built on the basis of archeological data at Fort Fisher State Historic Site and Bethabara, in North Carolina, and Charles Towne in South Carolina.

Because of an attitude of associating such historic site development with a "carnival atmosphere" not conducive to a "genuine research" (Cleland and Fitting 1968:131), and the fact that development of historic sites is not, strictly speaking, archeology, statements on historic site development are not considered proper for inclusion in archeological reports. A colleague recently reflected this view in commenting on a report in which a chapter on historic site development was included for the benefit of the sponsoring commission. The comment was to the effect that a chapter on historic site development might have a place in a limited distribution report, but should never be included in an archeological report for publication. This is correct when using the line of demarcation between archeology and historic site development as a criteria for defining the "proper" archeological report. However, this archeologist finds that in almost every report on an archeological project involving historical societies and commissions, he feels a responsibility to include a chapter on historic site development recommendations based on the results of historical archeology. These "master plan" chapters
are expunged from the archeological manuscript before publication in order to separate the master planning from the archeology. However, such chapters are a basic facet of the relationship between the historical archeologist and the historical society and commission members, often forming the basis from which more funds are obtained and further archeological work proposed and executed.

The literature on historic site archeology scarcely does more than touch on this question of historic site development and the role of the historical archeologist. A great deal of literature involving what has been done from an interpretive point of view has been published, particularly in books dealing with the National Parks, but these usually do not deal with the detailed steps of master planning for historic site development, and research leading to these interpretations. The National Park Service has long directed its efforts at the interpretation of historic sites through visitor centers, however, for too many years their efforts were hampered through official policy preventing them from engaging in archeological and developmental research prior to interpretation. Fortunately, however, this policy has given way to an active involvement with research and master planning, toward providing a foundation for historic site development. Those in the National Park Service have long since become familiar with the problems of relating the historic site to the visiting public in an accurate and meaningful manner. J. C. Harrington is a fine example of the kind of archeologist I am talking about who has involved himself not only with research in the field and archives, but with the problems of interpretation that are immediately thrust on the archeologist from the moment he approaches the neighborhood of a project destined to become a public historic park. We must have the broad interpretations emerging from problem oriented research specifically designed to answer cultural and historical questions, but we must also have archeologists who can step across these archeological boundaries and become visionaries who can project not only something of the meaning of what was, but can envision what an historic site can become. The primary reason this paper is being written is to introduce into the published record a sample of one of the site development chapters typically present in historical archeology reports to sponsoring groups, but absent when the report is published. Presented here is an excerpt from the report to the Star Fort Historical Commission of work carried out for them at the site of Ninety Six. It can easily be seen from this sample the reason for not publishing such invectives. Parts of these "indoctrination" chapters are an appeal to the emotions of the commission members as well as to their desire to do a competent job and, as such, have no place in an archeological report. However, they produce results in the form of additional funds for archeological research, and, upon occasion are directly responsible for saving historic sites from the ill-advised efforts that are sometimes destructive to archeological features. They also provide a guideline for the use of the intelligent, conscientious people who volunteer their time, in many instances, to serve on the historical commissions. The guidelines outlined by the archeologist may not be used by the commission, but it appears to this archeologist that
part of the responsibility of the competent historical archeologist is to provide such goals and guidelines based on research and interpretations, as well as experience in constructing on-site explanatory exhibits. To fail to do this leaves in the hands of a group of citizens, with no archeological background, an archeological report describing ruins and features, postholes and potsherds, complete with statistical tables and interpretive drawings; a product that may still leave the historical society members at a loss as to know what to do next. The statement on what to do next, however, might not be included in the report by an archeologist who felt that such considerations have no place in an archeological report. In a report to the sponsoring agency, however, such chapters are thought to form an important part of the archeologist's responsibility.

The following paragraphs are taken from a report entitled, "Exploratory Archeology at Ninety Six, South Carolina," which was presented to the Star Fort Historical Commission. They are taken from Chapter 8, which follows seven chapters of the publishable archeological report. Chapter 8, entitled "Comments on Explanatory Exhibits for Interpretation of Ninety Six and Recommendations for Further Archeological Research" would, under present ground rules, not be published with the first seven chapters. It is a sample of the type of discussion designed to lay the groundwork for historic site development.

**Site of the Town Palisade of Ninety Six (38GN5)**

In order to properly explore and interpret the palisade around the town of Ninety Six, along with the deeper and larger defensive ditches between the town palisade and the Star Fort, the entire area over the ditch line will need to be stripped of its overburden of plowed soil. This can best be done by a front loader under the watchful eye of the archeologist. However, in the area of these ditches there are pine trees that must be removed by chain saw crews, or rather pulpwood cutters, and the trees and tops removed from the site. The stumps remaining must then be removed by a backhoe, and the holes filled in. When this is done, a front loader or grader can then be brought to the site to strip away the overburden to reveal the ditch outline for plotting and photography. Once this is done, the contents must be archeologically excavated, which, on a ditch one hundred yards long, involves sifting several thousand cubic feet of soil to remove artifacts for analysis and exhibit purposes. All of this results in an expensive project, but a necessary one if the goal is to open the original ditch and install proper drain lines, rebuild the protective parapets, cover them with sod to prevent erosion so that the visitor can obtain a comprehensive view of the complex nature of the site at Ninety Six and its original relationship to the town of Ninety Six.
Again, the Star Fort Historical Commission would have to have made the decision to become involved in such an undertaking before any archeology is begun on the ditches. In other words, the archeologist must know before he begins whether such a plan is to be carried out, or whether the whole thing is to be back-filled after archeology is completed. The time has come, therefore, for decisions in the form of master site planning and development, research and interpretation to be made by the Star Fort Historical Commission. To proceed without a Commission decision on such long range plans is the expensive way to approach the problem.

The town palisade itself is apparently a relatively small palisade ditch, and the uncovering and recording of this feature is less time consuming than the major fortification ditch connecting the Star Fort with this town palisade. However, more exploratory trenches must be cut in order to determine exactly its position on the west side, and most of the north and east sides. Such a slotting project would take two weeks, with the complete uncovering of the entire line another two months. After this is done, new palisade poles could be placed in the original ditch, as has been done on a number of sites elsewhere, and a most impressive explanatory-interpretive exhibit would be the result.

The search for the various blockhouses would require a month with more time required if ruins such as powder magazines beneath these were discovered. A further examination of the open fortification ditch and embankment along the northwest face of the town should be made, with the determination as to whether it was palisaded being a prime question to be answered.

The search for the Caponier or Covered Way ditch, connecting the palisaded town of Ninety Six with Holmes' Fort, was ten to twelve feet wide, and would require at least a week of digging time to locate; and once located by this means, it could require several months to remove the contents and replace the parapet on each side of the ditch as was the case originally. This double parapet would have to be covered with sod, and drains installed at periodic intervals to prevent serious erosion, but once this was done, a constant maintenance crew would be required to keep it maintained and properly trimmed and landscaped. Unexpected features, and expected ones such as palisade ditches on both sides of the Covered Way would require excavation and interpretation also. Palisade poles replaced in any ditches found here would
require additional funds for purchase and installation according to the archeologist's specifications, based on the archeological findings.

As has been mentioned previously, the analysis of the artifacts, drafting of maps, writing of conclusions, all will take at least three times the time required for field work, and this phase of the project must also be planned for and funded.

These abstracted paragraphs illustrate the type of discussion usually seen in the chapters of historical archeology reports that are designed for planning and guideline use, and not for other archeologists. Following this chapter, in which archeology time schedules, interpretive suggestions, excavation priorities and similar advice is presented for consideration, is a chapter on "Historic Site Development." This chapter summarizes some of the problems encountered by historic site development commissions and societies, and presents a vision which is a projection into the future of the developed site as the archeologist sees that it can be; in this case, the site of Ninety Six. The summary statement in this section deals with "Our Responsibility," consisting of a harangue of the type never seen in published archeological reports. Nevertheless, such statements have proven their functional utility beyond doubt in dealing with historical societies and commissions involved in historic site interpretation and development for public education. The following is Chapter 9 from the Ninety Six report to the Star Fort Commission. The site is now in thick woods and undergrowth.

HISTORIC SITE DEVELOPMENT

A Tour of Ninety Six

We can envision the site of Ninety Six as it is developed in the years to come as a place of outstanding interest to all generations of history-aware Americans. Parents with their children leave their car at the parking lot in Savage's old field and tour the visitor center museum where the exciting panorama of history unfolds through artifacts and documents, through sight and sound, as the historic site they are about to visit is introduced. The introduction over, the group stands for a moment before the large window in the lobby which reveals a dramatic view of the parapet mounds of Holmes' Fort, with the palisade of the town of Ninety Six in the background. They perhaps walk past a well which, they are told by means of a field exhibit, was dug in November 1775, inside Williamson's Fort, which was a temporary affair. They move on to a more substantial work, the interpreted ruin of Holmes' Fort, and they enter the opening where the original gate
once stood. Perhaps they will see a stockade around the area as well as the protective ditch and parapet mound. After reading the field exhibit on the site, the parents follow the children's excited cries as they run down the Covered Way ditch toward the stream at the bottom of the hill, and across a small bridge and through the palisade wall into the town of Ninety Six. The open cellar ruin of the brick jail is seen near the entrance, with stabilized walls standing a few feet above the level of the ground to prevent accidents, and to protect the ruin itself. Interpretive field exhibits here guide the group to the depression of the Charleston Road, where they see other open cellar ruins, and a drawing of how the town must have appeared when the houses were standing. The children find the east corner of the palisade and follow inside a parapet ditch toward the Star Fort, where they visit the remaining earthworks, left very much as it has survived through the centuries, and here they see a field exhibit showing how the Fort looked in all its glory. Another exhibit to the north of the star explains Greene's siegeworks, but the highlight of the visit to this area is the view of the mine dug by Kosciusko; here, steps lead down to where you can see into the actual tunnel dug two hundred years ago, and they remember the diorama in the visitor center museum that showed the Americans digging this tunnel in an attempt to reach beneath the fort.

Leaving here, they walk past the graveyard of those who died in the battle, and follow a depression into the Island Ford Road, then down a path near a ditch and embankment that has remained intact for hundreds of years; a ditch so shallow that a few plowings would have destroyed it, but yet it remains today! On a walkway bridge across a road leading to the Star Fort parking lot they stop for a moment and watch cars pass beneath them on their way to see the Star Fort. Some people cannot make the entire trip by foot, and prefer to visit the Star Fort by car. They walk back up the Covered Way and, before going to the parking lot, they stop by the mound and ditch of Lee's Parallels to see the exhibit telling about the capture of the Fort by Lee's men on June 18, 1781.

They buy refreshments at the visitor center, and then back to the car for the ride to the site of the Trading Post, which they have learned is located a short drive south of the site of Ninety Six. They drive beneath the bridge they stood on a short time before, and past the Star Fort, and then down a quiet road through fields and trees, then along a great depression which the signs tell them is the two hundred-year-old Charleston Road. As they approach the top of a pleasant hill, the curious children
cry out in surprise and excitement as they see on the lower hill below them yet another palisade wall, that of Fort Ninety Six at Goudy's Trading Post. They park in the parking lot and get out to view the ruins of cellars. Here they see not only a single palisade fort, but parts of two or more forts with exhibits pointing out that these were additions made at various times to protect against the Cherokee Indians. In a small exhibit pavilion they learn about an Indian attack that occurred here, and about a scalp being run up with the British flag to the top of the flagpole, and about the bones of Indians being fed to the dogs of the colonists. While the parents rest in the shade of the roof of the exhibit pavilion, the children run along the nature trail which goes to a small stream where they see the stones placed there when the Charleston Road was in use as a help for wagons trying to get across the ford. While they are gone, the parents talk with the guide who is on hand to answer questions. They had seen a similar guide at the town of Ninety Six and at the Star Fort, but had not talked with them. Now they find that the guide is a great help with some of the questions that had come up on the tour. When the children return, they drive back to the top of the hill where they can look down on the site of Fort Ninety Six, and here they stop to eat their picnic lunch at tables in the shade of the trees.

Throughout America, American historical societies who have never had more than a few hundred dollars in their treasury are finding that grants from foundations and federal agencies have resulted in their becoming involved in a business where hundreds of thousands of dollars are available. Some of these restoration-sponsoring groups have done an outstanding job of research and development with their funds in bringing to reality their dream of creating a bridge for understanding between the past and the present.

Other groups often begin spending the funds they have suddenly acquired in a rapid manner, sometimes without proper regard for historical and archeological research to insure the authenticity of the restorations they are undertaking.

Through the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina, we are providing needed archeological assistance to local societies and commissions, and in this capacity we have encountered examples of projects where entire seventeenth-century villages have been on the drawing board and in the model—
making stage, with a million dollars reserved for the project, before any thorough research or any archeological work was undertaken. Needless to say, we had quite a struggle in convincing the supporters of the "Reconstructed Village" type of interpretation that there was a need to keep such unauthenticated constructions off the original village site until proper study had been undertaken; and then we could support it only if documents and archeology had abundantly demonstrated that a valid reconstruction of this type could be competently undertaken.

Another example illustrating how not to go about planning a restoration project was seen when the interpretive museum for an archeological site was proposed to be constructed directly on top of a documented plantation house, the ruins of which were clearly visible. Again we were placed in the role of trying to protect the historical sanctity of an archeological site from the developers who were determined to destroy a relic of the past, ironically, in the name of "preservation of our heritage." The fact that a million dollars was planned for the construction of the museum seemed to be sufficient cause to destroy a pile of brick and stone from an old ruin. Fortunately, we were able to convince the sponsors to move the museum site, and thus save the ruin.

The site to which the museum was planned to be moved had no history of early occupation by man. At the meeting at which the archeologist was asked to explore the new site for possible ruins, Jim Fowler, of television's "Wild Kingdom" fame, made the remark that it might be risky to allow the digging to take place on the new pavilion site because the archeologist might find an Indian pavilion on the site and ask that the museum be moved again. Everyone, including the archeologist, had a laugh over this suggestion. However, the archeological work did reveal an Indian pavilion or ceremonial center two hundred feet square, with an adjoining one hundred foot compound with a circular bastion attached. No such ceremonial center with a temple ruin, ceremonial sheds, and circular bastion tower had ever been discovered before, and the archeologists set about trying to save the site by attempting to point out the unique significance of the discovery. If the pavilion construction could be moved over only two hundred feet, the Indian structure could be saved, and new posts placed in the original postholes would make a most impressive explanatory exhibit for public enjoyment and education. However, in spite of a great outcry from the public, including news coverage on the Huntley-Brinkley Report, this historic Indian structure was destroyed, ironically, by a structure designed ostensibly to interpret the history of the site.
Another restoration group, dealing with a Revolutionary War site on which ruins of nine military fortification features and the ruins of an entire palisaded town are located, felt it necessary to use their restoration funds to buy log cabins, dismantle them, and reassemble them on the historic site, using exposed California redwood in the process. Another commission, involved with a site on which is located a standing Revolutionary War fortification and six other fortifications from the French and Indian War period and the Revolutionary War, is also planning on hauling log cabins on the site; a site already incredibly blessed with historic archeological treasure. This is being done, it is said, in order to provide the public with something of interest to look at. My question is, how many log cabins can the public absorb on historic sites before they begin to reject as bogus pseudo-history all such attempts to interpret the past? Will we not reach the saturation point with such efforts? Is not the public now more sophisticated than to require a log cabin on every historic site it visits? We are all working toward a dream of competently-researched historic sites through archives and archeology, with the resulting authentic restorations and reconstructions. The evaluation as to whether our efforts have a permanent educational and beneficial result depends on whether, in bringing our dreams to reality, we maintain a high standard of values anchored in thorough research, translated into competent restorations, reconstructions, and on-site explanatory exhibits.

Somewhere in between our visionary projection into the future and the historic sites and structures we see today, the dream meets the reality. Our responsibility to the future lies in first having a dream worthy of our striving, and reaching for its conversion to reality through the most competent means at our disposal. We must take care not to spoil the dream in our eagerness to bring its fuzzy edges too quickly into the sharp focus of reality. For, to do so, is to warp our understanding of history through the creation of distorted images that do a disservice to the past as well as to the future. We must constantly, in our role as stewards of the past, be aware of this responsibility. All our efforts should be directed toward achieving the greatest degree of accuracy in our historical and archeological research, to insure the closest correlation between the reality of the past and our explanatory exhibits. These parapets and palisades, cabins and ruins, are the bridges leading the minds of men to a greater appreciation of our heritage. We must not fail in our role as historical engineers who are shaping the attitudes and understanding of generations yet unborn. For it is only through what we do today, in
developing our historic sites, that the future can know the past through them. If we, in our enthusiasm, and in the name of history and "restoration," damage, destroy and distort the clues that have survived, rather than competently interpreting them, we have burned the bridges behind us and the future can no longer build on the true evidence, but must forever depend on our interpretation. We, the researchers and developers of historic sites, are the only ones who have the opportunity of observing the maximum amount of historical and archeological evidence. Once the pages in the earth have been revealed through archeology, there is never another chance for those pages to be read, for the archeological process itself is a destructive force, erasing as it reveals. There is no second chance!

We should guard against first-impulse planning and development; against the log cabin syndrome, where the countryside is stripped of all log cabins, to be planted in a cluster like pseudo-historical mushroom towns springing up overnight, regardless of the historical focus or archeological merit a site might otherwise possess. In our enthusiasm, we may go so far as to use California redwood in our "restorations," implying trade routes and resources undreamed of by our forebears. Yet the minds of children and unsuspecting adults are shaped by such distortions, that are springing full-blown as creations of our own age rather than anchored in the past through research and archeology.

Let us guard against the pitfalls of creating "instant history," insufficiently rooted in the rich humus of our heritage of people, their things, and the historic sites that were the stage for their drama. Rather, as we engineer our explanatory exhibits in the form of parapets and palisades, ruins and cabins, restorations and reconstructions on historic sites, we should be constantly aware of our role as creators of historical images to become burned into the minds of men. If our efforts to interpret history on historic sites are insufficiently supported by research and archeology, and we find that the palisade we built must be taken down in favor of a more accurate presentation, the damage has already been done by false images carried away by all those who have viewed the bastard child.

Therefore, we should look closely at our responsibility. These are not games we are playing with history! Our involvement in the past is our investment in the future!
After this chapter was read to the commissioners, several members expressed the view that after living in the community of Ninety Six all their lives, and serving on the commission for several years, now, for the first time, they were able to envision the potential of the historic site of Ninety Six as it could be. One commissioner stated, "I see that our job is only begun; but now we have a vision to bring to reality at Ninety Six."

Such master guideline chapters from historical archeology reports, seen only by historical societies and commissions, are definitely not (it is generally agreed) an acceptable part of historical archeology reports. However, they have proven their usefulness on numerous occasions in the relationship between the historical archeologist and the historical society, as a part of the archeologist's responsibility in attempts (as Pinky Harrington has said):

...to preserve the physical remains of our past and to employ them in perpetuating our historical heritage. (Harrington 1965:8).

No less important is such communication between the archeologist and the layman toward:

...public indoctrination in the importance of historical preservation. (Harrington 1965:8).

The point we have attempted to make here is that although historic site development is not archeology, the construction of interpretive explanatory exhibits such as parapets and palisades on historic sites should lie firmly and literally rooted in archeological ditches and postholes. The archeologist, therefore, is the one on whom the responsibility of such interpretation must rest. We cannot afford to ignore the need for competent guidance by qualified archeologists of groups undertaking historic site development.

A second point of emphasis is that historical archeologists have a responsibility to write planning and guideline chapters outlining recommendations for historic site development by sponsoring agencies, even though such guidelines are not favorably acted upon and brought to fruition. These chapters of the archeologist's report will not be printed, and will remain buried in the files in manuscript or progress report form in the offices of historical societies and commissions. As such, they cannot become a part of the archeologist's bibliographical ditty bag, but this should be of less concern to him than that he has contributed to a more accurate and sound development and interpretation of an historic site through competent guidance based on archeology.

It seems within the realm of possibility that these advisory chapters might conceivably be of some use to others working with historical groups toward interpreting our heritage through archeology and historic site research and development. The purpose of this paper has been to present a sample of such chapters that, while not archeology, do represent what is increasingly seen as a part of the responsibility of the historical archeologist.
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