CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

To be Let. The Plantation and Ferry in St. John’s Parish commonly called and known by the name of the Strawberry, whereon is a good Dwelling-house and other Out-houses, a Garden and about 80 or 100 Acres of cleared land, fit for corn and Indigo; a Horse Boat, and two Negro Men to attend the Ferry: There is also on said Place, a Mile Course, and a large convenient Stable with proper Stalls for Horses any person inclinable to rent the same (which will be vacant by the fifth of March) may apply in St. Thomas Parish (Irving 1932[1842])

With the westward movement of the Carolina colony small settlements emerged along the leading edge of the frontier. Although many were initially established for economic reasons, they acquired social importance to the local communities they served. Ties to the local and regional transportation infrastructure were important factors in where and why these settlements were located.

From its inception in 1705, Strawberry Ferry and Childsbury Towne, established two years later, were designed to reap an economic advantage from their position along the expanding Carolina frontier. The ability to profit from the trade in deer skins, naval stores, the production of rice and indigo, and commercial economic ventures tied to Charles Town are examples of their functional adaptation to colonial South Carolina’s
dynamic economic landscape. Archaeological and historical data shows the importance of ferry crossings to small settlements and their local transportation networks.

Historically, the vestment of Strawberry Ferry is known to have taken place very early in the 18th century. Archaeologically, the presence of 19th-century European ceramics shows its continued use past the colonial period. Together, this data has confirmed the importance of ferry crossings to the social and economic landscape of colonial South Carolina. Archaeological investigation of other low country ferry crossings has allowed the development of a construction typology for the landings associated with these crossings.

Archaeological and historical evidence, from previous studies, has established that Childsberry Towne was located within known production areas. With access to a deep water river port, Childsberry Towne was the apex for commerce along the Cooper River and had ties to regional and worldwide markets. It attracted wealthy individuals that invested in the town’s growth. Their influence and status assisted in the establishment of fairs and markets. They conducted business within the settlement’s commercial establishments and in private homes.

Archaeological evidence, from surface finds and shovel tests, determined that a number of structures were present at Childsberry Towne. The presence of pre-contact and contact period hand-built earthenwares, European ceramics, and structural materials provide a very early date for one of these structures. Other structures were also found, archaeologically, to be present within the southwestern quadrant of the town. The presence of 18th and 19th-century ceramics, primarily delftware, creamware, and pearlware, in association with brick features and other construction materials has defined the location of Strawberry Tavern and a number of colonial period residential structures.

The recovery of European ceramics and Colono Ware also established that class and status relationships were present in the spatial layout of the town. Spatial divisions,
as evidenced by the artifact assemblage, reflect a social and economic landscape occupied by a diverse group of people.

Childsbury Towne was not a city. It could not be classified as urban development or qualify under Lewis’ definition as a frontier town. In size, Childsbury was not large. Yet, Childsbury Towne, with its ferry, tavern, chapel, and residential structures were significant parts in a pattern of communal settlement found in low country—South Carolina. Childsbury Towne had the potential to grow but, did not. Why did it fail to prosper? Social and economic factors should have ensured the continued success and survival of Childsbury.

Eventually, outside forces, beyond the power and control of the men along the Cooper River, began to adversely affect Childsbury Towne’s position along the Carolina frontier. Inherent within the notion of frontiers is movement. As the frontier moved, new transportation routes accessed these areas. Archaeological evidence, reflected by the presence of the northeastern and southwestern landings of Strawberry Ferry, show that the failure of the local community around Childsbury to construct a bridge across the Cooper River affected its future. The growth of Monck’s Corner, on what became the main road to the Congarees, grew increasingly important to the residents along the Cooper River by the late 18th century. By then, too, the frontier had expanded throughout the interior of South Carolina and beyond into the unclaimed lands of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, and other western regions of the colonies. Although of importance to the immediate community, Childsbury Towne was no longer on the edge of the frontier. It was but another of many small towns established between the frontier and Charles Town.

Although the settlement of Childsbury ceased to function as a communal settlement economically supported by small farms and plantations along the Cooper River, the southwestern quadrant obviously remained of social importance to the local community for several years throughout the colonial period. The town slowly lost its
place as a viable part of the local economic landscape but, remained socially an important asset to the surrounding community. By taking on different roles as time passed Childsbury evolved more than just died. It continues to do so through its present owner, John Cumbie. Although today there is nothing left of this early Carolina settlement, other than the landings for the ferry crossing and Strawberry Chapel, the new owner of old Childsbury Towne prepares to tap the socio-economic potential of this small piece of land along the western branch of the Cooper River.