INTRODUCTION

While the excavations at Folly Island only sampled the full potential of the project area, valuable data was gathered. Of equal value to the data gathered, were the lessons learned, which will serve future archaeological work. This chapter addresses the questions posed in the research design, summaries the results of excavations, and offers some recommendations for the future. As has been stressed throughout the report, these results must be seen as preliminary, and the conclusions tentative.

IDENTITIES OF MILITARY UNITS OCCUPYING SITES

The first and most basic questions center on the identities of the human remains excavated at 38CH920. The data derived from archaeology, history, and physical anthropology points most strongly to the remains being members of two black regiments of Wild’s African Brigade. These units were the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment and the 1st North Carolina Colored Infantry. Additionally, two members of the 2nd United States Colored Infantry probably were represented. These soldiers died in their regimental hospitals and were buried in a brigade cemetery. These unit identifications are not conclusive, but the evidence supporting them is very strong. To date, all data support these conclusions and the authors have found nothing which contradicts them.

The regiments whose refuse makes up the material culture assemblage from the other three sites (38CH964, 38CH965, 38CH966) were not conclusively identified. There were many units camped in the project area during the winter of 1863-1864, and prior to the arrival of these units, Battery E, of the 3rd U.S. Artillery was already camped very near, or on, 38CH964. There is the possibility that other units were in the area prior to Battery E. Sharing the picket front on the north side of the island with Wild’s Brigade in December of 1863, were General Foster’s brigade and Gordon’s Division. Foster’s Brigade at that time consisted of the 13th Indiana, 112th New York, 169th New York (O.R. Vol. 28, Part II: 138). Gordon’s division included 12 regiments (O.R. Vol. 28, Part II: 138). Obviously, all 17 regiments could not have camped within the project area. The general location of each unit’s campground probably could be discovered, but only after considerably more archival research.

Furthermore, somewhere near 38CH964 was the campground of Alford’s Brigade. The artifact assemblage from SC1AA’s excavations and relic collectors provides moderate evidence of the brigade’s proximity. Alford’s Brigade consisted of four regiments: the 3rd New York, 89th New York, 103rd New York, and 117th New York (O.R. Vol. 28, Part II: 138). Archaeologists recovered New York buttons and a numeral “8” at 38CH964, perhaps from the 89th New York. Collector Robert Bohrn has collected numerals “8” and “9” used as hat insignia. Furthermore, Alford’s Brigade and Foster’s Brigade (see above) were in the same Division under General Vogdes, so it is reasonable to assume that they would have wintered near each other.

SITE FUNCTIONS AND HISTORY

Site 38CH920 was a brigade cemetery for two black infantry regiments. Apparently, the soldiers died of various diseases rather than combat wounds. The two regiments were camped near the cemetery and probably next to each other. They camped in the project area from November 1863 to February 13, 1864. At that time the two units left the island, however, the soldiers in the regimental hospitals remained behind. How long the hospitals remained at the winter camp location, and how long the brigade cemetery remained in use, is not known. Following abandonment, the site remained undisturbed for an unknown period of time. Then, as part of an extensive effort to exhume and collect the remains of soldiers throughout the South for reburial in National Cemeteries, the U.S. Government contracted with an unknown individual (or perhaps assigned a military unit) to exhume the 38CH920 burials. The burials were exhumed rather carelessly, leaving behind the remains SC1AA excavated in May of 1987. Two burials were entirely missed. The remains collected by this contractor may well have been taken to the National Cemetery at Beaufort, South Carolina. No other activities were indicated at 38CH920.

Site 38CH964 represented a multicomponent activity area, possibly used, abandoned and then reused. Water procurement, horse stabling and possibly blacksmithing were activities evident at the site. The site was also the
The investigations discussed in this report indicate that further archival work, military research concerned defining the archaeological expression or relic collectors, and the function, the occupation of the project area. Beyond the site clear function ob­ tained bottle and well area and then later as an area for regimental or company latrines.

The function of site 38CH965 remains unknown. The feature SCIAA discovered there had been heavily disturbed by bottle or relic collectors, and its function obscured by this action. It could simply represent another refuse pit, latrine, or some type of structure. There did not seem to have been intensive activities on the site. Whatever its function, the site was definitely part of the military occupation of the project area.

Locus A and C of site 38CH966, as originally defined, may well represent sutler’s activities as identified by relic collectors and the former landowner. The sites were not necessarily sutler’s camps. What is clear is that a large number of alcoholic beverage containers were abandoned at these two areas; these bottles presumably arrived on the Island as sutler’s stock. The artifact assemblages recovered from features at 38CH964 and 38CH965 were identical to the assemblages found at these loci, indicating that Locus A and C were created as a result of the military occupation of the project area. Beyond the site limits defined by CAS, SCIAA extended its testing at 38CH966 to sample a larger part of the project area. Excavations at Locus B encountered another well and other disturbed Civil War features.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The above site functions and identifications changed the framework of the research design originally proposed. The authors had hoped that the occupants of the sites could be clearly identified so that comparisons could be made between cultural assemblages from the various units represented. For example, comparisons might have been made between the material culture assemblages of white units and black units or between infantry and artillery units. Because the sites and their assemblages were not clearly linked to specific military units, this could not be done. Ironically, and unfortunately, while SCIAA recovered the human remains of the 55th Massachusetts and 1st North Carolina regiments, no formal archaeological work was conducted at their actual camp location, which remained a mystery until the very last phase of analysis. Thus, there is currently no artifact assemblage that can be clearly linked to these units.

However, the potential for such comparative research is still present at Folly Island. The work conducted to date, has identified the camp location of the 55th Massachusetts, and other unit camps probably could be pinpointed with further historical research. The investigations discussed in this report clearly indicate that further archival work, followed by further archaeological investigation on Folly Island, would provide the kind of data needed for comparative research. Still, despite the inability to link the assemblages to particular units, the work conducted has been, and will continue to be, extremely important for comparative work with other Civil War sites.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Site Patterning

One of the important questions addressed in this research concerned defining the archaeological expression of a Civil War campground. The investigations conducted at Folly Island have provided some clear indications of what might be expected at other Civil War camps, especially those on barrier and sea islands in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

The archaeological profile of the Civil War sites on Folly Island can be characterized as consisting of two layers. Uppermost was an A horizon (topsoil) which contained a moderate to light, evenly distributed, assemblage of military refuse. The soils and artifacts were highly mixed due to thick root growth and post-occupa­tional activities like logging. This upper layer extended as deep as 50 cm below the surface, but averaged approximately 30 cm. The underlying sand subsoil was riddled with features including refuse pits, latrines, wells, and possibly tent sites, although SCIAA did not actually excavate a feature that could be positively identified as a tent site. The camp was extensive, spreading over the entire project’s 42 acres, and historical documents indicate that it was much larger.

Based on historical documentation and indications from the archaeology, the authors strongly believe that the camp settlement pattern on Folly Island very much followed U.S. Army regulations (see Chapter II and Appendix D). The locations of officers’ tents, enlisted men’s tents, kitchens, sinks, and wells probably strictly followed these regulations. For instance, Major Fox, the officer in charge of laying out the winter camp of the 55th Massachusetts, even used surveying instruments. His sketch map of the 55th Massachusetts camp is very similar to the regulation infantry camp (compare Figure 2.4 with map in Appendix D). This strict patterning offers an opportunity for quick and efficient camp site excavation in the future.

If camp regulations were strictly followed elsewhere on Folly Island and at other Civil War camps, the authors believe that future excavations might attempt to locate camp features based on an expected military pattern. The challenge would be to discover a feature whose function...
was clearly evident, like a tent, latrine, or well. Then, following the expected pattern, the rest of the camps features could be located by measuring distances from the known feature to the suspected location of other features. The Principal Investigator has seen this method of excavation used quite successfully at Roman military camps in England. The pattern would only be diffused (or confused) by reuse of the site by successive units as was seen at 38CH964. However, it would be an extremely useful exercise to attempt such work at Folly Island or at other Civil War camps.

**Burial Patterning**

The burial patterns at 38CH920 were not clearly evident because of site disturbance, but some generalities can be made. The soldiers were buried in individual, usually shallow, graves dug to perhaps three to four feet below the original surface. The location of the cemetery on a dune ridge and the shallowness of the graves may be the result of the soldiers' fear of being buried in water, as the water table was close to the surface in low areas of island. The inconsistent distance between graves and the arrangement of graves in loose rows is similar to that resulting from long term use of civilian cemeteries, and may be evidence of informal burial ritual, as has been implied in historical sources.

Mortuary practices were easier to identify than burial patterning and it appeared that soldiers were buried in many different ways. Some were buried in coffins, others in their rubber blankets, some in both, and still others simply were placed in a grave without either covering. All but one burial lay in the extended supine position, aligned east/west with head to the west. Of those that could be observed, all had hands laid across the abdomen or chest. The soldiers' daily activities consisted of fatigue and picket duties. This labor was difficult, with human and animal muscle being the only sources of energy for building gun batteries, trench excavations, moving artillery and other such hard labor. Meanwhile soldiers also stood guard, and the cost of falling asleep on duty was possible execution.

The artifacts recovered, along with the extensive historical documentation, give archaeologists and historians a rich and detailed picture of soldier life on Folly Island. That picture is of a very isolated, Spartan life, filled with hard labor, boredom, tension and fear. Under these stressful conditions, it is remarkable that more soldiers did not die than was recorded, and that more serious morale and social problems did not occur than indicated. Life was not comfortable for any of the troops, and for black soldiers, the tension was probably greater due to racial prejudices.

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Artifacts testify to the soldiers' Spartan existence. The great lack of civilian-related artifacts and personal artifacts gives clear evidence of the isolated nature of the camp. The enlisted soldiers survived with few personal items other than those issued to them. Clothing was primarily military issue; only 27 civilian clothing artifacts were found at all sites compared with 292 military clothing related artifacts. Personal items from all four sites consisted only of a finger ring, a locket glass, pocket knives, a hard rubber pipe and two clay pipe fragments (excluding the writing implements as these may have been personal, but military issue).

The lack of civilian ceramics, other than alcoholic beverage containers, clearly was the result of the soldiers'
isolation. It is reasonable to assume that more ceramics would have been 'procured' for personal use, had there been the opportunity to come in contact with the civilian population. On Folly Island, the only way to procure civilian items would have been through sutlers or packages from home. Practically the only kitchen artifacts found were military issue mess kit materials. These items must have been rare and difficult to replace as may be indicated by the soldiers attempts to make drinking cups out of the glass bottles. Of course, the cut bottles may also simply represent an activity to counter boredom.

Adding to the stress of hard duty, isolation and lack of civilian comforts, was the stress of simple boredom. The artifacts and historic documents from Folly Island demonstrate a variety ways in which the soldiers sought relief. Besides the cut bottles noted above, whittled bullets also testify to the soldiers attempts to counter boredom.

Another manner in which the soldiers attempted to relieve boredom and other forms of stress on Folly Island was through alcohol consumption. The number of alcoholic containers in the assemblage (even if 38CH966 is discounted) cannot be accounted for strictly as 'pain relief' distributed by the regimental surgeon. The historic documents indicate the soldiers' desire for alcohol, and the artifact assemblage is physical evidence that they were securing it, even if it was officially contraband.

To lighten the burden of the soldiers, ladies aid societies sent packages. It is possible that some of the bottles of wine seen in the artifact assemblage were from this source. The packages also helped to clothe the soldiers and provide some variety in their diet. Certainly, the packages were a great source for lifting the soldiers' morale.

Beyond the above indications of some variety in soldier life on Folly Island, all other artifacts were related directly to work or to being soldiers; ammunition, barrels, shovels, horse equipage. To add to all of the above problems, the health of the soldiers was poor during the summer, although there was some relief in the winter. One source for the soldiers' poor health was probably their drinking water. Documents indicate that attempts were made to find better water by digging wells into the sand dunes rather than in low areas. The archaeological evidence for both types of well was found at 38CH964 and 38CH966.

SURVEY AND EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY FOR CIVIL WAR SITES

Based on the excavations at Folly Island, the authors can now offer some thoughts on the best methods for finding and excavating Civil War period military sites. The strongest lesson from Folly Island was that the traditional methods of archaeological site survey are inadequate for Civil War site discovery. Shovel testing was, and is, not a useful method on such sites.

At Folly Island, archaeologists failed on three attempts to correctly assess the sites using a systematic shovel testing regime. The first time was at 38CH920, when systematic shovel testing failed to discover some burials. The archaeologists changed to slot trenching and the burials were found. The second time was the use of shovel testing during the overall compliance-level survey of the project area. As a result of this testing only three small sites were recommended for further work by CAS. The Institute returned to Folly Island and used shovel testing in Phase II at those three sites. Only when the SCIAA's Field Director abandoned shovel testing in favor of more subjective feature selection at 38CH964 did the area's true complexity become known. In Phase III, the investigations were based almost entirely on selective sampling. Phase III proved to be the most productive effort in terms of time and energy expended.

The use of systematic shovel testing has been a time-honored method for site survey over large land areas, and the authors realize that this conclusion concerning the utility of shovel testing will be controversial. Archaeologists can not be faulted for continuing to use this method at Folly Island, and the authors are not advocating the abandonment of shovel testing altogether. In a general compliance survey, shovel testing remains an important method of locating other types of sites, particularly prehistoric components. However, shovel testing was not adequate for finding the Civil War components on Folly Island, and the method has also proved inadequate on Bray's Island (Robert Johnson, personal communication 1989). There, a similar Civil War period site was missed using systematic shovel testing. The site was found later using a metal detector. The shovel testing did not work because of the broad scatter of artifacts and dispersed nature of features characteristic of such Civil War camp sites. For these reasons, supplementary methods are recommended.

Based on the above discussion, the authors recommend the following methodology for Civil War site discovery and excavation. The first step is adequate historical research. This recommendation is made with full knowledge of the immensity of this task. However, secondary sources pertaining to the Civil War history are extensive, readily available, and should give some indication of the possibility of Civil War sites in any given area. Primary sources are more difficult to obtain, but they are well worth the effort needed to find them. As a routine part of every compliance survey in South Carolina, especially along the coast, the authors recommend a concerted effort in the local archives to identify possible Civil War camps or other related activities. If possible, a weeks research in the National Archives or other appropriate facility should
be conducted. This effort in the archives is worth several weeks effort in the field.

Another valuable source to check prior to fieldwork are the local relic collectors. While archaeologists can not condone the site destruction they cause, neither can they deny the average collector’s knowledge of his or her local area. Today survey archaeologists, faced with conducting time limited compliance-level work, do not always have the luxury of completing long-term research of an area they must survey. Interviewing local collectors, in conjunction with archival research, will prove very valuable in delimiting Civil War sites.

Once in the field archaeologists must turn to a revised field strategy. The authors strongly recommend the employment of a controlled or systematic metal detector survey at any suspected Civil War site. Metal detectors proved critical to the work at Folly Island, and to ignore their use is to misinterpret or miss entirely important archaeological features. Controlled metal detector surveys, or magnetometer surveys, may be the only feasible method for finding such sites. Obviously, metal detectors, in the wrong hands, can have disastrous results. However, archaeologists should adopt the best methods for the discovery of dispersed features, and at Folly Island, metal detectors were very useful for that purpose.

Preservation of sites is always the best alternative to excavation, however, if excavation of a Civil War site is necessary, the authors recommend a controlled survey, followed by stripping the area, if possible, to quickly locate subsurface deposits. This method proved very useful at the Bryan Cemetery and camp at New Bern (Phelps 1979), and would be the best method to reveal camp settlement patterns.

In the future assessment of the significance of Civil War sites, it must be remembered that most, if not all, Civil War sites have been disturbed prior to the arrival of the archaeologist. Folly Island was riddled with the holes dug by relic collectors and bottle hunters. However, the work at Folly Island has clearly demonstrated that previously collected sites still have archaeological value. Collectors are selective in their search for completely intact bottles or well-preserved metal specimens. While these kind of artifacts belong in public ownership for museum display, and their loss severely hinders archaeological interpretation, such loss and disturbance does not mean that disturbed sites are not worthy of study. The project area at Folly Island had been thoroughly collected over the past twenty years, yet valuable archaeological features still existed. Beyond the loss of museum quality specimens, the sherds and fragments of the Civil War camp still remained. Of course, archaeologists can not expect all collectors to be as ‘polite’ as the Folly Island collectors at 38CH965, where potholes were refilled with the original contents of the feature, sans the desired object.

In conclusion, two final comments can be made concerning archaeology at Civil War sites. In the beginning of this report it was stated that some will question the need for research at Civil War sites, given the amount of historical records that exist for such sites. What could archaeologists possibly learn that is not in the history books? Again, the answer to this is simply that the tremendous public and scholarly interest in this period of American history makes it critical to use every bit of evidence available. Archaeology is a part of that evidence. Archaeology is a relatively new technique in historic research and must not be overlooked. As a new technique, archaeology has theoretical and methodological problems. Archaeologists must learn how to apply the their technique to this particular historical period in order to learn useful, new information, about the Civil War. This will take time, and much further work at sites like Folly Island, before major contributions are recognized. Still, the work must be done.

Beyond history, archaeologists must also learn how to apply the evidence from Civil War sites to anthropological questions. They must learn how apply the artifacts collected to meaningful hypothesis testing. In this report, the authors have avoided establishing anthropological models using the evidence from Folly Island, primarily because there is so little comparative data available from other archaeological contexts. To extend the results of Folly Island archaeology to broader questions of human behavior would be premature, and should not be attempted until a larger data base is available. The authors hope that the information in this report represents a good beginning toward understanding Civil War sites, and that it is presented in such a manner that other archaeologists will find it useful for model building and hypothesis testing as the data base broadens.