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Savannah River Archaeology Research

The Savannah River Archaeological Research Program’s Cinematic Outreach Program

By George L. Wingard

Filmmaker Mark Albertin of Scrapbook Video Productions and I completed two projects this past year and uploaded them onto sites for public viewing. We have another in the works, and two more projects in the planning stages.

The first to be uploaded is a four-minute film describing the cultural resource management, research, and outreach mission of the SRARP. Originally created as an extra on the DVD of Albertin’s film Displaced: The Unexpected Fallout from the Cold War, (a film about the creation of the Savannah River Site and the removal of thousands of area residents—www.displaced.us) the short film has now been uploaded to the internet for easier access. The film can be accessed by visiting YOUTUBE.com then searching “Savannah River Archaeological Research Program—Cultural Resource Management.”

The second is an eleven-minute film about the archaeology of Carolina Bays. Filmed during excavations at a bay in Blackville, South Carolina, the film discusses the formation of Carolina Bays, the methods used in the excavation, and some of the artifacts discovered (Fig. 1). It can be found at YOUTUBE.com by searching “Savannah River Archaeological Research Program—Carolina Bay Research” or by going to the SRARP.org website and clicking the link.

In the spring 2011, filming began on a documentary about the slave potter Dave and an example of one of his alkaline-glazed stoneware vessels found by the SRARP on the Savannah River Site (SRS). So far, interviews have been conducted with Leonard Todd, (Fig. 2) author of The Slave Potter Dave, author Laban Hill, and illustrator Bryan Collier, collaborators on the book, Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave, and Illinois State University archaeologist, George Calfas, during his excavation at the Pottersville Site in Edgefield, South Carolina. Other interviewees will include Dr. Maggi Morehouse of the University of South Carolina/Aiken, Dr. Keith Stephenson of the SRARP, and Edgefield Potter Stephen Ferrell.

Fig. 1: Mark Albertin, (far right) filming the excavation at Frierson Bay near Blackville, South Carolina. In the unit, are Dr. Andrew Ivestor and Dr. Christopher Moore. (Photo by George Wingard)

Fig. 2: George Wingard interviewing author Leonard Todd for an upcoming film project about the slave potter Dave. (Photo by Mark Albertin)

The project will put Dave’s life into historical context by discussing what is known about Dave and the area in which he lived and worked. The excavation of one of Dave’s creations by the SRARP will also be highlighted: how it was discovered, why it was found where it was, and finally the use of the vessel as an outreach tool. It is hoped the film will be finished by mid-2012 so that it can be submitted to film festivals later in 2012.

Collaboration with Mark and Scrapbook Video Productions will continue with two new productions that will spotlight more SRARP research. In the planning stages is a short film about the research and excavation at Galphins Trading Post in Jackson, South Carolina and potentially a short on Native American research on the SRS. The use of short films and the internet make it simple to share research more concisely with interested individuals.

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