The Public and South Carolina’s Maritime Heritage: Two Heritage Trails

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THE PUBLIC AND SOUTH CAROLINA’S MARITIME HERITAGE:
TWO HERITAGE TRAILS

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Slide 1
SCIAA is state agency and a University of South Carolina research institute. Advantages of being both include: softer perception for the public, better research capability, ability to access to grants, private money and volunteers. I emphasize PUBLIC as the work we do is for the benefit of the diving and non-diving public and we often use volunteers on projects and gratefully accept private funds. In the middle image you can see Ashley Deming, our newest archaeologist and who will shortly assume management responsibility for the two heritage trails.

Slide 2
All cultural resources on state submerged lands are managed under the SCUAA of 1992. Much of our interaction with the public is through our Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program (SDAMP)...Hobby licensed divers, workshops and field training courses, volunteers and the trails.

Slide 3
Forefront of the program are the heritage trails, which highlight the range and diversity of South Carolina’s cultural resources associated with the state’s rich maritime heritage to both diving and non-diving visitors. Both located within a short travel from Charleston (one of the two tourism hubs) and are one of the centerpieces of cultural tourism in the area (after plantation visits, shopping, eating and the beaches). Waterproof information slates guide the visitor through each trail and provide information about each site, the immediate environment, and the flora and fauna one might encounter.

Slide 4
ASHLEY RIVER HERITAGE TRAIL-River was home to many of the wealthy and influential colonial merchants and plantation owners and was a constant source of phosphates during the late 19th century. The trail was designed as part of the South Carolina Heritage Corridor (from Upcountry to the Lowcountry, or for non South Carolinians, from the mountains to sea). It is pretty much exclusively for the paddler set.

Slide 5
The trail features 6 miles of narrow, winding river, containing a colonial dock associated with Dorchester, an early colonial town near the head of navigation on the river (1695-1750s), several wooden sailing craft, a steam tug, and motorized vessel. Some vessels may have been associated with the phosphate mining industry. Visible only at low tide.

Slide 6
COOPER RIVER HERITAGE TRAIL-If the Ashley R. was home to the rich, the Cooper was where many of the landowners had their working plantations and businesses.
The whole river system bears the signs of human intervention. The immediate landscape was completely modified from its pre-historic cypress swamps to rice fields through slave labor (puncheons, water control gates, rice mill). The Santee Canal, finished in 1900 improved navigation to the interior, and the Lake Moultrie Dam, upstream regulates the water flow, and diverted water flow from the neighboring Santee River into the Cooper bound for Charleston.

The trail is a 2-mile portion of the Cooper containing 6 submerged historic sites dating from 1705 through the early 20th century.

The 4 shipwrecks on the trail include: a small wreck of possibly British origin that was burned in 1781 by Colonel Wade Hampton, a local Revolutionary hero,

The Pimlico Wreck, a large-scantlinged, two-masted sailing vessel,

The Mepkin Wreck, a two-masted schooner dating to the mid 18th century, that sank carrying a cargo of cypress lumber, and

The Pimlico Barge, an early 20th century towing barge, and 4 anchors that came to us through various means.

At the head of the trail sits the Mepkin Dock, a Lincoln-log-construction rectangular dock associated with property once owned by wealthy merchant, entrepreneur, and late 18th-century statesman, Henry Laurens. Artifacts recovered from beneath the dock include this gold mechanical pencil with the name John Laurens, Henry’s son) engraved on its barrel.

However, it is the Strawberry Ferry Landing, at the downstream terminus of the trail, that the broadest currency for the trail.

It was the earliest ferry service in South Carolina, established in 1705, and served the main road between Charleston and Childesbury Towne, located on the bluff near the NE ferry landing. Through the 18th century, Childesbury Towne was the main entrepot for goods flowing from Charleston to the backcountry and from the backcountry and points north to Charleston and thence overseas, much of this traffic controlled by wealthy merchants like Henry Laurens and the Ball family.

The river has not been kind to the ferry ramp on the exposed SE side of the Cooper in spite of the best efforts of its current guardians. Compare the landing in 1998 (left) to the same landing photographed last week (right).
• Taken as a whole, both the Ashley and Cooper River Heritage Trails meet the criteria to be enrolled in the National MPA Program as to age, significance, context, integrity and diversity. Both reflect the economic and maritime history of the region and traditional cultural connections to the sea, while clearly demonstrating uses and value to this and future generations.

• Do they need additional protection? All the sites below mean low tide (both are tidally influenced) are protected by state law for human predation and those that extend through the intertidal region onto land are protected by purchase of the land by entities like SCPRT (Dorchester dock) and the Heritage Trust (Strawberry Ferry Landing/Childesbury) or by agreements with the landowners, such as the Trappist monks at Mepkin Abbey on which the Mepkin Dock is located. The sites were chosen in part because each had been systematically stripped of artifacts during the 1970s leaving only the structural components for scientific or recreational purposes. We utilize the Cooper River sites to train hobby divers and volunteers in underwater site recording techniques in our Field Training courses and ECU will conduct an academic field school on three of the sites this fall.

• The main benefit I see of enrollment in the MPA Program is having the ability to network nationally with the other groups in the system. I see it as rather akin to what Vic and I maintain with the annual Government Underwater Managers Forum at the SHA conferences and the State Underwater Archaeology Managers Meetings (SUAMM), whereby all parties recognize a commonality of the cultural resources we manage and benefit from the interaction and free exchange of ideas, experiences and solutions in dealing with these fragile vestiges of the world’s maritime heritage.

To find out about this and many other underwater archaeology projects conducted by the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology’s Maritime Research Division go to http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/sciaa/mrd/mrd_index.html
The Public and South Carolina’s Maritime Heritage: Two Heritage Trails
Maritime Research Division’s SDAMP Program

- Management of Hobby Diver Licenses
- Public presentations and workshops for dive clubs and community groups
- The Cooper River and Ashley River self-guided heritage trails
- Volunteer opportunities for recreational divers
Ashley River Heritage Trail
Strawberry Wreck

ARCHAEOLOGY

The site of the Strawberry Wreck is located at the

Strawberry Wreck is a significant site, providing valuable information about the historical

DIVING ADVICE

The dimensions for the measurements are as follows:

The site is best approached from the north, with the wreck situated approximately 1.5 miles offshore.

Be aware of the prominent cjwreck on the north side, as well as the shallow areas to the south.

To access the site, use a vessel with a minimum of 10 feet of draft.

Be aware of the nearby shallow areas and the potential hazards associated with the area.

Upon arrival, continue on a straight course to the site, ensuring safe navigation and adherence to all

For more information, contact the local dive clubs or the dive association in the area.
Pimlico Wreck
Mepkin Wreck

THE MEPKIN SHIPWRECK
1. Sternpost
2. Mast Step
3. Stanchion notches
4. Frame
5. Outer hull planking
6. Keelson
7. Stern area
8. Loose frames
9. Cargo of Shingles
10. Log

Artistic Sketch of Sue

COOPER RIVER UNDERWATER HERITAGE TRAIL
Diving the Mepkin Plantation Wreck

PLANTATION BOATS
Small plantation owned schooners and dinghy boats were used by planters to trade with other plantations and to the West Indies. Typically, they were watered by ebb and flow and were relatively small, with their largest being about 90 tons. A larger schooner could have a proper keel, whereas a small one would have a flat bottom. Many plantations had their own 90-ton schooner with at least two, a larger one and a smaller one. The larger was used for trade, the smaller for internal use. The hold was not completely closed but was divided into three sections. The schooner’s cargo was not limited to timber, as it was used for trade and transportation of goods.

HENRY LAURENS: A PLANTER, MERCHANT, AND POLITICIAN
A leading statesman, Laurens is a key figure in the history of South Carolina. He was a prominent owner in the early 18th century, and his estates included land on the north bank of the Cooper River. He was a member of the South Carolina Assembly in 1755 and served as a delegate to the Continental Congress. He was also a member of the Royal Society of England and a member of the Board of Trade. Laurens was a staunch supporter of the American Revolution and played a key role in the formation of the United States.

Mepkin Plantation
In 1761, a non-descript house was built on the south bank of the Cooper River. It was the original home of the Mepkin Estate, owned by John Laurens. The house was subsequently used as a dwelling for the plantation workers. The plantation was eventually purchased by the Laurens family. The Mepkin Estate was later the site of the Mepkin Abbey.

Henry Laurens

16-foot guideline to the mooring buoy monument
Pimlico Barge and “Anchor Farm”

**Artistic drawing of Pimlico Barge**

1. Towing Ring
2. Exterior Longitudinal Planks
3. Gunwale
4. Interior Transverse Planks
5. Chute Log Ramp
6. Bunking Pieces
7. Plastered Sides

35 foot guideline to the mooring barge monument

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**COOPER RIVER UNDERWATER HERITAGE TRAIL**

**DIVING THE PIMLICO BARGE**

**RICE CULTIVATION**

Rice cultivation at Pimlico Plantation, the former residence of the first governor of the Colony of Virginia, featured a variety of crops, including rice. The cultivation of rice was a significant part of the plantation economy, and the process involved the use of laborers, particularly enslaved African Americans. The rice was grown in long, narrow fields, called “rice gardens,” which were typically planted with black rice, a variety that was resistant to disease and adapted to the local soil conditions.

**THE PIMLICO BARGE**

Barges were important for the transportation of goods and people by water. They were essential for trade and commerce in the colonial era. The Pimlico Barge was a typical example of a colonial era barge, designed for use in the shallow waters of the Cooper River. The barge was equipped with essential features, including a deck for cargo and passengers, and a hull that was strong enough to navigate the river's currents and tides. The barge played a crucial role in the transportation of goods and the movement of people within the colony.

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**Pimlico Plantation**

The barge is a remnant of Pimlico plantation. According to the Smithsonian Institution, the historian notes that Pimlico was a plantation that was originally part of the larger estate of the Virginia Company. The plantation was later purchased by John Pinkney, a wealthy merchant, who expanded the property and added new buildings.

The Pinkney family lived in the plantation’s mansion, which is now a museum. The mansion was built in the early 19th century and features a large, elegant room with high ceilings and large windows. The mansion is open to the public and offers guided tours to visitors.

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**“Anchor Farm”**

“Anchor Farm” was a historic site located on the Cooper River in Charleston, South Carolina. The farm was once owned by the Pinkney family, who were prominent figures in the local community. The site is significant for its role in the history of agriculture and colonial life. The farm was a leader in the production of rice, which was a major crop in the region. The site is preserved and maintained by the National Park Service.
Mepkin Dock
Strawberry Ferry Landing