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

Christopher F. Amer
University of South Carolina - Columbia, amerc@mailbox.sc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/mrd_prsn
Part of the Anthropology Commons

Publication Info
2012.
http://www.cas.sc.edu/sciaa/
© 2012 by The South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Maritime Research Division at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact SCHOLARC@mailbox.sc.edu.
THE PUBLIC AND SOUTH CAROLINA’S MARITIME HERITAGE:
TWO HERITAGE TRAILS

Christopher F. Amer
State Underwater Archaeologist
South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology
University of South Carolina

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](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
Cooper River Heritage Trail

To the southeast is the “Hidden” - the area that flourished from the coast to the city. This is also referred to as the “Portman Flats” by the citizens of the area. The area is bordered by the Cooper River to the east, the harbor to the west, and the mainland to the south.

The western part of the area is where the Cooper River Heritage Trail begins. The area is bordered by the Cooper River to the east, the harbor to the west, and the mainland to the south.

The eastern part of the trail is where the Cooper River Heritage Trail begins. The area is bordered by the Cooper River to the east, the harbor to the west, and the mainland to the south.

The southern part of the area is where the Cooper River Heritage Trail begins. The area is bordered by the Cooper River to the east, the harbor to the west, and the mainland to the south.

The northern part of the area is where the Cooper River Heritage Trail begins. The area is bordered by the Cooper River to the east, the harbor to the west, and the mainland to the south.

The central part of the area is where the Cooper River Heritage Trail begins. The area is bordered by the Cooper River to the east, the harbor to the west, and the mainland to the south.

The trail follows the Cooper River to the north, past the city of Goose Creek, and then turns west at the railroad bridge.

Flora and Fauna

The area is home to a variety of wildlife, including birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The Cooper River also supports a large number of fish species, including trout, bass, and perch.

Diving and Mooring Information

Diving in the Cooper River involves a variety of different currents, tides, and water temperatures. Divers should be aware of the currents, tides, and water temperatures to avoid getting caught in a current.

Mooring is available at the City of Goose Creek, Moncks Corner, and the railroad bridge.

Cooper River Heritage Trail
Pimlico Wreck
Mepkin Wreck

THE MEPKIN SHIPWRECK

1. Stempost
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 Stave

COOPER RIVER UNDERWATER HERITAGE TRAIL

Diving the Mepkin Plantation Wreck

PLANTATION BOATS

Small plantations owned by several masters and their family, and a few by small commercial farmers. Although the majority of the colonists who had been to England and their families brought with them a variety of watercraft used in the Mediterranean, the colonial style was often quite different. The early settlers were often水面植田

HENRY LAURENS:
A PLANTER, MERCHANT, AND POLITICIAN

Henry Laurens was a prominent figure in the South Carolina colonial government. He was a successful planter, merchant, and politician, and served as a representative in the South Carolina General Assembly. He played a key role in the American Revolution and was a delegate to the Continental Congress. In 1776, he was appointed as the first United States minister to France.

MEPKIN PLANTATION

In 1743, the land grant of the South Carolina plantation was surveyed and divided among the slaves. It is considered one of the largest and most successful plantations in the colony. The plantation was operated by slave labor and produced a variety of crops, including cotton, rice, and tobacco. The Léger family owned the plantation from the late 1700s. The wood cemetery on the site is believed to be the oldest in the region.

Henry Laurens was a successful planter, merchant, and politician, serving as a representative in the South Carolina General Assembly. He was a delegate to the Continental Congress and was appointed as the first United States minister to France.
Pimlico Barge and “Anchor Farm”

Cooper River Underwater Heritage Trail

Pimlico Plantation

The barge is owned by Pimlico/Bazillion Farm. Pimlico/Bazillion Farm is a family-owned farm that dates back to the 17th century. The farm was originally used for tobacco farming, but it was later converted to cotton production. The Pimlico Barge was used for transporting cotton from the fields to the mill.

Rice Cultivation

Rice was a major crop in the area, and it was often grown in the fields surrounding the banks of the Cooper River. The Pimlico Barge was used to transport the rice from the fields to the mill.

The Pimlico Barge

The barge was used to transport a variety of goods, including rice, cotton, and other agricultural products. It was also used to transport people, as it could carry up to 20 passengers. The barge was built to withstand the rigors of the Cooper River, and it was well-suited for the purpose of transporting goods and people.

Artistic Drawing of Pimlico Barge

35 foot guideline to the new mooring barge monument

1. Towing Ring
2. Exterior Longitudinal Planks
3. Gunwale
4. Interior Transverse Planks
5. Chute Log Ramp
6. Backing Pieces
7. Planked Sides
Mepkin Dock
Strawberry Ferry Landing
Christopher F. Amer
South Carolina State Underwater Archaeologist
South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology
University of South Carolina
amerc@sc.edu