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Flotsam and Jetsam - March 1996

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Flotsam and Jetsam

Volume Seven, Number One, SCIAA, Underwater Archaeology Division, March 1996

Short Takes

Oops! Somehow Backwards It Came Out

For the past few years, W. Doyle Clifton (hobby license #747) of Burton, S.C., has been sending us professional-quality drawings of some of the artifacts he had been finding as well as humorous cartoons related to diving in South Carolina. We have published many of these, adding greatly to the look of this newsletter.

With that in mind, we would like to apologize to Mr. Clifton for reversing his name and calling him Doyle Oifton in the December 1995 issue of The Flotsam and Jetsam. The person responsible for this mistake has been assigned guard duty over the C.S.S. Hunley site—in a jon boat.

History, Archaeology And Hawaii, Too

The University of Hawaii at Manoa is offering two courses this summer that may be of interest to those of you who are serious about history and archaeology, or just need a good excuse to go to Hawaii.

The first course is titled "World Maritime History," and runs from June 10 to 28. This course will survey maritime history from the earliest times to the present with emphasis on the evolution of technology, the (Continued on Page 8)

Prehistoric Artifact Workshop Held

When most persons think of prehistoric artifacts they think of points (what many call arrowheads), but prehistoric man used a wide variety of stone tools, Tommy Charles, a prehistoric artifact expert on SCIAA staff, told the twelve participants who attended the Prehistoric Artifact Workshop held Saturday, March 23, at SCIAA headquarters in Columbia.

Axes, celts, drills, scrapers, atlatl weights, and choppers are just some of the other lithic tools used by prehistoric man, Charles told those attending the workshop sponsored by the Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program.

Participating in the workshop were: Darryl, Dale, and Brian Boyd, all from Aiken; Jimmy Moss from Abbeville; Alec Blalock from Camden; Tom Hartness from Anderson; Dee Boehme from Summerville; Bonnie and Daniel Wiggins from Timmonsville; Joseph Lewis from Florence; Debra Holt from Florence; and Debra Lindsay from Timmonsville.

James D. Spirek Joins UW Archaeology Division Staff

The South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology has a new underwater archaeologist on staff. James D. Spirek, most recently of Pensacola, FL, joined the Underwater Archaeology Division at the beginning of March.

Prior to coming to South Carolina, Jim spent more than three years as field director of the Pensacola Shipwreck Survey and the Emanuel Point Shipwreck Project, both for the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research.

Jim has a master's degree in maritime history and nautical archaeology from East Carolina University in Greenville, NC. While in North Carolina he also worked as a field archaeologist on the Atlantic Beach Project and on the Savannah River Survey for Tide-water Atlantic Research.

He also served as principal investigator on the Southfield Project, as archaeologist on the Mobile Bay Search, as an assistant on the Western Ledge Shipwreck Project and on the Apostle Island Survey, all under the auspices of East Carolina University. He also worked as an excavator on the Yorktown Shipwreck Project for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Jim brings to SCIAA vast experience in remote sensing, public education, shipwreck excavation, underwater photography and videography, archaeological and historical research, and report writing. He is also an accomplished illustrator.
Plantation's "Pile Of Trash" . . .

by George Pledger

When Robert Black of Seabrook, S.C., (hobby license #2579) called the SCIAA Underwater Archaeology Division office in Charleston and offered several containers of pottery shards that had been collected from a Combahee River plantation site, Lynn Harris jumped at the chance to have a ceramic sample from a defined area (see the December 1995 issue of this newsletter).

When the "sample" of pottery shards arrived at the office it consisted of several hundred pounds of mixed prehistoric, colonoware, stoneware, earthenware, and porcelain. If it was made or used in the Southeast, there was undoubtedly a sample in the several large containers.

For those of you who have attended SCIAA's Underwater Archaeology Field School (the next one is in May) you can imagine the look that Carl Naylor and Eddie Weathersbee gave Lynn for allowing this mass of material through the front door. My first reaction was "what a pile of trash," but that is what most sport divers are all about—old trash. And, this pile of "trash" would give us a view of a river site that would reach back through five millennia of human occupation. It is greatly appreciated that Robert Black would share his find with the rest of us.

Under Lynn's supervision, the samples were separated into groups—prehistoric, stoneware, earthenware, and porcelain. My part in this project was to identify the fragments that were either porcelain or earthenware with porcelain-like decorations. This consisted of more than 300 pieces of porcelain, pearlware, and creamware. I managed to identify the designs on 178 of these through publications such as Ivor Noel Hume's "A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America," and Ralph and Terry Kovel's "Dictionary of Marks on Pottery and Porcelain." Also, several local antique dealers contributed their expertise in the subject of export porcelain and custom creamware patterns from the early nineteenth century.

Using these sources, many of the

(Continued on Page 3)
fragments were identified by their patterns or by the proprietary or house marks on them. For example, several of the pieces were marked “Folch’s Genuine Stone China,” which, I learned, was made in the Staffordshire area of England around 1835. This type of ceramic was in high style between 1830 and 1845.

What was left took a little more research. Several shards were identified as Canton porcelain (1790-1842) by their greenish-gray body. Some shards pre-dated early versions of willow and bridge patterned pearlware which began production in England around 1795. Some good examples of Chinese export porcelain were among the fragments and dated from 1790 to 1830.

Custom fired stoneware and European creamware was also found that dates from 1830 to 1850. These have very un-Oriental designs, mostly pastoral scenes, and one can only regret that one of these scenes was not of the Combahee River plantation itself.

Historic sources already tell much about this plantation site. For instance, we know that prior to 1775 the Middletons and Atkins owned the immediate area of this plantation and the nearby Middleton homesite was the scene of a Tory raid in 1779.

Between 1785 and 1790 Nathaniel Heyward started to acquire plantations along the Combahee River, including the plantation where these ceramics were found. The Heywards built a modest cottage on this site which continued to be Nathaniel Heyward’s main plantation throughout his lifetime. He did own other plantations however, including Middle House, Rose Hill, Pleasant Hill, Lewisburg, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Copenhagen, White Hall, The Pines, Savannnah, The Vineyard, Marshland, Clay Hall, and Blanford, all mostly on the Combahee River.

From the diary of Major General George Izard, the Heywards were well known to Charleston as well as Savannnah society. General Izard’s diary entry for January 31, 1815 notes that the house at this particular plantation was not exceptional, but the entertainment was “good and comfortable.”

Nathaniel Heyward was acclaimed by his peers as the most successful rice planter of his time. Heyward’s rice production for 1815 was reported to be in excess of 4,000 tons. The Mills Atlas of 1826 shows two rice stamping mills hard by the Combahee River above and below “The Heyward Place.” These rice mills operated until 1863.

Nathaniel Heyward died in 1851 and his vast holdings were divided among his nine children. The plantation house on the Combahee was destroyed by Yankee raiders on June 23, 1863 when Col. Montgomery’s 1st South Carolina Black Regiment was moved up the Combahee from Port Royal by steamer. A description of this raid can be found in the Charleston Mercury for July 3, 1863.

This tract was kept with the Heyward family until 1911 when it was bought by the DuPonts who built the house that presently occupies this site.

What can a pile of broken dishes add to all this? By identifying and dating the various shards of pottery we are able to add significant details to the story of this plantation. First of all, the prehistoric pottery found on the bottom of the Combahee River reveals a very un-Oriental designs, mostly pastoral scenes, and one can only regret that one of these scenes was not of the Combahee River plantation itself.

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Shipwreck Work Continues On Banks Of The Ashley River

by Lynn Harris

During the winter months, the Charleston office staff and trained avocationals have been putting in many muddy hours working on the banks of the Ashley River. Billy Judd, a SCIAA Research Associate, reported several shipwrecks in this historic area to SCIAA last year (see the May 1995 issue of this newsletter), and we are now in the process of documenting these watercraft which date from colonial times to the twentieth century. Funding for the project is being provided by a Robert Stephenson Award.

Three sites were selected for this season of initial research. Selection was based on criteria such as how vulnerable the specific area was to boat wake, the practical logistics involved in recording important features without removing large quantities of overburden, and how these sites could contribute towards filling in the gaps our historical knowledge of the construction and utility of these boats in the larger context of South Carolina's inland transportation and economic setting. Essentially, we were trying to combine research and management goals.

The project also provided opportunities for SCIAA Part I Field Training Course students to obtain field experience and accumulate credits towards Part II certification. Many thanks to Doug Boehme, Dee Boehme, and George Pledger for all their hard work. Equipment donations such a tall ladder for aerial photographs and plastic for artifact tags helped to stretch the grant money even further. Additionally, we had the enthusiastic assistance of College of Charleston Anthropology major Rusty Clark and history major Eddie Weathersbee. April Cox from the James Island High School mentorship program joined us on-site for a day—the only day that it snowed in the Charleston area this winter!

These riverbank sites required careful planning since the work had to be conducted within tidal windows. Usually we managed to work for at least two or three hours around the low tide window while the sites were exposed. Part of the crew uncovered the timbers using garden hoses with water pumped from the river. Others recorded measurements and construction features. Wood samples were taken from each component (keel, keelson frames, planking etc.) to determine what types of woods were being used to build these boats. The wood expert, Lee Newsome of the Center for Archaeological Investigations at Southern Illinois University, will be identifying and analyzing these samples for us in the coming months.

The three vessels that were documented include a tugboat (with a length of 20.62 meters and beam of 6.45 meters), a motorized wooden vessel (length 13.75 meters, and beam of 2.85 meters), and another wooden vessel (length 17 meters and beam 2.82 meters) which is probably a sailing ship, although sections of the keelson are missing so there is no evidence of maststeps and rigging arrangements. For particulars on the tugboat, see the May 1995 issue of The Flotsam and Jetsom.

The framing pattern on the sailing vessel consisted of sets comprised of a floor timber and two first futtocks on either side fastened together laterally with metal bolts. The very square 90 degree rise of first futtocks, almost resembling standard "knees," is unusual compared to the earlier nineteenth century vessels the Institute has recorded. This was evidently a very boxy-shaped boat. The floor timbers and a disarticulated keelson both displayed distinctive slots cut to fit snugly together, locking the floor timbers into place.

On the motorized vessel site, a shaft log used to support the propeller shaft and engine beams straddling the keel provide clues that this vessel was motorized and dated to the latter part of the 1800s or early 1900s. The hull of this vessel was heavily planked, with three layers of outer hull planking in the aft section near the shaft log and two layers in the forward areas. One of the technical problems with early propeller-driven wooden vessels was that the vibration of the shaft caused hull planking to loosen and leak. The weight of an engine on a wooden hull also probably required the additional reinforcement such as extra layers of hull planking.

Apart from dates provided from construction clues and fastening types, both vessels yielded small chunks of what we believe to be phosphate in the bilges. This geological substrate was mined extensively along rivers in the postbellum years for agricultural fertilizer. Some of the most notable productive mines were situated along the upper Ashley River. The first mines were established in 1867, and by the 1880s, several operations flourished, due largely to South Carolina's virtual monopoly of phosphate production in its early years. In the 1890s, however, natural disasters, financial woes, and competition from mines and mills in other Southern states combined to send the Charleston area industry into a slump. It is very likely that these vessels we are studying were part of the phosphate mining business and used to transport miners, equipment and phosphate up and down the Ashley River. It is interesting to note how far upriver vessels of this size could maneuver.
Below—Frames indicate original curve of hull on sailing vessel.

Below—Shaft Log on motorized vessel shows shaft hole (bottom, right).

Right—Framing of motorized vessel shows boxiness of hull.

Above—Eddie Weathersbee, left, Dee Boehme and George Pledger take a break from recording timbers on the sailing vessel.

Above—Exposed remains of sailing vessel.
Hobby Diver, UW Site Data Shows Some Interesting Trends

by Lynn Harris

Now that readily available sources of information have been entered into the Underwater Archaeology Division's hobby diver and site databases, we have reached a plateau of sorts, and a report is underway. Here is a sample of of some of the preliminary information.

Looking at the types of shipwrecks we have in South Carolina, so far the majority we have recorded are sailing vessels, dating to the antebellum (21%) and Civil War Years (27%). Cross references to the hard copies reveals that most of the sites (mainly artifact scatters) reported by divers are located in rivers rather than offshore. So, come on divers—who are all those steamboats and offshore shipwreck sites? We need to fill in the gaps.

As anticipated, most hobby diving (47%) takes place in the Cooper River, followed by the Ashley River (20%). The Ashley River? Of course, not all our data comes from hobby divers. Most is through historic research (72%), followed by hobby reports (43%) and from site files submitted by SCIAA archaeologists (22%). The latter category can be misleading since many sites reported by hobby divers have subsequently been listed in the files under the name of the archaeologist who went out to assess the site. Recently we have been trying to encourage divers, especially Field Training Course participants, to submit this extra paperwork so that your name, as the discoverer, will appear in the official records.

In terms of hobby diver trends, the most licenses between 1995 and 1996 were issued to the coastal areas—Charleston area (61%), followed by Beaufort (28%) and Georgetown (11%). The majority of out-of-state hobby divers come from Georgia and North Carolina, with Florida lagging in the rear.

Since 1989, when we started offering training courses, 123 divers have been certified. Carl notes that 98 (80%) of these have been male and only 25 (20%) female!

Of the total number of hobby reports submitted by divers, 25% had included maps showing site locations and 15% have included drawings and photographs.

Good work! Hopefully the number will be even higher next year.
Distribution of Hobby Licenses issued to Geographic Regions of SC

- Coastal
- Midlands
- Upstate

Distribution of Out-of-State Hobby Licenses in 1995

- Pennsylvania
- Tennessee
- Arizona
- New York
- Alabama
- Florida
- N. Carolina
- Georgia

Percentage of Hobby License Types issued During 1996

- Two-Year Licenses
- Instructional Licenses
- Family Licenses
- Six-Month Licenses

Site Types Reported by Hobby Divers during 1995

- Shipwrecks
- Artifacts

N=388
N=49
N=166
N=209
expansion of maritime commerce and enterprises, naval warfare and the impacts of cross-cultural encounters between oceanic peoples. Instructor for this course is William N. Still, Jr, formerly of East Carolina University. For more information on this course call: 1-800-862-6628.

The other course, “Maritime Archaeology Techniques,” will run from July 1 to 31. This course provides a basic introduction to maritime history and the scientific methods and techniques employed in underwater archaeology. For more information on this course call: 1-808-956-8433 or Internet: sherwood@hawaii.edu, or World Wide Web: http://www2.hawaii.edu/mop/mop_mast.html.

Girls On The Rise

Lynn Harris shows two Girls Scouts a bandmask during the “Girls On The Rise” Career Fair held March 2 at the Short Stay Naval Recreational Facility outside Moncks Corner. Sponsored by the Carolina Lowcountry Girl Scout Council, the special program presented career opportunity information to Girl Scouts aged 13 to 17 from a nine county area. This information included hints on money management and resume writing in addition to specific career representatives who apprised the young women of opportunities in various fields, such as underwater archaeology. (Photo by Dee Boehme).