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# Archeological Recommendations for the Exchange Place Site, Kingsport, Tennessee

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ARCHEOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE  
EXCHANGE PLACE SITE, KINGSPORT, TENNESSEE

by

Stanley South  
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EXCHANGE PLACE SITE, KINGSPORT, TENNESSEE

Introduction

The Exchange Place site is a farm homestead of the early 1800's, having a hewn log house and several outbuildings surviving from this period. The spring house, smokehouse and store building are of particular interest, as well as the ruin of a cook's cabin with some of the logs and timbers still in place. This project of The Netherland Inn Association, Inc. is under the direction of Mr. E. D. Heppert, Jr. A visit to the site was made on May 16, 1973, to make recommendations regarding the archeological potential and requirements for the future development of the site as a farm homestead of the 1850's period. Appendix I of this report is a summary of the project prepared by The Netherland Inn Association, Inc., entitled "Exchange Place", which outlines the goals of the project.

As The Netherland Inn Project is fortunate in having the research and leadership drive in Mr. and Mrs. Spoden, so the Exchange Place is fortunate in having Mr. Heppert to manage and carry out the research on this project. Mr. Heppert's engineering skills are particularly valuable, allowing him to visualize the broad view relationship between various features and buildings, roads and property lines, so that a master plan can be developed that will consider all these aspects of the project. I would urge the formation of a master plan of development as one of the first steps toward further action at the site. Also needed is a detailed research report on the property written by Mr. Heppert or others that will deal with the information regarding original grant lines, road locations at various periods of time, origin of the name "Exchange Place", various theories regarding the origin, the title history from owner to owner, data as to the use of the property, an outline of the kind of documents available, etc., all of which Mr. Heppert has at hand, but as yet has not compiled into a research package relating to the property. This basic research document should be prepared as soon as possible, and up-dated as more information comes to light. In this statement should be copies of letters from the generous donor of the property, Mr. William A. Stuart, who remembers details from his childhood when he visited the farm and spent many happy days there. This information is being gathered by Mr. Heppert, and with some relatively little effort it can be compiled into what will become the basic documentary history of the site.

The study of this site involved background discussion with Mr. Heppert, probing in the yard to locate archeological features, opening exploratory holes to examine the features located with the probe, and making notes using the Craig Electronic Notebook, which were later transcribed for use in writing this report.

As mentioned above, Mr. Heppert's engineering ability has acted toward laying out the site in a master grid plan, and assigning site numbers to various features, which provides an excellent means of discussing and recording data about each feature. These site numbers will be used here for con-

venience, and to allow this report to conform with the excellent site plan research Mr. Heppert already has underway.

*Site No. 1; The Log House*

There is reason to believe that the log house dates from the eighteenth century period, and that additions were made in an extensive manner, with outbuildings, etc. added in the early years of the nineteenth century. All these details of points of evidence are well understood by Mr. Heppert, and hopefully each facet of interest will be discussed by him in his master research plan. Particularly of interest is the alignment of structures relative to the original grant line as opposed to those that do not so align.

Restoration work has already begun on the log section of the house that stood originally, with a caretaker living in the rear wing addition, which will eventually be torn away as the restoration progresses. A tentative probing and digging by Mr. Heppert in front of the house (which was originally the rear), has revealed footings for the original porch, according to Mr. Heppert. Before the porch is rebuilt onto these footings I would like to see more archeological work done around the rear of the house, provided Mr. Heppert's digging has not too badly disturbed the area. Such archeology would locate fragments of china and other artifacts that would be valuable in helping to determine whether the log house was indeed occupied in the eighteenth century as is suspected. A profile from the edge of the house toward the south would reveal evidence as to the location of the old road that went past the house, very near the porch at one time. Mr. Heppert is anxious to locate the exact location of this road so it can be restored, but I urge that archeology here be done before any machines are brought in to landscape or re-establish any roads. An immediate problem exists here in that the drainage from the area south of the main house is toward the house, causing a dampness problem in wet seasons. I have suggested to Mr. Heppert that this might be taken care of, until the services of an archeologist can be obtained, by placing railroad cross-ties along the edge of the original porch line, and soil piled against them on the south side, so as to provide a deflecting barrier for water that tends to wash against the house. Hopefully this will be done as a temporary measure until the porch and yard area can be examined archeologically.

When archeology is done around the main house structure excavation should be done on each side of the house, using five foot squares aligned with the standing structure and not to Mr. Heppert's grid. However, the master grid points should indeed be used as basic reference points to tie in with the grid used around the house itself. Profiles should be left at various intervals, to allow the layers of soil accumulated around the house to be studied and photographed and drawn by the archeologist in his effort at unravelling the sequence of occupation and use of the area around the house.

When the wing at the rear of the house is removed, archeology could be done there to recover information that may be surviving beneath this addition, particularly beneath the porch, as to walks, footings, and other information relating to the original front of the house.

### *Site No. 2, The Kitchen*

Mr. Stuart remembered from his childhood that a separate kitchen building stood behind the original log house before the present wing was built. He recalled that the chimney was on the north end of the kitchen. By using a steel probe the stone foundation wall for this kitchen was located, and by digging at the corners the foundation was found to measure 20 feet long running north and south, and 18.5 feet wide, east and west, with an exterior chimney at the north end, just as Mr. Stuart had remembered. This kitchen ruin lies beneath the north end of the added wing, and partly beyond it, as revealed in the sketch map provided by Mr. Heppert after our visit to the site (Appendix II of this report).

This ruin should be archeologically revealed and the details of construction noted for use at the time when the kitchen may be reconstructed on the original foundation. No more exploratory excavation is needed on this site until the archeologist comes to carry out the entire stripping and examination of this ruin. This archeological work should not be planned until the rear wing is removed from over the site.

### *Site No. 3, Walks for the Present Wing*

Above the kitchen ruin are rows of stones representing the edge of a walk four feet wide that once extended around the present wing addition. These are recent, being of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, and can be removed by the archeologist once he has plotted their position and photographed them after removing the grass to expose the walks. Of course the archeologists will photograph and draw all details regarding the original kitchen as standard procedure when he excavates the ruin.

### *Site No. 4, A Dependency Building Ruin*

Just east of the kitchen ruin a stone foundation wall was located and corners uncovered. This structure appears to have a cellar, and ceramic fragments from the early nineteenth century were found here, indicating this was probably a dependency building associated with the early nineteenth century occupation of the site. This structure may have been a root cellar and herb house, or possibly a cold cellar, though with the very fine spring house surviving one would suspect that the root cellar and herb house interpretation might be a better suggestion. However, this ruin should be carefully excavated archeologically to reveal its size and other details that hopefully will allow for a more positive identification of the use of this dependency building.

### *Site No. 5, Rubble from a Ruin*

This area east of the original kitchen and north of the dependency ruin just discussed above revealed a rubble of brick and stone beneath the surface of the ground, and apparently represents a ruin of some sort. This may be an extension of the building represented at Site No. 4, but only

thorough archeology here can determine what is represented by this rubble. In this entire area there will likely be considerable kitchen midden thrown from the kitchen during its use, so all artifacts found by the archeologist should be kept, and close provenience control maintained so as to aid in the interpretation and dating of the various ruins in this area. This, of course, is standard procedure followed by competent archeologists.

*Site No. 6, Rubble Along the Garden Fence*

Probing in the area of the garden fence, just beyond the kitchen ruin, revealed stones beneath the surface. These were probably thrown out from the garden during cultivation, but some exploratory archeology might be done to check this out just in case there is another dependency ruin in this area, a privy hole, or perhaps a walk leading at one time to the garden. These are all possibilities that must be checked out at any site where probing reveals brick or stone beneath the surface.

*Site No. 9, Stone Edge to a Road*

At a distance of twenty-five feet south of the log house a row of stones can be seen paralleling the house. These are single stones apparently forming the edge of a driveway or road, thought to be the edge of the old stage road. Mr. Heppert has indicated this on his sketch map as representing the north edge of the road, which it appears to be from the present information we have. However, archeological work here to reveal the road bed and edge should be done by stripping off the sod and revealing any underlying stones or hard surface area. The surface may be found to be hard enough to allow the entire road surface to be exposed archeologically and left exposed as an exhibit feature. Cutting a backhoe slot from the house across this area is an emergency measure that could be done to locate the exact position of the road, provided there was present a competent archeologist who could read and correctly interpret the profile. However, such emergency measures cannot be justified at this site where there is no excuse for rushing into anything with stop-gap or emergency approaches. We might as well approach the site archeologically as it should be handled, and work the master plan around this concept of methodical, step-by-step procedure involving research and archeology to interpret the site in an authentic manner. Authenticity is a key word meaning worthy of acceptance of belief ... trustworthy. In order for an explanatory exhibit, a restoration or a reconstruction to be authentic it must be anchored in documentation from the archives and archeology so that the result you see is "worthy of acceptance", something you can "believe" in, and in which one can put his "trust". These are basic philosophical concepts that should be kept in mind throughout the future development of the Exchange Place site. To achieve the requirement of authenticity there has to be proper background research in history, archeology, architecture, tradition and common sense, as well as having parallel examples in the area studied and recorded as supporting documentation for any of our restorations or reconstructions.

*Site No. 10, A Cobblestone Area*

Just south of the main log house, and a distance of 37 feet from it is a cobblestone area measuring 17 feet wide, north and south, and about 37 feet long, east and west (see sketch map in Appendix II). This area was located with the probe, and three small holes were opened to determine the nature of the stones. This area should be archeologically revealed at the time the archeological work is done on the area south of the main log house. At present it appears that this may have been an area for parking the stage or other carriage for the on and off loading of baggage and passengers. Such an area would afford protection from the mud generated in an area not so protected with cobblestones. There is a possibility that this area represents a floor of a structure that once stood here, but this can be checked out and determined through stripping and archeologically examining this entire area. Perhaps only postholes representing a roofed structure will be found associated with this feature. Only archeology can answer this question.

To the northeast of this cobblestone area, in line with the road edge stones, just north of the large tree to the east of the cobblestone area, some foundation stones were found. These were larger than those in the line of stone forming the edge of the road, and may represent a ruin of a structure at the edge of the cobblestone area, and east of it. If this is so, then the line of stones would represent the south edge of the road and not the north edge. Careful archeology here to reveal this foundation feature should be done in conjunction with the other archeological work necessary in this area south of the house (the original rear).

*Site No. 41, Large Foundation Stones, Possibly for a Barn*

To the south of the cobblestone area, across the road in the edge of a field, beneath locust trees, a row and corner of a large structure was found by Mr. Heppert and pointed out during our visit. A small hole dug here revealed a foundation made of huge stones, and it is conjectured that this may have represented a barn. To the west of this ruin a small field has been the site of the recovery of a number of Indian projectile points. These are of a period prior to the use of the area by Europeans, some dating from 5,000 years ago, and merely reflect the use of the site above the spring head by Indians. It is doubtful that below surface features of Indian origin would be located in the field, but if for any reason the field would be disturbed by road building or other construction an archeological look at the site would be called for. Any objects found in this field should be assigned a number and kept separate from artifacts found elsewhere on the site.

*Site No. 51, The Cook's Cabin*

To the northeast of the main house the ruin of what is known as "The Cook's Cabin" can be seen, with logs and other structural elements still present but in a collapsed, ruined condition. The present plan is to leave this feature as it is to represent an above ground visual ruin, reflecting



the fact that old buildings do go through such a stage before becoming total archeological ruins. I think this is a good concept for the present, but when restoration or rebuilding of this cabin is undertaken, using the excellent data of photographs of the structure, archeological work should be done around the site to reveal any details that may be of value in such a reconstruction.

In the field to the north of this cabin the probe revealed some stones that may represent another structure once stood in this area. To the south of the Cook's Cabin the probe revealed stones that may be natural outcropping or may be a ruin. To the south of this another probing appeared to reveal either outcropping of limestone layers or a foundation. These two areas have been designated Site 52 and 53 by Mr. Heppert. Since my visit Mr. Heppert says that an archeological crew has investigated these two areas and have found nothing but limestone bedrock outcroppings.

#### *Site 54, A Possible Slave Cabin Ruin*

South of Site 53, on a natural limestone outcropping eminence, ruins were found by Mr. Heppert and shown to me. These may represent a slave cabin similar to the Cook's Cabin, but at an earlier period of time. Since my visit a two-week archeological dig was carried out on the site, and Mr. Heppert tells me that what appears to be three walls a short distance apart were found. If these were brick walls only a couple of feet apart, they sound like fireboxes I have seen for brick kilns, but this is just a guess based on the fact of brick walls only two feet apart. If this was not what was found, then this conjecture would not apply. Perhaps by now more is known about the nature of this ruin.

From what Mr. Heppert says the work carried out here was done using the master grid instead of the method of laying out a grid oriented to the ruin wall itself. This, in my opinion, is not the best approach to an historic ruin when the orientation of the ruin walls is known. The provenience of objects is at an angle to the alignment of the ruin itself, and can therefore have no meaning in terms of the ruin. This method also does not allow for the most effective revealing of ruin walls and features in that it requires excavation in areas according to the grid rather than according to the dictates of the ruin. This, of course, is merely a matter of detailed approach, but one to keep in mind when other work is done on the site. It is absurd, for instance, to dig squares against the side of the log house oriented at a forty-five degree angle to that structure. What possible value or meaning could the data so recovered have to the structure from which the artifacts originated? Control is much easier and more meaningfully obtained by orienting the grid to the ruin or structure under investigation.

At the time of my visit I suggested that the area to the east of this ruin No. 54 might be checked to see if other ruins might lie in that direction. Mr. Heppert tells me that the archeological crew did find a rise in this area and planned to investigate the site for a possible ruin. Mr. Heppert and I conjectured that the several probings we had found might be a row of slave cabins, but with the discovery that two of these were likely

not cabin sites this interpretation may have to be altered. However, a good archeological look at the sites should be executed before they are rejected as not being cabin sites. Perhaps such a look was carried out by the two-week archeological project recently executed.

I have suggested to Mr. Heppert that if through the use of a probe he is able to discover what appear to be stone wall ruins below ground that he should go ahead and dig a small hole, such as those he and I dug while I was there, and see if he has found a wall of a natural stone outcropping. With his engineering know-how he will be able to plot such ruins while not actually doing any damage to the site prior to the time an archeologist is brought into the picture to carry out more extensive digging. Through such exploratory probing and small hole digging Mr. Heppert may well be able to lay out a number of outbuildings and dependencies not now known so that the work of the archeologist can be much less when he arrives on the site for extensive excavation.

#### The School and Spring Site

This structure is a fine relic still standing on the site to the west of the main house. In my opinion this feature is one that should be emphasized and made a focal point of the interpretation of this site. Revealing of the original stone-lined drain out of the spring house, and possible probing for a garbage dump near the structure, as well as cleaning out the spring and milk house race is all the archeological work that might need to be done here. I would like to caution that this structure be left to a great extent as it is rather than undertaking any extensive "restoration", which may well ruin the charm and character the structure now possesses. This is a sensitive area of concern since the structure has such a fine atmosphere as it is. Sometimes our "restoration" of a structure ruins whatever charm and character the building had before we began to "spruce it up" with paint, repairs, etc., often carried out in good faith and with good intention, but which, nevertheless, change what began as a structure of character, into a run-of-the-mill stereotyped "restored" bastard, that is neither good restoration nor authentic surviving structure with character. Such mistakes can be avoided if the planners and developers are sensitively aware of these intangible esthetic values that just cannot be induced by any amount of restoration effort, but which may already exist on the site in the form of this jewel of a spring house, which uplifts the spirit in a manner not possible when the effect is ruined by "restoration".

#### The Smokehouse

This structure is about fifteen feet square and is a fine example of a smokehouse structure. Excavation carefully carried out beneath the floor may reveal signs of a firebox or fires in the center of the floor, and again they may not, particularly if salting meat was practiced rather than smoking

it. The archeological work should include a photographic study of the house itself as well as detailed recording of the archeological evidence through drawings and photographs, standard archeological procedure on historic sites.

### The Store Building

When restoration is begun on the store building located at the extreme east end of the site some archeological work may be required, but at present neither the restoration or research for it are on the horizon, and much historical documentary research should be done, including the formulation of a master plan for the sequence of development of the site, before any decision as to the future of the store building can be made.

### Conclusions

The Exchange Place project has great potential for being developed as a farm complex of the 1850's period due to the fact that buildings from that period are still standing. The spring house in particular is a fine structure, and quite unique, whereas the main house will be, when restored, just another restored log house of the early nineteenth century period, showing more restoration than original features. However, this is not to say that the restored house, along with the surviving outbuildings, in combination with those to be reconstructed on their original foundations will not be an impressive historic complex; they most surely will. I would urge, however, that before any restoration is done that a master plan be in hand, a more detailed study of the main house itself be in hand, including photographs of details within the house, and clues to early evidence competently recorded both photographically and through architectural drawings. We would not think of hiring a local carpenter to come to our lot without plans and constructing a modern house for us, yet in too many instances we begin to dismantle an old historic structure without having an expert architectural historian on hand to make a study of the existing building, record the details, and write a report. Worse yet, we begin to "restore" the building without a set of restoration plans in detail in hand, and without realizing that saw-cut marks, the shape of the head of the nails, the thickness of the boards, the type of molding, etc. are all significant details that must be used if our restoration is to be more than a piece-meal jack-leg "refurbishing". This does not mean that this is the situation at The Exchange Place, but such an approach is too often used in the restoration of an historic structure. The fact that both at The Exchange Place and at The Netherland Inn consultants have been used is clear indication that caution is being used before the work is carried too far. It is best to wait for years if it is necessary before beginning restoration until proper planning and funds are in hand to do a competent, authentic job when we begin.

Properly the research report should be in hand, the architectural study with photographs and drawings should be in hand, working drawings for the

restoration should be in hand, and the archeology should have been done and the archeological report in hand before restoration of the main structure is undertaken. Unfortunately at The Netherland Inn this was not the case, and as a result some archeological data was destroyed by non-archeological digging before the archeologist was called into the picture. At The Exchange Place this has not been so much the case, and there is time yet to raise funds for archeological work to learn details of value in planning the master plan and the detailed plans for restoration, reconstruction and development of the site. There is time, too, to raise funds for carrying out the detailed documentary research and architectural and comparative research that should be done before the reconstruction of the main house proceeds to the complete stage.

The restoration of the main building is now underway at The Exchange Place, and hopefully later the research, detailed photographic study, detailed reconstruction plans based on a study of clues in the house will be written, and hopefully the archeology will be done to provide clues helpful in this restoration, but if these steps come after the building is "restored", then any information revealed by these studies will be useless in the restoration of the house. Once a restoration is completed no one ever will want to examine the house to look for clues to its age, its architectural merit, its sequence of construction stages, or other valuable bits of information an un-restored house has to offer, for from that moment on it will always be looked on merely as another restored house, like so many others whose secrets were wiped out in the restoration trauma. Therefore, the most exhausting recording of data should first be undertaken before a house is restored. The house is not restored first, then we try to raise funds for research and archeology, regardless of how anxious we may be to have tourists flocking through the house praising the furnishings we have picked up in attics and old antique shops, or had donated to us by well-meaning donors. If The Exchange Place is to be representative of the period prior to 1850, then there should absolutely be no object or clue within the house that would reveal a technique, nail head, paint color, saw mark later than that time. A wire nail would never be allowed to be seen in such a restoration.

Just as these details are of importance in the restoration of a building, similar details are revealed through archeological research if properly carried out by an archeologist familiar with historic sites archeology. The color of the rubble layer, the soil discoloration, the type of plaster and mortar coming from a foundation ditch or garbage dump, as well as the fragments of china, glass and other artifacts help to reconstruct the sequence of events, and the use to which a particular piece of land was put by various people in the past.

The developers of The Exchange Place are well aware of the need for competent archeological work to be carried out before relevant reconstruction of porches, outbuildings, etc. is undertaken. This report is a first step in the proper direction. The work Mr. Heppert is doing to pinpoint the exact location of each building, roadway, ruin and property line is also a step in the right direction. The next step is to obtain funds for historical, archeological, and architectural research of a detailed nature before proceeding further into the direction of ripping off and putting back.

There is a point I think it would be well to contemplate regarding The Exchange Place site, and that is the one brought up in connection with the spring house. A visit to The Exchange Place site today is a refreshing, relaxing, spirit uplifting experience, and this is before any actual visible "restoration" has been done. Imagine now, ten years hence when there may be restored buildings of several kinds around the place, a kitchen, outbuildings, barns, the store, the smokehouse, and all the other "cute" and "quaint" structures typical of restoration complexes, and a guide will show us these buildings with their fresh coats of paint, their immaculate polished look, their neatly manicured lawn, the rigidly organized furnishings in the house, with each thing in its proper place, the glasses on the table, the candlestick in the pewter candleholder, the "cute" little crib for the child and the "cutsie" little doll crib for the dollie, the hand-made quilts, etc., etc., seen in so many restorations. I wonder whether at that time Mr. Stuart would have the same feeling for the past he now has when he visits the site, and I wonder if I would again be able to conjure up the refreshing rapport with the past I felt on this first visit to the site. If then we see the site as just another typical restoration, sterile and neat, we might well ask whether we have lost more than we have gained.

Perhaps our efforts to interpret The Exchange Place, excellent though they may be, will still not be sufficient to prevent the loss of this ephemeral, mystic, intangible quality we feel but cannot easily describe. If this proves to be the case then we may well want to re-examine our goals, our values regarding restorations, and try to understand just what it is that we are attempting to do. One thing is certain, however, if we proceed without proper research, we are almost certain to produce a product that will offend some of us, will leave many of us disinterested, and fail to stimulate a vast number of others far beyond the point of curiosity. The most uninformed may marvel at how close to "the old days" the place looks, but only fools revel in the praise of fools.

One thing we can do, however, to insure that we will not automatically build mistakes and problems for the future into our projects is to build them on a foundation of authenticity, making them trustworthy, and worthy of our acceptance and belief. This we can do by insuring that all our actions are supported by historical, documentary, architectural and archeological research. The requesting of this study and report is a step in the research direction. Hopefully it will be followed by other far more in-depth research efforts toward the goal of authenticity at The Exchange Place.