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Archeological Consultation Report on the Newbold-White House, Perquimans County, North Carolina

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WHITE HOUSE, PERQUIMANS COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

by

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INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
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ARCHEOLOGICAL CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE
NEWBOLD-WHITE HOUSE,
PERQUIMANS COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Stanley South

At the request of Mr. Tom Brown, President of the Perquimans County Restoration Association, and Mr. A.L. Honeycutt, Jr., Restoration Supervisor of the Division of Historic Sites and Museums of the North Carolina Department of Art, Culture and History, a visit was made to the site of The Newbold-White House in Perquimans County, North Carolina to consult with Mr. Honeycutt and archeologist, Mr. Alain Outlaw, on the archeological work now underway on the site.

Carried all caps
Comments on the Historical Research

In preparation for the visit to The Newbold-White House on June 17, 1973, Mrs. Libb Wilborn, Research Supervisor in the Division of Historic Sites and Museums sent me a copy of a research report prepared by Dr. Thomas C. Parramore entitled, "The Newbold-White House, A Documentary History of the Property and its Inhabitants". In his report Dr. Parramore presents a collection of primary documents and transcribed copies of them dating from the Joseph Scott land grants of 1684 to Abraham White in 1839 (Parramore 1973). The sequence of owners is then summarized, jumping from the 1839 Abraham White document, to a summary of the chain of title from 1868 to 1943 (Parramore 1973:56,60). There is no statement as to the transition from 1839 to 1868, and we must assume it is the same family that is involved. We are not told what acreage is involved from 1868 to 1943, so we must assume that any amount of land from several hundred acres to perhaps a lot or two might be involved. No connection is made between the owner of the land in 1943, J.H. Newbold, and the present property owner, assumed to be The Perquimans County Restoration Association, but we have no way of knowing just how large the tract presently is. We assume that

sometime between 1943 and 1973 the land on which The Newbold-White House stands was transferred to The Perquimans County Restoration Association, for there is no documentation demonstrated to reveal this.

The 1684 land grant to Joseph Scott was equivalent to one mile square, 640 acres. By the time the land had changed hands over a period of 155 years until 1839, we find that the document for that date lists only 51½ acres remaining (Parramore 1973:1,56). The missing 588½ acres might need to be accounted for in our research, for the possibility remains that the house built by Joseph Scott may not have been on the small piece of land now owned by The Perquimans County Restoration Association. In order to demonstrate that The Newbold-White House may indeed be the Joseph Scott house, we must state our case in relation to the acreages involved, and in relation to the structure known as The Newbold-White House. Until such research is done we must assume that the chain of title outlined by Dr. Parramore has some connection with The Newbold-White House.

One of the primary jobs of a researcher dealing with an historic site is to develop a chain of title from the known tract of land, and the present owner to the earliest land grant to the first known owner. In Dr. Parramore's research we do not know who the present owner is, nor do we have a description or map of the present tract of land with which we are concerned, and about which the focus of the research centers. One of the ways to accomplish this task is to draft each land record as it is indicated on the record, so that a visual sequence of land exchange can be seen when the several tracts are compared visually through overlays

or a sequence of reconstructed plats. Sometimes aerial photographs are valuable in carrying out this research task. For instance at Fort Dobbs, an eighteenth century frontier fort site, a one mile square tract was granted in 1752, having a corner "below the fork of fourth creek". The intervening records were not in existence, so an aerial photograph was used, and from this document, the one mile square tract with a corner "below the fork of fourth creek" was still to be seen, just as it was surveyed in 1752. This allowed us to fix positively the tract of land in question, and thus to locate the site of Fort Dobbs by other means than tradition (South 1967).

A similar approach might well be attempted with the Joseph Scott tract. The 640 acre grant to Joseph Scott began at a red oak beside a swamp on the brow of a hill, and ran along the river northwest for a distance of 4752 feet to a gum standing beside a branch. It then ran (probably at a right angle) "into ye woods" toward the southwest a distance of one mile (5280 feet) to a red oak, then (probably at a right angle) to the southeast (the description says "south west" in error) a distance of 4752 feet to a gum, then the one mile back to the beginning, forming a rectangle about one mile square, though not quite (Parramore 1973:1). Such an excellent set of landmarks and measurements should easily allow the tract to be located on an aerial photograph, particularly since this land did not change its basic size for many years after it was laid out. If the United States Department of Agriculture* does not have photographs of the area, then a photographer

*Eastern Aerial Photo Laboratory, Program Performance Division, A.S.C.S., U.S. Department of Agriculture, 45 South French Broad Avenue, Asheville, North Carolina, 28801. Phone 704-254-0961, Ex. 610.

should be contracted to fly above the site and take photographs from various elevations and angles as well as straight down. Such photographs should reveal the large tract of Joseph Scott, with various later subdivisions. It may be found then that The Newbold-White House is indeed sitting on the Joseph Scott tract.

Scale drawings of the Joseph Scott tract could also be used, perhaps in conjunction with the photographs, to illustrate and superimpose the several land exchanges through the various transactions, until recent deed records and maps indicating the presence of The Newbold-White House are reached and plotted. Sometimes the county tax offices use aerial photographs for property assessment, and these are valuable in pinpointing a building in relation to a specific tract of land. Using either or both of these techniques of in-depth research on property we can for the first time begin to correlate the sequence of land titles researched by Dr. Parramore with the physical reality of The Newbold-White House. In order to do this research one would, of course, have to begin with the deed record and property map used when the property was last transferred. At present the research does not indicate the presence of The Newbold-White House on any tract of land, and this research must be done so that the assumptions now necessary are removed. Also, no information on the tracts of land exchanged in the period since 1839 is now known from the research now in hand, so this basic research must be carried out and made available for use in relation to the present study of The Newbold-White House, so that interpretations can be based on documentation rather than on assumptions.

If the most recent deed record does not indicate the exact position of The Newbold-White House on the tract of land, then the archeologist may be forced to the expedient of surveying the house in relation to the present property line pipes set by the surveyor in the last year or so, but to this date the location of these pipes is not known, and the archeologist may have to try to find the surveyor in order to locate these property line corners and eventually to correlate them with earlier property lines for which documentation is known. Through this means the archeologist, or exacting researcher fixes a specific building on a specific piece of land and then relates the land with the building on it as far back as the documentation will allow. In such a research design emphasis is placed on meets and bounds, the acreage, distances, angles, shapes of tracts, "on a hill", "beside a marsh", "beside a branch" and not on genealogical title change alone, to write a history of an historic site. Hopefully such basic research can be accomplished before the time arrives for the archeologist to submit his report, for correlation of the archeological data with the documentary data is one of the primary interpretive goals of the archeological process.

The research conducted by Dr. Parramore is a fascinating report, and reveals many important facts about the ownership of a grant of land obtained by Joseph Scott in 1684, and in the process reveals a number of interesting highlights regarding subsequent owners of the property he has researched. The fact that such an early sequence of land transfer continues for so long is remarkable in itself, and is indeed a fortunate circumstance for those interested in The Newbold-White House, provided, as I have indicated, that this documentation can somehow be related to the land on which The

Newbold-White House is standing. I feel sure that this can probably be done, either by the archeologist, or perhaps by Dr. Parramore himself through the procedure I have outlined above, in order to complete the documentary record, which in the present research stopped in 1839. Once this gap is filled the research of the property records should be complete. However, as Dr. Parramore has revealed, there are a number of avenues to be looked into in greater depth, for instance the fascinating account of the three women, Mary Hudson Scott, her daughter, and her granddaughter. With the exception of the failure to correlate his research to the house and property he was researching, Dr. Parramore's report is a fine piece of work. I particularly like the way he presented the transcription of the documents, then discussed this raw data in summary sections, fully citing further, as in his "'Vineyard' People" chapter. This makes for good presentation, in my opinion, and the report constitutes a good preliminary outline from which more complete and in-depth research can be carried out. I can't resist the suggestion that when the story of the good Quaker, Joseph Scott, his neighbors, and his times, is written, that a natural, ready made title for such a book be "The People Were Tender", the phrase George Fox used to describe the people he met at Joseph Scott's home in 1672 (Parramore 1973:3).

Report on a Visit to The Newbold-White House Archeological Site

On June 17, 1973, Mr. A.L. Honeycutt, Jr. and I drove from Raleigh, North Carolina to the site of The Newbold-White House, a fine brick structure on the west side of the Perquimans River, in Perquimans County, North Carolina. We met Mr. Alan Outlaw, archeologist, who is presently conducting a four month project at the site, two months of which is to be devoted to writing the report. This plan is an excellent one in allowing a block of time for report writing, which is too often left out

of research planning. It is indeed a poor situation when the archeologist must move from project to project excavating, without an opportunity to sit down and digest and evaluate the data and write his report.

In approaching a standing house site such as The Newbold-White House a good procedure, and the one I would use, would be to establish a grid system for the area, using the house as the basis for establishing the grid. I would then assign a provenience number to each of the grid units for use in artifact designation, and for vertical and horizontal control. The area immediately around the house would be excavated using five foot squares, with profile balks between each square. The features would be revealed, photographed and recorded in plan, and later each feature would be examined through excavation and the profiles recorded, with notes on the interpretation recorded as each feature is examined.

This technique would be carried out around the standing structure on all sides, and beneath the floor of the structure wherever possible. The area beyond the immediate vicinity of the house would be stripped using a machine, and the subsoil thus revealed would be schnitted clean with shovels to reveal each feature that ever intruded into the subsoil. These features would be assigned provenience numbers, and positioned horizontally using a transit set up on one of the master grid corners, and an engineers tape to record the distances. The provenience units or features here would not be tied in to each master grid unit, but would be treated as a unit within itself, its relationship to other features always pinpointed according to the transit shot points for each feature.

The probe would be used in all areas around the standing structure, and in any suspicious looking areas away from the house, particularly after heavy rains, so as to feel more effectively below the surface. Any feature so located could first be checked out with a shovel, excavating a small

exploratory hole, after which a larger excavation unit on the grid could be laid out over the feature, or a machine brought in to strip the topsoil so that the entire feature could be revealed for more detailed examination. Using these approaches to the site I would be able to gather the maximum amount of data in the shortest amount of time. A grid system in the hands of an inexperienced ill-trained practitioner of earth moving devours money when applied to all archeological situations, and can result in archeology being prohibitively expensive in relation to the amount of data that is recovered. Equally to be avoided is the earth moving machine in the hands of an ill-trained individual who rips through footings, ditches, features and other clues in an insensitive manner, when the situation called for the gentle touch and rigid control of the grid. Maximum data recovery at the least cost to the sponsor, and without compromising high standards of archeological data recovery techniques is effected by using a combination of these techniques in a sophisticated examination of an historic site. The artistry in the archeological process comes in having the judgment to know when to use a machine to greatest effect, and when to apply the grid. The exclusive application of either technique to all archeological situations is, in my opinion, an error in approach to solving the archeological problems facing contemporary archeologists. The day of the exclusive use of the five foot square to solve problems of chronology is past, for we are now asking questions that are anchored in a far broader base than the traditional question of chronology. Only the broad scope approach to archeological data recovery can, in a period of only a few weeks, locate ruins of dwellings, smokehouses, privies, kitchens, wells, walks, barns, gardens, drains and roads, and produce a master map of the entire layout. Such an

approach is typical of that being used by some historic site archeologists to record the abundant amount of data located on plantation ruin sites, for instance.

With this in mind we turn to the project being executed by Alain Outlaw at The Newbold-White House. Alain appears to me to be carrying out all of the above requirements in a competent, professional manner. He has made measured plan drawings of the features he has revealed, and is moving with considerable dispatch toward gathering a great deal of information about the area surrounding The Newbold-White House.

In the five foot squares around the house he has revealed two scaffold holes on the north end of the house, and eight scaffold holes on the south end that were used by the masons who constructed the house. Artifacts from these features should provide a terminus post quem for the construction of the house. However, it is likely that this was the first structure on the site, in which case no artifacts would likely be lying around to find their way into these holes during construction. Only debris dropped by the construction crew would likely be in these holes. On the original rear of the house, the west side, a number of scaffold holes have been found here also. It was recommended that this area be widened with another row of five foot squares in order to possibly locate any porch footings that may have been here originally. No such footings have as yet been found, however, unless the scaffold holes I have mentioned prove to be such footings. It is my belief, however, that these holes were for the brick masons who built scaffolds when they built the house.

Further out from the house, on the north end, Alain has stripped the topsoil from the area where he has parked his trailer, and from an area 150 feet square and cleaned and plotted the features revealed. To the south side of the house in the yard about twenty-five feet from the house

Alain has opened a square in which he had probed a feature, and has excavated this nineteenth century pit. In the two week period he has been working this amount of data recovery is remarkable, and one that can only be gained by using both the grid and the broad stripping method he is using.

One suggestion I have made to Alain that will aid in the separation of structures represented by postholes, is to record the details as to the nature of the fill of each posthole. He has done this to some extent, but a consistent recording of such data should be undertaken by assigning certain shading keys to each type of fill, humus, clay, sand, recent marbled soil, blended soil, etc. In order to assist with this type of data recording I am including in this report a copy of a chart on observation of such data that I have prepared to illustrate a paper soon to be published on this subject. Such data recording should be done not only with postholes, but with any feature, pits, ditches, palisades, etc. Perhaps this "Chicken Chart" will have some value to Alain in recording of specific types of archeological features.

While at the house I probed in the rear of the addition to the original structure, and found a mortared brick feature, and Alain dug a small hole to check its depth, type of feature, etc. This feature has no doubt been revealed in its entirety by this time. This would have been in front of the original house, and may be contemporary with the early period of The Newbold-White House, but it is my opinion that, because of its location, that it is likely a later feature.

Alain plans to machine strip the area in the yard to the east (front) of the house beyond the present wing addition, and record the

features as he has done on the north end. He will strip the south end yard first, then the rear, and finally the west, (rear). Here, however, he has found a walk leading from the door toward the west, and this must be revealed by the grid stripping method, as should other areas of the yard here on the rise of land, to reveal any features that may give clues to the use of this important rear area of the yard. Once this detailed work is done the machine can be used to explore other areas on the west side of the house. The area beneath the recent addition on the east side of the house should be examined once the east wing is removed. A search beneath the floor should also be made once the floorboards are removed from sections no longer having the original floor.

In order to check for the possible presence of a garbage dump on the edge of the branch to the west of the house, Alain plans to cut a profile by hand labor to reveal any deep lying artifact deposits near the stream, and once the depths involved are known through this trench, he plans to bring a machine to the area and remove the more recent overburden to allow him to get at the early deposits that may lie some feet down below the present surface. It may be here that the most significant deposits of artifacts may be revealed, for here we may have had deposition rather than cutting away, which is apparently what the situation has been near the house. There is a good possibility that a spring head may be found when the area near the branch is examined, and this possibility should be kept in mind as work progresses.

A remarkable fact so far in the examination of the area around the house by Alain is the absence of seventeenth century artifacts, and the virtual absence of any eighteenth century objects. Perhaps these will be

located as more work is done, but so far their absence is quite noticeable. In the field to the east, the original front of the house, there can be nothing found but nineteenth and a few twentieth century objects. In all of Alain's digging he has not found any good seventeenth century group of objects, nor has he found any eighteenth century artifacts, a period during which garbage was usually thrown all around an occupation site. The absence of seventeenth century objects is understandable, since ceramics were not abundant, and pewter, leather and wooden vessels filled the needs most homes of that period required. A Quaker home may well have had more simple furnishings than most, but the absence of eighteenth century ceramics is a most puzzling fact, since sites of that period are usually well supplied with ceramic fragments. Perhaps further excavation will cast some light on this curious situation.

On the site of the grape arbor, to the west of the house across the branch, eighteenth century ceramics have been found on the surface. I have suggested to Alain that exploratory trenches be run here to determine whether there is a cellar, footings, or foundation wall for a structure in this area. If a ruin, perhaps a cellar, can be found, excavation of such a feature from which the sherds may be coming, would aid in the interpretation of The Newbold-White House. For instance, if a good seventeenth century type half-timbered structure ruin were located indicating a house of major proportions, this would surely relate to the interpretation of The Newbold-White House, particularly if the cellar or storage hole contained good ceramics and other artifacts of the mid to third quarter of the seventeenth century. For this reason it is important that work be done on the grape arbor site to hopefully recover

such related data of use in the interpretation of the chronology of The Newbold-White House. Once the grape arbor site is explored through shovel cut trenches, a machine could be brought in to remove a greater area of the plowed soil zone for locating and recording further features.

The archeological strategy at The Newbold-White House is primarily designed to answer questions of two types, chronology and architecture. The archeological dating of the house through the recovery of artifacts discarded during the period of its use is a prime consideration, as well as the location of outbuildings, walks, wells, privies, midden deposits, and other evidence of occupation. The techniques being used by Alain Outlaw should reveal such evidence. I was very impressed with the procedure Alain Outlaw is following, and with his understanding of the problems facing him, and his apparent ability to solve them through his archeological investigation. If I can be of any further help regarding analysis of artifacts or features, I will be glad to do so. Alain however, appears to have the situation well in hand, which is a refreshing situation to witness in a young archeologist. I was also glad to learn that he plans to return to school to obtain further background, which should add a firm theoretical base to his already developed grasp of archeological technique and procedure for the examination and recovery of data from historic sites such as that at The Newbold-White House.

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on file at North Carolina Department of Art, Culture and
History, Office of Archives and History (Manuscript)).

NOTE: Copies of this report on The Newbold-White House are on file
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