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AND ROCKY MOUNT LOCK-KEEPER'S HOUSE (38CS63)

by

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
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*EXCAVATIONS AT LANDSFORD CANAL (38LA5)  
AND ROCKY MOUNT LOCK-KEEPER'S HOUSE (38CS63)*

*by Richard F. Carrillo*

*INTRODUCTION*

Archeological investigations were conducted by the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina during 1972 and 1973. The archeological investigations were part of a continuing effort initiated in 1969 to assist the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism in its development plans to restore Landsford Canal to its approximate original operating conditions.

Archeological excavations were undertaken at the site of the lock-keeper's house at Rocky Mount, located near the town of Great Falls. The S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism has plans to relocate the structure at Landsford Canal. In addition, excavations were undertaken at the north end of the southern lifting locks.

*HISTORICAL SUMMARY*

Landsford Canal was constructed along the west bank of the Catawba River in the northeastern portion of Chester District. Begun in 1820 and completed in 1823, Landsford Canal was the northernmost link in a chain of four canals in the Piedmont area for which the South Carolina Legislature had appropriated one million dollars to make the Catawba-Wateree River system accessible to navigation. By utilizing this proposed canal system and the Santee Canal in Charleston District, cotton and other items produced in the up-country could be cheaply transported to Charleston (Hemmings 1970: 1)

The area referred to as Landsford was named for a Thomas Land who had been granted a tract in 1754, and had built his house at the ford of the river. Two events of historical importance are believed to have occurred in this area during the Revolution. The first was Cornwallis's crossing of the Catawba River at Landsford while retreating from Charlotte to Winnsboro. The second was the engagement of the British by the Patriot leaders, Thomas Sumter and William R. Davie, at the Battle of Hanging Rock near Landsford (Mixon 1969: 3).

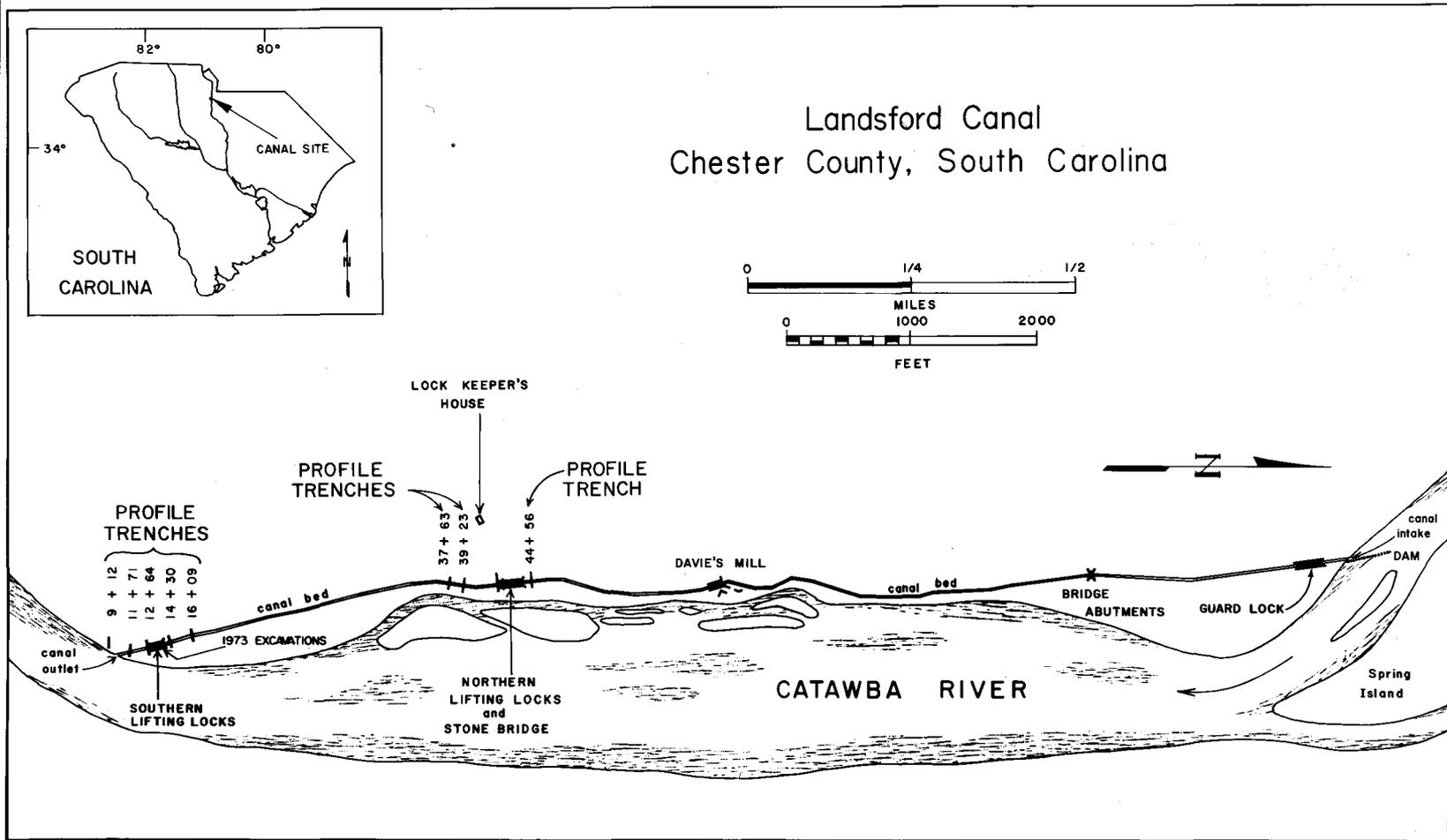
#### *1969 EXCAVATIONS*

Subsequent to an agreement between the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina and the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism on May 28, 1969, plans were formulated to commence initial archeological investigations at Landsford Canal.

The initial archeological research was conducted in 1969 by Dr. E. Thomas Hemmings of the Institute's staff between December 8-20 in a preliminary effort to determine construction details of the canal. This was achieved with a series of eight backhoe trenches which were excavated at selected locations along the canal (Fig. 1) (Hemmings 1970: v).

The conclusion reached as a result of the excavations was that the gradient of Landsford Canal consisted of three near-horizontal stretches of canal bed which were separated by two pairs of lifting locks. The northern pair of lifting locks accomodated a fall of approximately 14 feet and the southern pair approximately 18 feet. The total fall of the canal was 35 feet between the northern and southern locks, over a distance of one mile and 76 chains (Hemmings 1970: 35).

FIGURE 1: Location of canal features and profile trenches at Landsford Canal (from Hager 1969 and Hemmings 1970).



1972 EXCAVATIONS

Rocky Mount Lock-keepers House (38CS63)

During the summer of 1972 while excavations were in progress at the site of the old town of Dorchester near Charleston, South Carolina, work there was halted during the week of April 24-28 in order to archeologically examine the site of the lock-keeper's house at Rocky Mount located near the town of Great Falls. The Rocky Mount Canal which began operating in January, 1830 was another link in the Catawba-Wateree system (Hollis 1968: 36). The excavation was done because of plans by the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism to relocate this structure at Landsford Canal for use as park headquarters.

The Rocky Mount Lock-keeper's House consists of a partially standing stone structure constructed in 1830 on the west side of the Catawba River. There are no known records to indicate how long the house was used by a lock-keeper, as no records of tolls exist after 1833 (Hollis 1968: 40). The structure measures 39.20' NW-SE by 22.15' NE-SW, with interior dimensions of 34.80' by 17.75'.

The house, located approximately 300 feet from the river, consists of a sandstone block structure with fireplaces located at the north and south ends (Fig. 2). The primary purpose of the excavations was to examine the interior of the structure to determine if evidence of a partition or other related architectural features could be detected.

The architectural features within the excavated confines of the structure were three postmolds and sills protruding .35' situated along the east and west walls used to house the floor joists. In conjunction, the plaster extends to 1.4' from the sill, this area presumably encompassing the area which comprised the joists and floor (Fig. 2). It

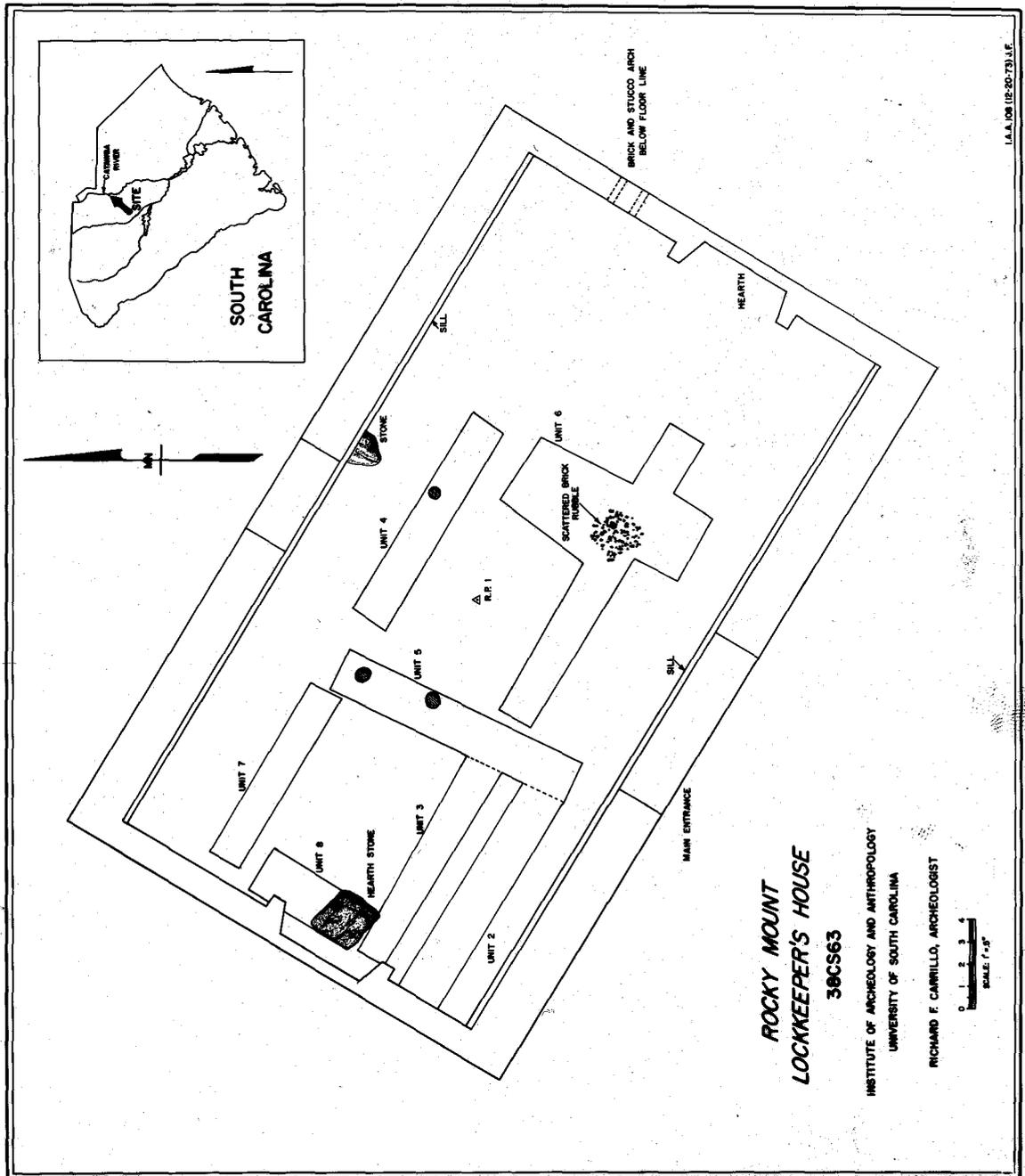


FIGURE 2: Plan of Rocky Mount lock-keeper's house (38CS63), Chester County, South Carolina.

seems that the lack of evidence regarding partitions can possibly be explained by their having been positioned upon the wooden floor.

### Artifacts

A considerable quantity of artifacts was recovered during the excavation. The total artifact inventory consists of 662 items, with nails and glass being the most numerous. The most diagnostic of the artifacts, to date, are ceramics. The ceramic inventory is comprised of one fragment of sponged ware (Fig. 3a); a porcelain transfer-printed blue basal bowl fragment (Fig. 3b); six sherds of finger painted pearlware (Fig. 3c) and 16 white earthenware fragments (Fig. 3d). The sponged ware (Fig. 3a), pearlware (Fig. 3c) and white ware (Fig. 3d) can all be dated c. 1820+ (Noël Hume 1970: 130-31; South 1971). The porcelain (Fig. 3b) may be representative of the type associated with the canal operation period.

One hundred and twenty-four fragments of window glass and 95 bottle glass fragments were found; three are wine bottle fragments (Fig. 3e) possibly attributable to the period that the canal was in operation.

Two hundred and fifty-two nails were recovered, the majority of which were square cut (Fig. 3f).

Three unique items in the artifact assemblage are a bone-handled knife (Fig. 3g), a pewter spoon bowl (Fig. 3h), and what appears to be a roughly cast oval lead object presumably cast in a tobacco can or other similar container (Fig. 3i).

The remaining artifacts are principally miscellaneous metal and bone fragments.

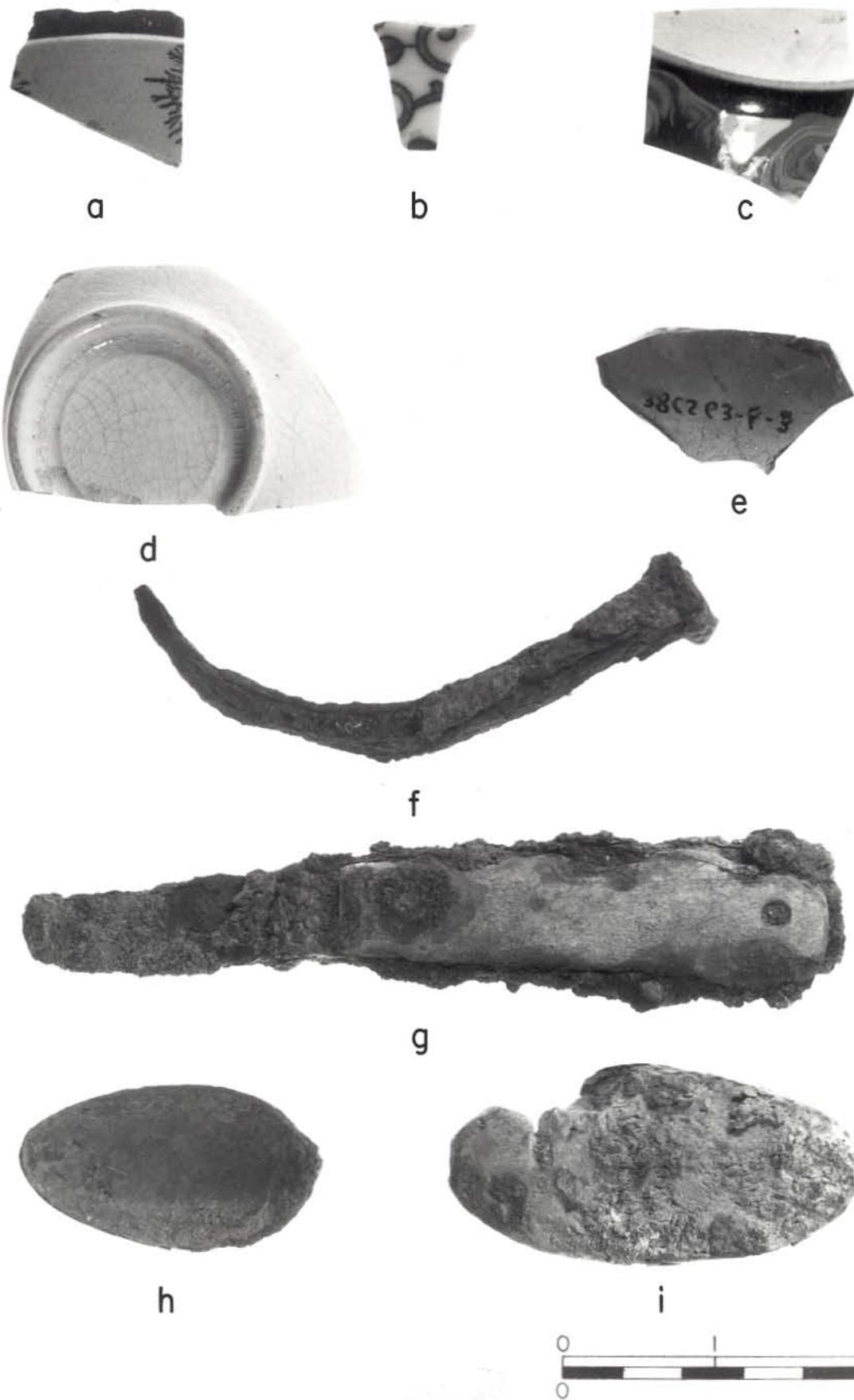


FIGURE 3: (a) sponged ware; (b) porcelain transfer-printed bowl fragment; (c) finger painted pearlware; (d) white earthenware; (e) wine bottle fragment; (f) square cut nail; (g) bone handled knife; (h) pewter spoon bowl; (i) cast lead object.

*1973 EXCAVATIONS -- LANDSFORD CANAL - SOUTHERN LIFTING LOCKS (38LA5)*

Renewal of archeological investigations at Landsford Canal State Park occurred during the week of August 6-10, 1973, following the excavation at Dorchester State Park. The purpose of this project was to survey the area in and around the proposed locations of the planned residences and maintenance shop for park personnel, and the location of the resituated Rocky Mount Lock-keeper's House (Fig. 4). No sites were found in either location. Further surveying was accomplished in the general surrounding area in an effort to locate other possible sites, but none were found.

Of prime concern to the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism was the excavation of the northern end of the southern lifting locks where a large sand and silt deposit was located. This deposit was thought to have resulted from the northern-most lock gate dislodging from its moorings and becoming an obstruction (Fig. 1).

Due to the dense undergrowth, clearing entailed approximately half a day. The southern half of the sand and silt deposit was excavated to a depth of 12 feet from the top of the lock. At this depth a clay layer approximately 1.0' thick was encountered which possibly served as an impervious lining to prevent water seepage. Evidence of such construction methods was found during the 1969 excavations by E. T. Hemmings (1970: 24-25). Immediately below the clay, water was encountered which impeded further excavation. However, probing at this point encountered stone at a depth of 14 feet. It was not possible to determine the extent of the stone, and consequently impossible to determine if the stone was utilized as a lining within the locks. The 1969 excavations did not evidence the utilization of stone linings, but no excavations were carried out within the canal lock systems.

LANDSFORD CANAL  
CHESTER COUNTY  
SOUTH CAROLINA

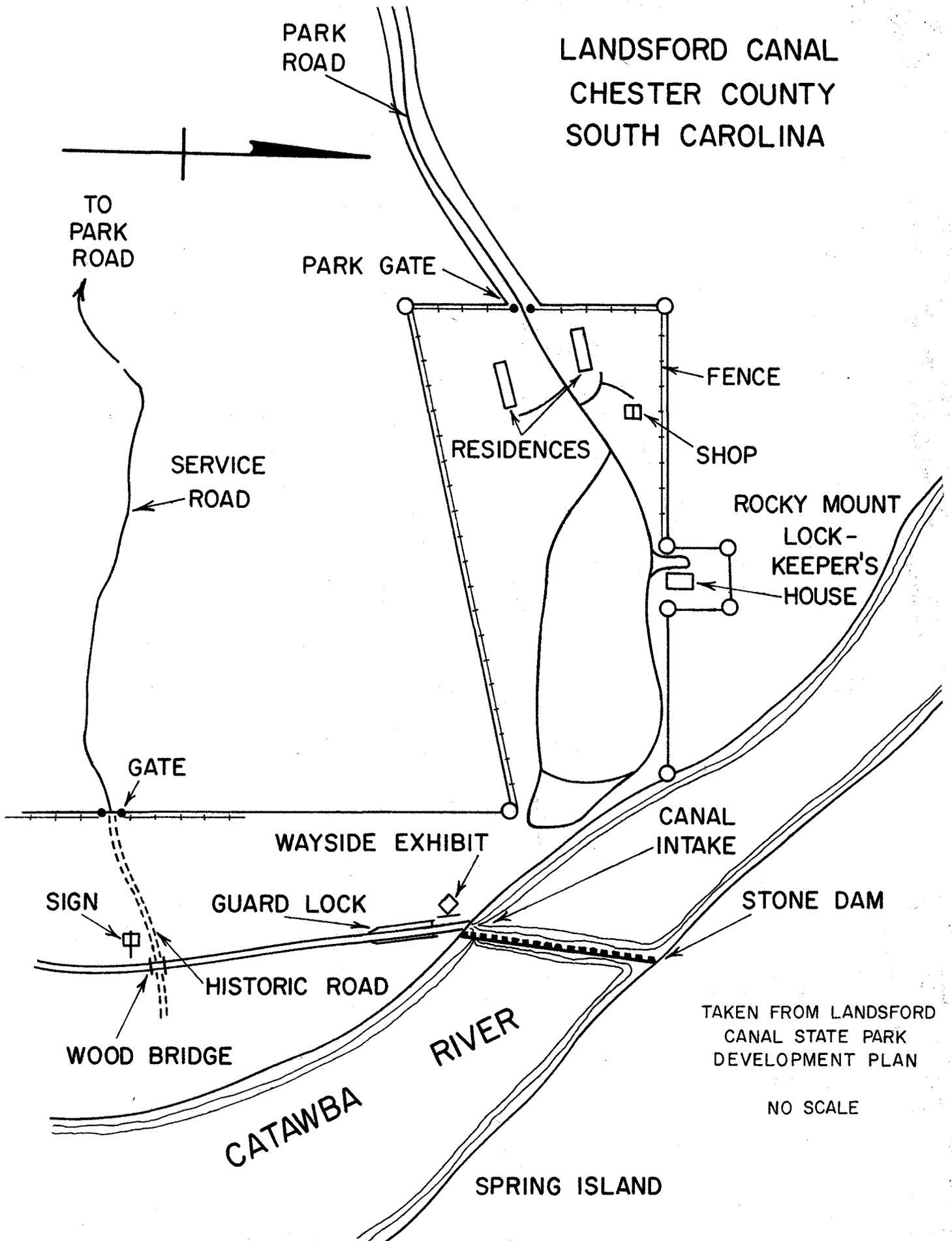


FIGURE 4: Landsford Canal State Park, Chester County, South Carolina.

Further excavations at the time were not possible due to the danger posed by the unstable sand wall. It is highly conceivable that the lock gate may be beneath the remaining sand deposit but future removal will have to be accomplished by use of a backhoe.

#### *SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS*

The archeological excavations carried out at Landsford Canal State Park and the Rocky Mount Lock-keeper's House during the summers of 1972 and 1973 achieved the goals agreed upon between the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology and the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

The excavation of the lock-keeper's house served to reveal that the structure was equipped with a wooden floor built upon a sill running along the entire length of the east and west walls.

Although many of the artifacts recovered were manufactured during the twentieth century, a good sample of nineteenth century artifacts was retrieved. These artifacts were conceivably utilized during the period that the structure was used as the domiciliary for the lock-keeper at Rocky Mount Canal.

At Landsford Canal, an archeological survey was carried out in the areas designated for construction of structures for park personnel and maintenance, and the area proposed for the relocation of the Rocky Mount Lock-keeper's House. No sites were found in these areas.

In addition, a survey was made of the areas adjacent to the above locations mentioned with no sites discovered.

The final project was the excavation in the southern lifting lock in an effort to determine if a dislodged lock gate was responsible for

an obstruction which caused a sand and silt deposit within the lock. No evidence of the lock gate was found beneath 14 feet of the excavated fill. However, excavations were limited, due to the danger of the sand wall made during the excavation collapsing.

#### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

The proposed recommendations comprise what are believed to be the most feasible by the Institute.

##### *Lock Structures*

Further work on the southern locks will require the use of a backhoe for an approximate period of one week. This period of time will allow for excavations to completely expose the southern lock and determine whether the obstruction in the lock was a dislodged lock gate. Excavation of the southern lock system would allow construction plans to be made of the lock, as well as allow for probable recovery of parts of the lock gate. In addition to the utilization of a backhoe, an archeologist and a crew of six laborers would be required for a period of three weeks.

##### *Lock-keeper's House and Davie's Mill*

In addition to the excavation of the southern locks, the existing remains of the original lock-keeper's house and the site of Davie's Mill should be excavated in order to enhance the historical interpretive framework being proposed for Landsford Canal State Park. Excavations of these two structures would entail a period of six weeks with an archeologist and a crew of ten laborers.

The above are intended as tentative recommendations which the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology believes are the most feasible in assisting the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism with their plans to achieve the proper historical setting at Landsford Canal. A detailed proposal outlining the recommendations will be prepared by the Institute upon request by the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

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