Archaeological Reconnaissance of a Tabby Ruin and Lot on St. Simons Island, Georgia

LAMAR Institute Publication Series, Report Number 111

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Savannah, Georgia
2009
This report details a brief archaeological reconnaissance of a tabby building ruin and surrounding lot on St. Simons Island, Georgia. This work was performed by The LAMAR Institute, Inc. at the request of anthropologist Patricia Barefoot and the property owner, Tommy Stewart. Barefoot completed a short history of the property shortly before this reconnaissance was performed (Barefoot 2004). Her report provided important background information for the archaeological reconnaissance. Her historical discussion is not repeated here.

The study site contains a tabby building ruin of undetermined age and association, and an adjacent property of approximately one acre. This ruin was converted for use as a home in the mid-20th century. The surrounding lot consists of lawn, driveway, and partially disturbed areas resulting from building demolition. The property is located at 300 7th Street, which is on the southeast quadrant of the intersection at 7th Street and Ocean Boulevard, St. Simons Island, Georgia in Glynn County (Figure 1). The site is officially recorded in the Georgia Archaeological Site File as site 9GN317. A copy of the site form is appended to this report. Various views of the study site are shown in Figures 2-5.

A brief reconnaissance of the property was conducted by Dan Elliott of the LAMAR Institute on September 13, 2004. Artifacts from the 20th century were widespread across the area. Older artifacts were noted in the rear of the house and included creamware, pearlware, ironstone,
tobacco pipe stems, and brick. Oyster shell and animal bone also were observed. An area of topsoil has been removed in the rear of the house and several utility pipes are exposed. Buildings that were recently razed on the property included two houses (built on slabs) and at least one outbuilding. The potential for intact deposits appears to be good, although the upper strata on portions of the site may have been compromised and utility ditches have likely disturbed an unknown portion of the property. The tabby ruin is a single story rectangular building with gabled roof. It is located approximately 65 meters east of two historical markers commemorating colonial Fort Delegal. The precise location of Fort Delegal has not been determined archaeologically and the possibility exists that the tabby ruins are related to the colonial fort, which was garrisoned in the 1730s and 1740s (and possibly later). Fort Delegal was a small, yet strong, fortification that served as the first point of defense for St. Simons Island in the War of Jenkins Ear. The fort was garrisoned by soldiers from South Carolina who were sent to assist James Oglethorpe in establishing the British colony of Georgia. Forts Delegal and St. Simon were heavily bombarded by the Spanish fleet in one campaign in that war. The artifacts that were observed on the surface indicate an occupation of the tabby dwelling in the late 1700s and early to mid 1800s, during the Plantation era. An early 20th century photograph on file at the Fort Frederica National Monument reveals the building in ruins. Questions remain regarding the age and function of this tabby ruin.

Figure 2. View of Tabby House Environment, September, 2004.
Figure 3. Angled View of Tabby House, September, 2004.
Figure 4. Angled View of Tabby House Showing Heavily Modified Wall, September, 2004.
The archaeological reconnaissance included a brief surface inspection of the exposed ground to check for diagnostic artifacts. Artifacts observed included: 1 ironstone plate base with a maker’s mark (Powell Bishop Ironstone China [produced ca. 1840s-1850s]); undecorated creamware and pearlware, blue and green shell edged pearlware, polychrome hand painted pearlware, tobacco pipe stems, olive green bottle glass, animal bones, oyster shell, brick, and small chunks of tabby. Artifacts were common and suggested that buried historic midden deposits were likely present. These artifacts indicate an occupation that spans the late 18th to mid-19th centuries. No artifacts clearly associated with the Trustee period of Georgia history (Fort Delegal era) were observed. No aboriginal artifacts were observed.

At the request of the landowner, Tommy Stewart of TDS Construction/Georgia Realty, The LAMAR Institute prepared a proposal for additional historical archaeology at this study site on September 15, 2004. Unfortunately, the landowner opted not to fund the project and large scale construction continued on the property. The site was officially recorded in the Georgia Archaeological Site File, although the full extent of the site was not determined. This brief report attempts to salvage what little was gleaned about the archaeological resources at this location. Figure 6 shows the study area in 2005 as the construction project progressed.
The exact age and function of this tabby building remains undetermined. The area immediately surrounding the building has now been extensively modified and its archaeological potential greatly reduced. Quite possibly, however, archaeological deposits associated with this building’s occupation and other historic use of the area may be located on adjacent tracts that have not been destroyed by construction. The search for vestige of Fort Delegal will continue, although the loss of the resources documented herein represents a significant setback in this research effort.

References Cited

Barefoot, Patricia
2004 Delegal’s Fort at Sea Pointe St. Simons Island, GA. Submitted to Tommy Stewart, St. Simons Island, Georgia. Manuscript on file, The LAMAR Institute, Rincon, Georgia.
GEORGIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE FORM
1990
Official Site Number: 9GN 317

Institutional Site Number: SSI-1 Site Name: Tabby House
County: Glynn Map Name: Brunswick East, GA USGS OR USNOAA
UTM Zone: 17 UTM East: 463051 UTM North: 3444481
Owner: TDS Construction/Georgia Realty Address: 7th St. at Ocean Blvd., St. Simons Island, Georgia
Site Length: 30+ meters Width: 30+ meters Elevation: + 2 meters
Standing Architecture: 1. Present 2. Absent
5. Unknown 6. Underwater
Type of Site (Mill, Mound, Quarry, Lithic Scatter, etc.): Tabby house and historic artifact deposit
Topography (Ridge, Terrace, etc.): ridge on island, near dunes
Current Vegetation (Woods, Pasture, etc.): lawn grass, trees, ornamentals, denuded ground
Additional Information: D. Elliott did an informal recon of site on 9/13/04 at request of landowner. Site is about 64 meters from the Delegal Fort historical marker. Site contains a standing tabby house and early 19th century (and possibly late 18th century) refuse scatter. Owner is curious if site is associated with Delegal Fort, which is a good possibility. Observed artifacts indicate site use in plantation era. House is a rectangular, single story building with gabled roof. It has circular window vents at eaves on each end. One side has been extensively remodeled with picture windows, other side is relatively intact. Historical photo on file at Fort Frederica indicates site was in ruins in early 20th century. House was rebuilt, circa 1960s or so, and occupied until fairly recently (presently vacant, awaiting new functional use).

SKETCH MAP
(Include sites, roads, streams, land features)
State Site Number: 9GN 3/7  Institutional Site Number: SSI-1

Public Status: 1. National Historic Landmark 2. National Natural Landmark

National Register Standing: 1. Determined Eligible 2. Recommended Ineligible

National Register Level of Significance: 1. Local 2. State 3. National

Preservation State (Select up to Two): 1. Undisturbed 2. Cultivated 3. Eroded
9. Graded 10. Razed


RECORD OF INVESTIGATIONS

Supervisor: Elliott, Dan  Affiliation: LAMAR Institute Date: 9/2004
Report Title: none
Other Reports: none

Artifacts Collected: 1 ironstone plate base with maker’s mark (Powell Bishop Ironstone China [ca. 1840s-1850s]); other artifacts observed included undecorated creamware and pearlware, blue and green shell edged pearlware, polychrome hand painted pearlware, tobacco pipe stems, olive green bottle glass, animal bones, oyster shell, brick, tabby

Location of Collections: University of Georgia, GMNH, Anthropology
Location of Field Notes: University of Georgia, GMNH, Anthropology
Private Collections: unknown
Name: __________________________ Address: __________________________

CULTURAL AFFINITY

Cultural Periods: 23~ historic
Phases: Late 18th through 20th century

FORM PREPARATION AND REVISION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institutional Affiliation</th>
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<td>9/2004</td>
<td>Daniel T. Elliott</td>
<td>The LAMAR Institute, Inc.</td>
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