Archaeological Reconnaissance of Pennyworth Island, Chatham County, Georgia

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Introduction

Archaeological reconnaissance of Pennyworth Island in Chatham County, Georgia was conducted in August, 2010 by a research team with the Chatham County Resources Protection Commission’s Technical Advisory Committee. The reconnaissance survey was accomplished during two separate visits to the island. The first visit to the island was in July, 2010 and it consisted of a surface walkover of one tract on the lower end of the island. The second visit took place on August 13, 2010 and it consisted of surface walkover, photography, and excavation of two shovel tests. This reconnaissance report is supplemental information, which may be helpful in the review of the forthcoming National Register of Historic Places nomination package for Pennyworth Island (Birge-Wilson 2010). Figure 1 shows a recent aerial view of Pennyworth Island.

Figure 1. Recent Aerial View of Pennyworth Island (Google Earth 2010).
Background

Pennyworth Island, also known as Cruger Island, is a small, low island that lies between the Back River of the Savannah River and Hutcheson Island. The island is comprised of approximately 178 acres of land, although much of this land is regularly submerged by tidal fluctuation and is marshy ground. A series of artificial dikes and ditches served to create rice fields and residential compounds within the low-lying ground. The island has changed somewhat in historic times as DeVorsey (2008:166) noted, “Pennyworth Island has grown slightly through apparent accretion along its upstream and northern shoreline. The South Carolina bank, however, has remained unchanged”. Figure 2 shows a view of the upland area on the south end of Pennyworth Island.

Figure 2. Pennyworth Island, South End (Courtesy of Chatham County Resource Protection Commission 2010).

The earliest identified owner of the island was Nicholas Cruger. Cruger is listed as the property owner in 1815. Later owners include James Hamilton, Jr. and Joseph Manigault. Manigault died in 1911, his house burned in 1915 and the island was abandoned by the 1920s. Historical information about the island is provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1994) and by Birge-Wilson (2010). Figure 3 shows a portion of an 1833 chart detailing Pennyworth Island (Mackay 1833). Figure 4 is a photograph of Joseph Manigault’s house on Pennyworth Island taken about 1915 (Courtesy of Georgia Historical Society, cited in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1994).
Figure 3. Portion of Chart of Part of the Savannah River (Mackay 1833).

Figure 4. Joseph Manigault House on Pennyworth Island, 1915 (Courtesy of Georgia Historical Society, cited in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1994).
An archaeological team from Tidewater Archaeological Research (TAR) documented several archaeological resources on Pennyworth Island in 1992 (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1994). These included Site 9CH801-- the remains of a large rice mill complex, wharf, canal, and protective bulkhead (TAR temporary designation GA BR 18); a dock area and structure (TAR GA BR 19); a multi-component wharf area that contained a dock, two small barges and a rice trunk (TAR GA BR 21); a cluster of small wooden vessels (TAR GA BR 23) and a large sailing vessel (TAR GA BR 22). These resources were mapped, photographed and described in detail in the 1994 report (Figure 5).

![Map of Pennyworth Island](image)

**Figure 5.** Identified Cultural Resources on Pennyworth Island (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1994).

Recently, Pennyworth Island was acquired by the Chatham County through the efforts of the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission. The present reconnaissance was conducted in response to a request by Joanna Bounds of that commission. Some of the results from this reconnaissance were used in compiling the National Register of Historic Places nomination (Birge-Wilson 2010). The present report focuses on cultural resources on interior portions of Pennyworth Island, not examined in the 1994 study.
Methods

The archaeological methods employed in this reconnaissance survey were straightforward. They were aimed at gaining a preliminary understanding of the range of cultural resources on the island. Time and budget constraints did not allow for a thorough survey of the island. Fieldwork was limited to two separate trips to the island lasting approximately 4 hours each.

The archaeologist reviewed readily available historical information concerning Pennyworth Island following the reconnaissance survey. Extensive information had been assembled by Adrienne Birge-Wilson, as part of the National Register of Historic Places nomination package, and the present effort did not attempt to rediscovery the information already assembled. Rather, sources were gathered that complemented the work already done. This additional information serves as supplemental support for the NRHP nomination, as well as, a partial guide for future researchers on Pennyworth Island.

Several primary sources were searched for information on Pennyworth Island. The greatest effort was placed on Civil War resources, although a few sources relating to earlier and later periods were also examined. These included: Cornell University (2010a-m); Jones (1861, 1874), Manigault 1855; Sherman (1990), and United States Navy Department (1903). Various secondary histories were reviewed for pertinent information about Pennyworth Island. These included DeVorsey (2008), Glatthaar (1985), Granger (1997), Hardee (1969), Jones (1890), Lamas (n.d.), Miles (1989), National Society Colonial Dames (1942), and Smith (1997). Historic maps of the area were examined. These included: Davis and others (1983), Latimer and Bucher (1911), Library of Congress (2010a-b), McKinnon (1800, 1820), Poe (ca. 1864, 1881, 1983), and Suter (1865).

Selected locations were recorded using handheld GPS devices. View sheds and specific archaeological views were recorded by digital camera. One of the cameras, operated by Joanna Bounds, was equipped with GPS capabilities. A simple sketch map was made of the more obvious dwelling ruin. This building appeared to date to the very late to early 20th century, based on the observed plumbing fixtures and brickwork. No excavation was attempted in that vicinity.

Two shovel tests were excavated in the vicinity of a second dwelling ruin. That ruin was evidenced by a single low brick pile, composed of Savannah Gray bricks. This pile probably represents a chimney for a single story dwelling. A few rusted iron, ceramic and bottle glass artifacts were immediately observed on the surface of the brick pile. Upon closer inspection a surface scatter of ceramics was noted just west of the chimney pile. Only one of these shovel tests yielded any artifacts. The artifacts from Shovel Test 2 were returned to the Elliott’s archaeological laboratory where they were washed, analyzed and catalogued. The artifact counts and descriptions were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which is included as Table 1 in the Appendix. The artifacts were deposited with the Metropolitan Planning Commission for permanent curation.
Results

The antebellum dwelling house on Pennyworth Island was likely destroyed by General Sherman’s Union troops in December, 1864. Nearby Gowrie plantation shared this fate. Watercolor illustrations of the Gowrie house and Gowrie kitchen are shown in Figures 6 and 7.

Figure 6. Louis Manigault's Gowrie House, Argyle Island, Georgia, circa 1834 (Manigault 1855; Courtesy of University of North Carolina).

The Blandford map of Chatham County, which was compiled from 1888-ca. 1893, shows numerous improvements on Pennyworth Island. These include multiple residences and rice-related industrial facilities. Portions of the rice-related industrial improvements on Pennyworth Island were documented in an earlier cultural resource study for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1994). Other resources shown on the Blandford map were not investigated by the present study and these should be targeted on future survey visits to the island. The present reconnaissance located five areas with surface evidence of historic structures and one area of undetermined cultural association. Each of these is described in the following.

AREA 1

The first discovery was a gap in the rice dike system on the southernmost section of the island. This gap was lined with “Savannah Gray” bricks (Figure 8). This feature probably represents one of many remnants of the flood gate system used to irrigate the
rice fields. No detailed study of this feature was undertaken, as the island likely contains dozens of such structures. More detailed mapping of these features is warranted in order to better understand the operation of the rice agriculture on Pennyworth Island.

Figure 7. Louis Manigault's Watercolor of the Kitchen at Gowrie Plantation, Argyle Island, Georgia (Manigault 1855; Courtesy of University of North Carolina).

Such structures. More detailed mapping of these features is warranted in order to better understand the operation of the rice agriculture on Pennyworth Island.

AREA 2

The second discovery was located south of the first find. It consisted of a more recent ruin containing cement blocks, a decomposed steel drum, and a scatter of Savannah Gray bricks and more recent (post-1875) extruded bricks (Figure 9). This feature was located along the same rice dike as the previously described feature and opposite from the more extensive riverfront ruins that were partially mapped in the previous U.S. A.C.E. study.

AREA 3

The third feature was the ruins of a residence in the interior of the island (Figures 10 and 11). This ruin included substantial portions of a brick wall or underpinning, numerous
brick piers, a single interior chimney constructed of fire bricks, and a porcelain cast-iron bathroom sink and related plumbing fixtures.

Figure 8. Area 1, Pennyworth Island (indicated by balloon A).

Figure 9. Area 2, Pennyworth Island (indicated by balloon A).
Figure 10. Chimney Ruin in Area 3, Pennyworth Island, Facing West.

Figure 11. Area 3, Pennyworth Island, (indicated by balloon A).
AREA 4

The fourth feature was a single brick chimney pile that likely represents a chimney for a single story dwelling (Figures 12 and 13). This location was sampled by two shovel tests. Both tests measured 50 x 50 cm in size.

Shovel Test 1 was placed immediately east of the chimney pile. It was excavated to a depth of 40 cm below ground surface and determined to be devoid of any cultural material. It should be noted that this area was virtually submerged, which hindered the excavation of traditional shovel tests. The absence of cultural material in the upper strata does not necessarily mean that no cultural remains exist at greater depths. The shovel test methods were not conducive for the exploration of deeper, submerged deposits.

Shovel Test 2 was placed approximately 2 meters west of the chimney pile. It was excavated to a depth of 55 cm below ground. Cultural material was encountered throughout this excavation. The test was terminated at 55 cm depth because of the submerged conditions. The soils in this test consisted of wet dark gray brown clay and brick rubble. Artifacts recovered from Shovel Test 2 are summarized in Table 1, which is appended to this report. These artifacts include a variety of ceramic, glass and metal artifacts that span the period from about 1840-1920. These artifacts include some oddity ceramics and higher status wares, which suggests that this dwelling was not that of a lower class resident or enslaved person. A majority of these artifacts exhibited evidence of exposure to extreme heat, such as a house fire. The Manigault home was consumed by fire in 1915 and this archaeological ruin quite possibly represents that conflagration event. As noted from historical records, Manigault rebuilt his home after the fire. The rebuilt dwelling may be the first building ruin described earlier, as its style is consistent with a circa 1915 construction date.

AREA 5

The last area explored on the island was the main industrial and riverfront zone (Figures 14 and 15). The exposed shoreline was examined for artifacts and several were noted. These included stoneware and blue transfer printed whiteware, bottle glass, iron, wood, and extensive brick rubble. A long section of brick retaining wall attests to the former presence of a wharf front. Other brick ruins extended from the waterfront to the interior of the island. These ruins were not fully explored in the present study, although they are discussed at length in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1994) report. Erosion and weathering to these resources has continued to take its toll in the 16 years that have passed since that study.
Figure 12. Chimney Ruin at Area 5, Pennyworth Island, Facing West.

Figure 13. Location of Shovel Test 2, Area 4, Pennyworth Island (indicated by balloon B).
Figure 14. Brick and Wood Ruins, Area 5, Pennyworth Island, Facing East.

Figure 15. Area 5, Pennyworth Island (examined area between balloons A and B).
AREA 6

One other area that was briefly explored by the reconnaissance team on their July visit was the high ground on the southernmost portion of Pennyworth Island (Figure 16). This was an area of well drained sand and slightly xeric conditions. Ground surface visibility in this area was about 30 percent and the surface was closely inspected for any artifact evidence but none was observed. This landform is readily visible on aerial photographs. No excavation was attempted in this area. Upon first inspection, it appears to be an older deposit of dredge spoil, although the possibility that the landform is natural was not entirely ruled out. Judging by the age on one older pine and one cedar tree this landform has some antiquity. A large patch of imported roses were noted on the southwestern side of the landform and these are likely survivors from Joseph Manigault’s celebrated rose garden. As noted by Birge-Wilson (2010) in her NRHP nomination form, Pennyworth Island was one of the exit routes used by Major General Hardee in the evacuation of the Confederate troops from Savannah on December 20, 1864 (United States. Navy Department 1903). Quite possibly their path crossed the landform in Area 6. Clearly, this area is deserving of more archaeological investigation.

Figure 16. Area 6, Pennyworth Island (indicated by balloon A).
MATERIAL CULTURE

Architecture Group
Brick were noted at several locations on Pennyworth Island. The majority of these were Savannah Gray bricks, which were likely manufactured within a few miles of the island. Area B contained more recent extruded bricks, which likely date after 1875. Yellow-paste fire brick were used in the chimney construction at Area 3 and one small firebrick fragment, bearing the letter “S” was recovered from Area 4. Mortar was also present with the brick scatters. Area 5 contains a heavy deposit of broken bricks on the shoreline. While many of these may be remnants of the wharf complex, others may be rubble that was dumped there to stem the erosion and to provide a firm walking surface.

Nails and other iron hardware were noted on the ground surface at several locations on Pennyworth Island. For the most part the iron was extremely oxidized and decomposed to the point where these artifacts were barely recognizable. The nails recovered from Shovel Test 2 at Area 4 included machine cut square nails and round wire nails. The machine cut nails date after 1790 and the wire nails date after 1865.

Plumbing remains were noted in the dwelling ruins at Area 3. The use of indoor plumbing on this house likely dates to the early-20th century occupation. Indoor plumbing also suggests that this dwelling was a higher status residence and probably that of the island’s owner Manigault.

Numerous wooden beams were noted on the surface in Area 5 along the waterfront. Some of these beams exhibited traces of mortise and tenon joinery and some were further secured with large iron spikes. Both the wood and the spikes were in poor condition. The wood was decomposed by rotting and by sea worms burrows. An example is shown in Figure 17. Other architectural artifacts on the site include window glass and roofing slate. Both were recovered from Area 4.

Kitchen Group
Ceramic sherds were noted in Areas 4 and 5. No whole vessels were observed. Examples of transfer printed whiteware from the surface of Area 5 are shown in Figure 18. These sherds date after 1830. An interesting assortment of ceramics was found in Shovel Test 2 at Area 4. These included expensive porcelains, art ware, and less expensive utilitarian wares and terra cotta flower pot fragments. The earliest wares observed on Pennyworth Island were manufactured from 1840-1870. The ceramics suggest that this dwelling was in use prior to 1870. The assemblage was too small for any detailed ceramic analysis or Mean Ceramic Dating (MCD). Slightly larger ceramic samples from the site would likely help to determine the time period that the dwelling was occupied.
Bottle Glass was common in Areas 4 and 5. No whole bottles were observed. The glass appeared to date from the mid-19th through early 20th centuries. One diagnostic amber glass bottle sherd was discovered on the top of the low chimney pile in Area 4. The Anheuser-Busch Brewing Association began operation in 1879 (Faulkenberry 2004:61). Amber beer bottles with the embossed seal, “A B Co” on the base were produced after that date. These bottles were likely crown cap seal varieties, which were common after 1910.
Other Artifact Groups
Other Artifacts recovered from Area 4 include two polished marble slab fragments. These may be portions of an elaborate marble mantle or fireplace trim or a furniture top. Whatever function the marble had, it represents higher status artifacts that one would not expect in an enslaved person’s dwelling. This marble slab evidence, along with the ceramic evidence, points to Area 4 as also associated with Pennyworth Island’s owner. The ceramics indicate a moderately long time span for this dwelling from the mid-1800s to about 1915. The termination of occupation of the dwelling was probably the result of a catastrophic fire. History records that Manigault’s house burned in 1915, so it is tempting to conclude that this ruin represents that house.

Table 1. Pennyworth Island, Shovel Test 2, 0-55 cm Below Surface.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ct.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stamped &quot;S&quot; fire brick fragment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Light green window glass, thick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Machine cut nails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wire nails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Roofing slate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Terra cotta flower pots, undecorated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Aqua bottle glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Clear glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Molded, floral art-ware, ironstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perforated piece, brazier or steamer, ironstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Undecorated porcelain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gold painted porcelain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Molded ware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Molded or stamped, engine turn refined stoneware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Engine turned stoneware teapot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Engine turned stoneware, ginger beer bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Domestic brown stoneware</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Undecorated ceramic, unidentified</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Brown transfer print whiteware</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pink transfer print whiteware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polychrome hand painted, late variety whiteware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dark green bottle neck, applied lip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dark green bottle glass</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Medium green bottle glass</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Light green bottle glass</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Marble slab (polished with 1 with finished edge)</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Melted glass</td>
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<td>Flat piece, unidentified iron</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
Summary Recommendations

A preliminary field reconnaissance of the archaeological resources on Pennyworth Island was completed in August, 2010. The island, which was recently acquired by Chatham County, contains an interesting array of resources. The present study was not a comprehensive survey of the island’s resources but was intended only to sample areas not described by previous archaeologists (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1994). Other cultural resources on the island’s interior were identified from cartographic research, particularly on the Blandford map of Chatham County (Blandford 1888-1893), by Birge-Wilson (2010) and these potential archaeological ruins were not explored in the present study. Several of these may represent residences of enslaved persons or later freedmen employees of Joseph Manigault. Recommendations for future research at Pennyworth Island include the following:

- Complete inventory of the island’s cultural resources by an intensive archaeological survey
- Ethno-botanical survey of the island to identify exotic planted species worthy of note
- Measured drawings of ruins related to the waterfront and rice industry
- Measured drawings of any identified building ruins
- Mapping, photography and selected drawings of the rice irrigation system features on the island
- Archaeological test excavations at the various domestic and industrial sites
- Development of interpretive materials to share the history and archaeology of Pennyworth Island with the interested public
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