Effingham County's Historical Archaeological Resources

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Effingham County, Georgia, is fortunate to have an abundant historical archaeological resource base that has unique qualities that attract global interest. Sites associated with the eighteenth century Salzburger community are particularly noteworthy. Many archaeological sites have been discovered in the past 15 years that are associated with the Salzburger and other German settlements at Ebenezer. The gem in the cap of Effingham County's archaeological wealth is the colonial town of New Ebenezer, also known as archaeological site 9Ef28. New Ebenezer has been visited by two U.S. Secretaries of the Interior, Stewart Udall and Bruce Babbit. Secretary Udall, who visited the site in the 1960s, was so impressed with New Ebenezer that he considered it eligible to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as a National Landmark.

Effingham County has been home for people for the past 12,000 years or more. Scattered finds of distinctive Paleoindian projectile points are reported from at least two sites near the Savannah River (Fish 1976:19). Sites from the later Archaic (8000-1000 B.C.) and Woodland periods (1000 B.C.-A.D. 900) abound throughout the county. Sites from the Mississippian period (A.D. 900-1540), while present in Effingham County, are fewer than sites of earlier periods. Several sites associated with historically identified Native American groups, particularly Creek and Yuchi cultures, are found in key areas of the county. Perhaps the most dramatic cultural manifestation witnessed in Effingham County was the arrival of the Salzburgers in 1734. The
Salzburgers settled in the eastern side of the county in what was then the frontier of British North America. Several dozen of their farmsteads, in addition to the town site of New Ebenezer, have been identified. By the middle 1700s the Salzburger yeoman farmsteads gave way to a planter class. Several large plantation sites, including the Davis and Wylly plantations have been identified archaeologically, and these sites exhibit significant potential for archaeological and historical research (Smith 1986; Elliott 1990). Sites of other important plantation are also known but historical research has not yet been completed (Elliott 1992a). Small farms, owned by non-Salzburgers, are more prevalent in the western parts of Effingham County (Elliott et al. 1994; Elliott 1992a). Sites from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are also abundant in Effingham County, but few have been assessed for their NRHP eligibility. The archaeological resources in Effingham County span a diversity of human history that is of international interest. This document presents a review of previous archaeological studies in Effingham County, that review is followed by a research design for managing the historical archaeological resources through a focused program of future archaeological research.

**History of Research**

A total of 239 archaeological sites is presently recorded in Effingham County, Georgia, in the official state site files (as of June, 1998). This represents less than one percent of the archaeological sites that have been recorded in the state of Georgia. It also represents a small fraction of the undiscovered archaeological sites in the county. The first archaeological sites in Effingham County were recorded in the 1960s but it was not until the mid-1970s with Paul Fish's landmark study of prehistoric settlement that the archaeological resources of Effingham County were studied in earnest (Mitchell 1975, Fish 1976). Fish examined 108 aboriginal and historical
sites in Effingham and Screven counties in the Ebenezer Creek watershed for the Soil Conservation Service. Eighty-eight of these sites were in Effingham County. Fish noted a positive correlation between sites in the Ebenezer Creek watershed and Lakeland sand type soils, particularly for Archaic period sites.

Only a handful of sites in the county, however, have been studied beyond the survey phase. Most of the sites that have received more in-depth excavation have demonstrated significant potential for research and many of these were recommended as eligible for nomination to the NRHP. As of June, 1998, however, only five places in Effingham County were actually listed in the Register: Ebenezer Townsite and Jerusalem Lutheran Church; Effingham County Courthouse; Guyton Historic District; New Hope AME Church, Guyton; and the Reiser-Zoller Farm, Springfield. Of these five National Register properties, only New Ebenezer (9Ef28) has an identified archaeological component. It was not until 1976 that New Ebenezer received NRHP status and the site was recorded as a prehistoric surface scatter in the state files that same year by Paul Fish. The New Ebenezer town site was not investigated for its archaeological potential until 1987 (Elliott 1988). Jerusalem Church also was recorded in the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1936, as was the Jaudon-Bragg-Snelling Farm.

Scientific study since the middle 1980s by the LAMAR Institute, Historic Effingham Society, Georgia Salzburger Society, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, several private archaeological consulting firms, and others, have demonstrated the research potential of a variety of archaeological sites in Effingham County, including many sites related to the colonial Salzburger settlement. Simultaneously, historical research and translations of many eighteenth century German documents pertaining to the settlement serves to enhance the value of these archaeological resources. Wise use of this archaeological resource base, which would include a
planned approach of heritage tourism of interpretive historical destinations, conservative management of the resources, and scientific and historical research on selected sites, could significantly benefit the people of Georgia and Effingham County.

The German speaking colonists, generally known as the Salzburgers, who settled the Ebenezer colony on the lower Savannah River, in what was to become Effingham County, arrived in 1734 and established the town of Ebenezer. After two grueling years (March, 1736) the town was relocated to a more easily provisioned site, on a bluff overlooking the Savannah River. This new town was called New Ebenezer. Excellent historical summaries of the Salzburger colony are found in published works by George Fenwick Jones (see for example, Jones 1984, 1990).

By the fall of 1737 many farmsteads had been established on the Mill Creek bluff (also known as Abercorn Creek) This area became known as the Mill District of New Ebenezer after several lumber and grist mills were established. By 1752 the Salzburgers had outgrown their bounds and expanded north of Ebenezer Creek to establish the Bethany settlement. Other minor settlements included Goshen, Abercorn, and Halifax. Of these, Halifax was the only settlement outside present day Effingham County. The Salzburgers occupied approximately 25 square miles on the eastern side of Effingham County. Their settlements were administered with a strong religious element, which until the mid 1760s was dominated by their religious and secular leader Johann Martin Boltzias. After Boltzias' death, the Lutheran congregation of Ebenezer began to fragment. This situation was exacerbated by the political unrest of the American Revolution, so that by 1782 most of the colonial Salzburger settlements were abandoned. Although many of their descendants continue to reside in the area, the area never again attained the cultural solidarity that had characterized the first 30 years of the colony. By 1800, New Ebenezer,
Abercorn, Bethany, and the Mill District were essentially ghost towns. The abandonment of these areas was, however, has been a blessing for latter day archaeologists, because it resulted in their survival as undisturbed archaeological sites.

Archaeological study of Effingham County's historical resources began in 1984 in advance of the construction of the Fort Howard (now known as Fort James) recycled paper mill on Abercorn Creek. Survey and test excavations conducted by Garrow & Associates resulted in the identification of more than a dozen important early colonial farmstead sites in the Mill District. This work was documented in a series of contract reports and was summarized in a presentation to the Society for Historical Archaeology (Elliott and Mitchell 1984; Elliott 1984; Elliott and Smith 1985; Smith 1986; Elliott 1986, 1987). Rather than destroy these important resources, the Fort Howard Paper Company took steps to preserve the significant historic sites as green spaces. As a result these sites remain available for scientific study today. This pioneering work on the Ebenezer Mill District established a framework from which later studies of the town of New Ebenezer developed.

Research investigations at New Ebenezer began in 1987 when an archaeological survey of a major portion of the town was conducted by the LAMAR Institute, Inc., a nonprofit organization for public education and research on archaeology (Elliott 1988, 1989a and b). This survey was requested by the property owner, the Kessler New Ebenezer Trust. Although the New Ebenezer site had been listed in the NRHP since 1976, little was known of its archaeological resources. The initial survey was followed by two seasons of test excavation and additional survey work in 1989 and 1990 by the LAMAR Institute (Elliott and Elliott 1990b, 1991). Excavations were conducted on four town lots and on one public square.

From 1992 to 1998, the LAMAR Institute archaeologists, in alliance with Elderhostel,
Inc., the Georgia Salzburger Society, the Kessler New Ebenezer Trust, the New Ebenezer Retreat Center, Jerusalem Lutheran Church, and Georgia Southern University, have continued to survey and test excavate portions of the New Ebenezer town site (Elliott 1995). Other reports on this work are currently in preparation. To date, slightly more than 100 square meters of the site have been hand excavated. This archaeological work allows for significant insight into the lifestyles of the colonial Salzburgers. The areas that were sampled include the silk filature, a tavern, and the house lots of a blacksmith and locksmith, a shipwright, and a carpenter. Because the excavations at New Ebenezer were conducted using similar methods with the early work by Garrow & Associates at the Mill District, these data allow a preliminary comparison of colonial life in two different areas of the Ebenezer settlement. Additional Elderhostel field investigations are scheduled for November, 1998 and Spring, 1999 at New Ebenezer.

Recently other work in Effingham County has been conducted by the LAMAR Institute through several sponsors. A small survey grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, awarded to the LAMAR Institute in 1989, resulted in the reconnaissance investigation of nine early colonial settlements in Effingham and Chatham counties, Georgia. This project included initial visits to Abercorn, Bethany, and Old Ebenezer, as well as additional investigations of New Ebenezer, Ebenezer Mill District, and Mount Pleasant (Elliott 1990). Test excavations were conducted by the LAMAR Institute, in cooperation with Effingham County, the Historic Effingham Society and the Georgia Salzburger Society, at Bethany cemetery in 1989 and 1990 (Elliott and Elliott 1989). This important cemetery was "lost" and the area had returned to woodlands. Archaeological investigations, coupled with the historical research efforts of Rev. Raymond Davis and Milton Rahn, resulted in the relocation of the cemetery. Twenty-two graves have been identified at Bethany as a result of this effort.
Other recent archaeological work in Effingham County on "non-Salzburger" historic sites includes survey and test excavation in 1989 and 1990 by the LAMAR Institute at Mount Pleasant (Elliott and Elliott 1990, 1997; Elliott 1991a, 1992b), and the West Effingham project. The Mount Pleasant community includes at least five archaeological sites. The most noteworthy is Site 9Ef169, which is a multi-component site that included a Yuchi village, a deerskin trader's outpost, and a Georgia Ranger garrison (ca. 1739-1758). Intensive survey and limited test excavations were conducted at 9Ef169. Investigations of other sites in the Mount Pleasant community was limited to reconnaissance level efforts.

The West Effingham project was a systematic surface survey of approximately 689 acres in western Effingham County conducted by the LAMAR Institute, under sponsorship by the Historic Effingham Society (Elliott 1992a). This study resulted in the location of 30 archaeological sites. Many of the sites identified by this study exhibited research potential and may be eligible for listing in the NRHP. The NRHP eligibility potential of these sites was not addressed in this study. This study is noteworthy because it focused on areas of Effingham County that were not settled by Salzburgers and it provides a glimpse of non-German adaptations in the Ogeechee River section.

Garrow & Associates surveyed an electric transmission line corridor for the Georgia Power Company that crossed Effingham County (Garrow 1984). Their survey located many sites in the county and one of these was tested for its potential eligibility for listing in the NRHP. At a site in northern Effingham County, Kathy Manning explored aboriginal use of a Carolina Bay environment (Garrow et al. 1984; Finch and Manning 1985). Although this particular site was found to have limited research potential, it was an investigation of an important site type that has long been recognized by amateur archaeologists who are familiar with southern Georgia.
Recent survey for an industrial park southeast of Springfield, Georgia by Garrow &
Associates resulted in the location of one site, 9Ef238, which was deemed potentially eligible for
listing in the NRHP (Jones 1995). This site contained a suspected colonial Salzburger house
farmstead. Additional testing of this site was recommended by Jones.

Georgia Southern University's excavations at a site in western Effingham County, led by
Sue Moore uncovered a historic grave, which was determined to be that of an eighteenth century
settler (Sue Moore personal communication, 1992).

Survey in 1993 and 1994, and test excavations in 1994 for the Georgia Department of
Transportation, Highway 21 widening project were conducted by Southeastern Archaeological
Services and New South Associates. No potentially significant sites were identified in the
southern section of the highway project, described in Elliott (1993), but the northern section
yielded one potentially significant site in Effingham County (Elliott 1994). Subsequent
excavations at 9Ef98 revealed intact features from a late eighteenth and early nineteenth century
farmstead and this site was deemed potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP (Elliott et al.
1994).

Several other surveys in Effingham County have yielded negative results for potentially
eligible sites. Several surveys were conducted by Brockington and Associates for Savannah
Electric and Power Company's Plant McIntosh near the Savannah River (Gardner and Gaddy
1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d, Gardner and Markham 1993). No potentially eligible sites were
identified in their study areas. Unfortunately, this section of the county was extensively disturbed
by previous construction at Plant McIntosh. Two surveys for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
for Savannah River channel modifications both yielded negative results for potentially eligible
sites (Michie 1978; Blick et al. 1994). Survey near Rincon by Armstrong State College yielded
no NRHP eligible sites (Julie Barnes personal communication 1988). Bloom (1990) conducted a survey for Garrow & Associates for a proposed Oglethorpe Power Company transmission line from Egypt to Dover but identified no potentially eligible sites. Survey by the Chicora Foundation for the expansion of the Silverwood housing development identified no NRHP eligible sites. These studies with negative findings demonstrate that not all of Effingham County abounds in important archaeological sites and that these important resources are not homogeneously distributed over the landscape.

**A Preliminary Design for Future Historical Archaeological Research**

Previous research has clearly demonstrated that unique and significant archaeological resources, associated with the Georgia Salzburgers and others, exist in several parts of Effingham County, Georgia. Only a small fraction of the county, however, has been inventoried for archaeological sites and many potentially productive areas of Effingham County remain to be surveyed. The distribution of important archaeological sites is not evenly spread across the county.

Previous survey in the Bethany settlement was restricted to surface reconnaissance and a few limited shovel tests. Additional survey in wooded areas of Bethany should prove productive. None of the sites located in Bethany thus far, other than the Bethany cemetery, have been examined by test excavation or intensive shovel testing programs. A representative sample of early historical sites in the Bethany area should be surveyed more intensively and selected sites test excavated and assessed for their eligibility for listing in the NRHP.

The Mill District contains many known archaeological sites with Salzburger components, including more than a dozen that have been tested. Most of the sites that were recommended as
potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP have not received any evaluative test excavation.

Other potential archaeological sites in the Mill District, not included in the Fort James paper mill studies, await discovery. Survey of lands, particularly south of Dasher Creek, should be conducted to define the horizontal extent of the Mill District settlement.

The steady march of urban development has exacted a heavy toll on the archaeological resources associated with the Goshen settlement. The tiny Goshen church and cemetery stand out as an island in a sea of asphalt. Archaeological survey data is urgently needed in this section of the county. Only limited archaeological study has been conducted in this area, which consisted of a systematic surface collection at site 9Ef94 by amateur archaeologist, Elliott O. Edwards, Jr. No intensive surveys or excavations have been conducted in the Goshen vicinity.

Previous archaeological research at Abercorn is extremely limited. Only a small section of the original town site was surveyed by the LAMAR Institute and none of the town has been examined by test excavation. Only one archaeological site was recorded in Abercorn area. This site contained the remains of a small Revolutionary War era redoubt, or small earthen fort, which was manned by Beamsley's Grenadiers, a British army unit. The site also contains domestic evidence of colonial homes, but information about these sites is sketchy at present.

Survey at Old Ebenezer also has been limited in scope and the location of the original townsite is not confidently established (Babits 1982; Elliott 1990). Although the site of the original mill at Old Ebenezer is known, the actual first town site location of the Salzburger colonists (ca. 1734-1736) remains unidentified (Klingelhofer 1976). The high probability areas where Old Ebenezer was situated should be examined by intensive archaeological survey. If the remains can be identified, then limited test excavations should be conducted to determine the preservation state and research potential of these resources. Despite its obvious historical
significance, Old Ebenezer is presently not listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This site, if it can be positively located, should be nominated as a National Register Landmark.

Archaeological excavation and survey is scheduled to continue at the New Ebenezer site. Funding for this work is quite limited, however, and additional sources of revenue are being sought to finance this research. Efforts should be launched to change the National Register status of this site from a National Register site to a National Register Historic Landmark. The site, and Old Ebenezer as well, may also be eligible for nomination as World Heritage sites.

Additional survey is needed along the Ebenezer Creek corridor. High ground (bluffs) adjacent to water are likely locations for important aboriginal and early historic settlements. Several Revolutionary War fortifications are known to exist in this vicinity but have not yet been recorded. Many Salzburger plantation sites also are likely located along unsurveyed portions of Ebenezer Creek.

Previous study of the western section of Effingham County, along the Ogeechee River, has been extremely limited. Additional survey is needed and potentially significant sites that have been recorded by Fish (1976) and Elliott (1992a) should be evaluated by intensive shovel testing and test excavation of selected sites. Study of this section of the county is particularly important because it contains non-German colonial and early Federal Period sites, which can serve to balance the findings from the German dominated Savannah River valley portions of the county.

**Potential Sources of Funds**

Archaeological research is a costly endeavor. Expenses include salaries and wages for the archaeologists and their assistants, field housing, transportation vehicle costs, and equipment
rental or purchase. For every day spent conducting archaeological fieldwork, archaeologists should plan to spend two days in laboratory analysis and interpretation. Laboratory costs, in addition to salaries and wages, include laboratory and equipment use, computers, photography, report production costs, and supplies.

Previous archaeological studies in Effingham County were funded by several diverse sources. Most projects fell under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which mandated the expenditure of project funds for federal, federally assisted, or federally regulated projects affecting significant cultural resources. These Section 106 related projects are expected to continue in Effingham County over the next decade and these will be effectively self funding. Several drawbacks concerning these projects should be noted. This work is performed by Cultural Resource Management (CRM) companies, who are highly competitive. Consequently, the work often varies in quality and can be biased by the research interests of those conducting the project. These projects generally lack any coordinated research strategy, other than generic research goals mandated by National Park Service or state guidelines. Section 106 projects cannot address all of the archaeological research needs of Effingham County since most of the land in the county is privately owned and most future development projects will not require any Section 106 action.

Recently, the State of Georgia enacted the Georgia Environmental Protection Act (GEPA), which mandates the inclusion of archaeological research for state funded projects. To date, however, few archaeological projects, have been funded as a result of this legislation, and we are aware of none that have been conducted under these auspices in Effingham County. If properly implemented, however, this legislation could prove to be another source of funds for archaeological research.
Salzburger-related research by the LAMAR Institute has been primarily privately funded with grant money, except for two small grants were provided by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Since 1987 the LAMAR Institute has pursued grant funding from a variety of federal, state, and private sources and this funding effort is ongoing. The LAMAR Institute's research has attempted to fill a portion of the void not covered by federally funded (Section 106) projects.

Potential sources of state funds for archaeological research include: the ISTEA grant program, administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation, and Heritage 2000 grants, historic resource survey grants, and National Register nomination grants administered by the Historic Preservation Division Georgia DNR. The Effingham County government is presently pursuing some of these avenues of funding, which should include archaeological components in the proposed projects (Bron Cleveland personal communication, June, 1998).

Ideally, money invested in Effingham County's archaeological resources could be returned as a dividend by marketing the county as a destination for eco-tourism. The most obvious archaeological candidate as a tourist destination is New Ebenezer. This site, and its related settlements, have the potential to draw tourists in the same way as other interpretive history sites on the eastern seaboard, such as Old Salem in North Carolina, St. Augustine in Florida. If properly developed through careful archaeological excavation, interpretation, and reconstruction, the Ebenezer settlement could ultimately rival Williamsburg, Virginia. Hopefully, a program of focused archaeological research will enable Effingham County to claim its rightful position as one of the gems in the crown of Georgia's Colonial Coast.
Summary

Effingham County has a diverse archaeological record, whose value is obvious to the professional archaeology community, but not widely recognized by the general population of Effingham County and Georgia. This document provided a concise summary of the previous archaeological research that has been conducted in the county. It also provides a preliminary research design for future studies of the archaeological resources that remain, including both known and unknown.
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