

Charles Towne Landing Archaeology Update

Charles Towne Landing archaeologists kicked off the Spring 2012 field season in mid-April! The focus of this season's excavations is once again to expose the full dimensions of the ever growing tabby floor.

We ended last Fall's season with the Northern and Eastern edges of the floor still to be uncovered. After only a few weeks of digging this season we believe we have found the Eastern edge. We are hoping to expose the Northern edge within the next few weeks.



The recently uncovered Eastern edge of the tabby floor

The second goal of this field season will be to excavate beneath the tabby floor in hopes of finding an artifact that will provide a TPQ date. TPQ is an abbreviation of *terminus post quem*,

which translates to "limit before which" and refers to the latest possible date an event, such as the construction of our tabby floor, could have occurred.

Usually this date can be determined by diagnostic, or datable, artifacts found in or beneath a feature. The TPQ date would correspond to the date of the most recent artifact found, because while an artifact could have been deposited anytime after its manufacture date it could not have been deposited before.

For example, if we excavated a feature and found a 1720 British coin, a type of ceramic that was first manufactured in 1762, and a pipe stem with a maker's mark that corresponds to the years 1678-1713, the TPQ date for that feature would be 1762 or after.

We are hoping that such an artifact will be found beneath the Miller Site's tabby floor so we will finally be able to give a more precise date for the floor's construction. Be sure to stop by Charles Towne Landing this May and June to see the excavations!

Inside this issue:

Charles Towne Landing Archaeology Update	1
Colonial Dorchester Archaeology Update	2
Meet an Archaeologist: Lauren Souther	3
Featured Article: The Colonial Use of Tabby as a Flooring Material	4-6
Archaeology News	7

Upcoming Events

**Southeastern Conference
 on Historic Sites
 Archaeology**

August 24–25, 2012

Founders Hall

Charles Towne Landing
 State Historic Site

Colonial Dorchester Archaeology Update

The staff at Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site is pleased to announce the beginning of our Archaeology Lab Volunteer Program. The program officially began in-mid April but is scheduled to continue every Wednesday and select Sundays throughout the year. Volunteers are asked to report to the Ranger Station anytime between 9am and 1pm on lab days to take part in the experience. Volunteers are also asked to be prepared to get involved and stay as long (or as little) as you would like. No experience is required and all lab materials will be provided.

The goals of the Archaeology Lab Volunteer Program are to train and educate the public about the process of artifact analysis, curation, description, and cataloging. For the past twenty years, archaeologists have unearthed virtually thousands of historic and prehistoric artifacts that have helped piece together the unique past of one of South Carolina's most significant historic sites. The artifacts handled in our lab are a large part of the physical evidence of the approximately hundred years of occupation (1700-1800) of the Colonial-era town of Dorchester. Your contribution will help archaeologists and researchers provide useful insight to the ongoing interpretation of Colonial Dorchester to the park's visitors. This Spring we will begin sorting through the material remains from the possible 18th-century kitchen house of lot 52 or commonly



known as the Blake Lot. After only two days of lab work, volunteers have discovered various items dating as early as the mid 1700s, such as imported ceramic fragments, wrought nails, a portion of an iron kettle, a bone button, and multiple tobacco pipe fragments.

Volunteers that develop a strong understanding of the lab process and show an interest in the field of Archaeology will be asked to help out with field excavations this fall.

If you and/or someone you know is interested in volunteering, please contact us at Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site, anytime at 843-873-1740 or by email at ljames@scprt.com. Lastly, we do ask that new volunteers fill out the required forms on site prior to any participation and of course, provide us some type of communication about when you will be arriving to take part in the program. Bring a friend and we will see you all on Wednesdays!

In addition, park staff, volunteers, and members of the Independent Company of South Carolina are continuing to bring Dorchester's above-ground rich history back to life during the Garrison weekend event. The Company will be recreating a mid-18th century military encampment of the Fort Dorchester Garrison of the Independent Company of South Carolina. The next Garrison Saturday will be May 5th. For more information call 843-873-1740 or visit the Independent Company of South Carolina's website. —*CD Staff*

Meet an Archaeologist

Lauren Souther

It was a Latin class in high school that first sparked Lauren Souther's interest in classical archaeology. A few years later she had successfully earned a bachelor's degree in archaeology with minors in anthropology and classics from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

As an undergrad Souther participated in the excavation of Mochlos, a Minoan fishing village in Crete, Greece. She worked there a total of five summers, first as a student and eventually as an area supervisor and artifact cataloger for the project. Lauren also has years of experience in cultural resource management (CRM) and has participated in many archaeological surveys and data recovery excavations across the southeastern United States.

While in college Souther developed an interest in burials and bioarchaeology, or the study of human remains found in the archaeological record to gain a better understanding of the sex, age, health and lifeways of a past population, and decided to continue her post-graduate education by specializing in this field.

Souther is currently finishing up her master's degree in anthropology with a focus in bioarchaeology at East Carolina University (ECU). Her thesis research is focusing on the comparative analysis of paleopathology and mortuary practices of Late Woodland Algonkian burials excavated in



Lauren Souther, analyzing human remains

Currituck County, North Carolina. Lauren also teaches the Introduction to Biological Archaeology Lab course at ECU.

Lauren's favorite aspect of archaeology is that it allows her to delve into the unknown, the fact you never really know what you will find and what it will be able to tell you. "Every discovery leads to a better understanding of the past, and that is exciting," she says.

Souther offers some sound advice for aspiring archaeologists. She stresses that you should go in being realistic. "Archaeology is definitely not spectacular

discoveries of sites and artifacts. It is more often than not low paying, hard work that requires a lot of patience. However, if it is what you love then everything else is moot because you are working in a field that makes you happy." She also recommends that you never be without a good trowel, root clippers and a compass.

There is no doubt that Souther has chosen a field that makes her happy. She expects to defend her thesis and graduate with her MA this spring. She is also pleased to be spending her summer working in Jordan as an area supervisor for an ongoing excavation of tombs and domestic structures in Petra dating from the 1st to 6th centuries A.D.

We expect great things from Lauren in the future and wish her the best of luck in all she does. ■

Featured Article

The Colonial Use of Tabby as a Flooring Material: Evidence from Charles Towne Landing

By: Rebecca Shepherd

In the fall of 2009 excavations at Charles Towne Landing's Miller Site, originally discovered by amateur archaeologist Johnny Miller in 1968, exposed an interesting feature, the remains of a colonial structure with a floor made of tabby. This discovery is providing new insight into the lifeways and building techniques of early South Carolinians.



A close-up of the Miller Site's tabby floor

Tabby is a multi-purpose building material unique to the coastal regions of the southeastern United States. A material similar to modern cement, it was utilized in the construction of walls, floors, roofs and foundations by both the British and Spanish during the colonial and antebellum periods. The manufacture of tabby involved the mixing of five key ingredients: oyster shell, lime, ash, sand and water, all of which were readily available to those living in the coastal areas of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina. Oyster shell, used for both the creation of lime and as an aggregate in the mixture, could be harvested from natural deposits or robbed from the numerous prehistoric shell middens found throughout the region. Sand and water were plentiful along the coasts many beaches and river channels. Although the creation of tabby could be a lengthy and labor intensive process, the inexpensive

but strong product it yielded caused it to become one of the most popular building materials in the Colonial coastal South.

Due to its small geographical distribution, the use of tabby can be considered a regional phenomenon "limited to a narrow section of the South Carolina, Georgia and north Florida coasts." The production of tabby can be grouped into two separate traditions that spread from two main hearths, the Spanish city of St. Augustine, Florida and the British cities of Charleston and Beaufort, South Carolina. The Spanish were the first to utilize tabby in the New World starting around 1580 and by 1700 the technology had spread north to British occupations in South Carolina.

The Spanish and British tabby traditions were similar in many respects, but they differed in the types of architectural components commonly constructed with tabby. The Spanish would

frequently use tabby for flooring and roofing, while the British typically preferred to use tabby for walls and foundations. Excavations in St. Augustine have uncovered many structures with tabby floors dating to the 17th and 18th centuries. Only a few British made tabby floors are known, and even fewer date to the colonial time period.

Much of what is known about the technique of tabby flooring comes from the extensive examples excavated in the Spanish houses of St. Augustine or from various historic accounts. Construction of tabby floors began by first preparing the surface on which the floor would be placed. The ground could either be tamped down until it was level or a one to two inch base of packed oyster shell or coquina could be laid down to create a level surface. Once the surface was level the tabby mixture would be poured until the desired thickness was reached, usually 2 inches. After the tabby was poured, three or more workers would tamp the mixture repeatedly with pestles, causing the large pieces of shell to sink to the bottom of the mixture and creating a smooth surface. The shell aggregate used in floors also differed from that used in walls or foundations. Instead of using whole shell a finer pounded shell or coquina gravel would be used which allowed for a smoother surface. After the initial tamping linseed oil would be brushed onto the floor and it would be tamped again. This oiling and tamping process would be repeated several times as the floor was hardening until a shiny marble-like finish was obtained. The completed tabby floor had a relatively short lifespan. As the old floor began to wear down and become rough to the touch a new floor would simply be poured on top of it. It is common during excavation to find multiple layers of floor built on top of one another.

Although rare, British colonial period tabby floors do exist. Two early examples can be found in the Hawkins and Davidson houses of Fort Frederica National Monument on St. Simons Island, Georgia.

The Hawkins house was built between 1736 and 1740 and the Davidson house was completed in 1738. Tabby flooring can also be observed in the 1760 Dataw House, located near Beaufort, South Carolina. The floors of the Davidson house were once believed to be the oldest of British construction, however, the floor currently being excavated at Charles Towne Landing, with its preliminary date range of 1690-1730, may replace the Davidson floor as one of the earliest examples of British tabby flooring currently known.

Excavations at Charles Towne Landing's Miller Site began in September of 2009 with two main research objectives. The first objective deals with the location of the site. Previous to 2009, most archaeological investigations at the park focused on the area inside the original colony's palisade wall. The Miller Site is located just outside of the palisade wall and if dated to the original colonial occupation could offer a comparison of activity inside and outside the fortified area of the colony. The second objective is to refine the time period the structure was in use. Miller theorized that this site dated after the colony had relocated, a time period when Albemarle Point would have been owned by a man named James LeSade. It is known that LeSade purchased this property sometime between 1694 and 1697 but little is known of his use of the land. Associating this structure with LeSade would provide missing information about his occupation and aid in the post colony interpretation of the park. Following the discovery of the floor, research objectives switched to the full dimensions and nature of the structure.

While excavations are still ongoing, the current exposed dimensions of the floor at the Miller Site are 20 by 25 feet. A remarkable portion of the floor remains intact but there are also areas where the tabby has been broken into rubble due to tree root disturbance and other bioturbation. The

characteristics of the floor are consistent with the descriptions of tabby floors in the literature.

As one would expect, the surface is smooth and appears to have been well tamped in the building process. Little shell is visible in the upper portion of the floor, but small to large shell fragments can be observed near the base of the floor's profile. Its thickness varies from two to three inches, leading us to believe that the floor was laid with one pour of tabby. The single pour seems to also indicate that this structure was not inhabited long enough for the floor's surface to wear down and require a second floor to be poured on top.



Pieces of the Miller Site tabby floor with visible fragments of oyster shell.

The artifacts recovered during these excavations remain consistent with Miller's original findings and still suggests a late 17th to early 18th century date. The most abundant artifact found is olive green wine bottle glass, which represents over half of the total artifact assemblage. Early colonial ceramics, such as Staffordshire slipware, delft, British Brown stoneware, and North Devon gravel tempered ware are also common and provide a mean ceramic date of 1716. A large amount of tobacco pipe fragments have also been recovered, including many that are stamped with maker's marks. These stamps refer to pipe makers Henry Edwards and Robert Tippet who manufactured

pipes from 1699-1727 and 1678-1720 respectively. Other common artifacts include nails, window glass, lead shot, furniture tacks, straight pins, and beads.

Based on features and artifacts uncovered so far, we feel comfortable continuing to date the Miller Site from 1690-1730 and though an earlier component could still be found, we believe this structure postdates the original colony. It is very likely that the floor and structure associated with it was built by James LeSade shortly after his purchase of the property. Further investigations will hopefully provide valuable information about LeSade and his use of Albemarle Point. Although wine bottle glass remains the most numerous type of artifact, there is currently no definitive evidence that the structure was used as a tavern and the site is now being viewed as a residence. The pre-1730 date range also points to a very early use of tabby construction in the British colonies and possibly one of the earliest British uses of tabby as a flooring material. Additional analysis of the floor and its construction methods could deepen our understanding of the initial British adaptation of tabby use from the Spanish.

Work at the Miller Site is ongoing and is expected to continue for a year or more. The goal of the current field season is to continue to expose the full dimension of the structure and investigate beneath the floor (see page 1 for more details). Be sure to stop by Charles Towne Landing this summer to learn more about the site. ■

For Further Reading:

Fairbanks, Charles H. 1956. "The Excavation of the Hawkins-Davidson Houses, Frederic National Monument, St. Simons Island, Georgia." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 40:213-229.

Gritzner, Janet Bigbee. 1978. "Tabby in the Coastal Southeast: The Culture History of an American Building Material." PhD diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Manucy, Albert. 1962. *The Houses of St. Augustine 1565-1821*. St. Augustine, FL: St. Augustine Historical Society.

Sickels-Taves, Lauren B. and Michael Sheehan. 1999. *The Lost Art of Tabby Redefined*. Southfield, MI: Architectural Conservation Press.

Rebecca Shepherd is an archaeologist at Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site

Around the World

NEWS!

- Archaeologists in Scotland have found what they believe to be the oldest string instrument in Western Europe. A 2,300 year old piece of carved and notched wood belonging to an ancient lyre was uncovered in High Pasture Cave on the Isle of Skye. Music archaeologist Dr. Graeme Lawson claims that this find “pushes the history of complex music back more than a thousand years.” Get the rest of the story [here](#).

- The Great Wall of China may have been longer than originally thought, [National Geographic](#) reports. Researchers have discovered 62 miles of previously unknown wall in Mongolia’s Gobi Desert. The team first located the ruins in satellite images from Google Earth then traveled to the remote region to investigate it. This section of wall was made of both mud and volcanic rock and today stands approximately 9 feet high. According to Anthropologist Jack Weatherford this could be “the largest human-made structure or artifact in all of Mongolia.”



Well preserved section of the Great Wall

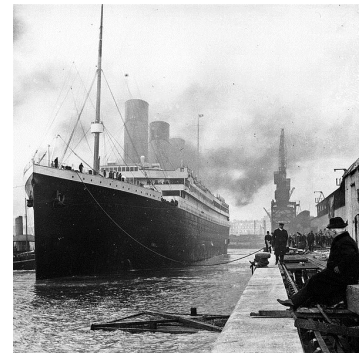


- The economic crisis in Greece is adversely affecting the nation’s archaeological heritage. Public funding for licensed excavations has fallen dramatically causing many to be postponed indefinitely. Only a few high profile sites, like the Acropolis and Knossos remain open. Museums have also been forced to significantly cut staff or temporarily close down. The lack of funding and staffing has led to an increase in site looting and museum theft. Given these circumstances, some sites are being reburied to better protect them. Michalis Tiverios, archaeologist in charge of the reburial project said, “let us leave our antiquities in the soil, to be found by archaeologists in 10,000 AD, when Greeks and their politicians will perhaps show more respect to their history.” Learn more [here](#) and [here](#).

▲ *The Minoan Palace, Knossos. One of the few sites not yet affected by Greece’s debt crisis.*

- The recently discovered frozen remains of a young mammoth may provide new insight into the biology of this extinct species. The mammoth carcass, found buried in ice near the Siberian Arctic Circle, still has intact flesh and hair and shows evidence of butchering by humans. According to paleontologist Daniel Fisher, “This is the first relatively complete mammoth carcass -- that is, a body with soft tissues preserved -- to show evidence of human association.” Preliminary dates of the mammoth show that it is at least 10,000 years old. [Discovery News](#) has the rest of the story.

- This April marked the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the *R.M.S. Titanic* and stronger protections for the wreck are in the works. The US Congress introduced a bill that would impose fines and prison sentences on any American illegally disturbing the wreck or collecting artifacts from it. Legislators are stressing that this wreck should be considered a grave site, a thought fueled in part by the fact that some experts believe unexplored areas of the ship could still contain human remains. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).



The Titanic at port