

# WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Or What Does Landscape Have to Do with It?

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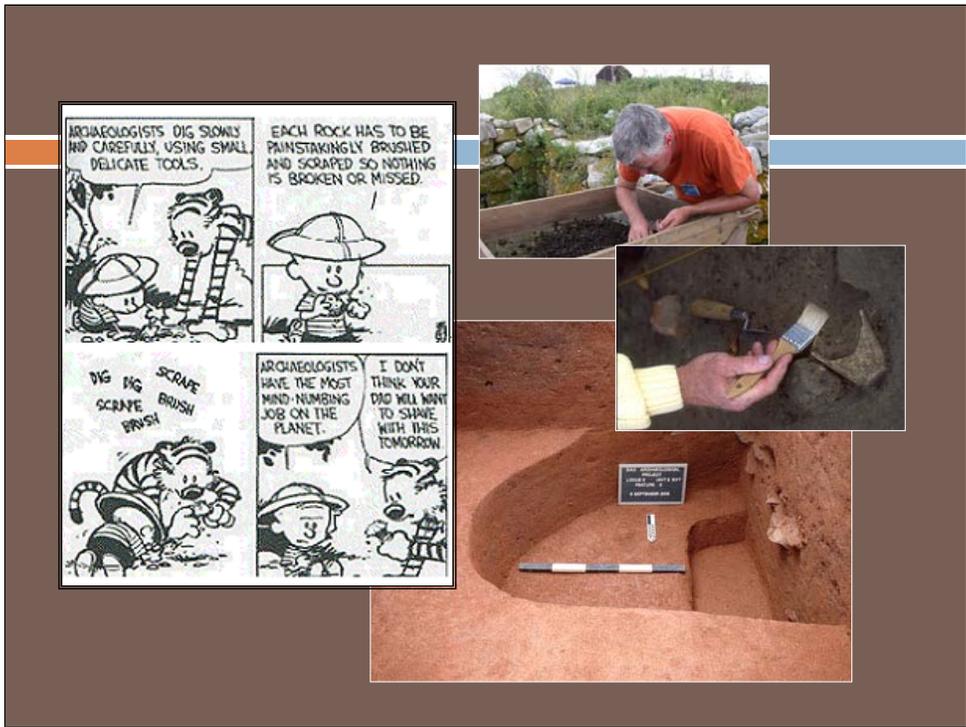
I am going to talk about archaeology and and what it means for a site to be significant on the NRHP in the section 106 process, but if at any time you have questions or comments please feel free to ask.  
What images come to mind when you think of archaeology?



For many people, it's popular movies.



Monumental architecture and material culture.



For others it's tedious excavations to understand the past.



Less people think about development and the protection of local history. Archaeology is about ensuring that when we build anew -- whether its expanding highways or building new neighborhoods or shopping centers – that we do not destroy our past.

## Archaeology:

- is the study of past human societies by their material remains.
- is defined by specific research questions that the archaeologist seeks to answer such as the origins of humans, the origins of specific cultures, or the way societies develop over time.
- utilizes a variety of methods including GIS, historical research, survey, excavations -- shovel test pit, test units, and block – mapping, GPR, photography, ethnobotany, and faunal and artifact analysis.

# Local, State & National Heritage

## Archaeology at Snee Farm

Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, Mount Pleasant, SC



Photograph courtesy of the National Park Service.

## Archaeology at Kolb

Johannes Kolb Site, Mechanicsville, SC



Photographs courtesy of Diachronic Research Foundation

Archaeology is a way to learn about our local, state and national heritage.



Archaeology is about people.

Photograph courtesy of Diachronic Research Foundation.

Taken for granted, that archaeology is about people, since many people think of it as being about old things. Valuing the things— landscapes, architecture, and objects — that reflect a communities history and heritage. Preserving those things for future generations.

# National Register for Historic Places

## Five property types:

- Districts
- Sites
- Buildings
- Structures
- Objects

## Little Barnwell Island Beaufort County, SC



Photographs courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History  
([www.nationalregister.sc.gov/](http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/))

Properties can be *significant* to a local community, a state, an Indian tribe, or the nation as a whole.

The National Register sets up five property types. Districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects

**A district possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.**

**A site is the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure. Example, Kolb Site from the previous slide.**

**The term "structure" is used to distinguish from buildings those functional constructions made usually for purposes other than creating human shelter. Examples include, bridges, dams or earthworks.**

**The final property type is objects. The term "object" is used to distinguish from buildings and structures those constructions that are primarily artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed. Although it may be, by nature or design, movable, an object is associated with a specific setting or environment. Example, fountain, monument or sculpture.**

**But of course we can name numerous building, objects, and sites. Here I'm using the example of Little Barnwell Island, a pre-contact Native American site in Barnwell County. What makes it eligible for the National Register?**

# So what makes this site significant?

## Little Barnwell Island



Photographs courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History ([www.nationalregister.sc.gov](http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov)), and Native American Pottery in South Carolina (<http://scnopr.info/>).

## Assessing NRHP Eligibility

- A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of history;
- B. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past;
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, possesses high artistic value, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. Has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to history or prehistory.

Four Criteria. A resource may be eligible for one or more of these criteria. A, B, and C are more frequently applied to historic buildings, structures, objects and non-archaeological features such as battlefields or districts. The eligibility of archaeology is most frequently considered under D.

Evaluation of any resource requires a twofold process. 1. the resource must be associated with an important historical context. If this association is demonstrated, the integrity of the resource must be evaluated to ensure that it conveys the significance of its context.

How does this work? Little Barnwell Island is a Mississippian mound site excavated by C.B Moore around 1899. According to the NR nomination, the mound is one of the most unique architectural features ever excavated from a prehistoric site in the Southeastern United States. The site consists of two shell and earth mounds that once served as the base for a ceremonial building. Based on a comparative analysis of pottery from the site the mounds and building were probably constructed during the late Savannah II Period or the 1200-1300 era. So I picked an unusual archaeological site, since this site is nominated as a structure because of its unique architectural features. Yet it could also be evaluated under criterion D, since it has yielded and is likely to yield more important information about prehistory, particularly the Mississippian period in SC, since the function of mounds is still debated in Southeastern archaeology.



Photographs courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History ([www.nationalregister.sc.gov/](http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/))

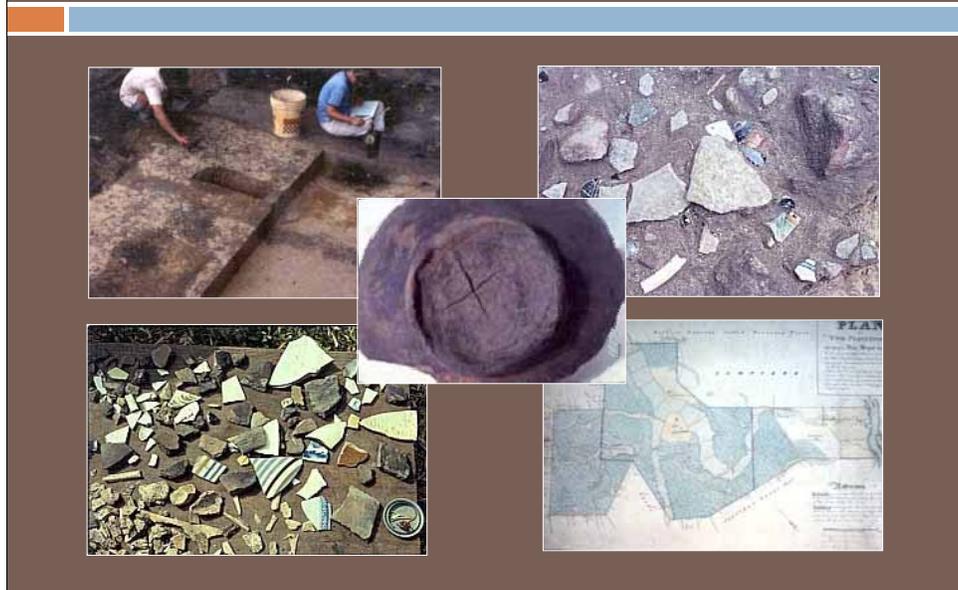
## Middleburg Plantation, Berkeley County, SC

Middleburg, built about 1699, is an example of a transitional two-story frame plantation house. The structure retains the medieval hall and parlor building plan, and the exposed post and girt construction of the 17th century, even though it is two stories in height. The building is significant for its architectural features, yet the plantation it self is also significant for what it tells us about South Carolina's plantation economy.



If you start adding the different features of the plantation. The Tree line drive, the commissary, the out-kitchen, the rice mill chimney, the rice fields, and the slave cabins we start to see a plantation landscape. What, where are the slave cabins, is that what you asked?

## Archaeology at Middleburg Plantation



Leland Ferguson and his students excavated the slave cabins at Middleburg. Archaeology at Middleburg provided insight into the lives of the African Americans who not only built miles of earthen banks to support rice agriculture, and cultivated, harvested, and processed the crop, they also built their own houses and made many of the objects necessary for daily life. These included small plain bowls and jars called colonoware. Therefore, the archaeological record allows us to ask questions about enslaved laborers personal belongings and everyday lives.

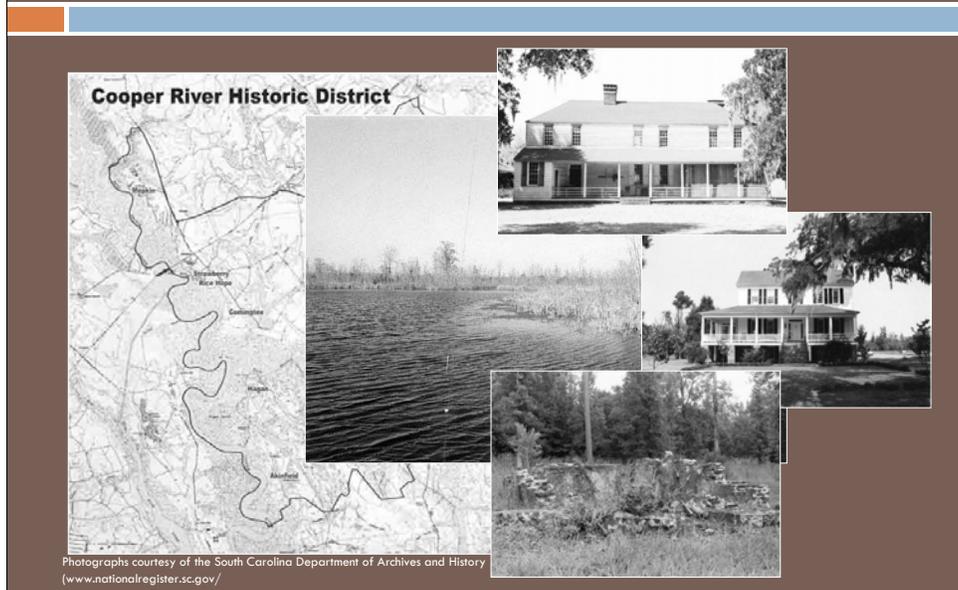
## Cultural Landscapes

A cultural landscape is defined as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic value.



It also helps us view the plantation as a whole connecting the rice fields, the rice mill chimney, and the kitchen. Examining landscapes has potential to provide new ways of preserving historical and cultural history of south carolina. As David Babson’s map shows the plantation is a geographic area which includes cultural and natural resources, wildlife and domestic animals associated with the plantation economy of South Carolina.

# Cooper River Historic District



One of the first ways we see this is in historic districts. It's pretty clear how the Cooper River connects Middleburg Plantation, with Blessing Plantation, and the silk hope plantation

## From Slavery to Freedom



But examining landscapes can also lead to new research questions and help us make sense of sites located through section 106 survey without excavation.

After emancipation a number of former slaves became sharecroppers or tenant farmers. Large plantations were separated into smaller farms. During Section 106 survey, we often locate house foundations previously occupied by these sharecropping families. But few archaeologists use census records and other documents to trace the occupation of houses and determine how households might be connected into neighborhoods and communities which compose landscapes.

Historical research that connects families with structures and sites on the landscape can tell us more about the ways former enslaved laborers experienced freedom. Examining census records, oral histories, land plats, and cemetery records, a landscape approach can provide a broader lens into the history of reconstruction and jim crow era history of South Carolina.

## Archaeology is a process



To pull this together. Archaeology isn't about tomb raiders, it is a way to learn about and preserve our cultural heritage. It also means asking new questions and developing creative methodologies. It requires consultation and communication and an active recognition that people value archaeological sites.

## Additional resources

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King, Thomas F. (1998). *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice: An Introductory Guide*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

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