

# Combahee Ferry and Creative Mitigation: *The US 17 Widening and Combahee River Bridge Replacement Projects*

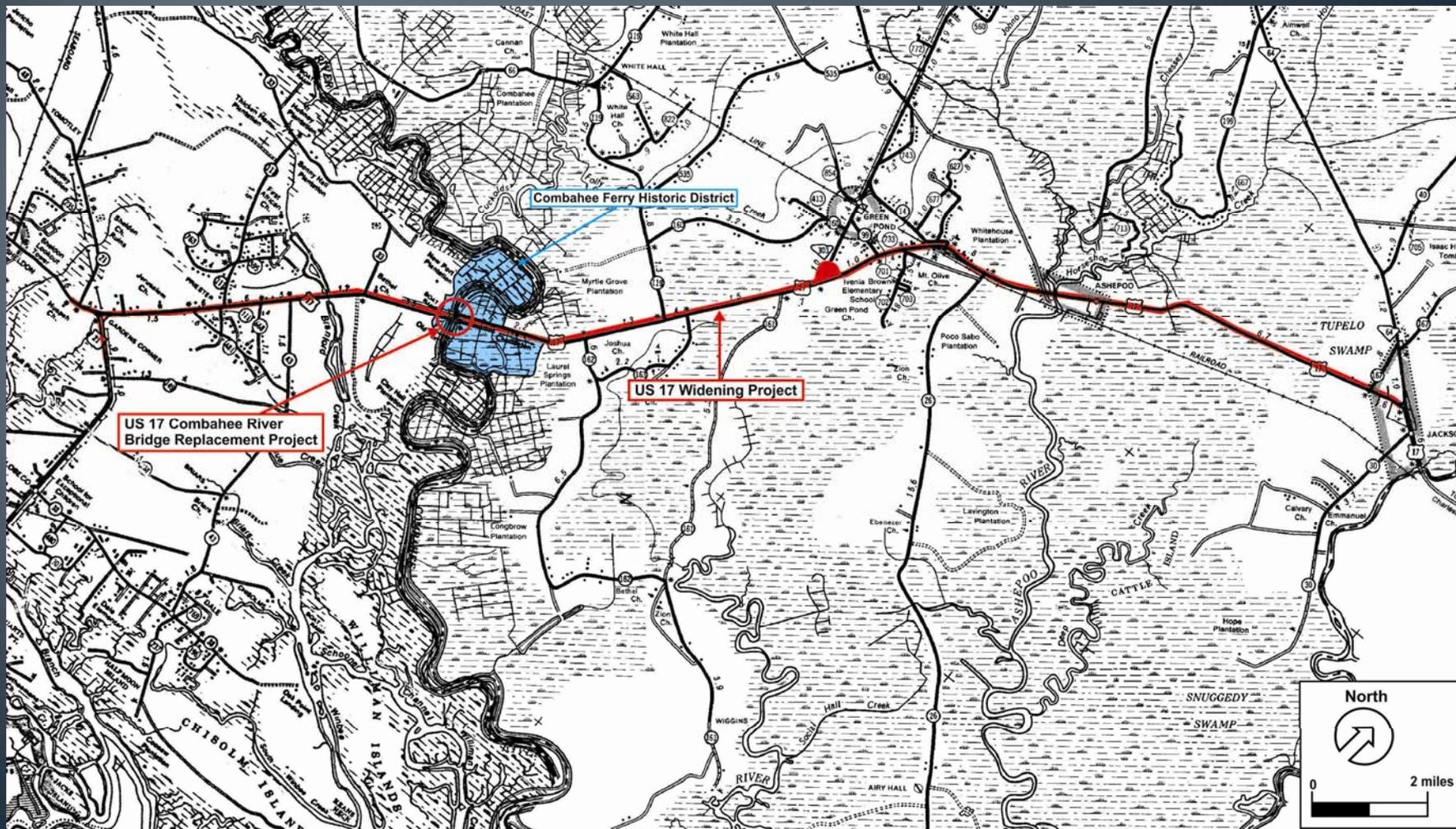


Wayne D. Roberts, SCDOT (retired)  
Eric C. Poplin, Brockington and Associates, Inc.  
Carol J. Poplin, The History Workshop

Courtesy of the SCDOT  
SC Preservation Conference  
April 16, 2013

# The US 17 Widening/Bridge Projects and the Combahee Ferry Historic District

Wayne Roberts

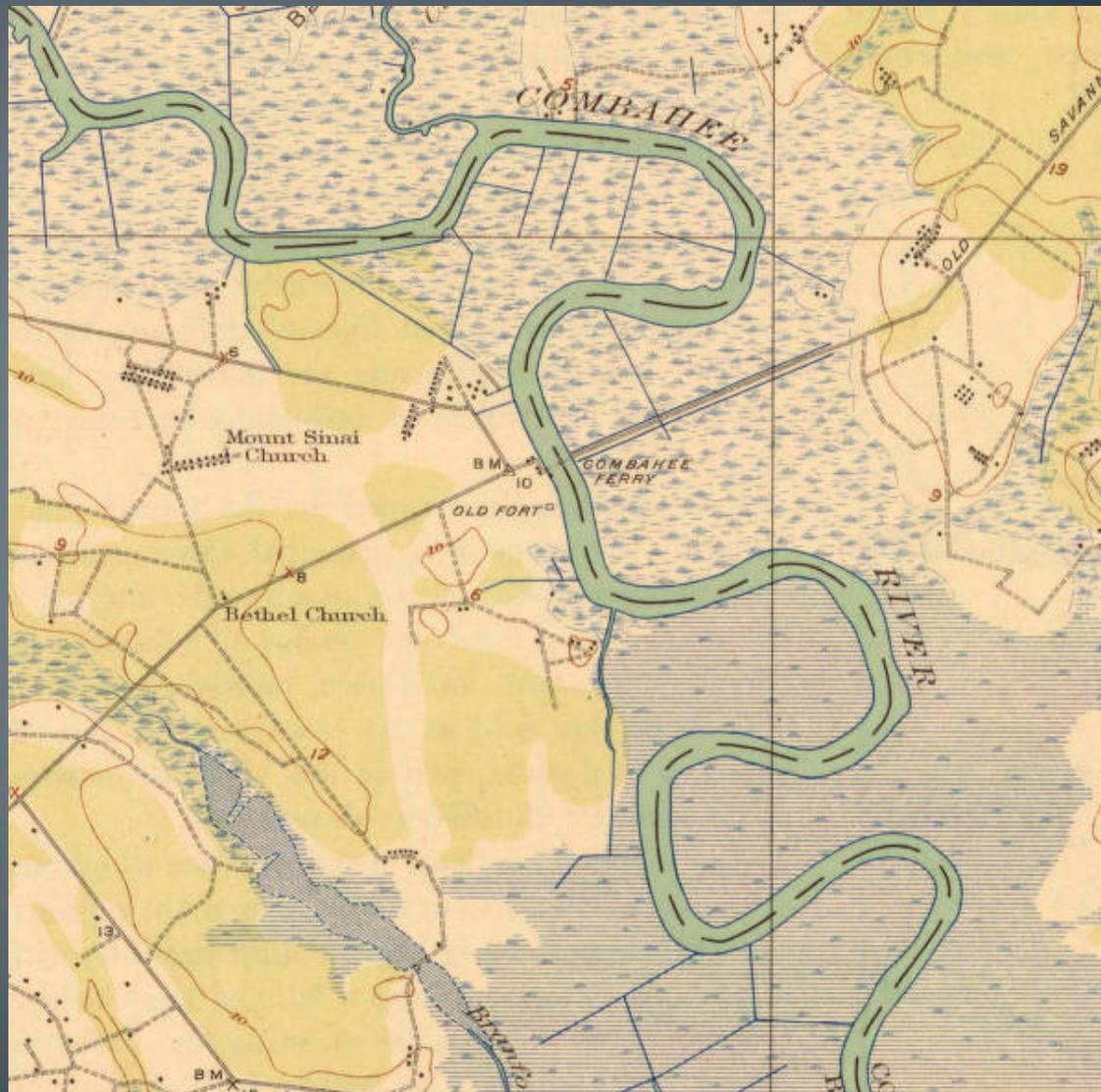


# Mills' 1825 Atlas

## Beaufort / Colleton Districts



# 1918 Green Pond, SC quadrangle



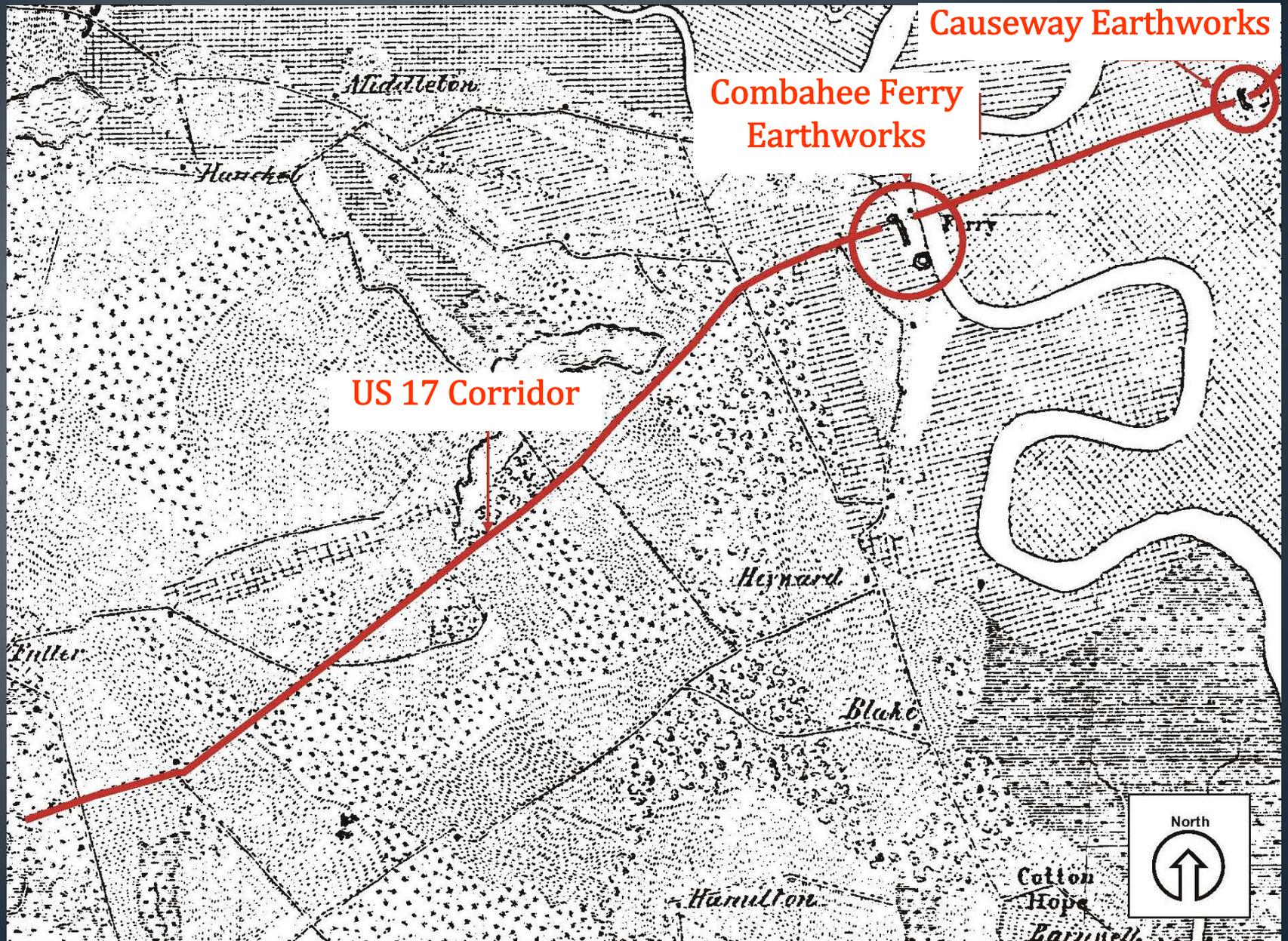
# 1939 Aerial Photograph



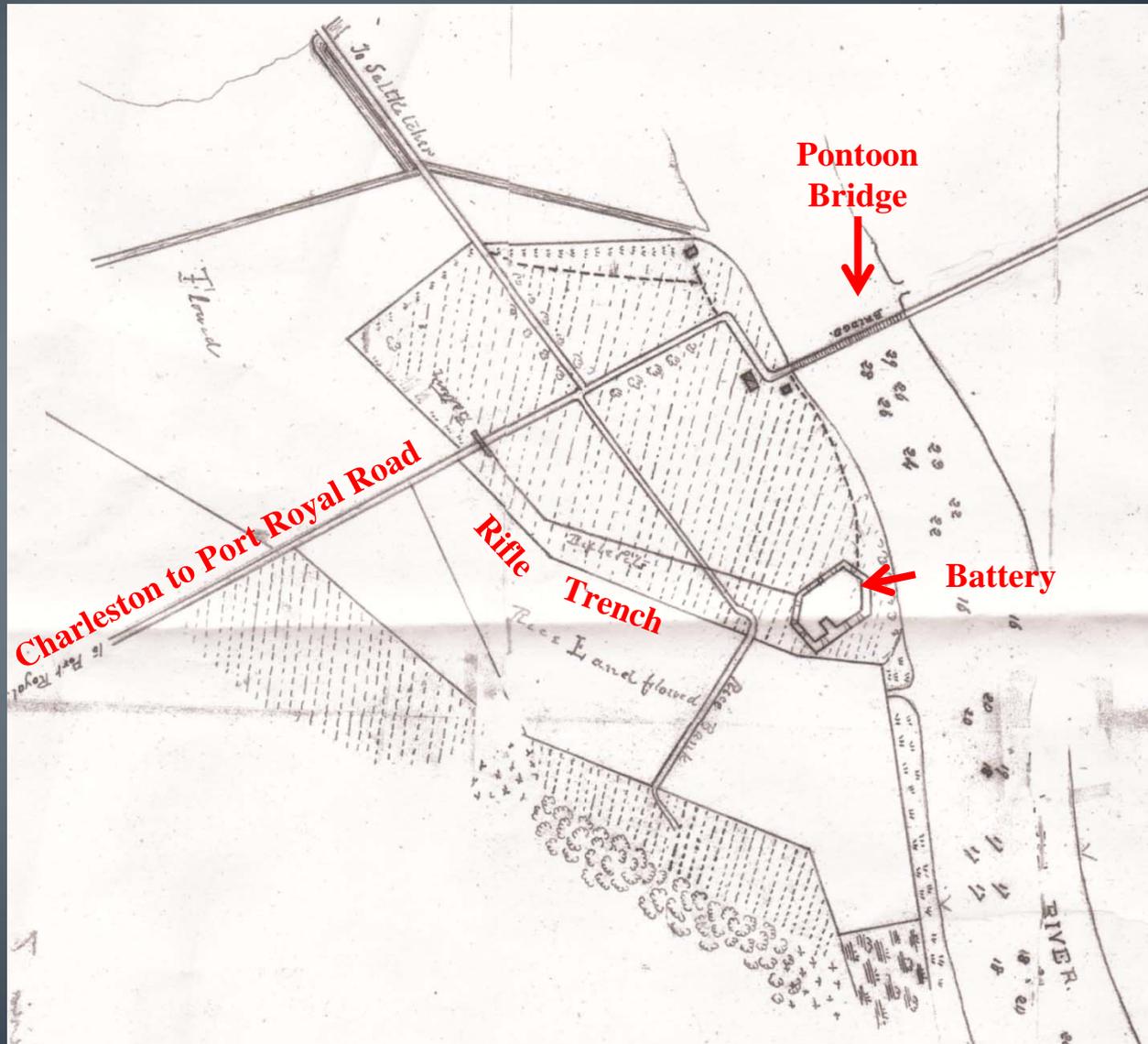
# 1999 Aerial Photograph



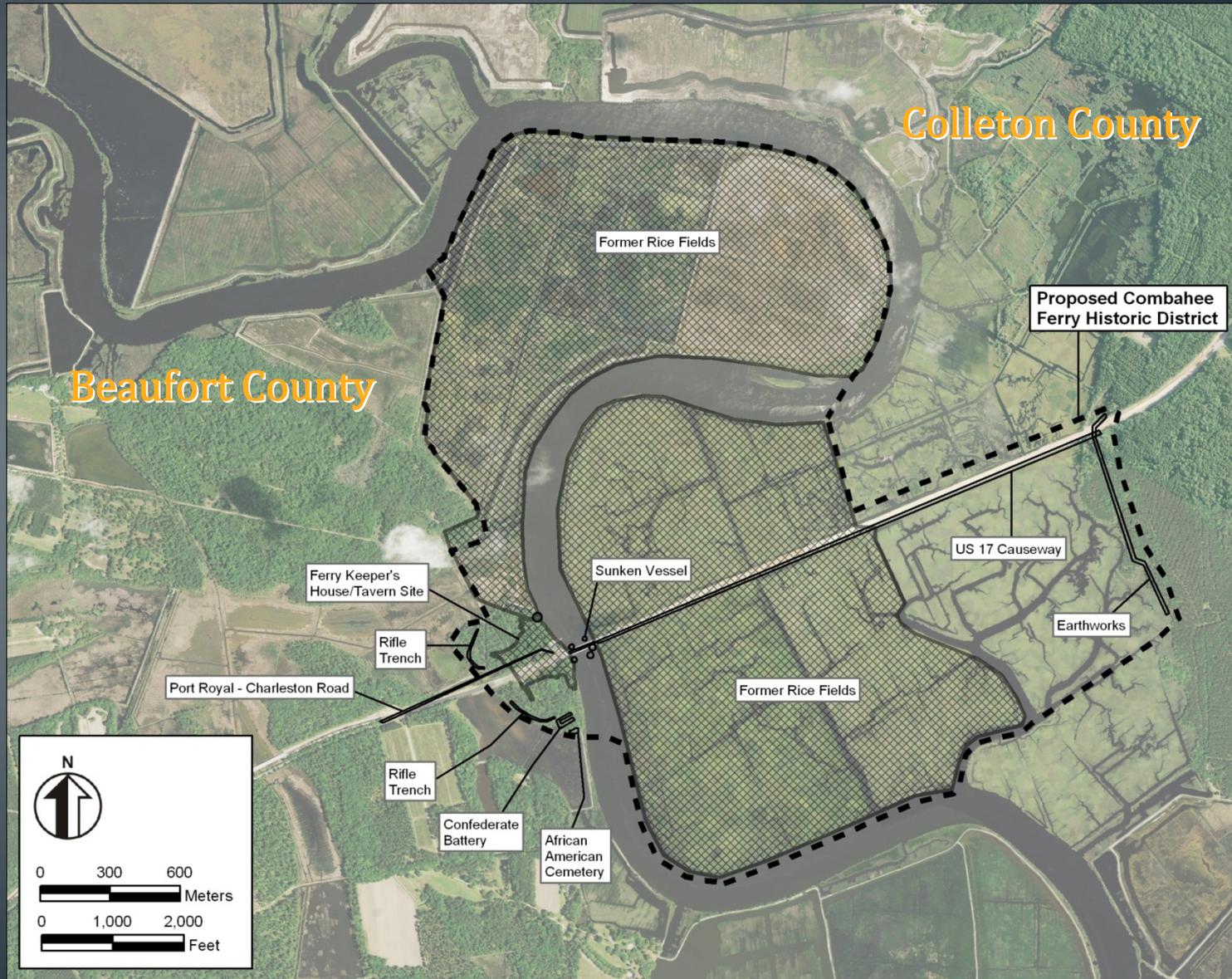
# Poe's 1866 Map of Rebel Works



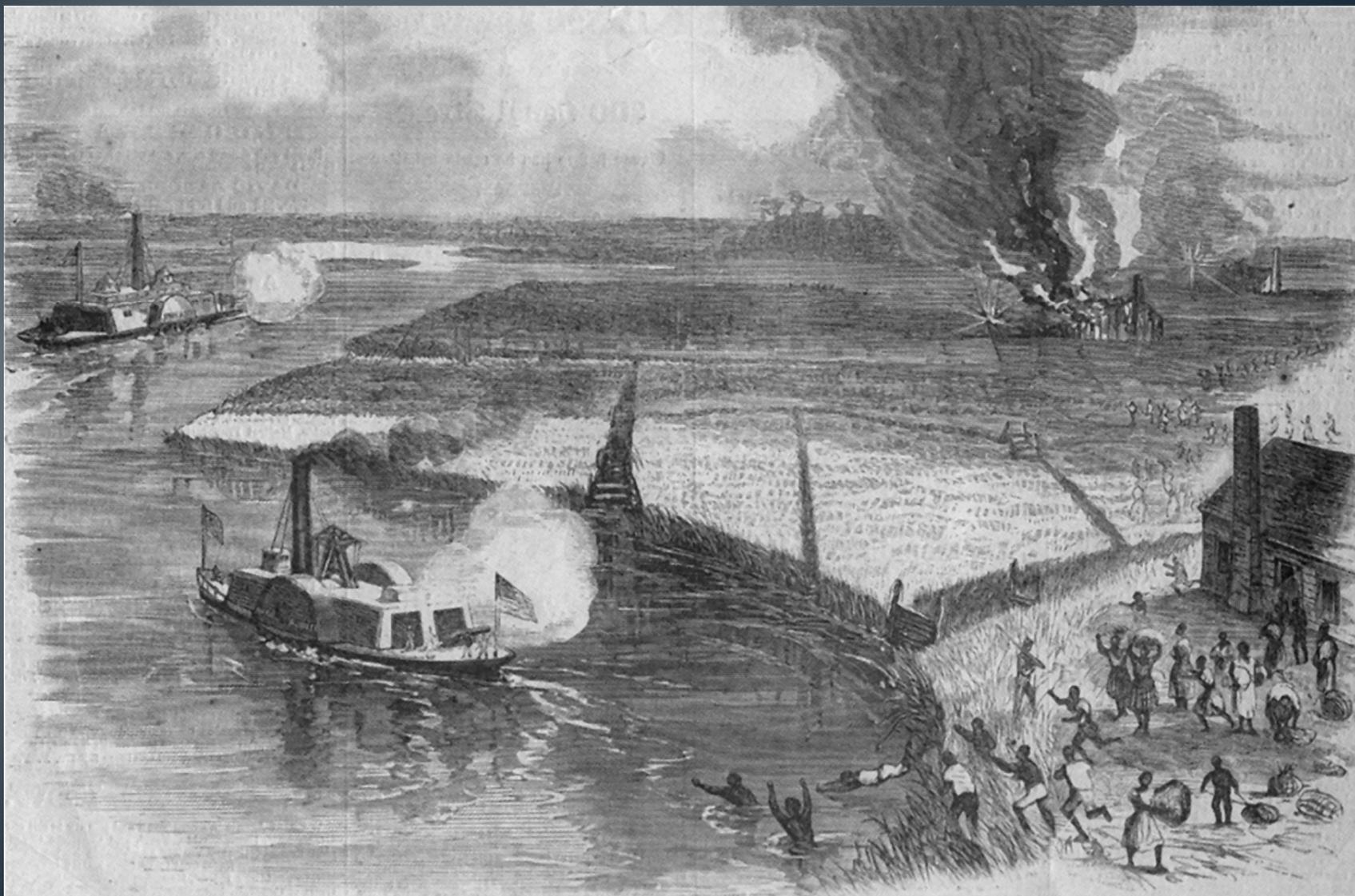
# 1863? Sketch of Confederate Defenses



# Combahee Ferry Historic District



# Combahee River Raid June 1-2, 1863



# Major Mitigation Project Tasks

Eric Poplin

- Archival Research/NRHP Nomination
- Terrestrial Archaeology
- Intertidal Archaeology
- Underwater Archaeology
- Topographic Mapping
- Public Outreach



# Combahee Ferry Historic District

Determined eligible by Keeper in January 2012

## Resources

Ferry site (38BU1216)	Sunken vessel (38CN256)
Battery (38BU1217)	Fortification (38CN257)
Cemetery (38BU1218)	Bridge (551 0287)*
Rifle trench (38BU1884)	Rice fields (551 0441)
Rifle trench (38BU1885 )	Causeway (551 1475 )
Submerged scatter (38BU2137)*	Charleston-Port Royal Rd (5011)
Submerged scatter (38BU2138)	Rice fields (5012)
Submerged scatter (38CN19)	Water control structure (5012.1)
Submerged scatter (38CN255)	Combahee River

\*Non-contributing

# Archival Research

- Supported NRHP Nomination
- Supported archaeological interpretations in report
- Supporting public information components

**Crossing the Combahee  
Mitigation of the Combahee Ferry  
Historic District**

Beaufort and Colleton Counties, South Carolina



PIN Number: 29997; FA. No. BR-BR88(039); File No. 715.101B

October 2012

**Brockington**  
CULTURAL RESOURCES CONSULTING

NPS Form 10-900  
OMB No. 1050-0108

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in submitting or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 33). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional names and addresses from continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Combahee Ferry Historic District  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number US Highway 17 at the Combahee River  not for publication  
city or town Beaufort  vicinity  
state South Carolina code SC county Beaufort and Colleton code (11) 013 zip code 029

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant:  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and address \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

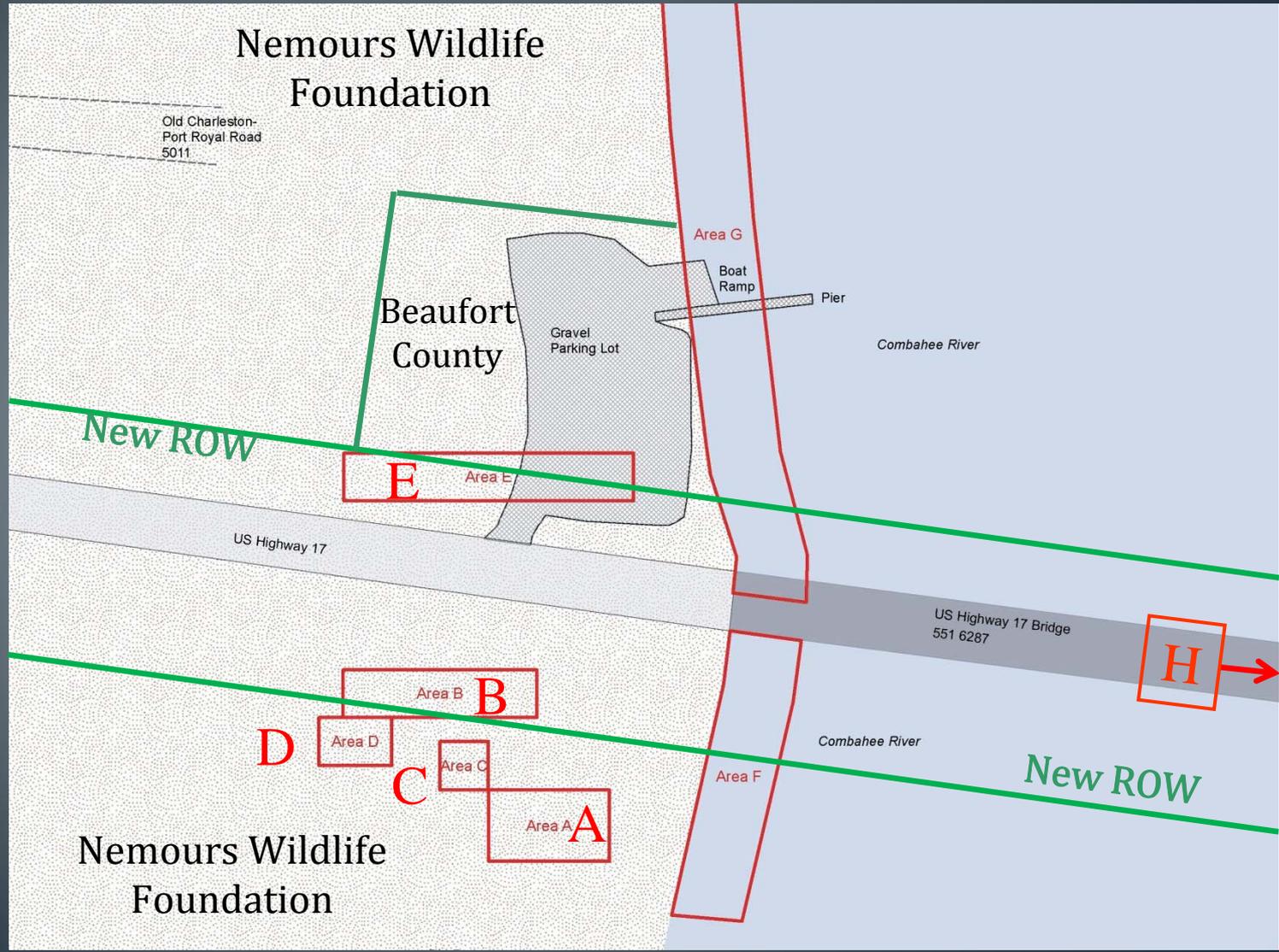
Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and address \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 listed in the National Register  See continuation sheet  
 determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

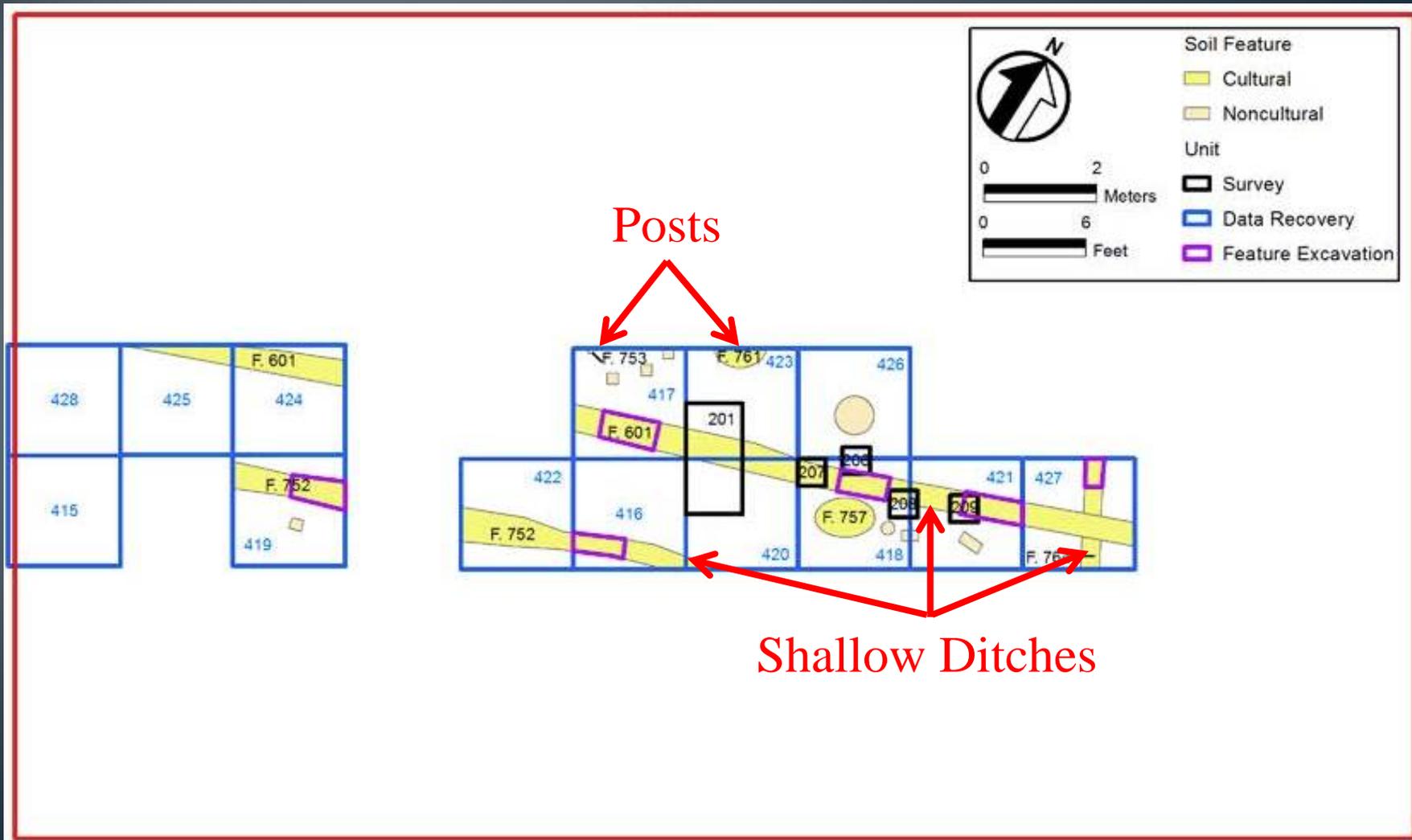
# Combahee Ferry Site 38BU1216



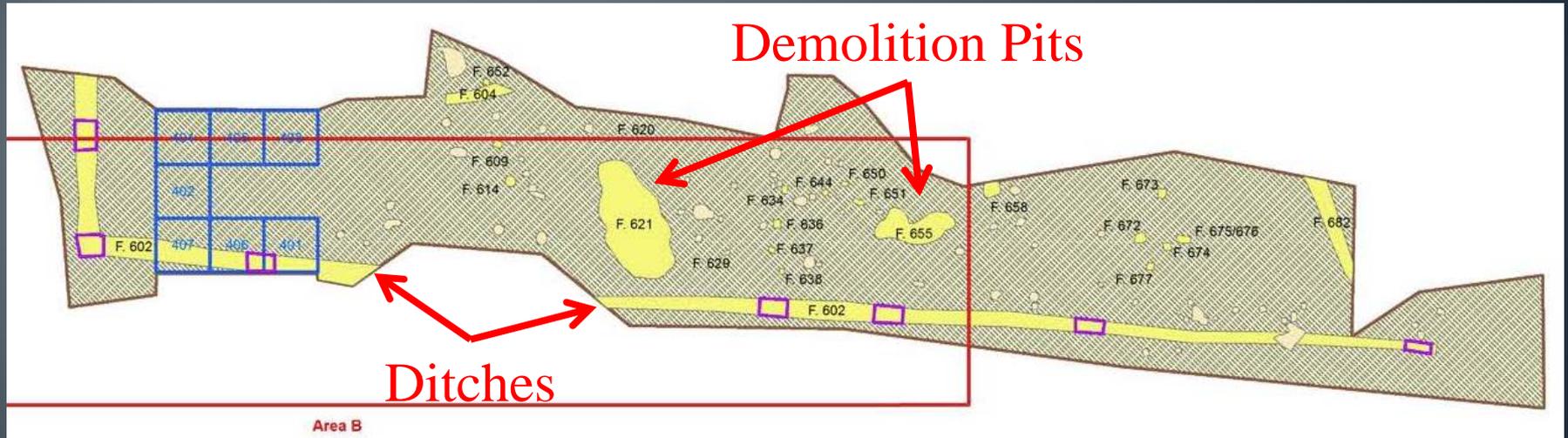
# Excavations Underway



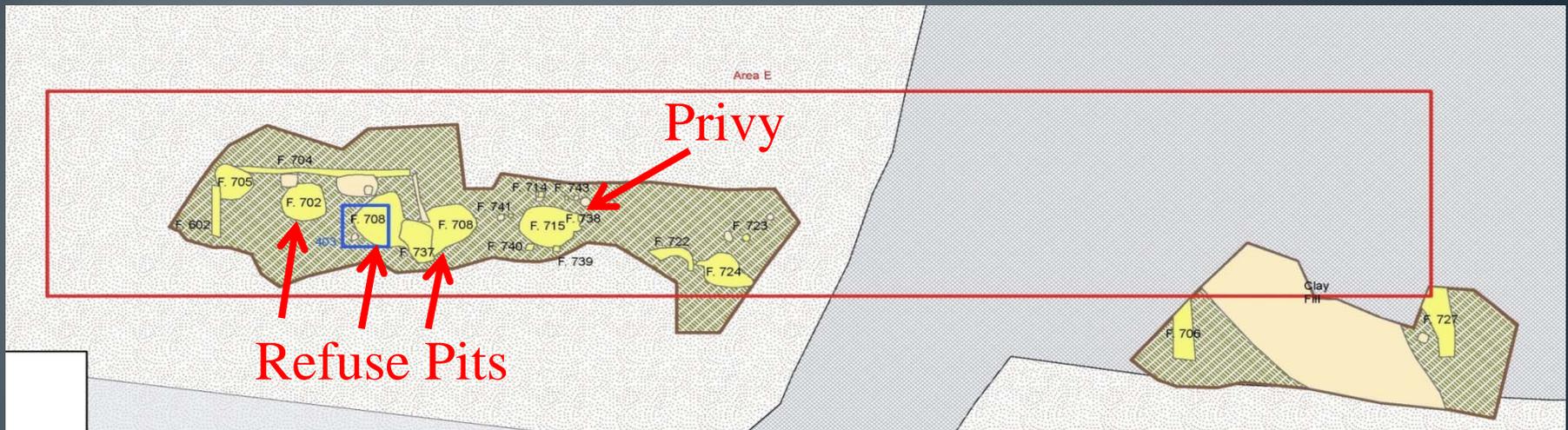
# 38BU1216 - Area A



# 38BU1216 - Area B



# 38BU1216 - Area E



# Refuse Pits (1825-1840)





# Privy (1830-1845?)

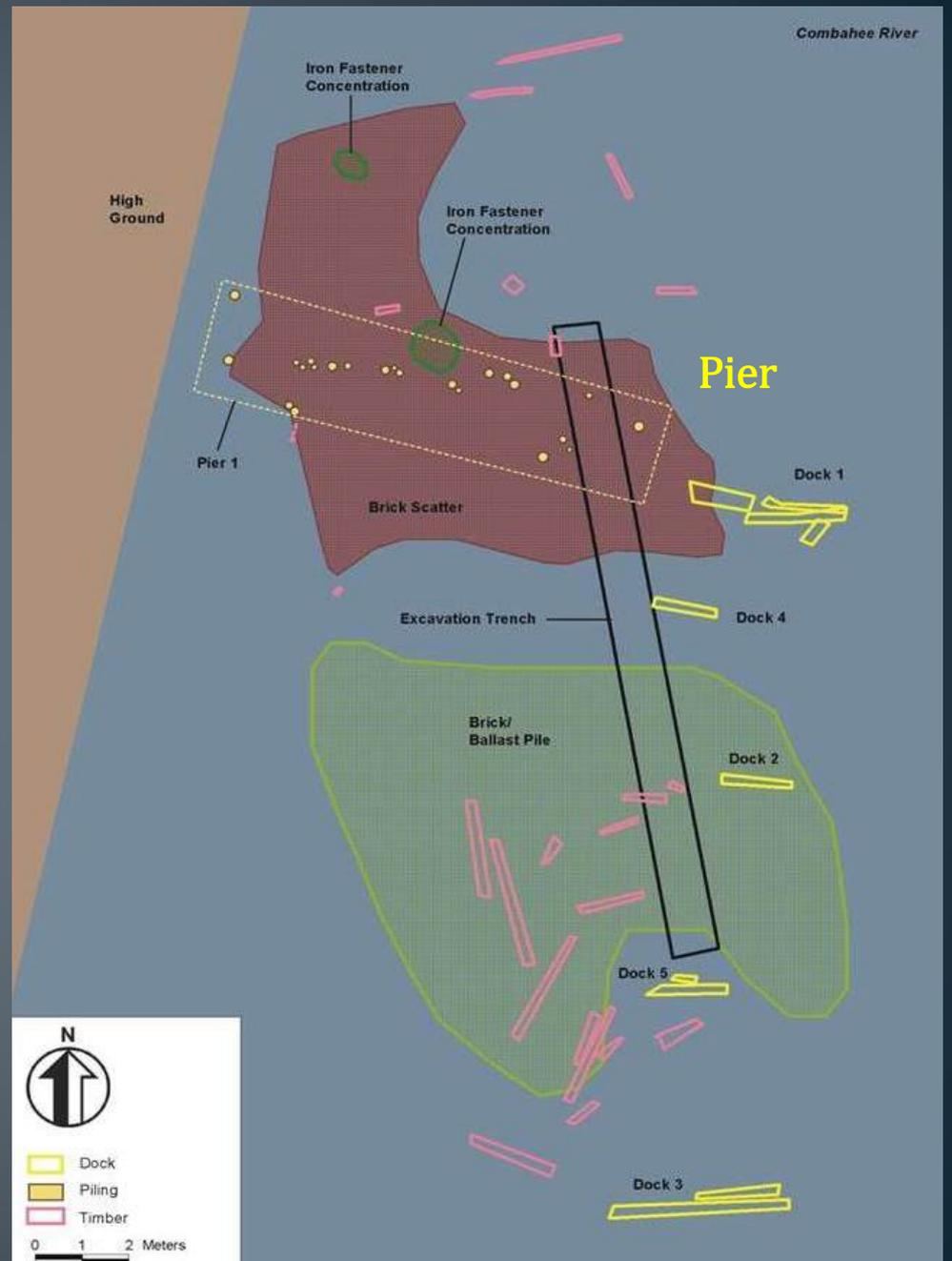


# Lafayette Plate (1825-1836)

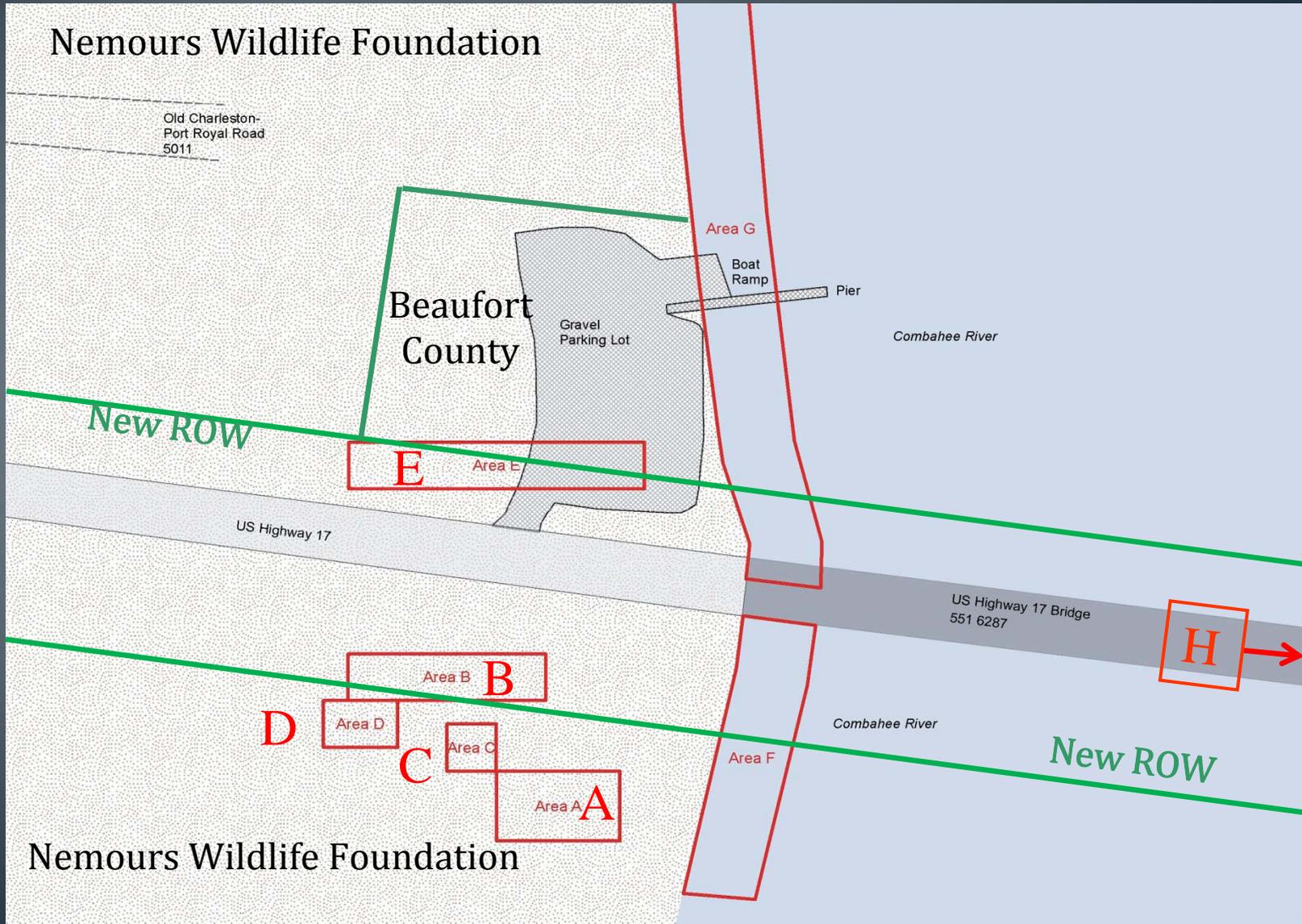


# Area F

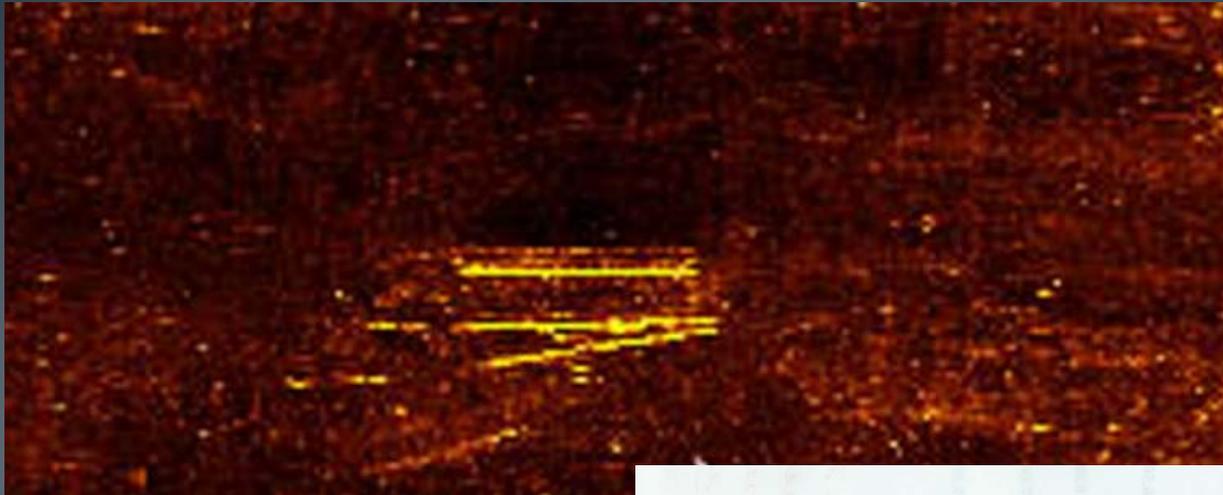
## Plan of Pier and Wharf Remnants



# Combahee Ferry Site 38BU1216

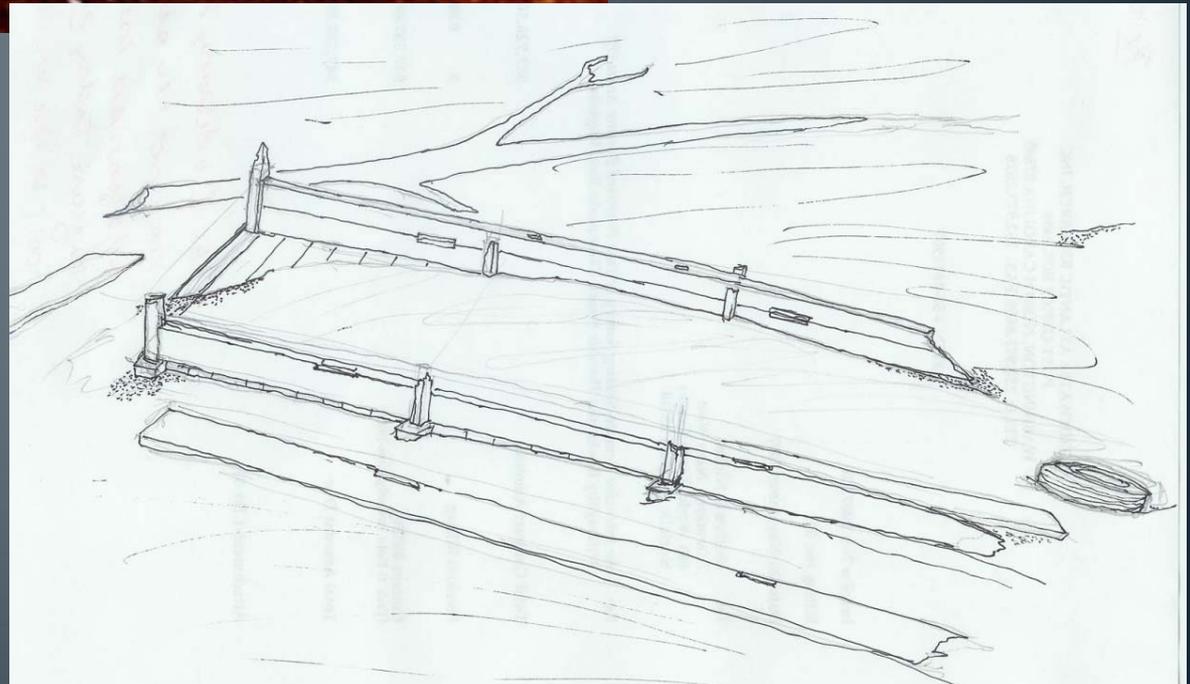


# Sunken Vessel



Side-scan Sonar Image

Diver's Sketch





# Public Information Components

Carol Poplin



# The Process

- Advisory Committee
  - Established by SHPO
  - Included local, state and federal government reps; preservation groups; concerned citizens
- Interpretive Themes
- Product Recommendations
- Product Development

# Theme 1. South Carolina's Transportation Network

- Connecting a Colony: The King's Highway from Charleston to Beaufort
- Waterways and Byways: moving people and products
- **The Role of Ferries in the Lowcountry**
- All Things Shall Pass: how the natural landscape shaped historical events at Combahee Ferry

## Theme 2. The Revolutionary and Civil Wars

- Bottlenecks and Bridges: moving troops through the Lowcountry
- Confederate Fortifications at Combahee Ferry: Pickets, pontoons, and Batteries
- **Fire and Freedom: Harriet Tubman and the Combahee River Raid**
- Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad

## Theme 3. Rice Plantations in the ACE Basin

- Power and Privilege: plantations along the Combahee
- Harnessing the Tides: tidal rice culture along the Combahee
- Forced to Labor: African American lifeways
- **Old Rice Fields: remnants of the past in the modern landscape**

# Theme 4. Local Economic Institutions

- Gossip and Grub: the role of early public houses
- **Archaeology at Combahee Ferry: looking for the Combahee Ferry tavern**

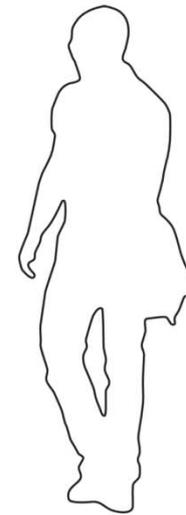
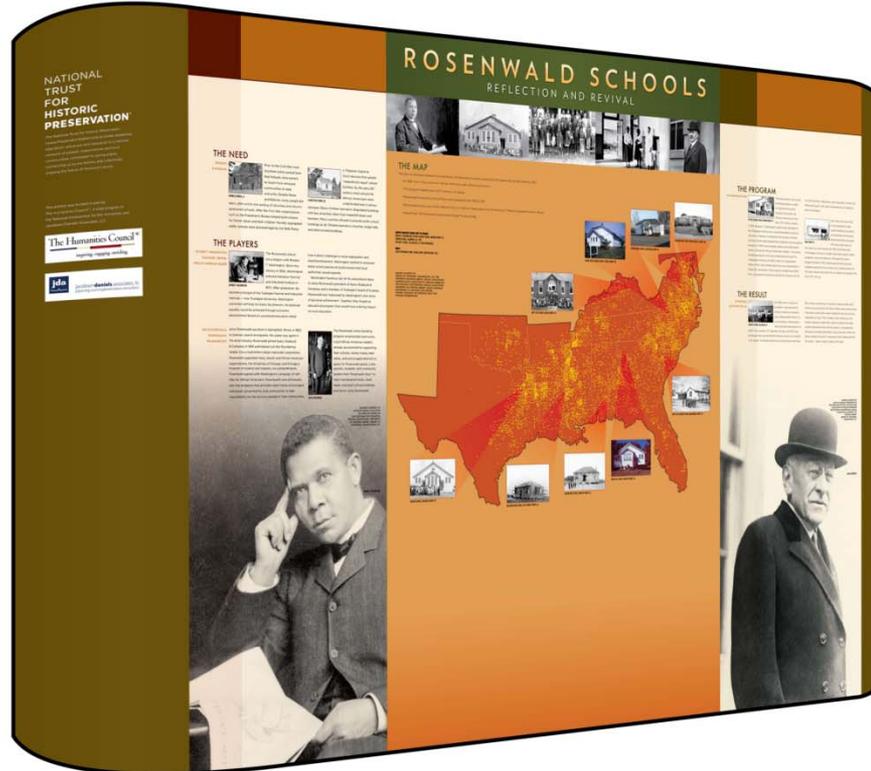
# CFHD Interpretive Products

**Goal: create an integrated multimedia presentation**

- Traveling Exhibit
- Double-sided onsite kiosk
- Web site
- Historical Marker

# Traveling Exhibition

Goals: Reach a broad audience;  
Encompass all of our primary themes



# The COMBAHEE FERRY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Bridging the Past & Present



Combahee Ferry, late 19th century of The Carolina Museum



Combahee Ferry, late 19th century of The Carolina Museum

## Spanning Progress and Preservation

**175** Highway 175 was the first road built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

In 1828, the first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

In 1828, the first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

In 1828, the first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.



**DID YOU KNOW**  
Cultural Resources are...  
...and...

## Charting The District

"...consider a convenient place for a ferry upon every navigable river." - Lords Proprietors 1696

**1828** The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

**1828** The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

**DID YOU KNOW**  
CONGRESS PASSED LAWS...  
...and...

 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.
 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.	 <b>1828</b> The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

## When Preservation Isn't Possible

**1828** The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

**Underwater Archaeology**  
The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

**Archaeology**  
The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

**Historical Research**  
The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

**Mapping**  
The first road was built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South. It was the first road to be built in the South.

**DID YOU KNOW**  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ARE...  
...and...



# The COMBAHEE FERRY HISTORIC DISTRICT

A Crossing to Freedom



Historical photograph of a street scene in the Combahee River area, showing several people walking and buildings in the background.



Historical photograph of a group of people, including men, women, and children, walking across a wooden plank ferry in a river.

## Harriet Tubman: Conductor, Soldier, Spy

## The Combahee River Raid

"He who fights the battles of America may claim America as his country and have that claim respected." - Frederick Douglass, April, 1863

## Why Did the Raid Happen Here?

**Harriet Tubman** was a brave woman who risked her life to help enslaved people escape to freedom. She was a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a soldier in the Civil War, and a spy for the Union Army. Her actions were instrumental in the fight for freedom.

"When I found I had crossed that line, I looked at my hands to see if I was free person. There was such a glory about everyting, and that like I was in heaven."

Harriet Tubman

Being the God We Think Slaves should be like any other human, we have our own mind, and we know what we want. We know we are not free until we are free in our hearts. We know we are not free until we are free in our minds. We know we are not free until we are free in our souls. We know we are not free until we are free in our spirits.

**DID YOU KNOW** HARRIET TUBMAN HAD A



**Combahee** was a strategic location for the raid because it was a narrow river with a single crossing point. This made it difficult for the plantation owners to defend the area. The raid was led by Harriet Tubman and other brave women.

"They all came running to the gun boats through the reeds just like a procession. I think I have here perhaps six out of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt."

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

**Historical Account of the Raid** The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

**Historical Account of the Raid** The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

**Historical Account of the Raid** The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

**Historical Account of the Raid** The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

**Historical Account of the Raid** The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

**Historical Account of the Raid** The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

**Historical Account of the Raid** The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman

The raid was a significant event in the history of the Civil War. It was the only time that a group of women led a military operation. The raid was a success, and it showed that women were capable of leading in times of crisis.



**DID YOU KNOW** THE COMBAHEE FERRY WAS THE ONLY PLACE WHERE ENSLAVED PEOPLE COULD CROSS THE RIVER TO FREEDOM.

**DID YOU KNOW** IN 1862, HARRIET TUBMAN LED THE ONLY ALL-WOMEN MILITARY OPERATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES.

## Outdoor Kiosk

Goals: Connect with the landscape;  
Showcase the Combahee River Raid



# The COMBAHEE FERRY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Connections Past and Present



Visitors at the Combahee River in 1916.



The crossing at the Combahee River.

## A Historic Hub

This crossing at the Combahee River was a vital link in a network of events that shaped the social, cultural, economic, and political history of South Carolina.

American Indians traveled a coastal route for thousands of years. Their trading path became the Charleston to Port Royal Road, the most direct route between Charleston and points south. By 1710, the colonial government required a regulated ferry here. The ferry, a tavern, and later a store, operated until 1827 when the first permanent bridge over the river was constructed.

During the American Revolution, General William Moultrie used the Combahee River crossing as a gathering place for troops and supplies. During the Civil War, the crossing was critical to Robert E. Lee's strategy to defend interior positions and the Charleston & Savannah Railroad.



Looking up the Combahee River.



Remains of the original Combahee River crossing.

The marshes along the Combahee River were the setting of a vast rice swamp from 1740 until 1842. Henry Middleton, William Heyward, and others made great fortunes growing rice with the labor of thousands of enslaved Africans. The Combahee River rice plantations became a symbol of opposition to abolitionists. In 1842, they were the scene of a military operation led by Harriet Tubman and Colonel James Montgomery that freed over 700 slaves in a single night.

The new Harriet Tubman Memorial Bridge reinforces the Combahee River crossing as a significant node in the Lowcountry's transportation network.

### DID YOU KNOW 1733 FERRY RATES

- 1 person, 2 shillings and 6 pence
- 1 passenger, 1 shilling
- 1 horse or cattle, 1 shilling a load
- Hog or sheep, 7 pence 3 pence a head

Harriet Tubman Memorial Bridge, opened in 2012.



## Welcome to the Combahee Ferry Historic District

In 2006, archaeologists found an archaeological site and seven architectural and landscape features along US Highway 17, and five underwater sites in the river near the bridge. These 12 resources are associated with people and events that shaped the development of South Carolina from 1715 until 1920.

Today remnants of this historic hub are preserved in the Combahee Ferry Historic District. Explore this aerial view of the district and learn about one of our state's most important historic resources.

 1. South River The river is the main waterway in the historic district.	 2. Bridge The bridge is the main crossing over the river.	 3. 1715 River Site This site is the location of the first permanent bridge over the river.	 4. Site of the Tavern This site is the location of the first tavern on the river.	 5. Site of the Store This site is the location of the first store on the river.	 6. Site of the Ferry This site is the location of the first ferry on the river.	 7. Site of the Tavern This site is the location of the first tavern on the river.	 8. Site of the Store This site is the location of the first store on the river.
 9. Site of the Ferry This site is the location of the first ferry on the river.	 10. Site of the Tavern This site is the location of the first tavern on the river.	 11. Site of the Store This site is the location of the first store on the river.	 12. Site of the Ferry This site is the location of the first ferry on the river.	 13. Site of the Tavern This site is the location of the first tavern on the river.	 14. Site of the Store This site is the location of the first store on the river.	 15. Site of the Ferry This site is the location of the first ferry on the river.	 16. Site of the Tavern This site is the location of the first tavern on the river.



## Archaeology at the Combahee Ferry Tavern

Archaeologists investigated the Combahee Ferry tavern and ferry leaper's house when South Carolina Department of Transportation construction could not avoid portions of 388A174.

Before there were bridges, South Carolina relied on ferries to carry people and products over the state's many waterways. Combahee Ferry was established by 1715. The ferry and the first causeway were located half a mile upriver from here.

In 1730, the legislature chartered a new ferry and causeway on the Combahee River where present-day US Highway 17 crosses the river. By 1760, Combahee Ferry was the principal crossing over the lower Combahee River.



Archaeological site.

In 1935, Colonel John McIlwain of Beaufort constructed a store, lodging, and public house at Combahee Ferry. By 1764, the tavern was known as Haymarket. A tavern or store served travelers until 1827 when the first permanent bridge over the river was constructed.

Today researchers believe the tavern and the tavern leaper's house are under US Highway 17. In 2007, archaeologists found garbage pits and a large privy or outdoor pit associated with the tavern and leaper's house. They excavated the pits and privy and found pottery, bottle glass, buttons, buckles, animal bones, pieces of smoking pipes, lamp parts, nails, window glass, and two Spanish silver coins.

Usually tavern sites contain more artifacts associated with drinking and eating than researchers find at Haymarket tavern. Perhaps the tavern served more travelers and was not a social gathering place for local residents.

### DID YOU KNOW THIS IS A FRAGMENT OF A LATE 18TH CENTURY POTTERY PIT

of a late 18th century pottery pit that contains the 1733 and 1764 ferry rates.



During American, LaGrange was a central location for the South Carolina Lowcountry. It was a major site for the pottery pits. Pottery pits were a major part of the pottery industry in the Lowcountry.



# CROSSING TO FREEDOM

## HARRIET TUBMAN

&

### The Combahee Ferry Raid



Current view of view of Newport Plantation.



A wooden bridge on the Combahee River, SC in 1862.

#### The Combahee River Rice Empire

Look out across the Combahee River and its reaches. The landscape is one of the features that makes the Combahee Ferry Historic District a significant place in South Carolina. Today's marshes were once a network of rice fields maintained through a complicated system of canals, embankments, and flood gates. Hundreds of enslaved people toiled in these fields to generate vast fortunes for their owners.

*"If you ask me what I am doing, I should tell you nothing. My father is a rice planter and his sons have enough money to live handsomely and at leisure."*

Edward Barnwell Heyward  
writing to a friend in 1862

The Combahee River rice plantations were owned by some of the most powerful in South Carolina. Their affluent lifestyle is hard to imagine.

#### DID YOU KNOW

IN 1850  
U.S. RICE  
OF THE

was being produced in the Combahee River.



View of Newport Plantation, SC in 1862.

Henry Middleton's Newport and other plantations extended from just below here to as far as the eye can see. In 1850, 123 slaves on these two plantations alone produced 2,610,000 pounds of rice — a crop worth around 2.5 million dollars in today's money.

William Heyward's Cypress Plantation was located across the river. The marsh visible from the canopy were Cypress rice fields. In 1850, 800 slaves produced 1,800,000 pounds of rice.

The Combahee River rice plantations were a symbol of oppression to many abolitionists. In 1862, the Union Army determined to strike at the heart of South Carolina plantation economy by burning rice production facilities. The Middleton and Heyward plantations were on their list for destruction.

The view of Newport Plantation.

#### Harriet Tubman: Conductor, Soldier, Spy

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Araminta Ross in Maryland around 1820. She escaped to freedom in 1849 with the help of the Underground Railroad. Harriet returned to Maryland to rescue her own family and spent eight years helping others escape from bondage. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison gave her the name "Moses."

During the Civil War, Harriet Tubman worked for the Union Army at Hilton Head as a scout and spy. She traveled through the region gathering information about Confederate troops.

The War Department authorized Colonel James Montgomery to organize a Black regiment at Beaufort and Hilton Head. The 2nd South Carolina Volunteer Infantry was formed in May 1862, and later re-designated the 1st United States Colored Troops. African American soldiers provided manpower and had a special zeal for victory against an old oppressor and for a new life as citizens.

*"Colonel Montgomery with his former self reported his instructions as rapidly as possible in different directions, inguring the money all he can and carrying away their slaves, thus rapidly filling up the South Carolina regiments in the department, of which there are now four."*

Major General Hunter  
June 1862



Harriet Tubman, 1862.

#### DID YOU KNOW

THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME

in the South history that a woman played an equal and armed military role.

The Combahee River Ferry (Photo: July 1862)



Reproduction of the Combahee River Ferry, SC, showing the Union Army's attack on the plantation, SC.

#### Defending Combahee Ferry

At the start of the Civil War, President Lincoln ordered a blockade to stop the flow of supplies to the Confederate states. General P. G. T. Beauregard, commander of South Carolina provisional forces, ordered the construction of earthen fortifications at the entrance to navigable rivers. One of the first Union naval attacks was at Fort Royal Sound in November, 1861. The Confederates were severely defeated and Beaufort and St. Helena were captured by Union forces.



View of 1862.



View of 1862.

Robert E. Lee decided the Confederates could not hold the coast. He focused their efforts on strategic positions such as the Combahee River crossing and the Charleston & Savannah Railroad. Confederate forces constructed fortifications at Combahee Ferry and at the head of the cove, and built a pontoon bridge over the river.

Remnants of these fortifications are present in the Combahee Ferry Historic District. Archaeologists mapped an earthen embankment on the Colleton side of the river, and 1,400 feet of rifle trench and a multiple gun battery that included an earthen embankment, gun platforms, bands post, and more on the Beaufort side. Underwater archaeologists found a wooden vessel in the river that likely is a pontoon used to support the Confederate bridge.

#### DID YOU KNOW

CONFEDERATE TROOPS REMOVED

in July 1862 a pontoon bridge at Combahee Ferry collapsed after a series of fires on January 1862.



A Confederate ship was sunk. Remains of the ship were found in the Combahee River.

## **Website**

**Goals: Create an opportunity to visit the District;  
Tell the rest of the story;  
See artifacts recovered from the site;  
Access the reports**

# The COMBAHEE FERRY HISTORIC DISTRICT

*Bridging Past & Present*

**Overview**

**Virtual Tour**



## Welcome to the Combahee Ferry Historic District

1 2 3

In 2006, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) decided to widen the last stretch of two-lane highway between Jacksonboro and Garden's Corner and replace the 1947 Combahee River bridge. SCDOT hired archaeologists to look for important historical resources along this stretch of the highway. Archaeologists found six archaeological sites and seven architectural and landscape features along the roadway. Underwater archaeologists found five submerged sites in the river near the bridge.

The SCDOT, the Federal Highway Administration, and the South Carolina Department of Archives and

History supported the creation of the **Combahee Ferry Historic District (CFHD)** to preserve these 18 important sites. These resources reflect the importance of the Combahee River crossing to the development of the state's transportation networks, ACE Basin rice plantations, and local taverns and stores, and military activities during the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Most importantly, the Combahee River crossing was the site of an 1863 raid personally guided by Harriet Tubman that freed over 700 enslaved people in one evening.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation

sponsored an exhibition to share some of the many stories of the crossing. Additional information about the Combahee Ferry Historic District can be found at the Beaufort County boat landing on US Highway 17 at the Combahee River. A traveling exhibit is available for loan from SCDOT. Please download this PDF for additional loan information and exhibition specifications.

# The COMBAHEE FERRY HISTORIC DISTRICT

*Roads and Ferries in the Carolina Colony*

History

Archaeology

Artifacts

Research



## History

As the Carolina Colony expanded from Charleston to points south, the General Assembly authorized construction of a road from the Edisto River to Port Royal Island to provide for "more easy conjunction of the forces of this colony in times of war and danger, and for convenience of business and commerce." The 1711 act appointed five commissioners to oversee the construction and maintenance of the road. The King's Highway was under construction at this time as well. Eventually a connected road would run from Boston to Charleston to Beaufort to Savannah.

The 1711 act also authorized the establishment of

ferries along the new road. South Carolinians relied on ferries to get them over the many waterways that crisscrossed the state, particularly here in the Lowcountry. Combahee Ferry was established by 1711. By 1825 there were 107 ferries in South Carolina. After the Civil War, ferries began to lose their importance as railroads expanded across the state. In 1898, the state government ceased to regulate ferries. By the early 20th century ferries all but ceased to operate in the state.

In 1741 the South Carolina Common House of Assembly authorized construction of a bridge over the

Combahee River arguing it was necessary for "...the security of the southern parts of this Province, as well as to the convenience of travels passing this way." The bridge fell into serious disrepair by 1754 and had collapsed completely by 1766. In the late 1800s, railroads provided the initial impetus for large-scale bridge building. This was soon followed by the demand for roads and bridges to accommodate new automobile traffic. The first permanent bridge over the Combahee River was constructed in 1927.

**The “ultimate purpose and the raison d’etre of the compliance process ... is to provide public enjoyment and appreciation of the rich diversity of past human experience.”**

**Jameson 1997**

# Acknowledgements

- SC Department of Transportation
- SC State Historic Preservation Office
- Federal Highway Administration
- Beaufort County
- Colleton County
- Nemours Wildlife Foundation
- Archaeology Advisory Cmte
- Public Information Advisory Cmte

