

**Archaeological Discovery of the South  
Carolina Huguenots:**

**A Review of Discoveries at French Jamestown,  
Purysburg, and New Bordeaux, South  
Carolina.**

*LAMAR Institute Publication Series,  
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**Archaeological Discovery of the South Carolina Huguenots:  
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*[Editor's note: Since this monograph was written the South Carolina Department of Archives and History has made great advances in public access to their holdings, including the original plats for the settlements discussed here. This electronic version was produced in 2009.]*

## **Introduction**

This short monograph reviews the progress in archaeological definition of three extinct colonial towns in South Carolina that were built by French Huguenot religious refugees. This monograph is derived from a paper presented at the Annual Meeting, Archaeological Society of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, April 3, 1993 (Elliott 1993). The archaeological and historical research described herein was supported in part by the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Law Engineering, Garrow & Associates, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Diachronic Research Foundation, and the LAMAR Institute. The author is solely responsible for the accuracy and opinions expressed here.

Jamestown, Purysburg, and New Bordeaux have been examined by archaeological survey and historical research conducted by the author and others (Elliott and Steen 1992; Lepionka 1980; Elliott 1984; 1985; Smith 1985; Judge and Smith 1991). Figure 1 shows the relative location of these three towns within South Carolina and the extent of archaeological survey conducted on each. All three towns contain no buildings or visible ruins from the colonial period, but all three contain subsurface archaeological evidence of colonial period settlement.

Jamestown, the earliest of the three towns, was established in 1705/6 as the seat of power of the St. James Santee French settlement. This was the largest of the French Huguenot settlements in South Carolina (Hirsch 1928). Jamestown was located on a bluff on the Santee River in present day Berkeley County. No original town plan has been found, but a nineteenth century copy of a 1716 plan survives (Gaillard 1848), and a reproduction of this redraft is shown in Figure 1. According to Gaillard's redraft, the town covered 141 acres and was rectangular and contained 31 numbered lots. Lots 1-18 occupied the front row, and the lots got progressively larger heading away from the river. The area fronting the Santee River was designated as a town common and in its center was the church and cemetery. The town plan also shows eight streets within the town and streets along the perimeter on the east and west sides. The Parish Church of St. James was built in 1706 and served the community until it was replaced by another church farther downstream in 1754. The town also contained a parsonage and glebe lands. One of the townspeople, Bartholomew Gaillard, operated a short-lived Indian trading establishment, possibly within the town (McDowell 1955:110, 259).

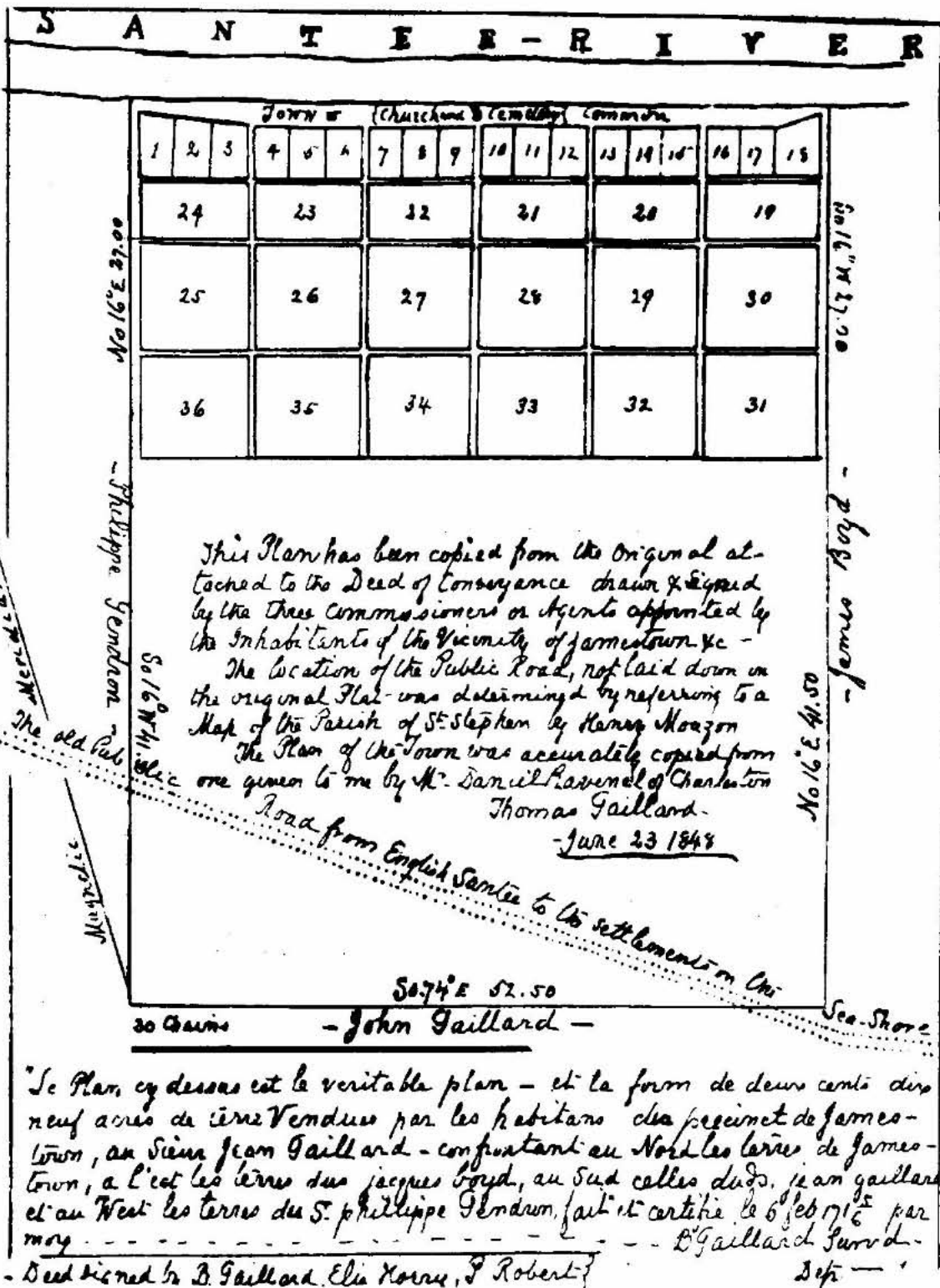


Figure 1. Gaillard's 1848 Redraft of Jamestown Plan.

Historians think that Jamestown was effectively abandoned as an urban center long before 1760, but the area continued to be used during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century as a plantation known as Mount Moriah.

Purysburg, established in 1732 under the guidance of Jean Pierre Pury, was the primary French settlement in southwestern South Carolina (Purry 1837; Migliazzo 1982). This town was located on a bluff on the Savannah River in present day Jasper County. Purysburg was rectangular shaped and measured 6,996 feet by 3300-4488 feet. A detailed plat of the town made in 1735 shows 455 numbered house lots (Bull 1735; Bryan 1735; SCDAH 2006a). The town also contained 100 acres for glebe land and a 260 acre common. A church, built in 1744, was located at the corner of Church and Savannah Streets. The estimated population at its zenith was around 600 who lived in fewer than 100 houses.

The town served as a the primary headquarters for the Southern forces under Benjamin Lincoln during the American Revolution. The Revolutionary War history of Purysburg is little known, although recent research has increased the recognition of its importance as a headquarters complex (c.f. Elliott 2001).

By 1804 there were approximately 60 dwellings in Purysburg. Although it continued to be used as a river port through the 1850s, Purysburg was no longer a significant urban center after the 1820s (Mills 1825; Elliott 1985).

Purysburg was again used by the military during the War Between the States. First ,the town served as a Confederate training camp, and in early 1865, it as a bivouac for several days for the Union Army under General Sherman, who were marching from Savannah, Georgia to Columbia, South Carolina.

New Bordeaux, established in 1764, was the only French settlement in the South Carolina piedmont (Moragne 1857; Davis 1951; Gibert 1976). This town was located at the confluence of Long Cane Creek and Little River, tributaries of the Savannah River in present day McCormick County. A 1765 plat of the New Hillsborough Township drawn by Patrick Calhoun, survives, as do numerous individual lot plats within the town of New Bordeaux, but no detailed town plan has been found. The portion of Calhoun's plan, which includes New Bordeaux, is reproduced in Figure 2. The original plan of New Bordeaux called for an 800 acre tract containing 198 house lots, measuring 1/2 acre, 300 acres of glebe land, 176 acres for vineyards (4 acre lots), 195 acres for commons, and 25 acres to be used for a fortified church yard, parsonage, market place, parade ground, public mill, and streets. New Bordeaux town was organized in 2 acre blocks surrounded by streets. House lots within the town were granted as late as 1774. The town served as a place of refuge during the American Revolution, but was probably abandoned soon after the war and the present town of Bordeaux was established several miles away.

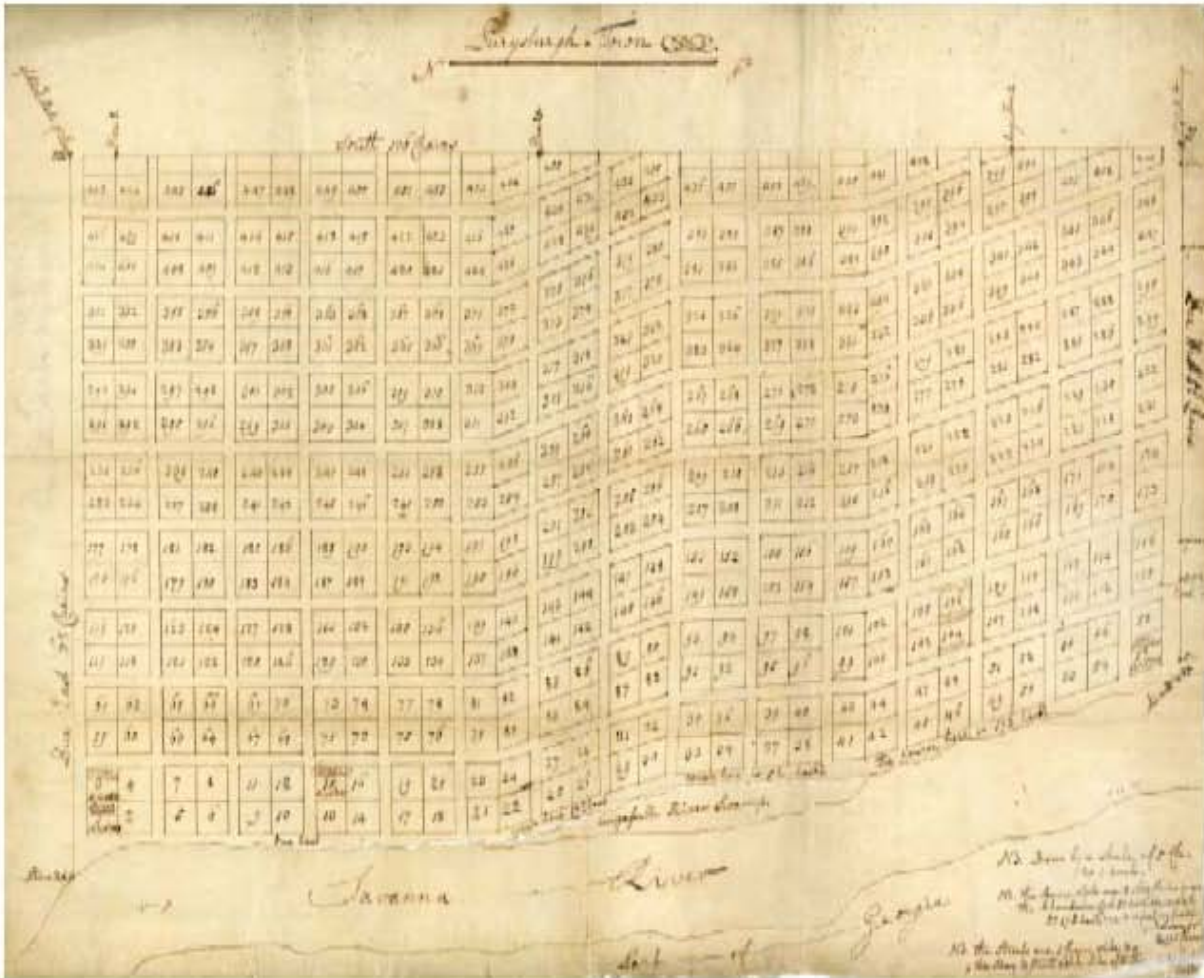


Figure 2. Plat of Purysburgh Town, 1735 (SCDAH 2006a).

Although all three towns harbored cemeteries during the eighteenth century, there are no marked graves from the period. Ravenel (1900) noted that the graves at Jamestown were obliterated by 1900, Beck (1934) cited the absence of eighteenth century graves in the 1930s, and no mention of the New Bordeaux cemetery was found in the literature. Memorial granite crosses were erected on each of the three sites by the Huguenot Society of South Carolina during the 1930s and 1940s, suggesting that the towns were never completely lost in people's memory (c.f. Summerall 1941). The towns were further memorialized in a series of scholarly articles by Henry A. M. Smith and others (Smith 1908; 1909; Moragne 1857; Davis 1951; Gibert 1976). These early references provided vital clues in relocating features within the towns.

### ***Previous Archaeological Research***

#### **Jamestown**

During the late 1970s, Patricia Logan, then Forest Archaeologist for the Sumter and Francis Marion National Forests, was considering the archaeological research value of



New Bordeaux and the St. James Santee settlement (Logan n.d.; Anderson and Logan 1981). Few archaeological studies, however, were conducted on these settlements during this period (Elliott 1983).



Figure 3. Portion of Calhoun's 1765 Plan of Hillsborough Township (SCDAH 2006).

Survey of each of the three French Huguenot towns was preceded by assembling available historical documentation. Original grants were identified through review of grant indexes at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Grant information for Jamestown had been previously assembled by H. A. M. Smith (1908).

The recon survey of Jamestown was a joint effort between the LAMAR Institute and Diachronic Research Foundation (Elliott and Steen 1992). No previous archaeological research had been conducted on the town. At the urging of State Archaeologist, Bruce Rippeteau, who executed an informal aerial reconnaissance over the town site, a study of the town was launched. The timing of the project was unfortunate, however, since the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo blocked our every step and generally slowed our progress. In spite of these hindrances, however, we examined approximately 1/4 of the town site through systematic shovel testing.

Archaeological remains at Jamestown include one well preserved, eighteenth-century house complex, a probable eighteenth century cellar that could not be examined because it was filled with water, and scatters of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century artifacts that may be unrelated to the urban settlement. Collectively, these spatially discrete loci were recorded as Site 38Bk1549.

The most promising area was in the northeastern section of Jamestown. Shovel tests and one 50 by 50 cm test unit in this area yielded delftware, Rhenish stoneware, proto-historic aboriginal pottery, a glass bead, nails, daub, and brick. The aboriginal pottery included plain and stamped surface decorations, and folded pinched rims. Elsewhere on the site, several brushed aboriginal sherds were found, but plain sherds were the dominant type site-wide. There were four large depressions in this area of the site. This is the home site of Etienne Thibout, Iedion Foucherou, or some other unidentified Huguenot colonist. It corresponds to either lot 16, 17, or 18 on Gaillard's plat of Jamestown. This area is believed to date to the very early eighteenth century (c. 1706-1720), based on the lack of later common artifact types. The presence of aboriginal pottery suggests economic interaction with local aboriginal groups such as the Santee or Sewee--groups that were extinct within a few years of Jamestown's founding. Since the French Santee Huguenots were noted for their slave trade, it is likely that these wares were produced by Native American slaves living in the French town. Interestingly, colonoware, a common type on later excavated sites on the lower Santee, was absent in the Jamestown sample. Other colonial artifacts recorded in the town include British brown salt glazed stoneware, pearlware, creamware, and bottle glass. While parts of Jamestown are destroyed by logging and erosion, the northeastern corner shows promise. Other parts of the town remain to be surveyed, notably the area that may contain Bartholomew Gaillard's Indian trading post.

## **Purysburg**

Purysburg was visited by Leland Ferguson, Roy Dickens, and Travis Bianchi during the early 1970s, and site 38Ja36 was recorded by Bianchi (1974). This was, however, a prehistoric site, and the historic resources were not acknowledged until 1978 when Larry Lepionka began a reconnaissance survey of the town (Lepionka 1980). This was followed by a brief visit to the site by Tommy Charles who recorded underwater sites identified by hobby divers.

The work at Purysburg by Garrow & Associates, Inc. was a CRM study for a potential major industrial development that was never constructed (Elliott 1985). The survey of Purysburg included surface reconnaissance, systematically aligned shovel tests, and metal detector survey. Elliott and his team examined approximately 14 percent of the original town site and they identified three historic sites containing eighteenth century artifacts were located within the original bounds of the town site.

Elliott historical research in 1984 and 1985 located 39 original grants of Purysburg's 455 house lots, or less than 8.5 percent of the town lots. None of the grants dated to the

early 1730s, which was the time when initial settlement occurred. The 39 grants were scattered throughout the town, although many of the low numbered town lots (Lots 1-100), which fronted the Savannah River were not represented in this sample. Systematic archaeological survey was conducted across 11 of these 39 identified lots, but unfortunately, no corresponding archaeological sites could be identified.

One isolated colonial house site, 38Ja144 was found in the vicinity of Lots 150-156. Two 1 by 1 m test units were placed on this site and it was recommended for preservation. Unfortunately, it was completely destroyed during subsequent timber harvesting and ground disturbing activities. There is a slight possibility that this house was on Lot 153 which was granted to Anna Inglerine in September, 1738 depending on how one adjusts the historic map to the present-day landscape. This site yielded delftware, redware or coarse earthenware, Rhenish stoneware, unglazed earthenware, goblet glass, bottle glass, brick, daub, nails, window glass, brass button, spall gunflint, a brass escutcheon (possibly furniture), and metal sprue. Low frequencies of colonial period artifacts also were found at 38Ja135 and 38Ja152.

After the first Garrow & Associates investigations Purysburg was revisited several times by professional archaeologists, including this author. Marvin Smith (1985) conducted additional survey of another 10 percent of the original town site. The area examined by Smith included many of the prime lots located near the Savannah River.

The greatest concentration of colonial artifacts was found on lots 42-52, where no lot information is available. This area, examined by Smith was recorded as 38JA158. Colonial period artifacts from this area include delftware, redware or coarse earthenware, creamware, pearlware, clay tobacco pipe fragments, nails, and bottle glass.

Chester DePratter and Tommy Charles made a visit to the site following a major timber harvest, and the site was reconnoitered during a review of the top 100 archaeological sites in the state project (Judge and Smith 1991). My most recent visit to the site was during the 260th anniversary celebration of its founding--a gala event where foreign emissaries, politicians, descendants, a U. S. Marine Corps Band, and other interested parties remembered the significance of the town as they quietly choked from the smoke created by ongoing land clearing activities.

## **New Bordeaux**

During the Reagan years, I had the personal pleasure of conducting research at New Bordeaux for the U. S. D. A. Forest Service. As Logan's interim successor, I conducted an intensive archaeological reconnaissance survey of New Bordeaux in advance of timber harvesting activities. The study of New Bordeaux utilized surface reconnaissance, selectively placed shovel tests, and metal detector survey. Since the town was partially submerged by Strom Thurmond (formerly Clark Hill) Lake and the lake was down about 4 feet from its full pool elevation of 338 feet, an irregularly shaped

shoreline transect, approximately 10 feet wide was examined completely across the former town. Approximately 2/3 of the town site was surveyed.

Original plats were found for 80 lots issued during the period 1765-1774. The lots were numbered, but no numbered lots below 72 were found, and presumably these lots would have been the first ones settled. The only town plan that survives was drawn by Patrick Calhoun (1765), but this map shows no internal features of the town. I attempted to reconstruct the town plan by using information available on the individual plats, but this was unsuccessful. As a result, it does not appear that any of colonists of New Bordeaux can be matched up with their archaeological remains, at least through the available archival record.

Despite high hopes, very few archaeological resources from the colonial period were identified. Inhabitants of the two archaeological sites containing colonial artifacts remain anonymous, at least for the present.

Site 38Mc386 was a large site, part of which is within the upper end town, and it contained eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century artifacts. Towards the lower end of the town, Site 38MC401 was identified. This site was occupied during the eighteenth century, and apparently abandoned. A cellar and other surface rock features were found. The only potential colonial artifact found along the Clark Hill shoreline was one small brick fragment on site 38Mc385. A large blob of brass sprue may date to the eighteenth century. It was found in an area where Carl Miller and/or Joseph Caldwell observed brick and ceramics during the Clark Hill Lake survey. Many parts of the town are deeply gullied and many archaeological traces have probably washed away. The archaeological potential of the New Bordeaux site was "written off" by the Smithsonian Institution archaeologists and historian (Miller 1949; Riley 1949).

As the title suggests, all this research is of a preliminary nature, but preliminary to what? In the case of Purysburg it may be the final word for large parts of the town that are currently being gobbled up by residential development. My work has shown that all three towns have intact archaeological areas, but the work thus far is superficial. A more in-depth study of these sites is needed and, hopefully, this monograph will focus attention on the need for research on the French aspect of South Carolina's colonial past.

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