

## Research Design

Peace College 2009 Archaeological Field School  
at Brunswick Town / Fort Anderson State Historic Site  
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North of the ruins that comprise the former core of colonial Brunswick Town, in the western shadow of the Fort Anderson Battery A earthwork, is an approximate three acre tract that contains above-ground brick and ballast stone chimney bases of over 100 Civil War era barracks arranged in orderly rows.

In preparation for the forthcoming sesquicentennial commemoration of the American Civil War, a partnership between Peace College and the North Carolina Division of Historic Sites and Properties has been forged to archaeologically document the overall boundaries and provide interpretive information about the remnants of barracks in this area as part of a summer archaeological field school course (ANT 450). This partnership fulfills the needs for Peace College to teach Anthropology students proper archaeological techniques in a field "laboratory" setting, while simultaneously providing labor and interpretive information to define and explore a key Civil War era feature of the Brunswick Town / Fort Anderson State Historic Site with minimal to no expense to the State of North Carolina.

### *Civil War Archaeology of Fort Anderson*

Fort Anderson is a Civil War era fortification comprised of a complex of defensive earthen mounds and gun emplacements. Located on the west bank of the Cape Fear River approximately 12 miles from its mouth, and built on the ruins of the once thriving colonial era port of Brunswick Town, its original purpose was to protect the water and western land approaches to the city of Wilmington, as well as its active blockade runner trade, from Union forces. As detailed by Fonvielle (1998), construction of Fort Anderson began in March 1862 under the command of Confederate Brigadier General Samuel Gibbs French, Cape Fear District Commander. By early 1865, the fort was garrisoned by of 2300 Confederate soldiers. As the war progressed, Fort Anderson was eventually captured in February 1865 by 6500 Union soldiers and a flotilla of Union warships. Two months later saw the end of the Civil War and the abandonment of the fort. It stood as a silent sentinel for almost a century as a quiet, physical reminder of a divided past.

The original archaeological research on Fort Anderson and Brunswick Town was conducted as part of a plan by Superintendent of Historic Sites, William S. Tarlton, to develop the site into an historical park. In the summer of 1958, Lawrence Lee conducted the initial phase of archaeological exploration at the site by identifying Colonial era stone foundations and conducting preliminary archaeological testing (Lee 1958). In August of 1958, as Lee returned to his position as a professor of Colonial American History at the Citadel, Tarlton hired Stanley South as site manager and archaeologist. Over the next 10 years, South identified over 60 Colonial-period architectural features, and oversaw intermittent excavation of 23 Colonial-period structures. Due to the presence of later earthworks related to Fort Anderson, these excavations primarily focused on the central and southern portion of the town site on loci initially identified by Lee.

Despite this primary excavation focus on the Colonial era features, Stanley South did record the location of the earthworks and above-ground features related to Fort Anderson that he observed. However, advanced archaeological exploration of such features was extremely limited. In 1959, South (1959) excavated a Civil War era barracks chimney base and related features that was located in an area designated for public access between the Visitor Center/Museum and the parking lot. Two years later, he excavated through a part of the Battery B earthwork to reach the buried Colonial-period foundation of the Newman-Taylor House (South 1961). As part of this excavation, despite a number of Colonial era artifacts recovered in secondary context, South confirmed that the earthwork was constructed in a single episode.

While these two projects represent the only excavations into Fort Anderson features during South's decade of exploration, he did document other above-ground remains related to the fort on the property. These include some of the brick and ballast stone barracks chimney bases that are the focus of this summer's investigations. South (2005:163-164) remembers these chimney bases in his recently published autobiography:

In the woods back of the earthworks, we cut paths through the jungle and found another treasure from the Civil War period. There were chimney mounds there, composed of bricks salvaged from the colonial ruins and mortared together with clay dug from the marsh. We discovered rows of these chimney bases from the barracks buildings housing the Confederate soldiers manning Fort Anderson. I used my transit to map each of these important surviving remains of the fort. From that map, I found that several rows of these barracks chimneys had survived the hundred years since the fort was bombarded by artillery from the Federal forces. I mapped over 50 of these historic ruins and on the top of one, as he was pulling the tape from the transit to the pile of chimney bricks, Charlie found a 32-pound artillery shell.

I excavated one of these chimney mounds located between the museum and the parking lot. These chimney bases, some still standing two feet high, were a rich archaeological treasure I was not able to excavate more fully before I left Brunswick Town and Fort Anderson. As far as I know, these chimney ruins are still in the woods waiting to be examined archaeologically.

Since South's departure from the site in 1968, until recently only limited excavations had been conducted and were primarily associated with improvements to the site, such as the development of a nature trail, the construction of a picnic shelter, and the expansion of the Visitor Center/Museum. In 1992, additional earthworks related to Fort Anderson outside the State Historic Site property were mapped as part of the survey of the neighboring Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point, but no subsurface investigations were conducted on these features (Louis Berger and Associates 1992).

Most recently, in April 2009, with the assistance of site staff, members of the Friends of Brunswick Town support group, and local volunteers, Assistant State Archaeologist John J. Mintz (personal communication, 2009) conducted the excavation of a buried gun platform on Battery B. Preceded by the detection of a prepared surface with an underground radar survey by Shawn Patch of New South Associates, Inc., the wooden remnants of the platform were unearthed and its architectural details confirmed as preparation for its reconstruction prior to the Civil War sesquicentennial commemoration.

Despite over a half century of extensive archaeological research at the Brunswick Town / Fort Anderson State Historic Site, South's two investigations and mapped above-ground features, as well as Mintz's recent excavation of the gun platform, comprise the extent of defined archaeological resources for Fort Anderson. There is much more that can be learned by additional archaeological investigations. As noted by East Carolina University Anthropology Professor Charles Ewen (1997:90), "no matter what the current paradigm, there will always be a

