

North Carolina
Archaeological Society

Newsletter

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Army Archaeologists Honor Sandhills Heritage With Earth Week Excavations

Dr. Linda F. Carnes-McNaughton, RPA
Fort Bragg CRP

Like a green oasis of hardwoods in a vast sea of tall pines, the Lamont House site is situated on a small northern bluff overlooking the Lower Little River, within the bounds of Fort Bragg and Cumberland County. Our first site visit was during early Spring, a time when one can see deep into the woods and appreciate the low mounds and deep gorges of a once-eroded landscape. Immediately visible were remnants of an early housesite--the dark trunks of tall black walnut trees (*Juglans nigra*), the crisp white blossoms of dogwoods (*Cornus florida*), the pale green stalks of daffodils (*Narcissus pseudo-narcissus*), the spiky tops of yuccas (*Yucca sp.*), and the magenta buds of a Beauty Bush (*Verbenacene*). Several large tulip poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) surrounded three small mounds of brick rubble, several rough sandstone piers, and some disarticulated brick bats scattered on the surface. A few feet west of the modern access road a deep gulch (some 30 ft long and oriented north-south) is all that remained of the original Lamont Road, depicted on McDuffie's 1868 map. Not far to the south, closer to the river, locals remember a deeply pooled spring situated amongst white cedars, cypresses, and hollies. The fast-moving waters of the lower Little Creek can be seen about 20 yards away--a truly desirable spot for people to dwell in during prehistoric times and even more recently.

As the month of April neared and our plans to host a public archaeology project for Earth Day materialized, several target sites (those previously recorded during Phase I surveys) were inspected as possible "outdoor classrooms." Selection criteria included public access from a major road, minimal requirements for clearing overburden and undergrowth, some potential to record

architectural remains and recover artifacts, and ample space for public amenities (port-o-johns and parking). Once the site had been singled out, we began to advertise the event through local radio, newspaper, television, statewide newsletters (e.g., the NC Archaeological Society) and our own web page. A week-long calendar was set up to schedule specific days for designated groups: Monday was dedicated to Veterans and Senior Citizens (groups and individuals), Tuesday and Wednesday were set aside for Family days, Wednesday was reserved for Single Soldiers and NC Archaeological Society members, and Friday was Government Employees and Professionals day. Our news releases also cautioned against environmental factors (exposure to bugs and sun), land-use factors (military-related activities, although not in the immediate site vicinity), and the need to wear suitable clothing for safety and comfort.

Each day an orientation table was set up under a canopy to greet visitors, display artifacts and site maps, and distribute handouts. The artifacts provided not only a glimpse of what one would expect to find, but also instruction on how to handle them. The two-page handout was compiled to inform the visitors and volunteers on what we knew about the site from historical maps, records, and oral histories. It stated that John Lamont, a Scottish immigrant, purchased the tract in 1859 and lived there with his family, a teacher, and a laborer. He owned livestock and operated a toll bridge across the river. At his death in 1871, his holdings were inventoried and enumerated to include "225 acres, 12 head of cattle, 2 horses, 1 lot hogs, household kitchen furniture, 1 cart, farming utensils, poultry, and provisions on hand." When this project

began, the only tangible remains of the Lamont legacy were the place names, Lamont Road and Lamont Spring, and the old home site awaited (awaiting?) archaeologists to unearth the history of this former occupants.

Once the site grid was laid out, eight units were outlined for possible excavation. As visitors arrived, the site director doubled as cicerone and provided a brief orientation. Those who volunteered were partnered with a professional archaeologist in one of the excavation units. The ratio varied day to day, but generally it was four volunteers to each professional on hand. Each volunteer was given the opportunity to dig, screen, label, and draw profiles or plans. Artifacts were collected from the screens, and bagged according to provenience, and then returned to the lab each day. Unique items were shared with visitors working in other units and soon the "fever" of enthusiasm spread across the site. A few volunteers assisted in the use of Total Station surveying and mapping activities. Photographs were taken throughout the project to document participation and excavation. Many of these photos were subsequently shared (digitally) with the volunteers upon request.

Of the eight units designated for excavation, five were completed during this public outreach project. Two units contained deep deposits (one a large trash pit), and two others were situated near rubble piles of chimney falls. Another unit was excavated in the vicinity of a large red sandstone pier, towards the rear of the house "footprint." Each of these units contained numerous architectural features and revealed useful information about the size, style, and composition of this structure. The unit that contained the deep trash

pit was also associated with a small rectangular depression roughly 6 x 10 ft in size. Contents of this unique feature included some remarkable artifacts, such as transfer-printed plates of various colors, dated coins, buttons, window glass, bottle glass, nails, a key, hinges, pipes, a brick with a dog paw print, and hundreds of animal bones of domestic stock and wild game. Analysis of these artifacts is currently underway and historical research continues on the family whose farm served as our "outdoor classroom" for a week of celebration for Earth Day and Sandhills heritage.

By week's end, the total number of volunteers and visitors had exceeded 100 and many of the volunteers worked more than one day at the site. They ranged in age from 6 to 65 and varied in their archaeological experience from untrained to avocational to professional levels. For the volunteers, visitors and veterans, the project was an overwhelming success and served to generate a greater appreciation for the cultural resources of the community and the archaeological science involved to recover and preserve them. For the Fort Bragg CRP staff, work on the Lamont House site (located in the Northern Training Area) provided an outstanding example of the Sustainable Range Awareness initiative in action—an integral part of our Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan.

As a testimony to the project's success, the Fort Bragg CRP site director received this response from one volunteer... "foremost in my mind is that this was one of the greatest hands-on learning experiences that I have ever had. Every day was something new and everyday I learned just a little more about archaeology... my deepest thanks."

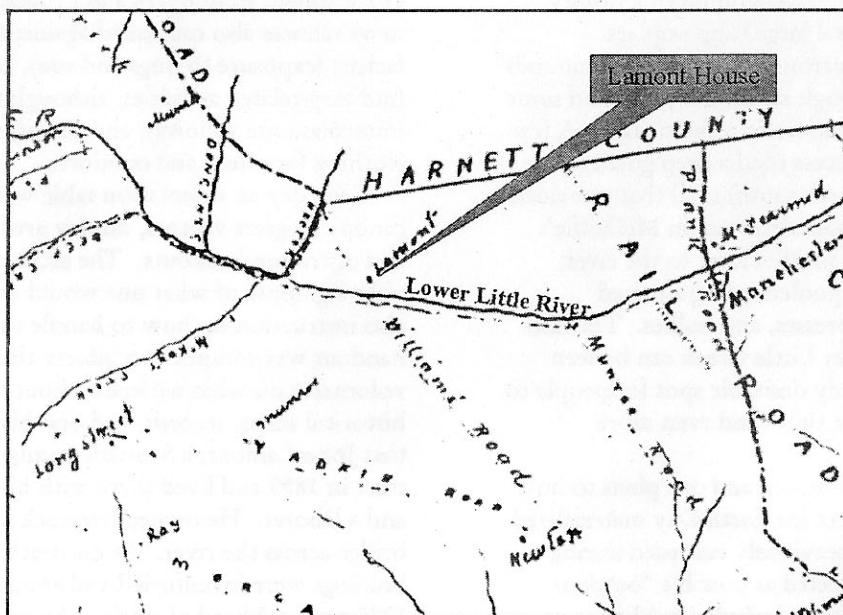


Figure 1. McDuffie's 1868 map showing Lamont House Site.

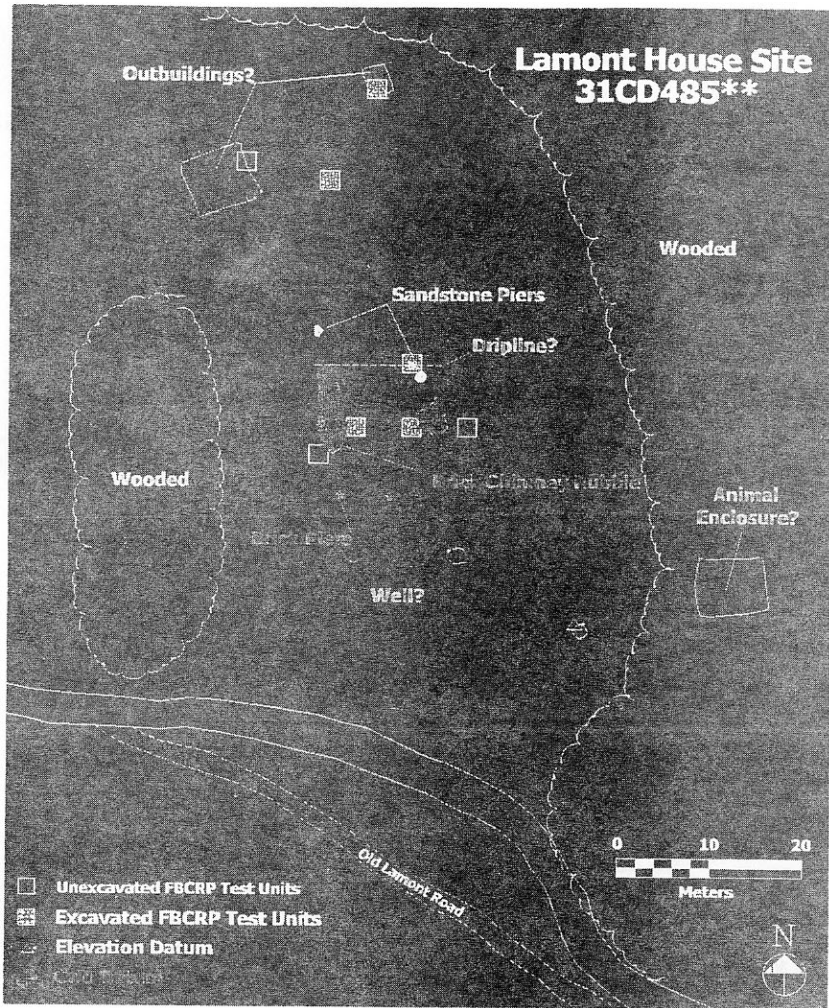


Figure 2. Site map with landscape, historic feature, and excavation units.



Figure 3. Volunteers mapping a profile in unit adjacent to east chimney.

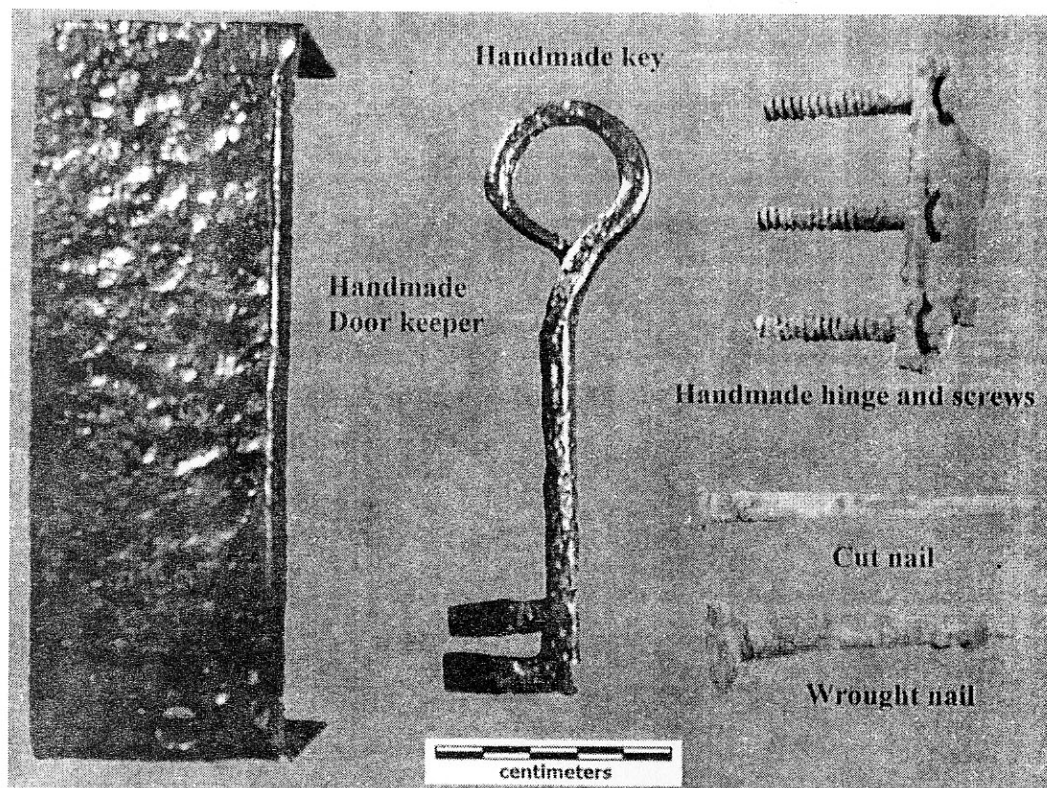


Figure 4. Sample of hand-made hardware recovered at site.

2003 North Carolina State Fair

The Fort Bragg Cultural Resources Program sponsored and created this year's state fair exhibit for the North Carolina Archaeological Society in October 2003. The theme was **ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF LANDUSE IN THE SANDHILLS** and it featured a cultural chronology of 10,000 years of human occupation and use on Fort Bragg properties. Two display cases contained artifacts recovered from FB sites; one contained prehistoric lithic tools and Woodland period pottery and the second case contained historic artifacts from 19th-century farmstead sites and naval stores activities. Two large display boards featured text and photo-mosaics dedicated to the Overhills Historic District and our Cemetery Monitoring/Preservation Program. The central display board provided a series of photos to document the history of landuse and people on Fort Bragg that concluded with Army Training activities—its current landuse. Two sets of free posters were given out, along with a colored multiple-use brochure describing the FBCRP. A newly printed color guide to Old Post Historic District was also available. NCAS t-shirts and hats were sold as well. Volunteers from the NCAS and Fort Bragg's CRP served to staff the booth and greet the public. Although no official counts were made, over 190 visitors to the booth requested copies of FBCRP reports. Thanks to everyone who participated and helped make this year's NCAS exhibit a wonderful success.

NCAS Newsletter Publication Schedule

All NCAS members are encouraged to submit articles and news items to Dee Nelms, Associate Editor, for inclusion in the *Newsletter*. Please use the following cut-off dates as guides for your submissions: Spring Issue, February 28; Summer Issue, May 31; Fall Issue, August 31; and the Winter Issue, November 30

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Vice-president: William E. Covington, III, 245 Broadmeade Drive, Southern Pines, NC 27387.

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Editor: R.P. Stephen Davis, Jr., Research Laboratories of Archaeology, CB# 3120 Alumni Building, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3120.

Associate Editor: Dee H. Nelms, Office of State Archaeology, NC Division of Historical Resources, 4619 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4619.

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