



North Carolina Archaeological Society

Newsletter

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Test Excavations at the Bethabara Brewery Site

John W. Clauser, Jr.

Historic Bethabara Park is located within the city limits of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Most of the 130-acre park is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as an Historic District. It is financed by the city and county and operated by the city as part of the Parks Recreation Department program and contains the remains of the town of Bethabara. As the first Moravian settlement in North Carolina, established in 1753, Bethabara was intended to serve as a temporary base while the planned community of Salem was constructed.

The park was founded 30 years ago as a result of excavations directed by Stanley South. The excavations, which uncovered structural foundations belonging to the eighteenth-century village, recovered data which were to direct the development of historic archaeology in the United States in its formative years. Additional excavations have been completed over the years, adding to the understanding of life in the eighteenth-century settlement. Jacqueline Fehon excavated the Krause addition to the Potter's House in 1973; Raymond Willis and Jackson Marshall worked at the present site of the Visitor's Center in 1985; and John Clauser worked on the Butner Kiln in 1974 and the Community

Garden in 1988. Ten years passed between the time South first excavated in the village and Fehon and Clauser returned to work at the Potter's House, and a similar period passed prior to the Willis and Marshall projects. Only three years passed between the Visitor Center project and the Community Garden excavations, and seven years between the latter and the current project. Archaeology is a continuing, but not a continuous, program at Bethabara.

The long-range plan for the park included archaeological and architectural research for the extant 1803 Brewer's House. The house, which had served as the first permanent visitor's center for the park, had been used sporadically since the opening of the new visitor's center in 1988. It served as a residence and laboratory for the archaeologist in charge of the Community Garden project and then briefly as a craft and gift shop, but had been vacant for some time. As the only standing structure dating to the Moravian period in the park which was not being interpreted, it was the logical focus.

Questions concerning the location and condition of archaeological resources associated with the brewing and distilling industries had been

raised. It was felt that a small testing program would be appropriate rather than to commit to a major excavation. Two areas were selected for intensive testing: the 12,000 square foot area surrounding the Brewer's House, and the gravel parking lot to the north of the house. There has been much debate concerning the location of the various breweries and distilleries which operated in Bethabara, but these two areas appeared to incorporate all of the most probable locations. The goal of the project was to locate and evaluate archaeological remains which might relate to the brewing industry, and to eliminate areas from consideration. It was never intended to provide information for interpretation or uncover structural remains for display. The goal was to supply data for planning future research.

Funding for the project was provided by the Trustees of Historic Bethabara Park as part of an upcoming capital campaign. Since the park has no archaeological expertise, an outside consultant was sought, and consultation with the State Division of Archives and History resulted in the assignment of John Clauser as project director. Normally an employee of the North Carolina

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Office of State Archaeology, Clauser was loaned to the City of Winston-Salem as part of an Intergovernmental Personnel Act agreement. An experienced labor pool of five Wake Forest students, who had, at a minimum, completed one session at field school, provided necessary excavation services. As school was in session during the project, careful attention had to be given to scheduling workers, but, again, the extra effort proved worthwhile. While only one crew member could work full time, the others supplied in enthusiasm what they could not provide in time. Excavations were begun on October 3, 1994, and were completed on October 16, 1994, resulting in 13 days of excavation. The remaining time, 15 days, was spent in analysis and report preparation.

The area to the east of the Brewer's House was investigated on the basis of oral tradition. An hypothesis has been based on the unnaturally flat terrace behind the house and correlations with historic references for measurements that suggest the extant structure was part of the second brewery, and that the remainder of that structure extended to the east. The area covered by the house and the terrace can be combined to match the 66 by 33 foot dimensions mentioned for the second distillery. Therefore an area of 4900 square feet was shovel tested to evaluate its archaeological potential. Results were conclusive. There was no evidence of a structure of any size in the area tested. No intact structural remains of sufficient extent to suggest the brewery or distillery were found. In fact, very little building material or rubble of any type was recovered from the tests, and no evidence of burning was found. The only test to discover rubble of any consequence was a unit on the brow of a bank and the rubble there may have been used to control an erosional ditch. The tests were aligned with the Brewer's House and placed 10 feet apart. Had

there been any evidence of a burned structure connected to the house, at least three tests on each of the grid axis should have been positive.

Two larger excavation units were placed in the north yard of the Brewer's House: Test Trench 1 which was seven feet by three feet and Test Trench 3 which was 10 feet by three feet. The first of these was excavated to examine the original soil levels in this area, compare them to the cellar level of the house, and investigate the cellar window northwest corner of the structure. The second unit was excavated to answer some questions which arose as a result of the excavation of the first trench.

The additional trench was excavated two feet north of Test Trench 1 in hopes of clearing up some confusion. Evidence of a number of building events were discovered which suggest the presence of a large structure 17.5 feet north of the Brewer's House. At 1.1 feet below present surface a substantial stone foundation was located with an associated builder's trench. The foundation was oriented east-west; so only three feet was exposed by the north-south trench, and only one course of stone remained. Therefore, any firm statement about structure size is subject to debate. But, the foundation was 1.5 feet wide, composed of very large stones and is suggestive of massive construction.

Although the first two large excavation units were quite promising, testing had to shift to the supposed location of the first brewery. Two trenches were hand-excavated in the area of the south wall of the first brewery. Position for the trenches was determined from measurements available on historic maps and from interpretations of later researchers (Willis, Marshall, and Meyer). Careful selection of test areas was necessary to cross the predicted area of the wall and place the trench between the parking lot, with its compacted stone surface, and the

branch. Previous experience had indicated the futility of attempting hand excavation through a prepared parking surface, but some attempt at determining the potential of this area was necessary. Results of these tests were ambiguous. Neither the massive stone foundations suggested by the background research, nor the total lack of all brewery remains as previously suggested by South, Willis, Marshall, and Clauser were found.

The west profile of Trench 2 is of note and deserves some explanation. Although it does not provide direct information concerning the brewery, it does suggest a series of events which have an effect on the excavations. When viewing the topography of the parking lot with its artificial flatness and the high bank to the north, many people have assumed that the surface was formed by significant cutting down of the grade. The topography, with its radical change just north of the lot is a strong indicator that this might have been the case. However, while the stratigraphy does reflect that cutting did take place, a good deal of filling also occurred. There is a 0.5 foot layer of sub-base fill exposed in Trench 2 and a small amount of the tan sandy clay subsoil evidenced in the profile indicating that the red clay subsoil may not have been touched at all. Any portion of features dug into the red clay subsoil should have remained intact. The 1757 "Perspective of Bethabara" and Reuter's 1760 map of Bethabara both indicate a steep bank in this area. It may be that at least part of the bank to the north of the parking lot is a natural change in topography and grading was not as severe as previously suggested.

Two machine-excavated trenches were completed to search for additional evidence of the first brewery. A rather strange series of features related to the brewery were located which are a great deal more

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promising than the ephemeral indications from the hand-excavated trenches. A series of sawn boards was found between three and four feet below present surface. The line was oriented east-west on the long axis and individual boards were 1'2" wide and 1 3/4" thick with the one fully exposed measuring thirteen feet long. They were simply overlapped and laid against the edge of an excavation. No vertical supports were located and the boards do not appear to be nailed together. Twenty-five feet of this feature was exposed and it clearly extends beyond the current excavation in both directions. Portions of two rectangular, wooden vat-like features were associated with the boards. These features were both four feet on the east-west axis. Only about one

foot was exposed of the north-south dimension. Excavation was not expanded due to time constraints and excavation conditions, and no firm identification can be assigned at this time. The features extend below water table, which probably explains the excellent condition of the wood.

The west profile of Machine Trench 1 shows a discontinuity which may be the remains of the brewery cellar. There is a blue to blue-grey clay anomaly which begins at the long board feature and extends north slightly more than seven feet, suggesting an excavation of that width. This blue clay was noted along the entire length of the board feature and between the vat-like features. Similar blue clay has been previously encountered in excavations in

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where cellars or other historic excavations into the water table have been abandoned and left to silt in. The previously discussed 25-foot long wooden features may be a bulkhead for a crudely dug basement, or a part of a water-handling system for the brewery, or perhaps are some other part of that structure. Whatever their purpose, the location and depth of these features relate them to the first brewery. Discussions of the first brewery site must remain somewhat vague at present. Archaeological evidence for the brewery is intact. The extent of that evidence is unknown, as is the identification of specific elements. For now it must suffice to say, "It is there."

Joint Meeting at Town Creek April 29th

If you haven't signed up for the North Carolina Archaeological Society and Archaeological Society of South Carolina joint meeting, there will be a limited number of lunches available on a first come, first serve basis at \$5 per person.

Also, NEW "hot off the press" t-shirts will be available at the meeting for \$8 (meeting price only--regularly \$10). Our new hats might be ready in time for the meeting.

Be sure to bring your softball glove (and any extras if you have them) for the North-South softball game.

We hope to see you there.

1995 NC State Fair

We are beginning to plan for the 1995 NC State Fair exhibit for October 13-22. If you want to sign up early to help man our booth located in the Kerr Scott Building, please contact Dee Nelms @ 919/733-7342 for available times. We need your help.

USGS Maps Available

Everyone involved or interested in outdoor activities knows that good maps are a necessity. Finding the maps you need, especially topographic maps, hasn't always been easy, particularly if a local source doesn't carry a selection covering the entire state.

One reliable source for any topographic map of North Carolina is the Geological Survey Section of the North Carolina Division of Land Resources. The Survey stocks complete North Carolina coverage of 7.5-minute (1:24,000 scale) at \$3.00 per map; 30-minute (1:100,000 scale) at \$4.00 per map and 2 degree (1:250,000 scale) at \$4.00 per map. All in-state sales are subject to 6% sales tax. Call or write for shipping and handling charges.

In addition to the topographic maps, the Survey also has a wide selection of geological publications and maps available. To order or for information or a publications list, contact the North Carolina Geological Survey, Post Office Box 27687, Raleigh, NC 27611-7687. Telephone orders or inquiries may be phoned to (919) 733-2423. Orders may be faxed to (919) 733-0900.

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 March 31 Fall Issue September 30
Summer Issue June 30 Winter Issue December 31

1995 Dues

If you have not already renewed your NCAS membership for 1995, please do so as soon as possible. Your continued support is appreciated.

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