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Forgotten Mission of Liberation: Work Uncovers Site Where Raid Freed 700 Slaves

By Wayne Washington

October 16, 2005

**Article posted online by the [State.com](http://www.thestate.com) at:
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In 1863, the Civil War came to the Combahee River in the form of abolitionist Harriet Tubman.

Rural Beaufort County -- Archeologists have unearthed artifacts they believe pinpoint the location of a Combahee River ferry crossing used in a Civil War raid led by legendary abolitionist Harriet Tubman.

The 1863 Union army raid, which freed more than 700 slaves from plantations in Colleton and Beaufort counties, is widely considered the first in U.S. history to be led by a woman. It cemented Tubman's legend as a daring and courageous emancipator, and it bolstered Union forces in the Palmetto State.

The archeologists were hired by the state Department of Transportation to probe the area before U.S. 17 is widened. In the process, they unearthed artifacts they believe came from a house or tavern near the ferry crossing where Tubman and black Union soldiers surprised local plantation owners.

A brief study conducted in 1989 revealed Confederate earthworks and an old African-American cemetery in the low-lying, undeveloped area. But when plans to widen the highway were shelved, no follow-up surveys were taken.

This year, with plans to widen the highway back on track, DOT and the private company have reviewed centuries-old maps, recovered artifacts, and conducted underwater and soil tests that have shown the area to be of great historical significance. [[read more](#) >>>].