The Colleton River Slave Row

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In 1993, Ms. Linda Kennedy, Ms. Marian Roberts, and Mr. Chris Espenshade of Brockington and Associates, Inc. conducted data recovery excavations at the Colleton River slave row, Site 38BU647. The site consists of 14 deteriorated, tabby chimney bases and associated midden from a nineteenth-century slave row. The phased field approach began with complete site coverage through the excavation of 50 by 50 cm shovel tests on a 5 m (15 ft) interval. The shovel test coverage represents the first effort in South Carolina to retrieve significant samples from all areas of a slave row site (not quite the first, ed.). The shovel test data were utilized to select three house loci for excavation. Occupation span, location within the slave row, and apparent status were considered in selecting the three structures. Nine 2 by 2 m (6 by 6 ft) units were excavated at each structure, and additional units were excavated to examine non-structural features.

Three structural patterns were documented. All three of the excavated cabins had tabby chimneys measuring approximately 2.5 by 6.0 ft at the base. The dimensions of three single pen cabins were 13 by 18 ft, 23 by 18 ft, and 16 by 21 ft.

The site is noteworthy for a high frequency of Colonoware vessels, several of which had possible cosmographic markings; the pots were produced by one or two potters using locally available clays. The late use of Colonoware at this site may be related to its role as an isolated slave row. A comparison of the South artifact pattern data from the full site and structure specific coverage indicates the limitations pattern analysis. The pattern from the shovel tests was very similar to the Carolina Slave Pattern, while the structure excavations yielded a pattern similar to the Piedmont Tenant Pattern. The final report is available from Brockington and Associates.