

CONCLUSIONS

The Initial Surveys

The data recovery excavations at Roupelmond Plantation followed two surveys of the tract – an initial reconnaissance and an intensive survey, both accompanied by increasingly intensive historical research. Several features concerning the survey were of interest. First, the survey not only identified several components of the plantation, including a main settlement along the marsh and what appeared to be a slave settlement further inland, but also other areas of diffuse scatters. Interpretation was hampered by intensive cultivation which was well documented by the land use history. Second, the survey also documented what might be called a “thin wash” of prehistoric materials across the entire site. Although a few vague concentrations were apparent, far more material was simply present as a few specimens mixed among far more common historic remains. Third, identification of the several known historic structures was very difficult, even using very close interval testing. This difficulty was attributed to the cultivation which had taken place on the site. Fourth, although no comparable surveys took place on the adjoining property to the east, the fields were freshly cultivated at the time and were walked several times – without ever recovering any prehistoric or historic materials. The sharp delineation of the site on its eastern boundary seemed unusual.

In other words, from the very earliest surveys we recognized that the site had been subjected to intensive cultivation. Although we did not search out previous owners to document the agricultural practices in use, based on knowledge from other low country tracts, it seems likely that mule plowing gave way to mechanization by World War II and afterwards

there were increasing efforts to maximize yields through about the early 1970s. During this period the habit was to subsoil plow only once every few years, sometimes less often because of excessive drainage.

This pattern seems to have resulted in considerable mixing, although it does not always result in excessively deep disturbances. By this we mean that often there appears to be considerable horizontal mixing and smearing of site areas, although there isn't necessarily complete removal of features.

We attributed the smear of prehistoric materials to the effects of agriculture – several loci of prehistoric activity, through time, had been merged, blurring across the landscape. Likewise, historic components were no longer as distinct as they might be – also being smeared by plowing. When those components might have been represented by small assemblages – such as the late nineteenth century houses on the road edge – they too were made indistinct by plowing. This serves as a good lesson that at some point, regardless of the survey interval, it will be impossible to discern faint archaeological footprints.

In spite of this, the initial surveys, combined with the information from the adjoining tracts, suggested that we had identified the main plantation complex. Historical research quickly revealed the plantation to be known by several names – Ferry being one of the first we encountered, followed by Roupelmond, and finally, after considerable additional research, Patterson Point.

One reviewer was critical that we had not devoted more attention to the prehistoric remains.

As we have tried to stress throughout this study, the Native American remains, based on these surveys, were determined ineligible for inclusion on the National Register and, therefore, were not eligible for incorporation into the data recovery plan.

In a similar fashion the reviewer was concerned that the data recovery did not explore the Civil War component of the site, as well as the school house thought to be situated near Stewarts Road. Again, the survey failed to identify any significant remains associated with these other site components and, as a result, they too were determined not to contribute to the site's eligibility. As a consequence, the data recovery plan did not devote limited resources to their further investigation.

The Historical Research

Concurrently with much of the field investigation, historical research was also taking place. Initially confined to local resources we were able to piece together much of the title and ownership, although there were several significant gaps. We found that repositories and sources which are rather uncommonly tapped provided exceptional clues. For example, at the Beaufort Library we found several fragments of Stuart family history, including a sketch plan of the nineteenth century plantation. Although drawn from memory long after the plantation had been abandoned to cultivation, subsequent archaeological research revealed the accuracy of many details. Moreover, the plan provides a sense of the plantation landscape as viewed by the white plantation owner and his family. Not only is the detail far better in the main plantation core, but so, too, is the scale. The owner's world view, according to these documents, seemed to focus on the main settlement, with their concern of the landscape reducing in concentric circles spiraling outward from this core area.

From the South Caroliniana Library we found a compendium of land restoration court

cases which provided a summary of the Stuart's efforts to reclaim the plantation after the Civil War. Although few details were included, it provided a case number, leading eventually to the National Archives. Our discoveries at the National Archives allowed us to complete the title and land ownership, as well as to fill in many of the blanks during the late postbellum – when the land was still in the hands of the federal government.

Were it not for our venture into federal records, our understanding of the Roupelmond Plantation would be far less satisfactory. Whether this represents simply an unusual situation, or provides an argument for more detailed historical investigations at other low country plantations, is left to the reader to ponder. But certainly our knowledge concerning this particular plantation would have been far less complete without these seemingly unusual efforts.

In spite of the successes, the historical documentation of the individual owners fell far short of what we might have liked. For example, we know little concerning the plantation economics during the major periods of ownership by Prioleau, Roupell, and Stuart. In fact, our characterization of early success followed by antebellum stagnation is based almost entirely on what we know was happening at a general level among other planters in the region.

And although we have been able to piece together quite a bit concerning the Stuart family, the Roupells remain something of a mystery. George Roupell, by all accounts, was a supporter of the Crown who benefited from multiple appointments. His Charleston dealings would lead us to conclude that he probably wasn't much of a planter. He might be characterized as a minor government official – a petty bureaucrat, not of the planter or even the merchant class. He married into half of the plantation, but succeeded in acquiring the remaining moiety to unite the plantation under his ownership.

Moreover, he somehow managed to

maintain control of his plantation during – and after – the American Revolution, when many others were losing their property or being heavily penalized. While his children seem to have had no desire to return to South Carolina after the Revolution, Roupell seems to have sought out the privacy of his plantation and done well enough to maintain his ownership. The archaeological research contributes to this, suggesting that he managed to surround himself with the objects of polite society and live very comfortably on the edge of St. Helena Parish until his death in 1794.

Roupell's wife continued to own the plantation until her death in 1819. But we don't know if she was an absentee owner or if she actually lived on the plantation and took an active role in its operation.

After the Roupell tenure the plantation was acquired by John G. Barnwell, perhaps to provide as a dowry to his daughter, Mary Howe Barnwell, since she brought the plantation to her marriage with Middleton Stuart. The Stuarts, although a part of Beaufort society and land owners in their own right, were probably less wealthy. Middleton Stuart's father, Dr. James Stuart, was apparently an overseer or manager of at least one Barnwell tract. With the acquisition of his own plantation, Middleton Stuart became a modest planter on the fringe of St. Helena, in an area not known for particularly good soils or high yields. Unfortunately, the historical accounts provide us with little information concerning his plantation activities. At his death in 1840, his brother-in-law took control of the plantation and apparently a somewhat patriarchal role in the Stuart clan.

No matter how little we know concerning the owners of the plantation, we know far less concerning the African American slaves. In fact, the only real voice they are given comes from some of the Stuart family histories, which provide a glimpse of slave life on the eve of the Civil War.

Even the Civil War history of the property

is not perfectly documented. Local legend had the plantation house largely destroyed by Confederate batteries – yet, the historical accounts and the archaeology dispute this, suggesting instead some damage, but a structure which stood, albeit abandoned and deteriorating, until the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Finally, the historic record also provided us with two views of the main house, both from the artist James R. Stuart. While perhaps from memory, the two views are very similar and reveal something of both the architecture and plantation landscape.

The Excavations

The excavations at Roupelmond focused on the slave settlement, where 2,200 square feet were opened in two blocks. Here a broad range of artifacts and features were identified – all apparently associated with the African American population of Roupelmond during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Perhaps most significant, we found the remains of multiple slave houses called “wall trench structures” by archaeologists. Initially encountered by Wheaton and his colleagues at Yaughan and Curriboo plantations in Berkeley County (Wheaton et al. 1983), they were further discussed by Adams (1990). These dwellings were built by first excavating a trench, into which posts would be set, some just to the depth of the trench, some set deeper in individual post holes. Branches or wattle were then woven between the posts which outlined the structure, creating the walls. At times these walls would be covered in mud, which of course is best revealed archaeologically if the structure burns, baking, and hardening the clay.

The structures at Roupelmond have rounded corners and the most complete reveals a structure at least 13 feet in width and minimally 18 feet in length. Previous work suggests that these wall trench dwellings form two clusters. One cluster consists of structures measuring about 9-11

feet by 13-16 feet, while the other ranges from 12-14 feet by 18-22 feet. The best preserved of the Roupelmond examples fits this second cluster nearly perfectly. Five additional wall trench structures were observed in the two blocks, although none were sufficiently intact to allow measurement – all having been affected by the site’s cultivation. All of the structures have a very similar orientation, roughly northwest-southeast, but do not appear to be aligned. They seem, instead, to form a cluster or clump of structures, all with an identical orientation, but not

trench structure. The east-facing side may have been open or had a door. This privy had seen considerable use, with its floor largely decayed and replaced with brick. Zone 2, at the base of the feature, is interpreted to be remnant “nightsoil” – a mixture of fecal material, other organics, and soil, all heavily composted. The mean ceramic date for this zone – presumably telling us about when the last deposit was made – is 1779. Zone 1 represents upper fill deposited after the abandonment of the feature, about 1791.

Table 32.
Soil Analysis of Feature 7 (weight % calculated on a dry basis)

Provenience	P	K	N	Mg	pH
Outside feature (480R450, PZ)	0.49	0.07	0.07	0.07	7.71
Privy Fill (Zone 1)	0.70	0.09	0.08	0.08	7.62
Composted “nightsoil” (Zone 2)	0.56	0.09	0.05	0.06	7.88
Base of feature (cleaning)	0.27	0.11	0.05	0.05	7.89

When other functions were considered a well was rejected since the hole does not penetrate the water table. A cellar was rejected since the feature is smaller, and far deeper, than cellars found further north in the Mid-Atlantic. One reviewer suggested that the feature might

necessarily forming any sort of strict alignment. This finding suggests that in the early eighteenth century at Roupelmond the slaves were left to create a landscape fitting their world view – not their master’s.

be an indigo vat, but this must also be rejected. The feature is far too small and lacks the ability to be easily drained.

A range of additional features were present, although most represent only basal levels – the upper portions having been lost to cultivation. Included in the assemblage of features are several that are of special interest. A pair of wagon ruts were found at the southern edge of one block, suggesting that a road led into the slave area from the south. We were not able to discern hearths and, in fact, are even reluctant to venture guesses about yard areas as opposed to structural areas, given the amount of plowing loss. But, we did encounter a cat burial which was almost certainly associated with these eighteenth century wall trench structures.

In an effort to either identify alternative explanations or to better document our interpretation that the feature represents a privy, we examined the feature soils. Although soil data from the feature reveal heavy leaching of the macronutrients, there are clear peaks (especially of phosphate) in Zones 1 and 2, when compared to both the area under the feature and also the plowed soil surrounding the feature (Table 32). In particular, phosphate is a nearly universal indicator of decayed organic material. The problem, of course, is that bases are required to fix the phosphoric acids as an insoluble; otherwise, phosphates may readily leach from sandy soils and chemical tests often fail to detect any appreciable amounts. Cornwall observes that:

Another odd feature – at least for a slave settlement area – is a wood lined privy. Measuring about 4-feet square and about 5 feet in depth, the privy hole itself was encompassed on at least two, and probably three, sides by a wall

the critical pH is close to 5.6, well on the acid side. Thus, if the pH of a soil is below this figure, its phosphate-content in the long

run will be negligible (Cornwall 1958:195).

Consequently, while the peaks in Zones 1 and 2 seem modest, they must be examined in the context of the acid soils.

Although nitrogen, in contrast to phosphate, tends to be more tightly bound up in acid soils, it is also quickly leached out of sandy soils. Consequently, it is no surprise that the levels are low. The peak in Zone 1 is so ephemeral it may actually represent the downward movement of nitrogen in soil, rather than an actual peak induced by the archaeological deposit.

The results of the pollen and phytolith studies are both consistent with a privy function. Zone 2 includes relatively few phytoliths since, as Rovner points out, humans ingest relatively few plant materials which are heavily silicified. Likewise, the Zone 2 pollen sample was suggestive of a composting function and that the material was open to receive pollen rain. In contrast, the quickly deposited Zone 1 fill has few pollen grains and did not display evidence of composting. The phytolith research, however, suggested that the Zone 1 fill contained evidence of both corn and other domesticated grass at the site, perhaps wheat.

In sum, although we are not wed to the privy interpretation, it is consistent with all of the available evidence.

If Feature 7 is, in fact, a privy, we might ask what it was doing in the slave settlement. Unfortunately, we have no clear answer since it is not only anomalous, but unique. We can only speculate that, for whatever reason, George Roupell saw to it that his slaves had the dubious benefit of a privy. Perhaps this was his way of "civilizing" his African slaves. Perhaps it was his way of ameliorating their condition. We are inclined to associate the privy with George Roupell's tenure since it appears to have been abandoned about the time of Roupell's death,

suggesting that whatever its reason for existence, it was no longer thought important once Roupell was no longer at the plantation.

The excavations also suggested a fairly dramatic change at the plantation at the turn of the eighteenth century. The wall trench structures (along with the privy) seem to have been abandoned and were replaced by more conventional slave row architecture. In fact, Adams comments that this change was occurring in the Berkeley County area between the American Revolution and 1830 – earlier at some plantations, later at others. But, the general tendency was for the wall trench structures to be replaced with clapboard structures raised off the ground on piers. Whether in response to pressure from abolitionists or as "self-interest," plantation owners improved the condition of their slave housing. This improvement, of course, is from a Euro-American perspective and there is some evidence that the earlier slave housing was preferred by the slaves themselves. Regardless, at Roupelmond, the new type of structure seen in the slave row was post and beam construction. Unfortunately, even less of this structure remains for study than the wall trench buildings, so it is impossible to compare size or make observations concerning chimney or internal arrangement.

The orientation of the slave settlement does not seem to have changed significantly, although its exact placement may have shifted slightly, perhaps to avoid the landscape modifications resulting from 60+ years of occupation.

Turning to the main settlement, less is known because of our conscious decision to focus on the slave settlement. The main house was identified in an area which would face less development pressure and might represent an area where future work would be possible. The slave settlement, in contrast, would be entirely destroyed. Moreover, during our initial clearing efforts, we came slowly to realize that the large quantity of architectural materials (coquina, tabby,

and brick) found along the marsh edge were not in situ. We came to suspect that they had been deposited there as the ruins of the main house were removed for easier cultivation.

These debris, nevertheless, did contribute to our understanding of the main house. The locally available coquina¹ had been mined from the marsh, not necessarily as a replacement for tabby, but rather to supplement tabby's use. Both appear to have been stuccoed or parged and then scored to resemble ashlar block.

Excavations in the field revealed dense deposits of brick and mortar rubble, indicating that we had to be near the remains of the original house. In addition, we discovered what appear to be patterned post holes which we have interpreted as perhaps scaffolding for building construction. Of course, there may be alternative explanations. It may be the post holes are not related to one another. We dismiss this because of the similarity of the post holes in diameter and depth. Or it may be, given the nature of the construction (the oral history suggests the building lacked a basement or ground level construction common to much low country architecture and was actually situated about one step above the surrounding ground level) that the post holes actually represent some portion of the main house. It is more difficult to dismiss this explanation.

When we look at the architecture of the Roupelmond house we are confronted by questions and uncertainties. In spite of several drawings, oral history accounts, and the archaeological remains of the plantation house, it is difficult to reconstruct both the nature of the house and its possible evolution. At a general level, the at-grade construction is reminiscent of other early (pre-Revolutionary) houses, such as

¹ Although coquina is often associated only with the materials found off the Florida coast, it is more generically a partially consolidated shell limestone which is found in a number of coastal South Carolina areas (Murphy 1995).

Old House and Retreat. This is consistent with a house built by George Roupell in the 1760s. Likewise, the grand columns and portico are suggestive of a later, neoclassical, addition. They could easily have been added by either Barnwell or Middleton Stuart in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The question remains, however, what other additions may have been made to the house during the period.

Perhaps the most significant finding here is the historical and archaeological documentation that has become clear. The Roupelmond house is of a style that is not very clearly revealed by such classic works as either Stoney (1938) or Lane (1984), who tended to focus on higher style architecture. The Roupell plantation house is far more likely to represent the common vernacular among low country planters prior to the American Revolution.

The main settlement, however, also produced evidence of additional wall trench structures, revealing we believe, the presence of African Americans in close proximity to the main house during the plantation's early period, dating to Roupell.

Indian Remains at Roupelmond

The early surveys, as previously mentioned, found a thin "wash" of prehistoric materials over much of the tract. Although interesting, these materials were not sufficient by the State Historic Preservation Office to warrant additional archaeological attention or modification of the data recovery plan. Although the subsequent excavations recovered the basal portions of a single Native American burial – a female perhaps 20 to 40 years of age – they did little else to contradict the earlier survey results. This basal portion of a burial was the only distinctly Native American feature encountered. The prehistoric ceramic artifacts recovered span a considerable period of time, ranging from about 2000 B.C. to about A.D. 1500, with a concentration of materials spanning the period from about 300 B.C. to A.D. 500. The lithic remains found at the

site range from the Middle Archaic (about 5000 B.C.) to the Mississippian (about A.D. 1500 or perhaps later). There seems, in fact, to be an unexpectedly high density of lithic materials at this site, at least when compared to other areas of the stone-poor low country. This is briefly discussed further below.

It seems likely that the one burial dates from the Mississippian (based solely on the condition of the bone – no temporally distinct artifacts were found in the fill) and may represent an individual buried under the floor of her house. This is consistent with what is known for the time period – some individuals were buried at home, others were taken to specially prepared mortuary areas. The difference, although not certain, seems associated with one's clan or status.

It is unfortunate that so little remained of the burial at Roupelmond. It seems to be the only Mississippian burial documented for this area of the low country from a non-ceremonial area. Regardless, it was badly disturbed, could not be linked with a recognizable structure, and appears to be isolated. Perhaps the Native American site at that time was little more than a seasonal camp. The remains of this individual are curated with the remainder of the materials from Roupelmond and await repatriation should a Native American group care to claim her.

Exploring the Historic Artifacts

The collection of historic artifacts is greatest from the slave settlement. There our previous discussions have revealed a fairly tight correlation between the historically documented events, most especially ownership changes, and Bartovics' ceramic formula. There is reasonable evidence of the plantation's slave row being established by at least 1762 and likely by 1750. There seems to have been a change – already discussed in the context of the shift from wall trench to post and beam construction – about 1800.

The pattern analysis of the historic artifacts is consistent with that seen at other eighteenth century low country slave settlements. Kitchen materials (primarily ceramics and glass) dominate. The low incidence of architectural remains is indicative of the wall trench structures which contributed few artifacts to the archaeological record. We were, however, delighted to see that in Block 2, where we encountered a mix of both "old" and "new" architecture, the proportion of architectural remains was higher. Even without the preserved post holes, this would have been sufficient to suggest a change in housing style.

We see considerable "trickle down" of goods from the owner to the slaves at Roupelmond. For example, the eighteenth century slave settlement is replete with fancy ceramics and leaded crystal. One explanation is that any serviceable item was finding its way to the slave quarters. As a result, we see more flatware forms being used by the slaves than hollowwares. This doesn't necessarily reflect a different diet (for example, less use of one-pot stews), but only different practices in serving and consuming the foods. During the nineteenth century it seems likely that less material was coming from the main settlement, although it is likely that the Stuarts were specifically purchasing whitewares for use by their slaves.

Turning to the main complex we have been able to document settlement at least by the 1760s – consistent with the information found in the slave settlement. Consistent with the historic evidence, there seems to be some decline in the main settlement during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, probably coinciding with the death of Middleton Stuart.

Considering the materials which were passed from the main settlement to the slaves, along with the materials found at the main house, it seems likely that Roupell – and Stuart after him – sought to surround himself with the material possessions of the elite. The fine ceramics, the

teaware, the heavy mirror, the lamp prism, finger bowls, stemware, decanters, clocks – all are items that would help transport a little of Charleston’s refinement to Whale Branch.

In spite of this, we found evidence that the late Roupell and, more clearly, Stuart ownership does not reflect particularly high status or wealth. In fact, while the ceramics in use by the Stuart family were clearly more costly than those they acquired for the use of the slaves, the Stuarts’ ceramics do not rank particularly high when compared to other low country planters. Porcelains were less common at Roupelmond than at almost all other low country plantations for which we have comparable data. Even the amount of glassware is low at Roupelmond. Taken together this provides some of the best evidence that by the nineteenth century Roupelmond was not a particularly profitable plantation and that the Stuarts were curtailing their outward display of wealth.

The Plantation Diet

Excavations at the main settlement did not yield sufficient quantities of faunal remains to allow any convincing statements concerning the owner’s diet. At the slave settlement, however, we found a diet that was generally consistent with what might be expected at a rural plantation site. Cattle appear to have been the most significant source of meat, although the low incidence of butchering marks suggests that much of this may have been salted and brought into the plantation for the use of the slaves. This, however, was supplemented by fresh beef, typically less desirable cuts – as evidenced by the finds in the slave privy fill. Moreover, the slaves supplemented their owner-supplied diet, although most of the supplement came from terrestrial sources, most of which could be easily acquired by untended traps. There was very little reliance on the abundant resources of the nearby marshes, creeks, and rivers.

In other words, there is some evidence

that Roupelmond’s slaves were forced to supplement their provisions by setting traps and were not provided the time necessary for use of the water resources.

The meat, however, probably represents a small fraction of the actual slave diet. Far more bulk would likely have been provided by other sources. The ethnobotanical remains and the phytolith record suggest that this bulk was likely corn, probably ground to yield corn meal. This is further supported by the archaeological record, which yielded a fragment of a grinding stone and the oral history that identifies a corn mill house on the plantation. In addition, the ethnobotanical remains indicate that peach – probably from a small plantation orchard – was being used. A wild resource found in the collections, which may have been gathered by the African American slaves, is hickory.

The phytolith record also suggests that wheat, or some similar grass (barley, rye, oats), was grown on the plantation. None of these are particularly common in the Beaufort area, although small quantities were apparently grown by a range of planters, primarily for animal fodder.² Chaplin, for example, mentions the planting of both oats and rye, but seems to never have produced more than a few bushels. Often the grasses were planted either in the orchard or even in his yard area (Rosengarten 1987:512, 548, 563, 706).

Reviewing the Proposed Research Questions

Prior to the investigations at Roupelmond, and based on the evidence from the two surveys, we proposed four broad areas of research. The first was an **examination of the plantation’s architectural style**. We wondered if Roupelmond, seemingly a somewhat isolated plantation, on the

² For example, in 1850 the Beaufort agricultural census revealed only 2,465 bushels of wheat, 29,943 bushels of rye and oats, and no barley (DeBow 1854:305).

very edge of the St. Helena Parish, might evidence a more vernacular architectural style than plantations closer to Beaufort and the Sea Islands. It certainly seems to be the case that the early plantation house was unusual, at least when compared to the high-styles commonly discussed by architectural historians today. Whether its vernacular appearance is the result of its isolation or perhaps simply its early age cannot be determined without far more comparative research. At present, however, the three plantations from more inland areas – Roupelmond, Rose Hill (Adams et al. 1995), and 38BU1289 (Kennedy and Roberts 1993) – are all far more vernacular than might have been expected.

We also wondered what architectural evidence we might be able to identify at the slave settlement. Again, we were not disappointed. As previously discussed, we were able to document the shift from wall trench to post and beam construction, and tie this change to a very specific period of ownership. We also found that while the architecture changed, we aren't as certain that the settlement's basic organization changed – in both periods the orientation of the settlement is similar. What did change, besides the basic architectural style, is the landscape arrangement. While the earlier wall trench structures were loosely clusters, the later post and beam houses took on a more rigid alignment, probably imposed by the owner. This seems to be a very basic alteration of the fundamental landscape theme.

Another broad research interest was associated with the **artifact assemblage at Roupelmond and how it might relate to other low country plantations**. Here, too, we found considerable data, particularly in the slave settlement. The artifact pattern was precisely what might have been expected, yet there were a number of unusual features: the prevalence of flatware, the change in ceramic provisioning between the Roupell and Stuart tenures, and the range of items which may reflect African American spiritualism.

A third research topic involved the **landscape and what it might reflect about the owner and slaves**. We found, for example, relatively little evidence of the formal organization of the landscape which might be associated with the Georgian world view. Although the archaeological assemblage suggests to us that George Roupell sought to replicate the comfort and status he claimed in Charleston, the plantation itself lacked formal organization and does not seem to have been designed to exhibit power and wealth. Instead, it seems to more closely resemble a working farm. Even the early antebellum alterations can't be considered to have produced a grand plantation. Instead, at best, they grandized a rather plain facade. Moreover, Roupell doesn't seem to have been concerned that next to his plantation house was a wall trench structure. There doesn't seem to have been any serious effort, prior to about 1800, to present a particular view of the plantation from the river (in spite of the many who would have seen it as they ferried from one side to the other). Nor does there seem to be a grand entrance from the south or from Shell Road.

On the other hand, the modifications of the plantation which occurred at the turn of the century do suggest that the landscape changed. Slave houses became more European looking, the main settlement became more organized, and there may have been a ditch placed between the slave and main settlements as a psychological barrier.

This may tie into our fourth research topic – a **search for evidence of alienation**. Of course, the idea of alienation is predicated on the idea that as the owner became more wealthy and the slaves saw no more or possibly less of their labor returned to them, there was increasing alienation. At Roupelmond it seems that the status of the owner declined from Roupell to Stuart. And it may be that the well-being of the slaves similarly declined, in spite of "better" housing. The faunal assemblage, for example, suggests limited time for supplementing the diet and a reliance on salted

meat with only a few poor cuts of fresh meat. The ceramics of the main plantation were of relatively low status and fewer items were passed into the slave settlement.

In other words, as the planter's wealth and apparent status were reduced, there seems to have been a greater effort to both distinguish, and separate, the two worlds. It may be that alienation increased not only as the planter's wealth increased, but also as it declined.

Alienation, however, is difficult to demonstrate, although the prevalence of items possibly representing "magic and empowerment" may suggest considerable tensions.

African American Magic and Religion

Archaeologists have recently become far more interested in attempting to discern evidence of African American cosmology. Ferguson, for example, suggests that scratched designs in Colono bowls are sacred symbols (Ferguson 1992) and Stine and her colleagues argue the ritual and spiritual importance of beads, particularly blue ones (Stine et al. 1996). Most recently Wilkie (1997) has urged archaeologists to better explore the context of artifacts at African American sites, looking for artifacts, perhaps previously ignored, which might indicate something of the magical-religious practices of slaves. Since there are a number of artifacts, such as bottles, pins, and buttons, which can have multiple functions and meanings, she cautions restraint, while at the same time encouraging exploration of meaning.

There is a vast body of literature, only briefly explored by even the detailed research of scholars such as Stine and Wilkie, concerning the beliefs and practices of low country African Americans. Among the Gullah there is a blend of herbalism, spiritualism, magic, and religion. Called in some places "ubia," or "voodoo," or "santeria," or "hoodoo," it seems most often to be called simply, "the root," among elderly low country blacks still willing to talk about old ways

(see, for example a recent discussion by Pinckney 1998). Wilkie chooses to distinguish mid-wives, root doctors, and conjurers, although she does note that at times the distinctions blur. It seems that Denmark Vesey's co-conspirator, "Gullah" Jack Pritchard, combined the functions of ritual expert and conjuror (Pearson 1999:124-127). This was also the case with Stephaney Robinson, probably better known as "Dr. Buzzard," and his son, "Buzzy," who died as recently as 1997. Regardless, there is a very rich body of lore and information concerning the use of various objects among African Americans.

Wilkie is also correct in noting that many simple artifacts may have multiple meanings. Consider, for a moment, the small quantity of window glass at the Roupelmond slave settlement. The glass is quite unspectacular, being consistent with window glass from any eighteenth to nineteenth century assemblage. Yet it is found at a site where the architecture makes it seem unlikely that glassed windows were in use. And it is found in such small quantities that even if used for a window, it would have amounted to at best one or two panes. If not used for glazing, then what? In the absence of gemstones or crystals – both of considerable importance in some African American magical contexts, might broken glass accomplish the same goal?

Several brass nails were recovered from Roupelmond – and in fact occur at almost all low country slave settlements. Their origins were the boats which plied coastal waters. They would likely have been fairly common items, salvaged from abandoned or sunk vessels and used for repair of the current vessels, but why are they found in the slave settlements? Are we to assume that African Americans were collecting these nails simply because they were shiny? On the other hand, there are numerous accounts of the power of nails, as well as the power of bright, shiny objects. Perhaps these nails, so common to the low country slave settlements, served a function in the magical practices of the slaves?

Likewise, there are a number of small, cut copper fragments at the slave row. Are these simply the trimmings from the repair of a brass kettle by a slave craftsman, or might they represent items intended to go into charm bags?

Although the skeptical reader may dismiss one or more of these examples, their co-occurrence at one settlement may make repudiation more difficult. In addition, the Roupelmond offers us six beads – four of which are blue. The documentation of beads as spiritual objects seems too convincing to ignore. And there is also the one silver coin. Although not pierced for wearing, it is heavily worn and there are numerous accounts which focus on the use of silver in various rituals (see, for example, Wilkie 1995:144).

We have previously mentioned the two unusual stones found in the slave settlement – one with ground edges and another with pecked designs. Both are smoothed. Again, both could be dismissed as idle, idiosyncratic behavior. Yet, there is good evidence that such pieces were often used in various root rituals. Moreover, Wilkie (1995:145) comments on the frequency of ground sherds found at Oakley Plantation in Louisiana, suggesting that the Roupelmond stones may have been used in divining or might have been incorporated into charm bags. Wilkie (1995:145) also comments on the importance of smoothed or polished stones and their occurrence at other African American sites. Thompson (1983) explores Bakongo water spirits, remarking on the importance and power of water smoothed stones and the significance of materials from waterbeds. Perhaps the four water-smoothed quartz stones found in the slave settlement of Roupelmond – an area where quartz is uncommon – aren't simply "smoothing stones," but may perhaps represent a different manifestation of Ferguson's Bakongo designs found in Colono ware.

African American spiritualism would also help us explain why the thin smear of Native American material at the slave settlement

produced 16 pieces of worked stone (12 identifiable points, one biface, two point midsections, and one unidentifiable point). We have previously commented that this seems far too large an assemblage of stone for a sparse site on the stone-poor coast. In addition, when we look at the strike-a-lights, far more are found in the slave settlement than at the main house. Is this simply because slaves required more, or is there perhaps a deeper meaning?

Wilkie, for example, suggests that such specimens may be "power objects." She observes that African American slaves, because of their work cultivating the plantation fields, would have been in a position to find, collect, and curate these objects in the slave settlement – which would certainly seem to be the case at Roupelmond.

Finally, there are several personal items at the slave settlement – a fragment of a tooth brush and a hair comb – which we have largely waved aside, suggesting that similar bone combs were frequently used by the lower classes, often for removing head lice and that the toothbrush was such a high status item that it almost certainly was discarded from the main house. These explanations may be entirely correct. Alternatively, might these very personal items – perhaps originating in the master's bed chamber – have been used to cast spells? Such "black magic" should not be so unthinkable, especially considering the fear associated with the 1739 Stono Rebellion and the charismatic power of "Gullah Jack," reputed at the time to be a "conjureman."

Is the limb bending under the weight of supposition, coincidence, and speculation? Possibly. But if so it is largely in response to our too frequent acceptance of simple explanations that ignore the richness and depth of the African American culture. Moreover, what we see at Roupelmond is a convergence of many different types of artifacts. We aren't making a case of magic based on one rock, or one silver coin, or one arrowhead. Any of these items, in isolation or

small numbers, may easily be discounted. At Roupelmond the weight seems more overwhelming. As many other colleagues have urged, it is time to explore alternative explanations and meanings which may be inherent in the materials found at African American settlements such as Roupelmond.