The Archaeology of St Paul's Parish Church, Hollywood, South Carolina, USA

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With the Church Act in 1706, the General Assembly of South Carolina established the Church of England as the official church of the colony and defined ten parishes. Soon after, missionaries were dispatched from England and churches constructed. Little archaeological research has been conducted on colonial South Carolina Anglican churches, so any archaeological intervention offers a rare opportunity to understand them. This article summarises investigations at St Paul's parish church Hollywood, S C, U S A

Introduction

With the Church Act in 1706, the colonial assembly established the Church of England as the official church of South Carolina which it remained until 1778. Originally ten parishes were defined (Dalcho 1820, 438). The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), a private institution, dispatched missionaries from England to these parishes for the purpose of expanding the Anglican Church, converting the Native American population, baptising the growing population of enslaved Africans and Native Americans and establishing schools and libraries. Very quickly churches were erected and later expanded to meet the needs of the various congregations. Several early colonial churches in South Carolina still stand today, but many are ruins and little exists (archaeologically or historically) to document their history. St Paul's parish church is one such ruin.

While religious institutions were important in early colonial life, archaeological research of religious sites has been limited (Veit *et al* 2009). A number of studies provide information on the significance of churches in the process of colonialism (Costello and Hornbeck 1989; Hoover 1989; Johnson 1989; Lightfoot 2006; Lydon 2009), and historians and art historians have researched the extant Lowcountry churches from this period (Linder 2000; Nelson 2001, 2008). However, archaeological evaluation in South Carolina has been limited to several 'shovel tests' on a single church (Martha Zierden 2008 pers comm).

The original St Paul's parish church and cemetery are approximately 20 miles west of peninsular Charleston, South Carolina, on 700 acres of high ground along the Stono River. This property was, until recently, used as a home and nature sanctuary by the naturalist and artist John Henry Dick, who bequeathed the property to the College of Charleston Foundation in 1995. Today it is an active research laboratory used by the College. All that remains of St Paul's church and cemetery are five headstones, four of which date to the 18th century and one to the 20th (the most recent proprietor of the property), together with two low mounds of earth (Fig 2). Other than the 20th century burial the site has seen little to no disturbance that would introduce post-18th-century materials into the archaeological record. The project research aims addressed several specific questions by minimal intervention. Interim results are presented here, on an ongoing research programme into the archaeology of the church.

Fig 1
Location: South Carolina, USA Inset: St Paul's church and cemetery along the Stono River.

St Paul's Church; historical background

The early history of St Paul's Church has been largely pieced together from letters written by missionaries and vestries to the SPG and to the Bishop of London (Dalcho 1820; Linder 2000; Nelson 2001, 2008). They provide statistical information such as population, births, deaths and baptisms, and in the case of St Paul's, they provide information about the founding of the parish, construction of the church and associated buildings, and its later expansion.

The property was originally part of a land grant from the Lords Proprietors to John Bristow, a sea captain from Bermuda who arrived in Charleston before 1678 (Baldwin 1985). It was acquired in 1701 by Landgrave Edmund Bellinger for failure to remit rent (Salley 1915, 170). Approximately one acre of Landgrave Bellinger's plantation was given to establish St Paul's church and cemetery (Bull, January 20, 1715). For the maintenance of the church and ministers a glebe

> '*near to the church and joining to the plantation of the late Landgrave Edmund Bellinger a narrow piece of ground in length one hundred and twenty in breadth but seven chains* (66 feet to a chain) *containing about seventy one acres of land or there abouts was laid out by the said supervisors.*' (Bull, January 20, 1715)

Reverend William Dunn was the first missionary appointed to St Paul's Parish in 1706 and he arrived in South Carolina from London later that year after a '*dangerous trip of five months*' (Dunn, December 6, 1607). In 1707 '*a small but convenient church of brick in length thirty five, in breadth twenty five feet was begun and finished…*' (Bull, 1717). Soon afterwards a brick parsonage and kitchen, along with several timber outbuildings, were constructed on the glebe (Bull, January 20, 1715); Dalcho 1820, 351). Letters do not provide the exact date for the first services in the new church, but based on Reverend Dunn's letters it was sometime between June 15th (Whitsunday) and November 24th, 1707.

The 1715 Yemassee Indian War had significant impact on the congregation of St Paul's parish, but not the church building itself. The Yemassee Indians lived just south of Charles Town in the Port Royal area near present-day Beaufort, South Carolina. They were a confederation of various ethnic Indian groups not

native to the region, who united after the dissolution of Indian groups such as the Tama and Guale from Georgia and Florida. For the first few decades after settling in Port Royal, the Yemassee were trading partners and close allies with white settlers in Charles Town. However, tensions between the Yemassee and white settlers increased due to continuing enslavement of Native Americans and unfair trade practices, leading to the Yemassee War of 1715 (Galley 2002; Green, *et al*. 2002; Oatis 2004). As a result of this tension a number of Indian groups joined forces and attacked white traders and settlers on Good Friday, April 15th, 1715, in Pocotaligo Town near Port Royal. From there, the Indians moved northward towards Charles Town, killing approximately 100 white settlers and burning many houses and other buildings along the way. Hundreds of white settlers sought refuge in Charles Town, including Reverend Bull of St Paul's and many of his parishioners. Due to its position between Charles Town and Pocotaligo Town, St Paul's Parish suffered great loss of life and property during the war. In late July 1715 a group of 500 Indians went through the parish torturing and killing many parishioners who stayed behind (Bull, August 10, 1715). For a few months, the very survival of the Carolina colony was in the balance. With the help of militia, both local and from Virginia, along with renewed alliances with the Cherokee and eventually other Indian cultures, peace was eventually restored; nevertheless, it took several years for the fears of the colonists to subside.

Reverend Bull returned to the parish in mid-September and found it still relatively deserted since the men continued to fight the Indians and their families remained in Charles Town (Bull, Nov 30, 1715). Over the course of the next year white settlers slowly began to move back to St Paul's (Bull, 1717). Property damage in St Paul's and other surrounding parishes was extensive, with 20 plantation houses in the parish burned, including the parsonage and all its outbuildings except for the kitchen (Bull, August 10, 1715). The church was spared. Bull wrote

> *To my church they did no other Damage, save the breaking a few of the windows, and tearing of the Lining from one of the best Pews; the Books, Pulpit and Table Cloths, and Communion Plate, I had time to Secure, with all my own Books, Linen, and some few of my Household Goods that were the most valuable and easy to be conveyed away'* (Bull, August 10, 1715).

There is no mention of when the minor repairs at the church were completed.

By the early 1720s St Paul's population had not only recovered, but had increased, largely due to the growth in rice production and the rise of the plantation economy. In July 1722 the Governor and General Assembly of South Carolina approved money to enlarge and beautify St Paul's and several other parish churches (Clergy of South Carolina, July 12, 1722). While money was tight because parishioners were still recovering from the war, they raised £960 to add to the £500 appropriated by the General Assembly and immediately began planning the expansion of the church. By autumn Reverend Bull wrote one of his final letters as St Paul's minister before returning to London:

> *The bricks and lime and timber are now preparing and will I doubt not be ready to begin ye work early in next Spring. The Church when finished as designed, which I believe may be in six Months after the Foundation is laid, and will be a neat and regular building and large enough commodiously to hold upwards of two hundred people.* (Bull, 1722)

Construction of the expansion began in 1722 (Bull, 1723), but for unknown reasons it was not immediately completed. On 6 June 1726 Bull's replacement, David Standish, wrote that the new building was being used even though it was not fully complete (Standish 1726). Standish died in 1729 and when his replacement Andrew Leslie arrived in 1731 construction had still not been completed. Leslie raised the necessary money and the project was finished in 1732, a decade after the first foundation was laid (Leslie, May 12, 1732).

In 1734 St Paul's parish had grown so much that it was divided into two parishes; St Paul's to the north and St John's, Colleton, encompassing the sea islands, to the south. Because the original parish church on the Stono River was no longer centrally located, a chapel of ease was established in 1736 at Beech Hill, about eight miles to the north. Services were initially held at a parishioner's home until a new chapel could be built

(Leslie, December 29, 1736). It is not known how long services continued at the original St Paul's church, but in 1742 parishioners petitioned to have the chapel of ease declared the parish church (Nelson 2001, 516-517). This date is not known, but it is safe to conclude that services ceased at the original church along the Stono River by 1756 when parishioners dismantled the church and reused the materials at the Beech Hill church (Dalcho 1820, 357).

Archaeological Questions and Methods

Archaeological investigations commenced in spring 2009 to investigate the following issues:

1. Do the slight changes in topography in the cemetery represent buried structures?
2. If so, does it date to the 18th century?
3. If it is a structure, is it a church?
4. What was the structural sequence?
5. What architectural information can be determined?

Method statement

The project involved both invasive and non-invasive methods. Invasive methods included 'shovel tests' at 10m intervals outside the 'church yard', and shovelled and hand-trowelled test pits both within the church yard and on the slight earthworks (Fig 2). All test pits were excavated stratigraphically. All contexts were screened through quarter inch mesh, and soil samples collected from each level for later flotation. All artefacts were bagged, though only samples of brick and mortar were collected due to their abundance. The base of each level was photographed and planned. Non-invasive methods included ground penetrating radar (GPR). Over three separate days, data were collected at the site along 10cm (4ins) spaced transects using a Mala Geoscience shielded 800 MHz antenna using a calibrated wheel cart.

This paper focuses on the data gathered from the excavated test pits within the structure and GPR data because they best contribute to our understanding of the architecture of this 18th-century church structure. Data is presented as archaeological deposits were encountered, from latest to earliest: Destruction,

A

Fig 2
Plan of church & cemetery area, with numbered trenches

Fig 3
GPR results showing the outline of St Paul's Church

Expansion, and Initial Construction, rather than chronologically.

Archaeological Evidence and Interpretation: Demolition c 1750

Initial testing was designed to answer whether the two slight earthworks to the north of the 18th-century headstones within the present day fenced cemetery were the remains of a structure dated to the 18th century. The more northern and larger one measured approximately 35 ft by 25 ft, roughly the dimensions documented for the original church with a roughly east-west axis. The smaller more southern earthwork was barely detectable and ran on a roughly north–south axis. Large brick fragments were present at, or just under, the surface of each earthwork.

A small 3ft by 1ft test pit (9) (later expanded to a 7ft by 1ft) on the initial rise of northern earthwork (1) was excavated in arbitrary 6cm (0.2ft) spits to assess the site stratigraphy. Rubble from the 1750s church destruction was encountered immediately here and in all subsequent test pits. Most of the bricks were bright orange and soft, typical of early colonial bricks in the Carolina Lowcountry. The associated lime mortar had many inclusions, primarily crushed shell and brick.

On the downward slope of the earthwork (1), presumably the exterior of the structure, were several fragments of brick, mortar, and plaster of varying sizes. On the upward slope, presumably the structure's interior, the number and size of plaster pieces increased and wrought nails were recovered. Intact bricks were less than 6cm (0.2ft) below ground surface and it is believed that this earthwork is the remains of an 18th-century building.

Archaeological Evidence and Interpretation: Expansion 1722–1732

Letters written in the 1720s from Reverend Bull to the SPG attest to the planning and design of an addition to the church, but lack any reference to architectural details except for construction materials: timber, lime and brick. Non-invasive geophysical investigations were conducted utilising GPR to identify subsurface features. Intact foundations indicate that

Fig 4
St. Andrew's Church, Charleston, SC. Photo from: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Historic American Buildings Survey, C.O. Greene, Photographer April 9, 1940 north-west elevation. HABS SC,10-CHAR.V,1-25

Fig 5
Photograph of brick foundation and construction trench in test pit 16 Northwest corner of transept addition

the two earthworks comprised were at some time a single cruciform structure (Fig 3). When the original '*convenient church of brick in length thirty five, in breadth twenty five feet*' was enlarged, the additions formed a cross-shaped rather than rectangular church. The GPR image clearly shows the church foundations and the junction of the original plan and later transept and chancel (Fig 3A). When completed St Paul's may have been very similar to St Andrew's church (Charleston, SC) built in 1706, expanded in 1726 and still standing today (Fig 4).

The expansion of the church was investigated by a test pit (16) measuring 4ft by 4ft (1.22m by 1.22m) located adjacent to the 7ft by 1ft (2.13m by 0.31m) excavation (9). GPR results suggested that the intact

brick already recorded may have been the north-west corner foundation of the addition. The second test pit revealed details of its construction (Fig 5). Initially four courses of brick were laid in English bond of alternating heads and stretchers (a common bond pattern used in 17th-century architecture in English colonial America). These four courses were offset by the length of one third of a brick, thus providing a base to support both foundation and walls. Thereafter, brick courses comprised alternating stretchers and headers for strength.

Test pit (16) revealed three distinct levels and a portion of the construction trench for the church addition. The upper level, associated with the demolition of the church, again contained large pieces of brick, mortar fragments of varying sizes, and one white ball-clay pipe stem. Level 2 contained a dark, near black soil approximately 3cm to 6cm (1.17 ins to 2.34 ins) thick. Brick and mortar fragments were much smaller in size and concentration. Two pieces of flat glass and five wrought nails were recovered, along with Native American ceramics and lithics. Level 3, a yellow-brown soil 3cm to 6cm (1.17 ins to 2.34 ins) in depth, was marked by a significant decrease in brick and mortar debris, with a clay pipe stem, two wrought nails, three possible nail fragments and Native American ceramics. It was similar to subsoil encountered in the western portion of the test pit (16) and a clear construction trench in the eastern half. Both lower contexts demonstrated disturbance of prehistoric Native American occupation.

One additional subsurface feature identified through GPR is intriguing, but has not yet been excavated. The circular feature lies within the chancel, approximately 46cms (1' 6") below the surface, with a diameter of 1. 97m (6' 6"). Other cruciform Anglican churches in South Carolina and Virginia often show a low, semi-circular structure within the chancel with an altar table located within it. This feature has not been excavated and is an area for further research.

Archaeological Evidence and Interpretation: Construction 1707

Attention focused on understanding more about architectural details of the original structure. GPR results indicated that the foundation under the

Fig 6
Centre aisle of St Paul's Church (note mortar lines) in test pit 13 and 15

southernmost mound, closest to the remaining 18th-century headstones, the nave of the church after expansion, measures 10.6m by 7.8m (34.8ft by 25.6ft) externally (Fig 5). These are roughly the same dimensions as the documented dimensions reported for the original brick church built in 1707. A 3.05m by 1.52m (10ft by 5ft) trench (13 and 15) was excavated at the southern end of the structure within the church walls and another trench (19) 1.52m by 0.76m (5ft by 2.5ft) spanned the foundation and the exterior of the church.

Levels 1 and 2 of the interior trenches were very shallow and contained demolition debris: much brick and mortar, 139 wrought nails, plaster fragments, part of a lead window casement, window glass and one non-architectural historic period artefact, a small grommet. Immediately below level 2, intact brick paviours, one-inch-thick, were observed in the far eastern half of the trench. The paviours were *in situ* but had been broken in half prior to construction of the floor. In the centre of the excavation was a fragile mortar bed that nevertheless retained the mortar imprint of lines of 30.48 square (one foot by one foot) paviours, interpreted as the surface of the central aisle for the church (Fig 6). It is probable that these large paviours were carefully removed in 1756 to be reused at the Beech Hill church.

A single line of whole bricks lined the mortar bed with broken brick paviours to its side. In areas where the mortar was missing, a sandy yellowish-brown soil, typical of subsoil, was observed. It appears that, when the church was built in 1707, the ground surface was levelled using this material. The halved paviours were then placed directly onto this layer, while the larger

brick paviours were set in mortar sitting directly on the sandy prepared surface. Because they were broken, the half-brick paviours were probably not meant to be seen. Typically with Anglican churches from the colonial period, paviours would have been sealed beneath raised wooden pews, with a single row of whole bricks serving as a border between the centre aisle and pews. St Andrew's parish church has a very similar pattern in its interior, but with more decorative brick work separating aisle and pews.

A smaller test pit (19) uncovered a portion of the western foundation for the original church and measured approximately 56.4cm (1.85ft) thick. Several bricks were missing from the footing, providing an opportunity to see how each course of brick was laid in alternating directions, to give greater stability. A separate area of intact brick was uncovered on the exterior side of the church, near the centre. GPR results indicated a large, roughly square anomaly here that might represent a brick entrance into the church. If this is the case, the entrance would have opened onto the cemetery where the headstones remain today.

Conclusion

Archaeological investigation, historical research, and data from ground penetrating radar paint a more detailed picture of St Paul's parish church. The SPG letters simply describe the dimensions of the church. Excavation has given the exact location and orientation of the original 1707 church and confirmed that the 10.67m by 7.62m (35ft by 25ft) dimensions documented were the exterior dimensions, while the interior measurements were 9.6 by 6.31m (31.5ft by 20.7ft). From plaster samples we know the interior was a glistening white. Recovery of flat glass shows that St Paul's boasted glass windows. While it is not possible to determine the window positions, nearby St Andrew's Parish church (Fig 4) may provide some clue to window pattern at St Paul's: originally built in 1706 as a rectangular church, St Andrew has three large windows along each long axis with an entrance on the west end of the church.

The physical setting of St Paul's church along the Stono River (Fig 1) would have made it a significant force behind the development of transportation networks that facilitated settlement of the Carolina frontier. Its orientation on the river was both tactical and symbolic. When the church was originally designed and constructed in 1707 the long axis was set north-east to south-west, which is contrary to Anglican church planning, normally on an east-west axis. When the church was enlarged it was designed and constructed in such a way as to enhance the impact of the church on this river bank. With the church prominent in the landscape, the Anglican Church made its presence known to all who travelled past on the Stono River – whites and non-whites, freed and enslaved, Anglicans and dissenters.

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