

FORT FREDERICK  
Fort Frederick Boat Landing  
Port Royal  
Beaufort County  
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-858

HABS  
SC-858

PHOTOGRAPHS

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
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ADDENDUM  
PAGES...

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## Addendum to FORT FREDERICK

HABS No. SC-858

- Location: West shore of Beaufort River at Fort Frederick Landing, adjacent to the US Naval Hospital, Ribault Road, Port Royal, South Carolina.
- Present Owner: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.
- Present Use: Ruin.
- Significance: Fort Frederick is the earliest documented tabby structure known from Beaufort County and the only British Colonial period fort built to guard the approaches of Port Royal Sound now extant.

### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: Funding for construction of what became known as Fort Frederick was authorized in 1730. According to the *Journal of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly*, construction was complete except for platforms in 1734. Associated barracks were probably finished before January of 1733 when James Oglethorpe lodged a large group of Georgia's first settlers in the building while he reconnoitered lands around Savannah.
2. Architect / Engineer: Not known. Plans (now lost) and estimates for construction were presented to the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly on 20 January 1726 by Col. William Rhett who had previously (1707) overseen construction of defenses surrounding Charles Town.
3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, use: It was built by the colonial government to protect approaches to Beaufort Town from the Atlantic Ocean by way of Port Royal Sound and the Beaufort River. The fort was garrisoned from 1734 or 1735 until abandoned following the construction of Fort Lyttelton in 1757. The garrison varied in number from two provincials to one hundred British regulars.

In 1785, the fort and surrounding lands were sold to Captain John Joyner on whose death in 1796 the property passed to his grandson John Joyner Smith (1790-1872). This tract, which by 1861 comprised 700 acres, was known during the late antebellum period as *Old Fort*, the *Smith Place* or alternatively *Smith's Plantation*. Local planters

appear to have forgotten Fort Frederick's origin and history by the 1860s when it was called the *Old Spanish Fort* or *Smith's Fort*.

Occupied by Union forces after the Battle of Port Royal in November of 1861, *Old Fort* plantation subsequently became headquarters for the 1st South Carolina Regiment of Volunteers, a regiment of African-American soldiers. The site was then renamed Camp Saxton after General Rufus Saxton, self-styled Governor of the Sea Islands and a leading advocate of what came to be called the Port Royal Experiment.

In 1863 *Old Fort* plantation along with most other plantations on Port Royal Island was sold by Union authorities for the non-payment of taxes, in the amount of \$93.40, the US Government buying in the property for \$1,000.<sup>1</sup> In 1949, and subsequently, part of the site was developed to accommodate a US Naval Hospital and associated housing. Fort Frederick was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: *Journals of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly* attest that Fort Frederick was built by "Messrs. Bond and Delabere" to whom partial payment in the amount of £1,600 was authorized on 24 January 1734. Jacob Bond (1695-1766) and John Delabere (died 1739) were both members of the South Carolina General Assembly in 1733 and both were re-elected for several years thereafter.<sup>2</sup>

5. Original Plans and construction: No plans or drawings of Fort Frederick contemporary with its construction are known to survive.<sup>3</sup> The fullest verbal description is that of Robert Brewton who examined the almost finished structure on behalf of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly in 1734. Brewton states that he saw four "lines" and two bastions, observing that the tabby walls were five feet high and "five feet thick at the top." The fort contained a magazine, and this was described as "leaky" in 1739/40. Brewton also mentions "barracks" but does not give any location or dimensions leaving

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<sup>1</sup>Application for compensation was filed by the heirs of John Joyner Smith on 25 January 1892. Direct Tax Case No. 17,329 Elizabeth A. Barnwell; Charlotte C. Barnwell; Elizabeth A. Smith and Helen Z. Smith vs. The United States.

<sup>2</sup> DelaBere, who represented St. Helena Parish, continued in office down until his death in 1739. In 1754 he was given permission of the House to absent himself from the Ninth Royal Assembly (1731-33) while working on Fort Frederick. Bond stayed in office down until 1754.

<sup>3</sup>Aside from archival depositories in South Carolina, collections of the Public Record Office (London), and Kings Topographical Collection (British Library) have been searched by the writer for early drawings of Fort Frederick but without result.

open the question as to whether or not such accommodations were erected within the fort's enclosing walls.

Brewton's account is probably reliable, but, its accuracy cannot be absolutely confirmed since the eastern half of Fort Frederick, eroded and undermined by the Beaufort River, has now largely washed away. The barracks have also disappeared and the magazine is lost. Destructive processes were already far advanced in 1864 although not so far advanced as today since the survey of *Smith's Plantation* then produced by the US Department of Engineers shows the fort to have been square in plan or very nearly so.<sup>4</sup> Apparently its southeast angle (now lost) was still visible below high water mark. No bastion is indicated at this point which, assuming the survey is accurate, both supports Brewton's observations and indicates that the fort's river bastion was located at the northeastern angle and was already destroyed in 1864. This would place it diagonally opposite a land bastion to the southwest which was illustrated by the 1864 survey and still survives in a recognizable form. The fort's west or landward "line" and northwest angle although damaged still stand, however, the north and south walls are truncated while the east or river side has disappeared.

6. Alterations and additions: Within six years of completion, Fort Frederick's tabby walls had partially disassociated along the structure's western side, the barracks had deteriorated, and the magazine was found to be unfit for service. Subsequently, the South Carolina House heard numerous proposals for repair and replacement; however beyond a few minor patching episodes, no substantive comprehensive restoration was undertaken nor any significant alterations made.

In the late 1750s permission was sought to remove materials from the barracks to be re-used at Fort Lyttelton. Whether or not this robbing actually took place cannot be determined.

During the antebellum period or the Civil War it is possible that external walls were breached to provide access to the landing stage illustrated by the 1864 Survey mentioned above. In advance of systematic excavation it is not clear if narrow openings on the fort's north and south sides are original or the product of alteration, although it does seem that the walls adjacent to the openings have been tampered with.

## B. Historical Context

Fort Frederick was not the first British colonial fort built to guard Port Royal Sound. Rather, it perpetuated a strategic stance already established, replacing one or more forts erected

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<sup>4</sup>National Archives and Records Administration, RG 77, I- 33, College Park, Maryland.

to protect European settlers in Beaufort Town against Indian attack, ensure the continuity of frontier settlement, and place an obstacle in the path of foreign powers contesting British territorial claims extending beyond Carolina's ill-defined southern boundary.<sup>5</sup>

Events surrounding Fort Frederick's construction have been reported most fully by Crane (1928), who chronicles international rivalries played out across the immense wilderness dividing Hispanic Florida and British South Carolina over the first thirty years of the eighteenth century. Among many threats, desertion of Fort King George on the Altamaha in 1727 by its garrison of "sottish" Port Royal scouts (who, Governor Nicholson said were "too lazy and mutinous to fetch good water or make gardens to provide wholesome food") was the immediate cause demanding new fortification. With Fort King George lost, almost nothing stood between Beaufort Town, a promising, although troubled settlement founded on Port Royal Island in 1710/11, and its outlying plantations, and Spain's forces or belligerent Indian surrogates.<sup>6</sup>

Even in advance of the Altamaha debacle, Port Royal was considered almost helpless against any concerted attack mounted out of St. Augustine, Florida, despite two scout boats placed on permanent station and the patching-up of Beaufort's old fort in 1721.<sup>7</sup> Charleston was scarcely better prepared. Reviewing coastal defenses, a committee appointed on 7 January 1726 by the South Carolina House of Assembly "to consider what is absolutely necessary to be immediately done to put this Province in posture of defense" discovered dismantled cannon, worm eaten carriages, the "Angle" defective, "lines entirely ruined," Moor's Bastion "quite out of Repair" and Fort Johnston defenseless. In the event of war, the Committee concluded:

the enemy will be encouraged to invade our Southwards settlement such: as they lye more exposed. The Harbour of Port Royal is capable to receive many and large Ships of Warr they may therefore be induced to make their attacks first there.

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<sup>5</sup>The first fort erected in the vicinity of Beaufort Town was authorized by the South Carolina General Assembly on 18 February 1702/3. It appears to have been a timber structure capable of housing thirty men and mounting three guns. In 1724, Col. John Woodward was "empowered" to finish "the fort...with as little expence to the Publick as possible" but whether this structure was the same structure as mentioned near the beginning of the eighteenth century is uncertain. Indeed, almost nothing is known about Beaufort's earliest fortifications except that Woodward's account submitted to the South Carolina General Assembly on 17 March 1724 totaled £209.5. 0. ; the Assembly ordering "a proper flag" for the presumably completed fort in November of the following year (1725). The fort itself is illustrated by John Gascoigne's *Plan of Port Royal in South Carolina* (London, 1729) which shows a square enclosure with corner bastions, but whether this is an actual or conventional representation cannot be said. Nor is known exactly where the fort stood because Gascoigne placed the structure in a location overlooking the Beaufort River within the boundaries of Beaufort Town perhaps at the south end of Church Street.

<sup>6</sup>Crane, 1928:246.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

To prevent such an eventuality it was proposed:

for the better security of that place & for the retreat to the several inhabitants in those parts that a good substantial Fort be erected at Beaufort or at the most convenient place about that harbour & to be build with lime shells and sand mixed together as it proposed the new Battery at White Point [Charleston] should be...

Construction of this kind, the Committee estimated, would cost £1,500, detailed prices given elsewhere in the same document, describing proposed tabby work at White Point, suggesting that members had some practical experience of tabby-making. The key figure here was probably the irascible and powerful Captain William Rhett who was appointed a Commissioner for Fortification in 1707 and become involved with plans to build both the State House and Governor's House in 1712.

But, however necessary new defensive works may have seemed as Spain and Britain drifted into open hostilities, immediate means were lacking. Shortly after Fort King George's desertion and subsequent destruction by a Spanish raiding party, fresh disasters struck South Carolina when the great hurricane of 1728 shattered Charleston's already decayed military installations. As late as 1734, the Province claimed it was unable to mount ordinance sent by the British Crown, thus leaving Charleston harbor practically unarmed.

To the south, progress, or, more accurately, an illusion of progress came in 1730, when the Assembly, thoroughly agitated over reports of impending war, made provision for "erecting a fort at port Royall to be built in the manner proposed." The appropriation bill included the following item:

To his Majesty by loan for building a fort at Altamaha and a fort and barracks on port Royall River..... £5,600

But, alarms notwithstanding, construction of the new Port Royal fort, named after Frederick, Prince of Wales, proceeded slowly. The site chosen was located overlooking the Beaufort River about 1 ½ miles south of Beaufort Town from where it was perhaps calculated the future garrison could better observe shipping, hostile or otherwise, entering local waters from the Atlantic Ocean via Port Royal Sound. However, this site had little or no natural cover and, as subsequent events proved, was open to tidal erosion and storm damage.

Other difficulties arose once work got underway, the two contractors appointed to build the new fort, Jacob Bond and John Delabere, either miscalculating or discounting its scope. Construction probably began with the barracks, for one hundred men according to a report of 1738, since James Oglethorpe temporarily lodged a large group of Georgia's first settlers in the

newly completed structure during January of 1733 following their transatlantic journey on the ship *Anne*.<sup>8</sup> One of the company, Thomas Causton, observed the barracks were “intended for a new fortification” but makes no mention of work having then started on the fort’s perimeter walls.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, over the next twelve months considerable progress must have been made, although not enough to satisfy Robert Brewton who noted:

That having examined the Journals of the late Assembly, relating to the Fort & Barracks at Port Royal, find that the House was apprised that the said fort consisted of four Lines & two Bastions: and it appears to your Comm’ee by examining Messrs Bond and delaBere on Oath, that the Fort and Barracks are completed to the Plan (except the omission of two Hawkers) and that the Wall is five foot high and five feet thick at the top.<sup>10</sup>

Your Comm’ee having objected to Messrs Bond and DelaBere that the Platforms are not made, receiv’d for answer that they never understood it to be in their Agreement.<sup>11</sup>

On reading this report, the Commons House ordered £1,600 paid out of £2,000 raised toward construction, retaining £400 until the contractors:

finished the Platforms of said Fort with good & substantial materials with two Inch Pitch pine Plank and Cedar or light wood Sleepers which Platform is to be laid in the Bastions covering then thro’out and to be laid in the Curtain Line for sufficient traversing all the Guns to be mounted on said line.<sup>12</sup>

Two prominent local planters Maj. Barnwell, who presumably was Nathaniel Barnwell, and Thomas Wigg were to certify the work when complete.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Oglethorpe to the Trustees of Georgia, 10 February 1733, cited in Lane, 1975 :Vol 1: 4.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas Causton to his wife, 1733, cited Lane, 1975, 1: 8.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Brewton (1698-1759) was a member of the Assembly from 1733 to 1742 and among many other offices, the Commissioner of Fortification, 1755-59.

<sup>11</sup>*Journal of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly*, 24 January 1734.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>In 1736 the South Carolina General Assembly voted its military engineer Gabriel Bernard (who had been appointed to the position earlier in the same year) the sum of £50 to defray expenses incurred on a journey to Port Royal. If Bernard (a native of Geneva) had any hand in bringing work at Fort Frederick to conclusion is not known, however it seems safe to suppose that his presence on Port Royal Island was related to military construction.

The fort itself was occupied from 1734 or 1735 until abandoned during the 1750s, the garrison's strength increasing and decreasing as expeditions southwards were mounted and recalled or alarms were sounded about enemy intentions. According to Ivers (1970:67):

the Independent Company of foot, a unit of British regulars, garrisoned the fort until they were transferred to Georgia in 1736. During the next two years provincial soldiers were stationed there. British Soldiers from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Regiment in Georgia provided a garrison from 1738 until about 1744. Regulars of a newly raised Independent Company began garrisoning the fort in 1746, and British soldiers continued to be stationed there intermittently, until a new fortification, Fort. Lyttelton, was begun in 1758.

Records are disjointed for the period although sufficient to establish that Fort Frederick was no more capable of protecting Beaufort Town than its predecessors.<sup>14</sup> Distanced from Charles Town, and somewhat isolated from local settlements, the needs of local military personnel were often neglected. A report sent to London dated 16 June 1738 observed that the fort was then mounted "with only 4 Small Shipp Guns" even though eighteen cannon and six ships guns had been sent to the site some time earlier.<sup>15</sup> Just over one year later in December of 1739 James Oglethorpe reported "a great want of powder" and how the garrison had "great occasion for a boat" despite the fact that Britain and Spain were by then fighting over the incident of Jenkins' Ear.

In 1740 Oglethorpe, along with two hundred men including a contingent of "gentlemen volunteers" from South Carolina launched what was meant to be a pre-emptive strike against St. Augustine, but, the force was unable to take the Castillo de San Marcos and remained languishing on the beaches opposite the fortification "until July 1740, when *HMS Flamborough* and the rest of the naval squadron withdrew in July to avoid the summer hurricanes." Besides sowing discord between Oglethorpe and his supporters in South Carolina, the result of the expedition of 1740 "was to encourage a counterstrike by the Spanish." For two years, Spanish *guarda costas* and privateers harassed the sea islands and Spanish Indians raided English settlements."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>In a report sent to London in 1738 (Public Record Office London. South Carolina Vol. 9: 90) a new fort to mount twelve guns "designed" for St. Helena Island is mentioned along with another new fort (also mounting twelve guns) on Hilton Head Island "which commands the entrance [to Port Royal Sound] from the Sea." While these structures which prefigure Confederate forts erected at Bay Point and the north end of Hilton Head Island in 1861 would have considerably strengthened Beaufort's seaward approaches, it is uncertain if either was ever built.

<sup>15</sup>British Public Record Office, South Carolina Vol. 9. F.90. Transcript, SCA&H microfilm, Roll 5: 200-201. Governor William Bull, reporting to the Duke of Newcastle, states that the "six Shipp's Guns" had been bought the previous summer. He also noted the cannon available in South Carolina were of "so many different makes-Viz French and Dutch as well as English that it is difficult to mount one Bastion or Platform of ten Gunns of all the same Height or Nature."

<sup>16</sup>Rowland et al., 1996: 144-45.

Yet, visiting Fort Frederick "in Company with Col. Barnwell" during 1739/40 another committee appointed by the Assembly found serious deficiencies.<sup>17</sup> The garrison, they reported "is in most miserable and forlorn condition being intirely out of order." As for the defenses, conditions were alarming:

The new Work (which is esteemed the best Battery and of the most defence) is almost gone to ruin, and all down on the land side. The Repair of which is certainly necessary as the chieftest Part of the cannon are mounted therein.

Other faults had surfaced, the magazine proving "leaky," badly ventilated, and unfit for storage, so much so that the powder was removed to the upper part of one of the barracks which was "dangerous on account of fire and other accidents."<sup>18</sup> Of the barracks themselves, the Committee observed:

Would be more durable were they rough plaistered, and are daily decaying for Want of it. The Weather Boards being leaky and very uncomfortable in driving Rains, and inconvenient for the sick and ailing Soldiers.

Attention was drawn to more intractable problems:

The Fort in general is so low all round that there is no cover or Shelter for the men in Time of Action, who would be to much exposed to the Fire of the Enemy, if it should be ever attacked: and must be raised if intended for Service, at least three feet on the land side, and four feet fronting the River; and aught to be done after the same Manner as Broughton's Battery is, with Plank framed in. And filled up with Mud or dirt.

The question of providing a good serviceable boat was raised again, while it was found that incredibly, no more than one-half pound of musket shot could be mustered by the entire garrison.<sup>19</sup>

Two years later little or nothing remedial had been done at Fort Frederick even though officials were receiving information about a powerful enemy squadron gathering off the Florida coast.

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<sup>17</sup> *Journal of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly*, 12 December 1737, recorded payment to five individuals then stationed at Fort Frederick, a gunner, sergeant, and three men.

<sup>18</sup> The South Carolina Assembly had ordered (on 4 March 1736/37) construction of a brick magazine "not to exceed £100" at Fort Frederick Whether or not this work was ever completed is uncertain.

<sup>19</sup> *Journal of the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly*, 8 February 1740.

In a long letter heard by the South Carolina House on 23 February 1742 Charles Hicks, a merchant of New York "who had resided at St. Augustine for nine years," reported:

Soon after the late expedition against St. Augustine there was Talk amongst the Spaniards at making an expedition against Georgia, that it was the Opinion of many that the Negroes of this province would join them. That he apprehends the late embarkation against Georgia consisted of about 3,000 Men, viz. 800 regular Troops from Havana and 400 from Augustine, 500 Negroes among whom were Carolina deserters and mulattoes, and the rest were convicts from Lavera Cruz. That he heard that the Spanish carried with them 12 pieces of Cannon for a battery. That there were various reports of their intended scheme whether they should proceed first to St. Simon's, Port Royal or Charles Town. That on all hands he understood that they proposed to destroy everything they met with. That he heard that there are more Galleys building at the Havana.

Fortunately for the settlers of Port Royal and those few adventurers inhabiting adjacent islands, Oglethorpe, although greatly outnumbered, managed to beat off the long awaited attack mounted out of Cuba when it came. A despatch from Oglethorpe to the Duke of Newcastle written from Frederica, Georgia, on 30 July 1742 describes the action as follows:

My Lord:

I am to acquaint your Grace with the success of His Majesty's arms here. The Spaniards with a fleet of 51 sail and a land army on board, under the command of General Montiano and Major General Antonio Arodonado, who was also Engineer General, attacked the colony of Georgia. The fleet was separated, 14 sail of half galleys and small craft attempted Fort William but were repulsed by Captain Dunbar. They then came into Cumberland Sound to have intercepted me, going with some boats to reinforce Fort William. I fought my way through them and God blessed us with such success that the whole 14 sail stood out to sea and only 10 of them ever joined their fleet.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> June part of their fleet, consisting of 36 sail, came and lay of this bar 'till 5<sup>th</sup> July. They several times attempted to land and were disappointed. At last they ran into the harbor and after a hot engagement, which lasted four hours, passed by all our batteries and ships and got into the River Frederica. In the fight one of the guard vessels in His Majesty's service belonging to this colony was disabled and sunk, also several trading vessels . . . I marched to Frederica to defend it, on which they landed. . . and attempted to march by land. We engaged two parties making near 500 men one day in the woods, whom we entirely defeated, taking one Captain and 18 men prisoners and killing upwards of 200. They attempted the town by water and were repulsed also and we, continually harassing of them, forced them to re-embark. The Cuba fleet, being 20 sail, ran out to sea and General Montiano went to Fort St. Andrew's which I had slighted and abandoned,

and from thence went to Fort William where, attempting to land, [he] was repulsed . . . I followed them to Fort William, but Don Manuel never stopped 'till he got to Augustine.<sup>20</sup>

Despite rumors and fears to the contrary, the Spanish fleet never regrouped, nor did forces of the Spanish Crown return. Oglethorpe's victory on St. Simon's at the Battle of Bloody Marsh as it became known, earned him the admiration of settlers in both Georgia and South Carolina. Rowland et al note:

The Planters of Port Royal were so thankful that they felt obliged to send Oglethorpe a message of gratitude for saving them from their "inveterate and Barbarous enemies, the Spaniard." They knew that if Georgia had fallen, the Spanish would soon have overrun their lands and "filled our habitations with blood and slaughter."<sup>21</sup>

Thoroughly shaken by recent events, Lieutenant Governor William Bull sent the Duke of Newcastle a "representation" which described the defenseless condition of Port Royal for the king's consideration.<sup>22</sup> The magnitude of the danger so narrowly escaped was also grasped by South Carolina's Chief Justice, Benjamin Walker who, on 15 October 1742, said that the Spaniards were "to have landed 200 men at Port Royal and built a strong fortification there; and as soon as they had possession to have sent to the Havannah for ships."<sup>23</sup>

On 15 September 1742, in speech read before the South Carolina Assembly, William Bull pointed out the urgent "necessity" of either repairing or replacing Fort Frederick. Two days later, the House agreed to place two galleys on station at Beaufort but, distracted with elections, made no reply concerning Fort Frederick until December, when it was reported:

With regard to Port Royal, our Southern Frontier, the Committee is of the Opinion that Fort Frederick is in so ruinous a condition and so disadvantageous a Situation, that it would be improper to repair the same, but that a small fort be built in Beaufort to receive

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<sup>20</sup>Lane, 1975:616-17.

<sup>21</sup> Rowland et al., 1996:146.

<sup>22</sup> In August of 1742, State Paper Office, London, cited South Carolina Historical Society Collections, 158: II: 277.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. Walker also stated that the Spaniards have minute information about every step taken with either in the West Indies or here" a comment which was not as far fetched as it might seem since a chart entitled *Plano de Gualquini Rio St. Simon* of which a duplicate copy was filed in Havana, Cuba, by Antonio de Arredonde on 15 May 1737 shows that Spanish authorities were singularly well informed about Frederica, the map illustrating the town, its fortifications, armaments, water supply, and roads. How such detailed information fell into Spanish hands is not known, a local informant with grudges against British authority being one possible source.

and defend the Inhabitants of Port Royal against any sudden Attempt from Privateers or Gallies, not exceeding two thousand Pounds.<sup>24</sup>

Early during the following year (1743), some repairs were put in hand. Colonel Wigg informing William Bull that he had “got the plank ready for the platforms at Fort Frederick.” However, such work did not begin to rectify what had become an untenable situation. Wigg continued:

In the opinion of most people there, it would be to no Purpose to lay the same unless the Fort was repaired, and that upon a Survey there was a great deal of Rubbish to be cleared away before they could be laid, because a great part of the Wall was tumbled in, that the Wall whereon most of the Cannon were mounted is entirely down and the whole fort is not worth the Money it would cost to finish the Platforms.<sup>25</sup>

The House agreed. Fort Frederick had been a costly failure and merited no further public expense. Yet, no clear solution to the problem posed by its ruin emerged, members alternatively hearing opinions concerning a new timber replacement and estimates for making good existing deficiencies. Discussion dragged on for years without any resolution. In May of 1749, the garrison repaired the barracks on its own initiative, Lt. George Daniel “of one of his Majesty’s Independent Companies” petitioning for reimbursement in the amount of £111.10.0 to cover building costs. Almost one year later Governor Glenn brought before the House the case of Serjeant Hall “a gentleman of... liberal education” brought low by “circumstances” who had on Glenn’s authority been appointed “Gunner of Fort Frederick” several years before (exact date not given). Hall served for about two years before dying in office, never receiving any payment for his services. Now, his widow who was in “great distress” begged for relief stating that £100 “would satisfy her.” This request was refused. Glenn himself then gave the widow Hall £65 and another £35 for her return passage to England. Not until February of 1754 was the House able to reimburse this payment.

Seemingly incapable of authorizing either substantial repairs or a replacement, the House eventually referred the entire problem of Fort Frederick to the Governor. Irritated over repeated importunities concerning his own inaction, James Glenn finally issued on 5 May 1752 a blistering reprimand:

I am most ashamed to answer that part of your message relating to Fort Frederick, or even give it the name of Fort. It is in judicially situated, ill constructed and is a low wall of oyster shells which a man may leap over! And this called a fort ... den fence is full as good a security. Nay it is really worse than nothing. For the name of Fort may decoy people to retire

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<sup>24</sup> *Journal of the South Carolina House of Assembly*, 4 December 1742.

<sup>25</sup> *Journal of the South Carolina House of Assembly*, 30 March 1743.

to it in case of danger which will undoubtedly prove destructive to every one who does so, whereas by betaking themselves to their boats or to the woods they may have a chance to escape.

Warming to his text, Glenn continued:

Fort and fortifications, Batteries and Bastions, Ramparts and Ravelings sound well: but if they are empty sounds, they will signify little. Let us therefore not amuse our selves with words, but less take the opinion of persons of experience which of them are good and will prove a real defense in the day of danger: and let such be preserved: but let us not spend our money for what will not profit.

And there the matter rested until 4 March 1757 when following the outbreak of war between Britain and France local residents felt impelled to remind legislators that “in the Southern Parts of this province & more especially those who live contiguous to the Island & Harbor of Port Royal, are greatly exposed to the incursions of the enemy.” The ruinous condition of Fort Frederick and its ill chosen situation were again described, and comments made about the inadequate garrison which, the petitioners said comprised “only a Corporal & a few men. Fearing so “enterprizing an Enemy as the French who certainly look with the Eye of Jealousy on the prosperity of this Province” the petitioners went on to observe that:

a good Fort, upon a proper Situation, of which there are many on both sides of Port-Royal River, would, ‘tis probable, discourage any such attempt; or, if made, might render it Unsuccessful.

In a move which must have taken many by surprise, the House, perhaps wearied by its own procrastination, concurred declaring:

that the sum of £10,000 should be granted to the inhabitants of Granville County, for erecting the most proper Works it will admit of for their defense at or near Port Royal.<sup>26</sup>

Once having decided on action, little time was lost in securing a new site, located slightly northwards on Spanish Point, or plans and estimates for the proposed fort which was to be named Fort Lyttelton.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, by November of 1757 the South Carolina Commissioners for Fortification instructed:

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<sup>26</sup>Funding was agreed by the South Carolina Commons House of Assembly on 10 March 1757.

<sup>27</sup> On 9 September 1757, the South Carolina Commissioners of Fortification were informed that the site on Spanish Point where the new fort was to be built belonged to Mr. Isaac Holmes who proposed to exchange his land for land on which Fort Frederick stood. However, the Commissioners concluded that the Fort Frederick site could not be disposed of without an Act of the General Assembly.

Mr. Rattray and Mr. Crawford to wait on his Excellency the Governor in consequence of a letter which they received of the Superintendent for building the Fort of Port Royal to request His Excellency leave to remove the materials of the old Barracks at Fort Frederick to Fort Lyttelton to be used there.

In October of the same year, construction of Fort Lyttelton was underway, those individuals charged with its erection opting for tabby, despite the premature failure of Fort Frederick, cast on a hitherto unprecedented scale. Despoiled or otherwise – and the record is unclear on this point – Fort Frederick gradually fall into complete decay, eroding on one side as the Beaufort River meandered westwards. Lands surrounding the fort along with the fort itself passed into private ownership these lands subsequently being put under cotton.

The site saw no more military use until late 1861 or early 1862 when what had become *Old Fort* plantation was occupied by Union forces, the 1<sup>st</sup> South Carolina Regiment of Volunteers stationed here naming their encampment, Camp Saxton.

Viewing the camp for the first time on 24 November 1862, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson commanding officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> South Carolina saw “a picturesque point, an old plantation with decaying avenues and house & little church amid the woods like Virginia & behind a broad encampment of white tents.”<sup>28</sup> Shortly thereafter, on 1 December 1862, Higginson visited Fort Frederick and wrote of it in his journal:

Had a ride through the plantation to a strange old fort of which there are two here...they are built of a curious combination of oyster shells & cement, called Lupia [sic] & are still hard and square, save where waterworn. One is before this house & a mere redoubt; the other two miles off is a high square house, bored with holes for musquetry & the walls still firm, though a cannon-ball would probably crush them.<sup>29</sup>

Fort Frederick and its surroundings are described at this period by a survey approved by the US Department of Engineers on 26 May 1864 which delineates 160 acres of *Smith's Plantation* reserved to the United States.<sup>30</sup> The main house, now lost but known from contemporary photographs to have been a “T”-shaped, timber framed structure, is shown facing east. An avenue and radial plantings linked the house to the Beaufort River. Southeast of the main

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<sup>28</sup> Looby, 2000:53-54.

<sup>29</sup> It is now difficult to identify the second building described by Higginson since his description does not seem to correspond with Fort Lyttelton which in 1862 still stood in ruins less than a mile to the north.

<sup>30</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, RG 77: I-33, Cartographic Division, College Park, Maryland.

residence on the shore stands Fort Frederick which was identified as "Spanish Fort."<sup>31</sup> Part of the building had washed away by then, a boat landing extending outwards from its center giving access to river traffic.<sup>32</sup>

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement: Originally Fort Frederick was almost square in plan with low, but massive exterior walls fabricated in tabby. It featured two angled bastions positioned diagonally opposite one another, but only one now survives in recognizable condition, the other having washed into the Beaufort river.

B. Condition of the Fabric: Fort Frederick is now ruined and incompletely preserved. The landward (west) side of the structure retains a measure of integrity although nowhere do the walls stand to full original height. In the absence of archaeological excavation, neither the barracks nor magazine can be located. Those elements which still exist, including the west wall, southwest bastion and portion of north and south "lines," are threatened by the Beaufort River which over time has shifted westwards. Tabby top surfaces are friable and loose in many places, the roots of herbaceous plants and shrubs penetrating the fabric. If left unchecked the latter are likely to destroy evidence for wall embrasures and slowly consume what remains of the standing tabby.

### B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: Too little survives of Fort Frederick to determine its original dimensions. Ivers (1970:67) states the fort measured "one hundred twenty-five by seventy-five feet" but gives no source for his assertion.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, the 1864 survey illustrates an almost square rather than rectangular structure, measuring (excluding bastions) approximately 130' north-to-south x 128' east-to-west overall, dimensions which are far more likely than those given by Ivers when it is considered that the fort contained a magazine and perhaps barracks capable of accommodating one hundred or so men.

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<sup>31</sup>According to Dr. J. A. Johnston (*Beaufort and the Sea Islands*, p. 9, typescript Beaufort County Library, Beaufort, SC) what remained of the structure was called either the "old Spanish Fort" or "Smith's Fort" by Beaufort residents just before the Civil War by which time all memory of its history appears to have been forgotten.

<sup>32</sup>This landing is illustrated by a Civil War period photograph of Fort Frederick held by the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>33</sup>These figures are perhaps extrapolated from the fort's present condition and takes no account of eastern portions of the building which have obviously disappeared.

2. Walls and Platforms: It is difficult to determine the original elevation of tabby walls defining Fort Frederick's perimeter, the best preserved sections now extant rising approximately 4' -5" above present grade.<sup>34</sup> Traces of embrasures show that at least one "round" of tabby at the upper level must be missing, which if restored would give an exterior wall height of about 6' , this figure being 12" higher than that given by Robert Brewton in 1734. Actual wall thickness correlates more closely, measuring 5'-6" in width at the presumed penultimate pour level, the walls being battered slightly on external faces.

Truncated by erosion the north and south "lines" are now difficult to interpret since both probably saw alteration or repair some time after the fort fell out of use. Both walls are now pierced by a narrow opening but whether either opening is entirely original cannot be said.

All gun platforms have disappeared along with related support structures such as sleeper walls. Outlines of embrasures do however survive, Iver recording six piercing the outer wall of the extant southwest bastion. Typically, these measure 7 '-9" in width on the inner wall face, each tapering symmetrically to a width of 3'-4" on the outer wall face.

3. Structural System: All surviving segments of the fort's enclosing walls were constructed of tabby cast solid between timber "molds" (form boards) which were struck and repositioned at higher levels as construction proceeded. Tabby pour lines are somewhat indistinct, but clear enough to show that "molds" measured between 1'-4" and 1'-6" in height, their opposing faces tied together by circular (probably metal) pins. All tabby surfaces are now heavily eroded but, evidence survives to indicate that vertical surfaces were once stuccoed and finished smooth.

Generally, where shielded from erosion the tabby appears remarkably dense and hard doubtless as a result of firm and consistent compaction of mixes during the fabrication process. Adhesion between pour levels also appears excellent, the tabby work with its battered outer face attesting to a skilled and experienced labor force.

4. Structural derivation and failure: How or from where the contractors Jacob Bond or John Delabere acquired the skills necessary to execute Fort Frederick is not known, there being nothing in the historic record suggesting that either man had expertise in large scale construction or even prior knowledge of tabby, which, in 1734 was still an unfamiliar material in the Carolina Low County. Indeed, both individuals are known as planters, rather than builders, who shared a taste for political life. Moreover, Captain

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<sup>34</sup>The foundation of the fort's perimeter walls remained un-investigated in 2003.

William Rhett who was probably the project's prime mover and may well have had a hand in its design, died before construction began.

More puzzling still is the fact that the fort's massive tabby walls failed within a few years of completion despite the apparent care lavished on their fabrication. While this circumstance might be explained by several variables having to do with the casting process itself, such as inadequate supervision near the end of the job; poor adhesion between upper and penultimate tabby pours; use of salt contaminated sand or water etc., a possible parallel for premature failure is offered by Fort Johnston, North Carolina. Here, the tabby walls shattered under the stress of the fort's own cannon fired to salute every passing vessel.<sup>35</sup>

At Fort Frederick too, gunners, perhaps out of boredom, squandered their always meager powder supply on signal shots, an action which could well have produced similar results. While such conjecture cannot be confirmed, two circumstances exist which taken together are suggestive. First, the present ruin shows that as reported during 1739/40 the fort's landward walls "where the chieftest Part of the cannon" were mounted, disassociated; structural separation with consequent loss of tabby fabric occurring all along the uppermost horizontal pour line. Second, this line of separation was coincident with base level of the gun embrasures as might be expected if physical stress generated by cannon shots had really contributed to failure of the tabby.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings: No original or early drawings are known to survive. A sketch plan is given by Ivers (1970).

B. Bibliography:

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<sup>35</sup>see Colonial Records of North Carolina, VII: 246.

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#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by the Historic Beaufort Foundation and by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) division of the National Park Service, Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief, HABS. This report is one component of a larger survey of extant examples of tabby architecture within Beaufort County, South Carolina. The documentation was undertaken by HABS under the direction of Paul D. Dolinsky with assistance from Virginia B. Price, HABS Historian, who worked with Jefferson G. Mansell, (formerly of) the Historic Beaufort Foundation, Ian D. Hill, Beaufort County Planning Department, and Colin Brooker, Brooker Architectural Design Consultants, to identify subjects of study and locate them in the field in 2002 and 2003. Colin Brooker, whose research underpinned the project, wrote the historical report. Evan Thompson, now with the Historic Beaufort Foundation, assisted Brooker in the production of the reports. Jack E. Boucher, HABS Photographer, took the large format photographs.