

BARN  
Frogmore Manor  
Seaside Road  
St. Helena Island  
Beaufort County  
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-864

HABS  
SC-864

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20240

ADDENDUM TO:  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## Addendum to BARN

HABS No. SC-864

Location: Frogmore Manor, Seaside Road, St. Helena Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina.

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. William Hatcher.

Present Use: Agricultural Outbuilding.

Significance: Only tabby outbuilding of its kind standing in Beaufort County.

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### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The tract on St. Helena Island which came to be known as Frogmore was granted to William Bull in 1731 and incorporated 3,300 acres. From William Bull the property passed to his son, Lt. Governor William Bull. Part of the tract had been planted in indigo before the American Revolution, and Bull, who as a loyalist fled South Carolina for England, estimated the property to have been worth £5,700 sterling. In his will dated 1791, Bull left Frogmore to a niece by marriage, Hannah Beale Stapleton, who put the property into the hands of managers. Under such supervision, the plantation prospered, producing 133 bales of cotton in 1816. In their *History of Beaufort County*, Rowland et al observe that:

By 1818, the slave population had grown to 139, and the primary settlement on Seaside Road consisted of the main house occupied by the overseer, a barn, a provisioning house, a cotton house, a ginning shed and "18 negro houses" on the "street."<sup>1</sup>

In 1836 the property was sold to William J. Grayson. By 1853 it was in the hands of Thomas Aston Coffin (1795-1863) who also owned Coffin Point plantation, another prime cotton producing property located at the eastern tip of St. Helena Island.

Following the Battle of Port Royal in November of 1861, Frogmore was abandoned and passed into Federal ownership. Maps prepared for the U.S. Direct Tax Commission in 1862 show that a parcel located southeast of Seaside Road which included the main house and barn described above was subsequently designated School Farm No. 25 this same parcel being purchased by Laura M. Towne for \$3,000 in 1868. Towne, who was to spend her life educating freedman families, re-worked the main house, adding a second story and altering interior trim in 1869. It also possible that she re-roofed the tabby barn, this work perhaps being undone by the hurricane of 1895.

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<sup>1</sup> Rowland et al. (1996): 283.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The barn at Frogmore is a single story, rectangular structure that measures 48'-0" north-to-south x 25'-3" east-to-west. Exterior walls are made of load-bearing tabby cast to a uniform width of 12" in 2'-0" high vertical increments. Impressions show inner and outer formwork faces to have been tied with timber pins measuring 3" x 2" in section, positioned variably between 3'-0" and 3'-2" on center. As preserved, the exterior skin stands to a maximum height of 13'-2" above present grade. During what was probably an alteration phase, two lower tabby walls (each 12" wide and standing to a height of 6"-3" above present grade) were built at right angles to the west facade. These define an open bay measuring 15'-9" north-to-south x 14'-5 1/2" east-to-west approximately centered on the building's west face. There is no evidence for any associated framing, however it is possible that the modern shed roofed enclosure now running along the building's west side (reworked in 2001) follows an earlier enclosure which would have defined three open bays or stalls here.

Although somewhat eroded, the north facade retains its original entranceway measuring 4'-7 1/2" in width. Top and bottom portions of this opening have been cut out, a circumstance which leaves its original vertical dimension uncertain. At the opposite end, the south facade has seen more extensive alteration, what was probably an original doorway having been enlarged out of recognition to facilitate the storage of bulky items or machinery inside the building. The long north facade is blank except for three small rectangular openings (each measuring 2'-0" wide x 2'-3" high) cut to light the interior during what was probably a secondary alteration phase. Small patches of stucco remain on the east facade but is doubtful if this finish is original although it probably replaces an earlier coating.

The south facade was originally blank, the present shed running along its length being open to the west.

Inside the principal space, all the early timbers have disappeared, however sockets show that originally there was a timber floor raised 2'-0" or more above grade on 5" x 5" joists positioned between 2'-1" and 2'-6" on center. Joists spanned east-to-west across the building's short axis. There is no evidence for intermediate support for the joists or any interior partitions.

Today, the barn's main body is enclosed by a timber roof of gabled form, the roof space floored and lighted by an east facing dormer window. Probably introduced during the early twentieth century, the present roof was extensively repaired and partially rebuilt in 2001.

Nothing definite is known about the structure's function or date. Its location, slightly northwest of Frogmore's main plantation house, suggests storage of cotton or some other valuable commodity, the sturdy original floor being capable of supporting substantial loads and

keeping stored items away from ground moisture. It is possible that stabling for horses or mules was introduced along the building's west side during the later Antebellum period.

Tabby fabricated using formwork measuring 2'-0" in height suggests construction after the American Revolution, perhaps some time between 1795 and 1825 when St. Helena Island saw an unprecedented period of agricultural development built upon profits derived from long-staple cotton.<sup>2</sup> It is also possible that the barn's present roof replaces one destroyed during the "great" Beaufort hurricane of 1893 which brought devastation to local sea islands.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Bibliography

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Harvey, Bruce G., Colin Brooker, David B. Schneider, and Sarah Fick. *Beaufort County Above-Ground Historic Resources Survey of Beaufort County, South Carolina*. [Beaufort, SC]: Brockington Associates; Inc., Brooker Architectural Design Consultants, Historic Beaufort Foundation, and Preservation Consultants, Inc., 1990.

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Rosengarten, Theodore. *Tombee, Portrait of a Cotton Planter*. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1986.

Salley, A.S., ed. *Minutes of the Vestry of St. Helena's Parish, South Carolina 1726-1812*. Columbia: 1919.

### 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

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<sup>2</sup>According to historic Resources of the Low Country (1979: 72), other tabby structures once existed at Frogmore Plantation including a row of slave houses which were demolished in 1930.

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.

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