

# *2004 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards*

## *Cultural Resources Management, Installation*

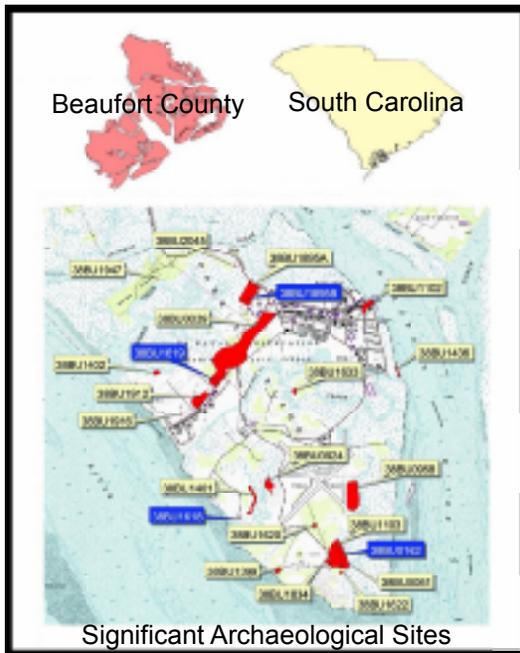


*Marine Corps Recruit Depot  
Parris Island, South Carolina*

**Secretary of Defense  
Environmental Award FY 2004  
Cultural Resources Management  
Installation  
Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island**

## **BACKGROUND**

The primary mission of Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island (MCRDPI) is oversight of enlisted recruiting operations in the Eastern Recruiting Region, and provision of reception, processing, and training for enlisted male personnel recruited in the ERR and all enlisted female personnel. There are approximately 1,500 active duty military, 480 civilians, and 4,800 recruits at MCRDPI.



Parris Island, South Carolina is a Sea Island near the confluence of the Beaufort and Broad Rivers, at the tip of Port Royal Sound.

The Depot, near the town of Beaufort, consists of about 8,100 acres spread between Parris, Doggie, Jericho, Scout, and Horse Islands.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, cont**

English explorers visited in the mid 17th century, and by the early 18th century, British colonists had established slave-labor based plantations here. During the Civil War, Union forces occupied the region and freed slaves were schooled in missions, as well as encouraged to homestead their own farms on the island.

In 1882, 41 acres were designated as a naval station, and in 1891 Marines were permanently stationed on Parris Island. In 1909 the Navy established a Marine officer's school, and by 1915, other training operations were also moved to the island. By 1918 the federal government had acquired the remainder of the island, but civilians were allowed to remain on their farms in certain areas until 1938, when the buildup leading to World War II necessitated their complete removal.

The long history of Parris Island has left a rich legacy of cultural resources, both archaeological and architectural. As of December 2004, more than 100 archaeological sites have been identified. Four are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and fifteen are deemed eligible. One is also listed as a National Historic Landmark.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Parris Island has been occupied for over 4,000 years. While no Paleoindian period sites have yet been identified on the island, numerous Paleoindian points have been recovered nearby in Beaufort County. Numerous prehistoric sites from the Archaic Period to the late Mississippian are documented on the island. Historic occupation can be documented as beginning in 1562 when French explorers built an outpost on the island, with the intent of founding a colony. Spanish colonists inhabited Parris Island from 1566 to 1587, with a continued military and missionary presence well into the 17th century, when Native Americans once again returned to the island.

## **PROGRAM SUMMARY**

Cultural Resource Management activities on MCRDPI fall under the umbrella of the Assistant Chief of Staff G-4. The Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Office (NREAO) exercises oversight of the overall natural and cultural resource management program. The focal point for Cultural Resource Management at Parris Island is the Depot Museum.

**RECENT PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

MCRDPI has a very successful and dynamic cultural resource program. Significant recent accomplishments include

- ★ Ongoing coordination meetings with seventeen Native American tribes to finalize agreements for a working Programmatic Agreement and MOA concerning CRM issues on the Depot.
- ★ The Depot’s Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (ICRMP) was finalized.
- ★ Cultural resources inventory was completed for approximately 98% of the Depot’s habitable property.
- ★ MCRDPI hosted a tour of the Depot’s historic district and National Historic Landmark for the 2004 Department of Defense Conservation Conference.



*2004 DoD Conservation Conference tour hosted by MCRDPI staff.*

**MAJOR PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Charlesfort-Santa Elena Programs**

By far the most significant cultural resource on MCRDPI is the Charlesfort-Santa Elena National Historic Landmark. Over 60 acres in size, the site, near the present Legends Golf Course, was once the

location of the capital of Spanish Florida.

In 1562, a company of French explorers under the leadership of Jean Ribaut chose Parris Island to establish a foothold in the New World for Protestant France. Building Charlesfort, Ribaut left some 23 volunteers to garrison the fort while he returned to France to secure supplies and colonists. War and political contests at home delayed his return, and the garrison eventually lost hope, and decided to return to France on their own. Building a ship on the island, they set sail in 1563, and after an arduous journey, many survivors were rescued in the English Channel.

In response to the French attempt, Spain sent a colony to Parris Island in 1566. Establishing the town of Santa Elena, the Spanish occupied the island for some twenty years. The resulting archaeological site, preserved from destruction due to the acquisition of the island by the Marine Corps, is the best preserved example of a 16th-century Spanish colonial town site in the United States.



**MAJOR PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Charlesfort-Santa Elena, cont**

In recognition of the exceptional value of this cultural treasure, the Secretary of the Interior designated the site as the Charlesfort-Santa Elena National Historic Landmark. Conference of national historic landmark status is bestowed only upon sites which exhibit outstanding value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Fewer than 2,500 historic places nationwide have been deemed worthy to carry this distinction.

Because this important cultural asset is under stewardship of the Department of Defense and is located on Marine Corps property, in the spirit of Executive Order 13287 and the Preserve America initiative, a cooperative effort was launched among the Depot's cultural and natural resources offices, a number of Depot facilities offices, and interested stakeholders to help develop the site into a showcase for meaningful public interpretation.



*September 2004 formal dedication of the Charlesfort-Santa Elena National Historic Landmark monument. From left, BGen Richard T. Tryon, CG, MCRDPI; Mr. Mark Barnes, National Park Service; Dr. Stanley South, SCIAA; Dr. Chester DePratter, SCIAA.*

**Interpretive Initiatives**

**Trail System**

NREAO and CRM staff created a trail system throughout the newly dedicated National Landmark. An above ground gravel trail was designed to have no adverse effect on resources. Signage along the trail invites visitors to learn about the Depot's diverse cultural history as they explore the area.

The trail system is an outstanding example of installation teamwork, as well as cooperation with interested stakeholders. Depot staff designed the trails and chose the placement for interpretive markers.



*New signage guides visitors on a trail system through the Charlesfort-Santa Elena National Historic Landmark.*



**MAJOR PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Charlesfort-Santa Elena, cont**

Interpretive Initiatives, cont

Trail Signs

Twenty six new interpretive trail signs were created to be placed along the trail.

Basic interpretive topics and outline text were worked out by MCRDPI CRM staff in cooperation with fellow stakeholders from the South Carolina Institute of Anthropology and Archaeology.



Professional quality graphic layout and final editing was done entirely in-house by the MCRDPI CRM office staff, saving the tens of thousands of dollars had the project been contracted out to an exhibit production firm. Special care was taken in choosing ADA recommended type and fonts for the signage.



Digital files for the signs were then embedded in weather-resistant fiberglass resin. Metal frames conforming to NPS outdoor sign standards were chosen to support the signs, and special tamper-resistant screws mount them to

Depot created posts on pads. The pad mounting system was designed to be able to support the posts, yet require no subsoil disturbance, therefore allowing signage to be placed anywhere on the archaeological site without danger to archaeological deposits. Facilities Maintenance assisted the project by installing the signs using the non-invasive pad-support system.

Finally, NREAO and FMEO instituted a long term care cleaning contract for the 60+ acre site, to ensure the trail and environs are well groomed for all who visit.

**MAJOR PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

**Charlesfort-Santa Elena, cont**

Interpretive Initiatives, cont

Trail Brochures

To further enhance heritage tourism and educational opportunities at the site, a bilingual array of trail brochures was created in-house by the cultural resource staff.



*Interpretive brochures, available in English or Spanish*

Website

Along with on-site interpretive materials, another stakeholder to the site, the Parris Island Museum and Historical Society, sponsored the creation of a website by the Depot Archaeologist which is entirely devoted to the National Landmark site ([www.SantaElena.us](http://www.SantaElena.us)). This outreach mechanism offers not only useful information on the site's history, but also allows visitors worldwide a virtual glimpse of the landmark site through online versions of the interpretive trail signs, as well as related materials, photos, and historical documents.

Enhanced Security

To better protect this important national treasure, MCRDPI has recently appointed a Natural Resources Conservation Officer. This individual will help ensure the site is secure, and will have law enforcement authority.

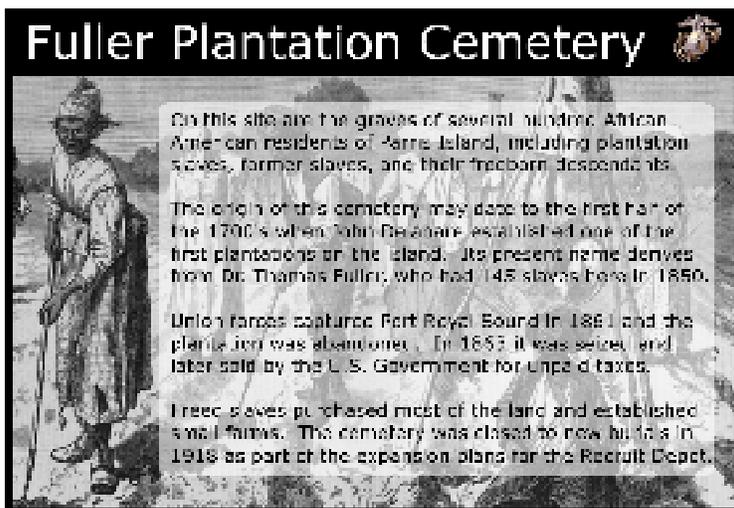


## MAJOR PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Parris Island African-American Cemeteries Study

Four known historic cemeteries are on Parris Island. They originated as early as the 1720s and remained in continuous use until the 1930s. The extent, however, of these cemeteries was unknown until the Depot performed a comprehensive study. This project defined the boundaries and provided an estimate of burial density at each site.

Not only did the Depot accomplish this goal and identify hundreds of previously unknown burials, but the resulting data generated from the research greatly expanded our base of knowledge about African-American individuals and families associated with the cemeteries.



*Example of interpretive signs created for cemeteries.*

The first burials in the cemeteries were slaves. During and after the Civil War, freedmen continued to use the burial grounds, as did their freeborn descendants. Interestingly, evidence was found that not only were locations continually used, but that African burial customs also passed through the generations.

The in-depth research accompanying the archaeological fieldwork resurrected many obscured chapters of the lives of some 1400 to 1600 individuals buried on the island, many of whom have descendants in the community today. Markers were created for each cemetery to ensure these people will not be forgotten.

This project serves as an excellent demonstration of outstanding program management, technical merit, and commitment to preservation.

## MAJOR PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Overall Program Advances

MCRDPI has developed a comprehensive Cultural Resource Management Program in support of the Depot's primary mission, recruit training.

#### Cultural Resource Surveys

The Depot recently completed a 578 acre cultural resources survey of the last remaining significant inhabitable areas of Parris Island. The results included the addition of a number of archaeological sites to our inventory, as well as the redefinition of several known archaeological site boundaries. This information will greatly speed up future development projects in support of the Depot's primary mission.

#### GIS CRM Layers

In conjunction with the final large surveys, the Depot compiled all past survey information into a comprehensive GIS management tool. This advancement has accelerated the review process for requests for resources information from planners from days to minutes. The savings to the Depot in time and money has been enormous.

#### SC SHPO and THPO cooperation

The Depot has been working diligently with the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office and interested Tribal Historic Preservation Offices to streamline the consultation process. A series of meetings with the Tribes has generated working documents which will greatly enhance our ability to consult with all interested parties in a timely and manageable fashion.

#### On-call Archaeological Services

An on-call cultural services contract has been signed which has saved the Depot remarkable amounts of time and money. A process which once took months can now be accomplished in hours, and archaeological crews can be fielded in as little as 24 hours in the case of inadvertent discoveries.

#### Summary

The varied program enhancements recently implemented at MCRDPI are a result of commitment to a highly effective program management. They exhibit technical merit, outstanding orientation to mission, transferability, and are evidence of superlative stakeholder interaction.