

VII. ELIGIBILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

A. NATIONAL REGISTER EVALUATION

Archaeological sites may be found eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under any of the four criteria that apply to all historical sites:

- (a) **they are associated with events** that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- (b) **they are associated with the lives of persons** significant in our past; or
- (c) **they embody distinctive characteristics** of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (d) **they have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information** important in prehistory or history.

Criterion D is the one most often applied to archaeological sites, but sites such as battlefields, the homes of famous people, and underground structures may also meet the other criteria. In evaluating these archaeological sites, therefore, all four criteria have been applied.

To assess whether a site is eligible for listing in the NRHP, it is first necessary to identify the type of site and its associated time period. It is also essential to assess the integrity of the site, because for the most part only sites with intact structural and landscape features or intact, unmixed deposits can provide important information about the past. Then the information potential of the site is considered in the light of the research questions developed and pursued within archaeology, some of which are outlined in state planning documents (Bedell 2002; De Cunzo and Catts 1990). The logic of evaluation for a farm or rural dwelling site therefore proceeds as follows.

- What is the historical association of the site and its primary components?

It is essential to identify the approximate date of a farm or rural dwelling before it can be evaluated, and a notion of the character of the household who lived at the site is also very useful. These questions are answered by a combination of archaeological and documentary data. The artifacts give us the approximate date of the occupation, and a title search can tell us who owned the property at that time and tell us his or her social class. If the owner lived elsewhere, then the occupants were presumably tenants. Documentary research can also help with questions of ethnicity, and whether the site might have been occupied by enslaved workers. The quantity and quality of archival information that is available for a site is also an important consideration for evaluating its significance (Wilson 1990).

- How can the site be characterized with regard to archaeological integrity?

Integrity can be measured in many ways. Bedell (2002) suggested three types of archaeological integrity for plowed historic sites: presence of sealed subsurface features

containing datable artifact deposits; presence of structural features that can define the basic layout of the farmstead; and the presence of architectural remains. For some categories of sites, such as an eighteenth-century slave quarter, uncontaminated plowzone deposits might be sufficient evidence of integrity for NHRP eligibility.

- What research questions can the site answer?

Once the nature of the site has been determined and its integrity assessed, we can proceed to analyze the potential of the site to answer important research questions. These questions might include:

Household economic activity: what was produced on the site, and how did the occupants fit into the broader economy of colonial America?

Consumer behavior: what did the occupants buy, and what were they trying to express through their purchases?

Modernization: did the occupants live in an up-to-date, vernacular Georgian house, or in a more traditional hall-parlor house? Was the landscape of their farm the rough pattern of the frontier or the ordered layout of a Victorian farm?

Ethnicity: If the occupants of the site were African-American, how is their ethnicity reflected in the material culture associated with each site?

- How does the site compare with others in the region?

The final step in the evaluation of the site is to compare it to other known sites in the region. Does it have unique characteristics that make it particularly valuable? Does it have the potential to fill in major gaps in the existing record?

B. EVALUATIONS OF THE TESTED SITES

1. Bowman #3 Site, 7NC-F-85

The Bowman #3 Site is a small scatter of brick and domestic artifacts dating to the 1750 to 1770 period. It seems to represent a residence. The property belonged at that time to absentee landlords, so the site was presumably occupied by tenants. The occupation period is tightly defined by the artifacts. However, the importance of the site is limited by the lack of information about the residents and its low integrity. The lack of historical data means that the site cannot be eligible under Criteria A and B. The low integrity presents problems with regard to the other criteria. No structures or intact features are present, so the site is not eligible under Criterion C. The site is located on a slope that has been plowed for decades, if not centuries. Soil profiles suggest significant erosion, as one would expect in this environment. The mismatch between the amount of gravel in the plowzone vs. the subsoil of some units is particularly important in this regard. The presence of two plowzones in the lower part of the site, both containing artifacts, implies that some artifacts have moved downslope as a result of erosion. Testing at the lower part of Site 7NC-F-85, called by the investigators Bowman #4, showed colluvial deposits along Scott Run with depths of as much as 92 centimeters (3.0 feet) (A&HC 2011:177). Such deep deposits of colluvium imply significant erosion on the adjacent slopes.

Erosion of even 0.5 foot would be enough to significantly impact the shallow features most commonly found on tenant farm sites, and erosion at the Bowman #3 Site could easily have been

more than a foot. Erosion and plowing have also probably altered the distribution of artifacts across the site, effectively rendering the site a single, undifferentiated context. These impacts on the integrity of the site greatly limit its information potential. The complete absence of any documentary data on the occupants also limits the questions that might be asked about the site.

The plowzone of the site does contain eighteenth-century artifacts, but this material was already sampled during the Phase I and II testing. The area of the site yielding more than one or two artifacts per unit measures about 100x120 feet. Within this area 28 3x3-foot units have been dug, comprising a sample of just over 2 percent. Additional plowzone excavation on the site would likely yield more of the same material.

Because of the very low likelihood of finding any sub-plowzone features, the erosional disturbance to the plowzone, and the absence of documentary data, Site 7NC-F-85 lacks the integrity and information potential to be eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion D.

2. *Bowman Tenant Site, 7NC-F-145*

The Bowman Tenant Site is a small domestic occupation dating to the 1800 to 1880 period. A few hints were found of an earlier occupation—a sherd of Astbury ceramic reported during the Phase I, and a sherd of English brown stoneware found during the Phase II—but this earlier occupation, if present, must have been ephemeral. This archaeological site corresponds to the tenant house shown on the 1837 Orphans' Court plan of the Bowman property (see Figure 7).

The Bowman Tenant Site is not considered eligible for listing in the NRHP. Nothing is known about the occupants of the site beyond the fact that they were not the owners of the property, and little remains of the structures that stood on the site, which rules out eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. The site does not meet Criterion D because it lacks information potential. The only feature found on the site was a small, shallow pit containing mixed fill and a single artifact, a sherd of whiteware. The site therefore consists essentially of a collection of artifacts in plowed soil. These artifacts are numerous in the core of the site, up to 300 in a 3x3-foot test unit; however, they are for the most part very small, especially the potsherds. Because the sherds are so small, they cannot be identified as to vessel type, and even the ware type is sometimes difficult to determine. No other artifact types are present in substantial numbers, except for window glass. Further excavation of the site would be unlikely to produce any more information about the site and its occupants.

3. *Mrs. Bowman Site, 7NC-F-144*

The Mrs. Bowman Site was considered not eligible for listing in the NRHP after Phase Ib testing. It is a relatively recent site of a common type, and the demolition of the house seems to have greatly disturbed the immediate surroundings. Many shovel tests on the site encountered disturbed fill. The site seems to have been occupied throughout its history by tenants of whom nothing is known. This lack of knowledge, and the thorough demolition of the site's structures, rule out eligibility under Criteria A, B, and C. Given the low integrity of the site and the lack of information about the occupants, it lacks information potential and is therefore not eligible for under Criterion D.