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The "Dead House" at the Former Charleston Navy Base and Shipyard

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THE “DEAD HOUSE” AT THE FORMER CHARLESTON NAVY BASE AND SHIPYARD. SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS.

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Historic Preservation

by
Christopher Alan Ohm
May 2007

Accepted by:
Jonathan Poston, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

Over the years a small brick building on the former Charleston Navy Base and Shipyard has been studied, yet still leaves many with unanswered questions. Much speculation has been made about its builder, and date of construction, but with little success. Many researchers cannot agree on the original use of this building, usually referred to as the “Dead House.” Historical research pointed to many answers, but often led to almost insurmountable questions.

This author’s recent research has found several missing sites eliminating much confusion. Further research has led to explanations for many of the enigmatic aspects of this building. Architectural, material and structural analysis of receiving tombs and powder magazines with known histories created a control group. Systematic study of the “Dead House” culminating in archaeological exploration has literally uncovered new information not available before.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife and special friends, some of whom are no longer with us. This thesis wouldn’t exist without their boundless, unfailing love, and support.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Jonathan Poston. I am also grateful to the other committee members, and faculty for their support and guidance. I would also like to thank Jim Augustin, Martha Zierden and Richard Marks for allowing me to explore every possible path. The many hours of tireless help from other researchers and archivists are greatly appreciated. Finally, I would like to thank Albert E. Sanders. His patience, determination and wit provided a reality check. Thank you for offering a safe haven on Tuesday nights.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERVIEW OF EARLY CHARLES TOWN AND ITS PROTECTION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARLY SOUTH CAROLINA POWDER MAGAZINES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE “DEAD HOUSE” AS A POSSIBLE POWDER MAGAZINE</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERVIEW OF DEATH AND BURIAL CUSTOMS</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAGNOLIA CEMETERY AND ITS RECEIVING TOMB</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITE ANALYSIS AND TYPOLOGY OF THE “DEAD HOUSE”</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POTENTIAL BUILDERS OF THE “DEAD HOUSE”</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Fort Johnson powder magazine, Zierden 1997. P.159.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fort Dorchester powder magazine by the Author</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dorchester magazine during excavation, Carrillo 1976. P.38.</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Magnolia Cemetery plan c.1850.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Receiving Tomb at Magnolia Cemetery by the Author.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bethany Cemetery receiving tomb by the Author.</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. “Dead House” seal back surface by Jim Augustin.</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lords Proprietors seal front and back from Jim Augustin.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Plan of the Navy Yard c.1909 from RDA archives.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Olmsted plan with “Dead House” from RDA archives.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Olmsted garden plan from RDA archives.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Retreat Plantation plat from Charleston County Public Library SCR.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Retreat Plantation plat from Charleston County Public Library SCR.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Glass negative print of “Dead House” from Library of Congress.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Modern view of “Dead House” looking toward bluff by the Author.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Modern view of “Dead House” from front by the Author.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Modern view of “Dead House” interior by the Author.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Archaeology team East side of “Dead House” by the Author.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

21. East side unit showing the roofing slate by the Author .......................... 55

22. “Dead House” back test pit at old marsh edge by Jim Augustin.......... 56

23. Square hand wrought copper roofing nails recovered during excavation by
    Andrew Agha.................................................. 56
INTRODUCTION

Over the years a small brick building on the former Charleston Navy Base and Shipyard has been studied, yet still leaves many with unanswered questions. Much speculation has been made about its use and date of its construction but with little success. Many researchers cannot agree on the original use of this building, usually referred to as the “Dead House.” The popular name implies that it was a mortuary structure. It resembles both local receiving tombs and colonial powder magazines. Historical research into the military history of Charleston, as well as title and deed searches has shown that this building will need to be studied through several avenues to present solutions to many lingering questions.

Since this building is often presented as either a receiving tomb or powder magazine it is likely a methodical study of these two types of structures would present useful historical and physical information. Charleston has several buildings of each type. This writer has suggested a systematic study of these local structures to their owners or agencies. Architectural, material, and chemical analysis of two receiving tombs and two powder magazines with known histories would create a control group.

Measurements of all five buildings or ruins would produce architectural plans to compare. The materials and structural systems of all five buildings or ruins should support historical study of each of the known structures and may help to date the “Dead House.” Systematic study of the “Dead House” would date building materials and determine changes to the structure over time.
Research done recently by this writer indicates a plausible explanation for many of the confusing architectural aspects of the “Dead House.” This proposed methodology should indicate a likely solution.
OVERVIEW OF EARLY CHARLES TOWN AND ITS PROTECTION

In the 16th century, European competition for wealth and riches in the Americas focused on the battle for naval supremacy. By the 17th century the French, Spanish, and English all claimed much of the Atlantic seaboard, alternately or often simultaneously. King Charles II granted eight English noblemen large tracts of land in the Carolina colony in 1663, setting up a system of trade favorable to his Monarchy. Three shiploads of settlers from Gravesend, near London sailed into Charleston Harbor in April 1670 and settling first a short distance up the Ashley River. Within a decade, the settlement was moved to the confluence of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers where there was a good harbor suitable for trading. Though a treaty between the English and Spanish gave the lands to the permanent settlers, there was persistent warfare. Early on, the city also made provisions for raising a store of gunpowder for defense of the province. In 1702, the Council resolved that a “country magazen” be built.¹ Records indicate that it was some time before the magazine was built. Settlers still feared the French spreading along the Mississippi River, and Native Americans caused anxiety. The Spanish still continued to support attacks on South Carolina. The English, French, and Spanish all tried to control Native American populations and their trade in deerskins. For protection, Charles Town was fortified with a surrounding wall by 1704. The overall appearance of the fortifications follows the

¹ August 22, 1702 and also earlier in the Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, January 19, 1702.
principles of Vauban’s *New Method of Fortification* published in 1693.\(^2\) As the population of African slaves grew in the lowcountry, new tensions developed. By 1708, a majority-black population in South Carolina is recorded for the first time.\(^3\) In 1712, powder was still being kept in different locations around the town including several forts and bastions. The magazine was finally built by 1713. Apparently the building did not keep the powder dry and slate roofing took several years to complete. During this time powder was again stored in one of the bastions.

The Yemassees along the Georgia coast were Spanish subjects until, terrified by attacks of French and English freebooters, they scattered into the Georgia interior and the Southern corner of South Carolina. They settled with permission of the Carolina government in the present Beaufort, Jasper, and Hampton counties. Their massacre of the settlers at the Spanish mission on St. Catherine’s Island led to the Yemassee Wars. This was the most dangerous Indian attack ever made upon the province. Charles Town’s walls were retained until after this conflict. The powder magazine’s new slate roof was completed and the building was finally suitable for storage of gunpowder.

Colonial Dorchester, a small settlement on the Ashley River, was founded fifteen miles north of Charles Town in 1697. By the mid-1700s, the upper Ashley was no longer the frontier it had been a generation before, when Indian traders conducted business from their plantations with neighboring tribes. Still the

recurring wars for control of the North American continent periodically evoked
the specter of attack by Indians and their French or Spanish allies. Rumors of an
impending French naval invasion in the winter of 1756-1757, led Governor
William Henry Lyttelton to quickly assess the colony's security. Only one public
powder magazine existed in South Carolina at the time, and it was in Charles
Town. If the port city were attacked, the colony’s supply of munitions would
have been lost. Lyttelton was convinced that a magazine in the interior was
needed. A tabby fort enclosing a powder magazine was erected there during the
French and Indian war in 1757. The fort overlooks the river, and at the beginning
of the Revolutionary War, Dorchester was a fortified post for the Americans. The
American Revolution brought new threats and renewed activity to Dorchester in
the summer and fall of 1775. Legislative records were moved from Charles Town
to Dorchester for safekeeping, as South Carolina prepared for war with Great
Britain. The little town was transformed into a military depot and was soon
swarming with militiamen. Near the war’s end, the village was a British post,
occupied until the approach of an American force prompted the British to
evacuate. The town was mostly abandoned after the Revolution.5

For the coastal city of Charles Town, pirates were always a serious threat.
In 1718, the infamous Edward Teach, also known as Blackbeard, seized several
ships with his fleet off of Charles Town. As the menace of Indians, Spaniards,
and pirates declined, merchants and planters prospered. The town grew and the

4 Or was known to exist.
walls of the city were taken down. Trade and exports flourished, and Charles Town became a thriving seaport and one of the most important cities in America.

In 1737, a new powder magazine was built near the Work House, on part of the Old Burying Ground. This building was so poorly built that it had to be torn down and rebuilt. The old magazine had to be repaired and reused. And again, for a time, powder was also stored in one of the bastions. The replacement built near the Work House, gave the name to Magazine Street. This magazine was erected by 1748. Charles Town was in a period of financial stability, with a profitable port in the expanding colony. The commercial expansion of Charles Town was matched with remarkable physical growth. By this time, a map of Charles Town indicates that the city had expanded well beyond the original walls and development had encompassed the Magazine. It was not safe to store the gunpowder so close to the St. Philip’s churchyard within the city. Questions of ownership of the land where the building stood and its state of disrepair, led to the disuse of the building by 1748.

The great fire of 1740, which destroyed an estimated 300 houses in the most valuable part of the city and a devastating hurricane in 1752, were temporary setbacks to Charles Town’s prosperity. Political unrest grew in the 1760s, with opposition to the Stamp Act and Sugar Act. By an act of the assembly on April 7, 1770, HL, Rawlins Lowndes, John Rutledge, Benjamin Dart, David Oliphant,

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6 Commons House Journal, December 5, 1739.
7 Council Journal, December 3, 1744.
8 Another hurricane followed two weeks later. Other large fires in the city occurred in: 1698, 1740, 1778, 1796, 1838, and 1861. By 1775 Charles Town was the fourth largest city in British America.
John Poaug, and Miles Brewton were named as commissioners of the powder magazines of Charleston. The commissioners purchased building sites and oversaw the construction of two magazines located within four miles of Hobcaw Point and Charleston Neck.\(^9\) Two new powder magazines were built in 1772 on Charles Town Neck and Hobcaw Point.\(^10\) In one of the first actions of the Revolution, the Secret Committee on the night of April 21, 1775, broke into the magazines at Hobcaw, at Robert Cochran’s on Charleston Neck, and into the armory seizing: powder, arms, and ammunition.\(^11\) With the coming of the Revolution Lord William Campbell, the last Royal Governor of South Carolina fled Charleston. The old powder magazine behind the church was repaired and put back into service, as were others.

On April 9, 1780, the British fleet crossed the Charleston Harbor bar and anchored off the town. To demonstrate the wisdom of surrender, British Admiral Mariot Arbuthnot elevated the ship’s guns and fired 200 cannons into the night sky. The Continental forces withdrew, and Charleston surrendered on May 12, 1780. The loss of Charleston was considered the American’s greatest defeat, but surrender did not bring about the anticipated political reconciliation.

During the occupation by the British, many Carolinians suffered sequestration of their property, quartering of troops in their homes, imprisonment

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\(^10\) Both powder magazines were near the present day site of the “Dead House.”  
in the “dungeon” at the exchange, internment on ships in the harbor, or were exiled.\textsuperscript{12}

After the British evacuation on December 15, 1782, hundreds of ex-loyalists sought formally or informally to be excused.\textsuperscript{13} After the Revolution, Charles Town continued to be turbulent politically, with much violence directed against suspected Tories. Further, there was continued animosity between the “aristocrats” and the “mechanicks” of the town. Also at the close of the Revolution, the Governor and council ordered most of the powder be kept at the Shipyard. To discharge the city from danger only the smallest necessary part was to be kept in the Town Magazine. Merchants had complained that it was inconvenient and expensive to make many trips to a distant magazine. And again citizens were endangered by large quantities of powder secreted within the city.\textsuperscript{14} The Public magazine at the Shipyard was also considered too small by 1788, so the Commissioners of the Marine Hospital authorized use of the powder magazine near the “Common Gaol.” It was suggested that a new magazine be built about one mile out of the city on the Charleston Neck.

The fire in 1778 had devastated the waterfront area. The city had been bombarded and looted by the British, who carried away many slaves. Charleston experienced a period of depression after the American Revolution. However, the economy improved due to certain innovations in the 1790s: the invention of the cotton gin which made cotton a viable cash crop, the development of tidal rice


cultivation, and the construction of new and improved rice mills. Sea trade now
unfettered from British mercantile laws, found new markets and brought
Charleston back to an approximation of its pre-Revolutionary prosperity for a
time. Charleston received a large number of refugees from the slave revolution
on Santo Domingo. This caused uneasiness in an area in which blacks
outnumbered whites.

The powder receiver at Hobcaw Point advocated the sale of the magazine
and land there in 1786. In 1788, it was reported as “being nearly demolished and
not proper for Storing Powder.” As early as February 1786, the
“discontinuance” of the powder magazine on Charleston Neck, near Shipyard
Creek was also advocated. The Powder Inspector proposed that the magazines
and lands at “Hopkaw” and Dorchester be sold, and a new powder magazine be
built about a mile from the city. He also recommended that the magazine at
Shipyard Creek be examined and repaired; which was done. Protests continued
regularly for years, and often a replacement for the complex was recommended.
November 1, 1820, Charles Gruber, Powder Receiver, reported to Benjamin
Markley, Quarter Master General, South Carolina Militia, that the situation of
these magazines “for some time Past has been bad indeed for Containing
powder—and unless they are shortly repaired I am very afraid that serious
Consequences will result, Every time the wind blows hard, the Slates give way
and the powder rendered more and more liable to damage by water whenever it

14 Military Affairs, Reports, Manuscript Report of Committee on “State of the Powder Magazine
and Arsenal,” Historical Commission of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.
15 Journal of the House of Representatives, October 29, 1788.
rains, besides this other repairs are indispensably necessary.” Finally, new construction was approved. As the new magazines were nearing completion in 1825, it was remarked that as soon as the old buildings were left unoccupied they would certainly fall into ruins. The new magazines designed by Robert Mills at Laurel Island were completed in 1827, leaving the magazines on Charleston Neck unoccupied that year.

By the 1820s, the city was again in serious decline, there were economic problems in Charleston. Then, in 1822, a former slave from the West Indies, Denmark Vesey, was charged with conspiring to incite a slave rebellion in Charleston. Vesey and thirty-four others were hanged; some suspected in the conspiracy were deported. Laws for stricter control of blacks were adopted and the old Citadel was built as an arsenal to safeguard Charleston against future plots. Like the first days of old Charles Town many people perceived threats and called for protection. The people of Charleston had conquered many old fears, but there was still great unrest. Soon after Laurel Island was finished, it was proposed that the gunpowder be stored at the new fortified citadel in the city.

As early as 1704, in Charles Town gunpowder was stored in the cores of the bastions of the city wall. This was the general practice, according to a historian in London. “Here [in England] a number of powder-house (probably three) were sited in the cores of the bastions. They were replaced by the existing much larger rectangular magazines of the classic Vauban model in 1716-7. The form of the 1716-7 replacements was subsequently rehearsed in the design of

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16 *Military Affairs, Reports, Charles Gruber’s Manuscript Report to Quarter Master General*, Historical Commission of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.
most Ordinance powder-houses until the early 19th century.\textsuperscript{17} As early as 1719, the English Parliament had passed an “Act for Preventing the Mischief”s which happen by keeping too great Quantities of Gunpowder in or near the Cities of London and Westminster.”\textsuperscript{18} The development of the typical Vauban powder magazine follows.

Previously, powder-magazines were made in a quite different manner from those at present; they placed the powder in towers that had been built in town-walls, by which they became liable to many accidents; for when the powder happened to be set on fire, either by chance or by some concerted scheme of the enemy with the inhabitants, it opened the town, and made a breach for the enemy to enter…finding by experience, that the building magazines in the rampart, was of dangerous consequence; they are now placed in different parts of town, and made of various figures…it was agreed to make them of one single arch…the form of this arch was the Gothic kind, and in order to get more room for lodging the powder, a floor was made at the spring of it…Mr. Vauban having observed in several sieges, that these kind of arches were too weak, and that the floor loaded the piers very much to no purpose; since prudence requires not to lodge so much powder in one place; and being better to divide it into several parts, he absolutely rejected all the different methods till then followed, and proposed an new one, much more perfect.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Letter from Dr. Geoffrey Parnell Keeper of Tower History to Richard Marks of Richard Marks Restorations.
\textsuperscript{19} Muller, John Professor of Artillery and Fortification, \textit{A Treatise Containing The Practical Part of Fortification in Four Parts}. London: Printed for A. Millar in the Strand, 1782. Section XIX ps.215-216 and Plate XVII.
EARLY SOUTH CAROLINA POWDER MAGAZINES

The Old Powder Magazine at 79 Cumberland Street is the only public building remaining in North or South Carolina from the period of the Lords Proprietors, the group of English noblemen who originally owned and ruled the Carolinas. In the late 1600s, the construction of walls around the city and building of harbor forts added to the defensive character of the city. The old magazine was further security for the city and colony in the early period. After 1820, the Powder Magazine returned to the descendants of the owners of the property before 1703, the Izard and Manigault families. The Old Powder Magazine is quaint and somewhat out of place, but it is surely a reminder of the rich history of Charleston. Much the same way another small brick structure sits surrounded by marine sciences equipment and classrooms at the College of Charleston’s Grice Marine Laboratory.

The George D. Grice Marine Laboratory is located at Fort Johnson, on James Island, across the harbor from downtown Charleston. Among the remains of fortifications dating from the Revolutionary War is a brick powder magazine (figure 2) and, from a later period, the foundations of a Martello tower. The brick building was uncovered in the 1930s when the earthwork at Fort Johnson was partially demolished. A low marshy area had been filled in with the earth from the mound to provide space for quarantine buildings.

Fort Johnson was the first defensive work constructed to protect the harbor of Charleston against Naval attack. The British built the initial structure from
1704 to 1708. As recently as 1983, there was still some uncertainty over the period of origin and function of the Fort Johnson powder magazine. It became known as a “powder magazine” during the Civil War, and may have been built after 1800. Further exploration at the Grice Center may find new evidence to better date the powder magazine. Without a better understanding of this building it cannot be used as originally planned for this study. The magazine at Fort Johnson is typical in design and the structure may be compared to other local buildings. However, the date of its construction is uncertain so this building cannot be used to determine the age of the “Dead House.” In light of this, it is also reasonable to judge the powder magazine on Cumberland Street in the city as older than the building at Fort Johnson.

Henry Augustus Middleton Smith, jurist and historian purchased 600 acres of land that included the town site of Colonial Dorchester near Summerville in 1904. Public attention focused on Dorchester once again in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Citadel history instructor, Lawrence Lee began to identify building foundations on the town site. Extensive excavations within the tabby walls of the fort were conducted in the 1970s, this included exploration of the 1757 powder magazine (figures 3-5).

The Old Powder Magazine on Cumberland Street, the Fort Johnson Powder House, and the Tabby Fort at Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site are

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now protected and in some cases restored. Another similar local site is the “Dead House” near the Cooper River.

For nearly a century, a small building that could be one of the oldest structures in the Charleston area has been tucked away among some trees on the former Charleston naval base (figure 1). Two historical surveys date the building, known in Navy circles as the “Dead House,” as early as the late 1600s during the first settlement of Charles Town. The structure appears to be an old powder magazine, but no one is sure what it was used for or what time period gave birth to its construction. A round metal casting in the design of the seal of the colony’s Lords Proprietors is prominently displayed above its entrance.

Looking at old maps there was a powder magazine on Shipyard Creek, though this building was at the south end of the former Naval Station north of the coal tipple, and not where the “Dead House” is located. There is a powder magazine mentioned often in Davis, referred to as either the magazine at State Island or on the Charleston Neck. This site has often been thought to be either Laurel Island or the “Dead House,” it is neither. Near this powder house was a barracks garrisoned by the militia. State Island is likely the Magazine Island found on plats in the City of Charleston Archives at the Cigar Factory.\(^2\) These plats look much like the plat of the magazine on Charleston Neck in Davis. Written accounts speak of explosives and “black keg powder” being stored near

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\(^{22}\) Variously called State Island etcetera by Davis and others, this author will refer to the site as Magazine Island as it is labeled on the City Archives plats. This will also help to clear up confusion when researchers find Laurel Island called State Island or the State Arsenal.
Magazine Island or Laurel Island. An 1889-1900 Commercial and Business map of Charleston shows buildings near the later Maybank and Etiwan phosphate fertilizer mills south of Magazine Island. One structure is labeled “Magazine” and the property is labeled “Hazard Co.”

Hazard is a separate commercial site from a later period. Magazine Island and the Hazard site are in an industrial area down the Cooper River from the “Dead House.” This area is on the neck above Magnolia Cemetery (Belvidere and Magnolia Umbra Plantations) on the Cooper River above Belvidere Creek. Magazine Street (now called Milford Street) was south of Elliott or Elgin Street and likely north of modern Greenleaf Street (Green Street). Magazine Island is near present industrial sites along the river, and foundations may still stand in a restricted commercial area. Also located by this author near Romney Street are the ruins of the 1827 Robert Mills powder magazines at Laurel Island.

The powder magazines on Magazine Island and Hobcaw Point were built in 1772. Hobcaw on Molasses Creek has also been located through historic research, and the actual site can be placed in the modern landscape. All of the sites described in historic accounts have been found in their modern context and visited by the author. The “Dead House” still remains unexplained through this avenue of study.

23 Willis, Eola. Extract from a Letter of Miss Eola Willis. Charleston: CVF files Charleston County Public Library South Carolina Room. Davis, Nora M., 1942 ps.210. The E. I. duPont de Nemours & Company, of Wilmington, Delaware, subsequently rented these nine magazines [at Laurel Island] from the city for the storing of “Black keg powder”...As Charleston was the distributing point for North Carolina and South Carolina, these magazines were used for storing powder for duPont & Company, Hazard Powder Company, Laflin & Rand Company, and the King Powder Company.
Not shown on most early plats of the Retreat Plantation, the “Dead House” remains standing alone. Other buildings that are shown on these plats and the later Olmsted plans for Chicora Park, have been lost.\textsuperscript{24} The Olmsted plans for Chicora Park are also at the City of Charleston Archives and they show the Turnbull house at the Retreat Plantation and foundations of adjacent buildings later demolished.

\textsuperscript{24} Archived at the RDA (Charleston Naval Complex Redevelopment Authority).
THE “DEAD HOUSE” AS A POSSIBLE POWDER MAGAZINE

The small (10.5’ by 12.5’) building features a barrel-vaulted interior and paved brick floor. The vault may have been protected by a gable roof of slate like similar local structures. Architect Joe Opperman observed in 1993 that the square parapets were added over what were gable ends. A brass or bronze commemorative seal with the hallmarks of the Lords Proprietors adorns the front gable end over the single wooden door. Both the seal and the parapets appear to be later additions. It is likely that the parapet was changed and this seal was added during a time when the building was repaired or adapted for reuse. There are no other entrances or openings other than a louvered ventilator in the back. A more typical powder magazine is located at Fort Johnson. However, the construction of the “Dead House” is in keeping with that of a powder magazine.

The building is a vault, buttressed on each side and constructed of brick laid in the Flemish bond pattern, as you step down into the interior, to the left you notice seven iron hooks, each two feet long. Six of the hooks are evenly spaced; one is offset. Also inside and to the right is a single hook at the same height and location as the offset hook on the left. On the rear wall is a vent, which is about one foot high and two feet wide. The interior of the vault is plastered and the floor is brick (figure 19).

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The seal is about 17 inches across with eight coats of arms arrayed around a central cross (figure 10). The seal marked Colonial offices and government buildings of the British territory from the 1660s to the 1720s. A historian stated that the piece was probably a reproduction because the seal is not known to have been used in the Carolinas. It still remains a possibility that the seal on the “Dead House” is modern and purchased as decoration, or possibly made at the Navy base or shops at the nearby shipyard. Sir Egerton Leigh, who owned the property from 1767 to 1771, may have built the “Dead House.” However, Leigh owned the property nearly fifty years after the Proprietary period was over so it seems unlikely that he placed the seal on the building.

The seal when further examined looks like it may be a newer casting; on the back is a partly threaded rod with a slight bend at the end for an attachment. This may be the best indication of the age of the seal yet (figure 9). The seal was held in place on the building by this thin rod at its center in the back. The attachment rod is threaded where it enters the seal and appears to be welded onto a short piece of threaded stock. This may have been a repair. The seal itself was not cemented but the rod may have been. It is possible that the rod was also threaded at the bent end for a nut or fastener that may have broken off or rusted away. In researching Charleston’s powder magazines, in most cases when a building was no longer used it was left in very bad repair. It is quite likely that if

26 The reverse of the Lords Proprietor’s Seal is located above the door. As you look at the Seal, you see eight Coats of Arms beginning clockwise from the top: Albemarle, Craven, John Berkeley, Ashley, Carteret, William Berkeley, Colleton, and Clarendon.
27 Jonathan Poston, former director of museums and preservation initiatives for the Historic Charleston Foundation.
this is an old gunpowder magazine, it could have been fully restored by the Navy while the base was operational, since this structure is in the Base Commander’s garden near the tennis courts. This would definitely explain the decorative seal if it turns out to be a reproduction.

Recent photographs of the “Dead House” compared with a photograph from the period when the Olmsteds were developing the base as Chicora Park, show the building was essentially the same before the Navy Base and Shipyard were built (figures 16-18). The building was covered with vines and vegetation that were obscuring the roof and upper portion of the front wall. It could not be determined if the seal was in place at the time the old photograph was originally taken.29

The most striking feature of the building is the heavy brick buttresses projecting from its sides. These oversized features are the strongest evidence for use of the building as a powder magazine.

28 After Jim Augustin photographed the seal he described its back, and how it was attached to the “Dead House.” It has been removed to the Noisette offices for safekeeping, and a plaster cast replica is on the front of the building.

OVERVIEW OF DEATH AND BURIAL CUSTOMS

As churchyards became filled, the city crowded or built over graveyards. The air may have become foul, and wells or water supplies may have been compromised. People worried about sickness or disease. Overseas, complete cemeteries were emptied and new memorial gardens and burial grounds created outside of the great cities. The rural cemetery movement started in France with landscape gardens and memorial cemeteries. The English followed the French example, and a rural cemetery movement started here in America with cemeteries like Mount Auburn Cemetery near Boston designed in this style in 1931. Magnolia Cemetery was the first rural Cemetery in South Carolina. This movement coincided with an effort to soften the stark reality of death by emphasizing the tomb as a place of refuge from the hustle and bustle of life.

From colonial times to the nineteenth century, the American funeral was something handled by the family. Close family, relatives, and friends performed the duties involved with preparing the deceased for burial. They washed and laid out the body, wrapped it in a sheet, and made or ordered the coffin. A local carpenter or cabinetmaker may have crafted the wooden coffin. The family carried the coffin on foot to the church and afterward to the graveyard. The family would also dig the grave unless a church sexton was appointed this task as

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30 Some burials predate its 1850 dedication. The other cemetery of the rural cemetery movement is Elmwood Cemetery in Columbia, incorporated in 1854.
one of his regular duties. Between death and the funeral, the body was kept in the home, often laid out in the family parlor where mourners could look over it.

This viewing had a practical purpose in earlier days, because there was a possibility that watchers may see signs of life. A strange obsession expressed in grandiose buildings and customs flourished overseas at the time the building in Magnolia Cemetery was in use. That was of hospitals for the dead, also known as “waiting mortuaries.” These were widespread, often large and elaborate. In France and Germany some were used until 1900. These structures were associated with the fear of premature burial still strong in the minds of people of the Victorian period. The Receiving Tomb at Magnolia Cemetery was not associated with such views, and served a more practical function. The people here were most likely past help and only awaiting the gravedigger or better weather.

In the rural cemeteries outside of Charleston many of the earlier customs probably continued, but in some cases new mortuary practices developed to answer new concerns. Many of the duties of the family or church needed to be handled differently. Changing views on death and the distance of new cemeteries from town started a separation of tasks, disassociation with the deceased, and the job of “occupational layers out of the dead.”

The first undertakers were people who aided the family in the duties of disposing of the mortal remains of their loved ones. They came from three occupations: livery stable keepers, who could supply horses and a wagon, or hearse if needed; carpenters, or cabinetmakers, that often supplied coffins; and
sextons, who would often ring the church bell and dig the grave in the churchyard. Magnolia Cemetery was outside of the city requiring the family to come by horse-drawn carriage or wagon. The deceased may have been brought by the family or perhaps by an undertaker with a hearse to provide this service.

The job of undertaker was a custodial job like the name implies; he would do many chores that would relieve the family from immediate concerns at their time of loss. They continued to take more control, establishing new customs and cultural needs. Bodies were taken from the family for preparation, elaborate services and rituals developed, and later embalming practices changed our entire view of death and burial.

Though seen during the Civil War embalming was still infrequent. In 1900, embalming a corpse before viewing was still the exception rather than the rule and often the procedure was done in the decedent’s home. Soon after, bodies were taken to the funeral parlor for dressing and embalming.

Over time the Receiving Tomb was used less frequently. Mortuaries and funeral directors took charge of the deceased. Bodies were kept on ice, and embalming allowed a few more days of preparation for the grieving family. When coolers could be installed in funeral homes, receiving tombs would become unneeded. These sturdy buildings were often abandoned, used for storage, or remodeled like the receiving tomb at Bethany Cemetery.
Built on a former rice plantation along the banks on the Cooper River, Magnolia Cemetery is surrounded by other burial grounds. Edward C. Jones of the Charleston architecture firm of Jones & Lee designed the 153-acre cemetery in 1849. Planned like other burial grounds of the period, Magnolia grew out of the “rural” cemetery movement. Trolley cars brought people to the gardens to picnic and visit the graves of loved ones. Many often stayed for the day enjoying the beautiful park-like setting. A rural cemetery has spacious landscaped grounds and romantic monuments in a rural setting.

The gatehouse, receiving tomb, and some of the monuments were built as part of the original 1850 plan (figure 6). The Receiving Tomb (figure 7) was most likely designed by Jones and built early on; it is marked on the original plan kept in the cemetery office files. The receiving yard was built near the center of the cemetery at the northern edge; the Receiving Tomb is in this area. A receiving tomb or receiving vault is a building where the dead were kept while crypts were opened or graves prepared. There is another receiving tomb in Bethany Cemetery nearby (figure 8).

The Magnolia Cemetery Trust was formed by nine Charleston businessmen to develop a tract of 75 acres into a burial ground for the City of Charleston and surrounding area. The South Carolina Legislature chartered the

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32 Jones also designed the Romanesque tomb for the McDowall and Wragg families at Magnolia around 1858.
cemetery in 1850 as a non-profit organization by Act. No 4005. The land was divided into 1407 lots, originally designed and laid out by Architect Edward C. Jones and his Junior partner Francis D. Lee.³⁴ The Receiving Tomb is the only original structure to survive.

This gothic-style building of stuccoed brick has a slate roof and one entrance. It measures approximately eighteen feet long by eleven and one half feet wide by eleven feet high (18’ x 11-1/2’ x 11’). The buttressed walls are over a foot thick with a barrel-vaulted ceiling that is stuccoed and painted white. The ceiling may have been eight to ten feet high, with entry by several steps down from ground level outside. The floor is sand or dirt, and many have been filled to the present level of about one foot below the ground level. Excavation is not allowed at this time, and the concrete barrier in the tomb does not allow further exploration. Originally, it had brownstone around the entrance though this detailing has been mostly lost to weathering and vandalism. The stone inset reading “Receiving Tomb” in capital letters remains above the open entryway. On the west side where some stucco is lost, what may be a tie bar or earthquake bolt can be seen. At the back a clay tube pierces the wall, possibly functioning as a vent. Just above also on this end are several bricks in a pattern, possibly where a lattice (now closed with bricks) was left in the wall to let light into the farthest end of the building. The metal vent stack still remains at the ridgeline near the

³³ St. Matthew's German Lutheran Church purchased land outside the city for Bethany Cemetery in 1856.
center of the building. This would have been to release the smells and noxious, possibly flammable gases from the decaying bodies once stored inside.

Many nineteenth-century cemeteries had receiving or public vaults that held decedents for days, weeks, or sometimes months while their permanent resting place was prepared. Graves had to be dug, vaults opened, or sometimes crypts and mausoleums completed. In northern climes graves could not be dug in the frozen ground, and the high groundwater in Charleston, or flooding, may have prevented timely burial. Often bad weather or other delays could leave the deceased in the public vault until the burial could proceed.
SITE ANALYSIS AND TYPOLOGY OF THE “DEAD HOUSE”

The location of the “Dead House” is shown in an 1895 map (figure 12) and the plan of the Navy Yard dated June 30, 1909 (figure 11). The “Dead House” is so labeled on the older plan, and is likely the building labeled 1010, temporary oil storehouse on the other.\(^\text{35}\) The Olmsted plans are on file at the City of Charleston Archives in the Cigar Factory building, and RDA (Charleston Naval Complex Redevelopment Authority) where maps and records from the Navy period are archived. Reviewing the original plans for the park at the Cigar Factory, the “Dead House’ is not found. At the RDA three plans and proposals can be compared and the “Dead House” is labeled as such on the 1895 map there. The proposals seem to indicate that the building was not regarded as important and is not included in the designs for the park (figure 13); possibly indicating it would be razed.

With the 1895 Olmsted plans of Chicora Park and the photograph from the same period in the collection of the Library of Congress, it is possible to date the existing building as over one hundred years old. It is significant that the map and glass slides were found, they give the earliest date the building is called the “Dead House” in print and show the condition of the building.

\(^{35}\) Both are archived at the RDA (Charleston Naval Complex Redevelopment Authority).
Early home sites in the area are often found to be where there was deep water and high ground.\textsuperscript{36} Originally built on high land surrounded mostly by dry marsh much like Laurel Island or Magazine Island, the “Dead House” would have been close to both the Cooper River and Noisette Creek offering dockage.

Surrounded by dry marsh, which would flood with the high tide, the “Dead House” was commanded from the bluffs above. This landing at the water’s edge may have been one of the few places with direct access to deep water along the Cooper River. Dan Bell of the State Parks Service once commented that because of its proximity to the Cooper River it was close enough to load and unload gunpowder barrels from a supply boat.\textsuperscript{37} The building is located on high land and is both central and defensible. The site is also near the junction of the important roads to Charles Town, the Ashley Ferry, Clement’s Ferry, and the surrounding area. The Quarter House was the headquarters of the British during the siege of Charles Town during the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{38}

It appears that both the powder magazines and receiving tombs are very similar in design; they use the same materials and were designed for utility. The use of these buildings dictated their design, and in both cases they were used for storage.

\textsuperscript{38} A 1796 plat of the Oak Grove Plantation, owned at the time by Samuel Prioleau says that Oak Grove is about “two miles northwardly from the Quarter House.” This plantation is shown adjacent and just north of the Retreat Plantation in a 1784 plat.
Most of the buildings in this study are about the same size and built in the same manner. Local mortuary tombs and crypts are also similar in design, though in most cases made of grander materials and more highly decorated than these utilitarian buildings. It should be noted that even the receiving tomb at Magnolia Cemetery is more detailed and elaborate.

The two buildings primarily compared and described in this study are the Receiving Tomb at Magnolia Cemetery, and the “Dead House” at the former Charleston Naval Complex. Both buildings are like the receiving tomb at Bethany Cemetery and the powder magazine at Fort Johnson. The Receiving Tomb at Magnolia Cemetery measures approximately eighteen feet long by eleven and one half feet wide by eleven feet high (18’x 11-1/2’x11’). The buttressed walls are over a foot thick with a barrel-vaulted ceiling that is stuccoed and painted white. The ceiling may have been eight to ten feet high, with entry by several steps down from ground level outside. Similarly, the “Dead House” is smaller ten and one half feet wide by twelve and one half feet long (10.5’ by 12.5’) with a barrel-vaulted interior and brick floor. The vault may have been protected by a gable roof though today the gable ends have simple square parapets. Both Fort Johnson and Bethany are also similar in design. At Fort Johnson the structure is of brick with walls between four and five feet thick. This powder house measures twenty-seven feet in length by twenty feet wide (27’x 20’). Its floor area is 18 feet by 10 feet and its vaulted roof is 11 feet high in the interior, larger than either the “Dead House” or the Receiving Tomb at Magnolia Cemetery. The barrel-vaulted ceilings of both the powder magazines and
receiving tombs were clearly employed to create the largest open, unobstructed, interior space without sacrificing the structural strength of the building. These four buildings are so similar in structure that it is apparent they were all built in this manner for utility. Differences are generally suited to their ultimate use, though the “Dead House” may have been altered over time. The two receiving tombs are stuccoed, and the others are not. The tombs are also more decorated; the tomb in Magnolia Cemetery is in the gothic style.
POTENTIAL BUILDERS OF THE “DEAD HOUSE”

The Quarter House (or Six Mile House) was near the “Dead House” and it is possible there may be a connection. The building may have been built or used by the attacking forces, because of its proximity to the Quarter House, river, and roads. Constructed prior to 1722, the Quarter House Tavern at the present intersection of Meeting and Success Streets was a popular gathering place, and served as a British garrison during the siege of Charleston in 1780. On July 5, 1781, Colonel Isaac Haynes captured British General Andrew Williamson there. Haynes was later captured and executed.

The Quarter House marker is located under just 1 mile 600 feet from the “Dead House.” It generally takes between 10 and 20 minutes to walk a mile. So the gunpowder and possibly lead would have been close and convenient if it was stored in the “Dead House.” Still it is far enough from the Quarter House for safety in case of an explosion.

In proposing the “Dead House” may have been built prior to the American Revolution, it is necessary to scrutinize the property owners from the early period and it may help determine where their loyalties were in the coming conflicts. It may also be useful to examine possible connections between successive owners of the property. The five owners of this property preceding the American Revolution are examined because this was a period of increased tension in Charleston leading to the war. No other public powder magazines in either

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A historic marker is all that is left of the Quarter House Tavern.
Charleston or the surrounding area are mentioned in written accounts before this period. Could there be other public or private powder houses that have been overlooked? If the material and structural analysis of the “Dead House” indicates the building is from the early settlement or pre-Revolutionary period then it should be possible to determine who built it, when, and why.

In the winter of 1757, a French fleet was operating in the West Indies and the colony feared an invasion. Only one public powder magazine existed in South Carolina, and it was in Charles Town. If Charles Town were to fall in an attack, the colony’s supply of munitions would be in jeopardy. The royal governor of South Carolina, William Henry Lyttelton directed construction of the magazine and protective tabby wall. Built from 1757 to 1759, the inland powder magazine at Dorchester was built for the protection of the port city, allowing staging for conflict from a distant stronghold. 1. Loyalist James Wright owned the Retreat Plantation from 1750-1758; he would become the third and last royal governor of Georgia, serving from 1760-1782, with a brief interruption early in the American Revolution. Written proof of another structure for storage of gunpowder being proposed at this time has not been found. 2. Samuel Brailsford, a merchant in Charleston owned the plantation from 1758-1765. 3. Henry Middleton only owned the plantation for two years (1765-1767) and likely did not change the property to any extent; he would become the second president of the First Continental Congress for a short time. His brother William Middleton was tendered a post as colonial agent for South Carolina in London in 1757 that he

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40 See the Appendix Part I for a complete listing.
rejected. James Wright, who had been the attorney general of South Carolina, accepted this post. William Middleton was the owner of Crowfield Plantation in Goose Creek until he returned to England in 1754. However, although he declined to serve as colonial agent he and his sons were loyal to South Carolina's interests over Great Britain's. In fact, two of his sons returned here and were on the Rebel side during the Revolution. Middleton documents have not been found describing the “Dead House.”

Henry Middleton sold the property to Loyalist Sir Egerton Leigh who owned it from 1767-1771. It is likely in this light that the Middleton brothers knew Wright, Brailsford, and Leigh. Egerton Leigh was the probable originator of the name “Retreat” and is often cited as the town’s first customs officer and postmaster; he also exacted the gunpowder tax on ships arriving in the port at Charles Town.

Egerton Leigh, Attorney General in South Carolina (1765-1774), was the son of Peter Leigh, the Chief Justice of the Province (1753-1759). Egerton Leigh remarked on the preparedness of Charles Town for conflict, discussing her weaknesses on the Cooper River and on the Neck of the peninsula in personal correspondence. This is likely due to his bitter resentment at some Charles Town aristocrats and his strong loyalty to the

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41 After the American Revolution his simple suit for recovery of a debt eventually led to the first jury trial to be held in the Supreme Court of the United States.
42 William Middleton spent much of his childhood in England, attending school, and staying with his English relatives. These men considered themselves Englishmen, and England was truly the mother country. William eventually inherited the estate called Crowfield in Suffolk England from an aunt, and in 1754 returned there with his family to take up permanent residence. William died in 1775, at the start of the American Revolution not 1785 as is mistakenly recorded in many sources (including Langdon Cheves's Middleton genealogy). This is evidenced by the correspondence of his eldest son and heir, another William, and other family papers.
44 To keep a store of powder in readiness an act was passed to exact the powder tax. Statutes at Large of South Carolina, Vol. II, ps.20-21. And Guy, Randy L., 1990-1994, p.5.
James Wright was governor of the last of the original colonies Georgia, established fifty years after the others. Georgia was possibly the colony most loyal to the King and supported Leigh’s ardent Loyalist views. The land attacks on Charles Town were launched from Savannah in 1779 and 1780. In both cases, British troops marched to the Ashley River near the ferry, crossing to the Neck and the Quarter House. During their campaigns they garrisoned close to the present site of the “Dead House,” property previously owned by both Wright and Leigh. 

5. Merchant Thomas Loughton Smith owned the Retreat from 1771-1778. It is possible that the “Dead House” was built before the American Revolution or during any of three attacks on the city. The British may also have constructed it during the period of occupation. Middleton, Leigh, and Smith owned the property just prior to the attacks by the British. Smith and later Prioleau owned the Retreat during the siege and occupation of Charles Town. This was a pivotal period and it is plausible that the “Dead House” was constructed in response to building tensions in the colony. This author has reviewed several plats of property owned by Samuel Prioleau dated 1784 and c.1796; they show three structures labeled “Retreat Settlement,” the “Dead House” is not shown (figures 14 and 15).

“Before the transfer to the City the place bore the evidence for having at one time had much time and labour expended upon it. There was the remnant of quite an extended garden, between the residence and the river and a number of

ornamental ponds in a park with drives to the west of the residence. The residence was of brick and stood on the high land which ran in a point, bluff (Gibbon’s Bluff) to the river. Naturally with its occupation by the government the old residence and reliques of former occupation have disappeared. With construction of Chicora Park and later the Charleston Navy Complex it is certain that many old structures and ruins were destroyed. Much of the context and evidence of the Retreat Plantation’s many owners is scattered across lawns, golf course, and buried under parking lots. With all this destruction, why does the “Dead House” still stand when old plantation buildings from the area have been lost?

After 1820, the Old Powder Magazine on Cumberland Street in Charleston returned to the descendants of the early owners of the property. It was later used as a printing house, storage building, and livery stable. The powder magazines at Laurel Island would continue to be used to store gunpowder, later the adjoining buildings being used for barracks, pest houses, and finally to shelter hobos and vagrants. Some buildings researched in this study decayed and fell into ruin, even while being used for public protection. Most were lost to time and only through extensive research were their modern locations finally discovered. Strangely some were co-opted for other uses and still live on. This is likely because they were well-constructed, utilitarian buildings in a convenient location. The “Dead

47 Seventy-five years had elapsed between the founding of Virginia and Pennsylvania. After a lapse of fifty years Georgia became the last of the original thirteen colonies.
49 The Olmsted plans for Chicora Park at the City of Charleston Archives show the Turnbull house at the Retreat Plantation and foundations of adjacent buildings later demolished.
“House” has survived for this reason. Subsequent uses of the building may help explain the common name, but evidence still supports the conclusion that the building was originally built as a powder magazine.

“The ‘Dead House’ a small brick structure located down the path from Quarters A. was built in the 1700s. As travel was slow in those days, the ‘Dead House’ was used as a cool house where dead were laid out until relatives and friends arrived for the funeral.”

Several possible sources of the persistent stories about the “Dead House” have been found, though they may not be tenable. “After the British landed in Carolina in 1780, they confined some of the first prisoners in the vaults with the dead. When their successes had multiplied the number of prisoners, they were crowded on board prison-ships, where they suffered every inconvenience that could result from putrid air and the want of the comforts of life.”

In this case prisoners may have been locked in crypts or cemetery buildings under unwholesome conditions and their neglect may have led to horrific tales.

A map drawn by Benson J. Lossing shows a “British Hospital” on the Neck north of Town Creek and south of a smaller creek. The area of the peninsula is labeled “Shipyard,” the hospital is along the Cooper River near an

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50 This description comes from a cookbook of recipes from Navy families illustrating how widespread stories about this building may still be. Kaup, Donna L., *Dining in Quarters A, Charleston Naval Base*. P.4. Another tale tells of a ship docking with dead crewmembers, they were laid out in the “Dead House” until other arrangements could be made. This story usually tells of several decedents and is set in the colonial period. Several versions are set during the American Revolution or the Civil War with the “Dead House” being used as an ad hoc morgue or mortuary.

island across from Hobcaw Creek. Also during the Civil War, Union Soldiers used the neighboring Marshlands Plantation as headquarters for the United States Sanitary Commission (1861-1865). Some activity may have carried over onto the Retreat Plantation property that was owned by Andrew Turnbull at the time (1851-1895). At the same time the house at McLeod Plantation on James Island was used as a military hospital. Graffiti, personal items, and human remains have been found at McLeod and other sites. To date no human remains have been unearthed near the “Dead House,” and there is not a cemetery recorded in this area of the plantation or Navy Base. The popular name and stories are unfounded, though commonly believed to be true. To the date of this writing these tall tales have not been supported with any actual evidence. This just lends more credibility to the conclusion that the “Dead House” was built as a powder

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54 The fortified lines of the city were further south and crossed the peninsula at Magnolia Cemetery. Map #33 1865. Charleston County Public Library South Carolina Room.
56 Without a cemetery near the site a receiving tomb is not plausible, and the archaeological and structural evidence indicate the building is not from the period these buildings were used.
magazine. It may have been used for storage but finding written proof that dead bodies were kept here has been unsuccessful.
CONCLUSION

1. The "Dead House" is a Powder Magazine; this assertion is also backed by the structural analysis. 2. Likely built during the American Revolutionary period or shortly later, comparative dating of bricks corroborates this judgment. 3. It is probable the British built the building as part of their siege lines and fortifications during of the attacks on Charles Town or during the occupation. Loyalists Sir Egerton Leigh and Governor James Wright might have played a part. The owner of the Retreat Plantation during this period was Samuel Prioleau; this is likely Samuel Prioleau III who was known to be in St. Augustine at the time, in exile with other Charleston Patriots. Preliminary findings from recent archaeology at the site, supports these determinations. Even though popularly called the “Dead House,” this small brick building was built as a powder magazine not a mortuary structure. Historic research of the site and study of the building supports this conclusion.

“I believe North Charleston has reached a point in time when we must act: Act together to create a new and proud community, where quality of life is second to none.” Mayor Keith Summey in November of 2001 set the tone for redevelopment of the riverfront areas of North Charleston. Launching a

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57 See the Appendix Part III.
59 Hand forged square copper nails, an olive green bottle neck fragment and whiteware ceramics. See the Appendix Part II.
community involvement process to engage the area in change. Noisette is the largest sustainable urban revitalization in U. S. history.

Further interpretation to the “Dead House” will focus on filling in the missing parts of the story of this site and its inhabitants. Well-planned systematic study should continue using extensive noninvasive ground penetrating radar surveys and additional archaeological exploration. The research from this thesis and material remains recovered in the archaeological component of this study will be used to develop additional signage, and displays at the site and in the adjacent city park.

3. Fort Dorchester powder magazine by the Author.

6. Magnolia Cemetery plan c.1850.

7. Receiving Tomb at Magnolia Cemetery by the Author.
8. Bethany Cemetery receiving tomb by the Author.

10. Lords Proprietors seal front and back from Jim Augustin.

12. Olmsted plan with “Dead House” from RDA archives.

13. Olmsted garden plan from RDA archives.
14. Retreat Plantation plat from Charleston Public Library SCR.

15. Retreat Plantation plat from Charleston Public Library SCR.

17. Modern view of “Dead House” looking toward bluff by the Author.
18. Modern view of “Dead House” from front by the Author.

19. Modern view of “Dead House” interior by the Author.
20. Archaeology team East side of “Dead House” by the Author.

21. East side unit showing the roofing slate by the Author.
22. “Dead House” test pit at old marsh edge by Jim Augustin.

23. Square hand wrought copper roofing nails recovered during excavation by Andrew Agha.
APPENDIX

I. Property chain-of-title.

The original owner of the property was Thomas Hunt who was issued a warrant (a request for the Surveyor General to survey the site) for 370 acres on September 7, 1672. Mr. Hunt received a grant from the Lords Proprietors and owned the property until 1676. The chain-of-title for the property follows.

- Edmund and Francis Gibbon (1676-1693)
- William Hawett (1693-early 1700s)
- Arthur and Mary Foster (early 1700s-1721)
- Charles Burnham (1721-1750)
- James Wright (1750-1758)
- Samuel Brailsford (1758-1765)
- Henry Middleton (1765-1767)
- Sir Egerton Leigh (1767-1771)
- Thomas Loughton Smith (1771-1778)
- Samuel Prioleau (1778-1790s)
- Edward Hare (1790s-1796)
- James Strachan and James McKenzie of London (1796-1798)
- James Lee (1798-?)
- Andrew Turnbull (1851-1895)
- The City of Charleston owned the property which was developed into Chicora Park by the Olmsteds (1894-1901)
- The Department of the Navy builds a Navy Base and Shipyard at the park site 1901 until the base closure was announced in 1993.
- The Charleston Naval Complex (CNC) closes. Turned over to redevelopment agency RDA (Charleston Naval Complex Redevelopment Authority) April 1996.
- The Department of the Navy (DoN) divided transfer of the CNC’s 2,922 acres into four phases and all transfers are complete. The DoN accomplished transfer of 661 acres to the RDA via three Economic Development Conveyances (EDCs) in 2000, 2002, and 2003. The DoN completed the final EDC consisting of 436 acres via early transfer in May 2003.

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2005. Other significant transfers include the sale of 24 acres of the Chicora Tank Farm in 2004 and transfer of 1677 acres to other federal entities.

- City of North Charleston and Noisette to redevelop the site. Currently more than 85 private, local, state and federal entities own or lease property on the CNC.

II. Limited test excavations at the “Dead House.”

The proposal for archaeological exploration of the “Dead House” was drafted with the aid of Martha Zierden, the Curator of Historical Archaeology at The Charleston Museum. Dr. Eric Poplin, RPA, was the Principal Investigator for these excavations. Dr. Poplin ensured that the quality of the investigations met or exceeded current professional standards. Andrew Agha (M.A.) served as Field Director. Mr. Agha was present during all of the field investigations and will prepare a report of the excavations. Mr. Agha has extensive experience in urban archaeological investigations as well as the examination of colonial and antebellum sites.

Archaeological testing of the Dead House was limited to the excavation of test units strategically placed to provide information about the nature of soil deposits at and around the Dead House and selected elements of the foundations of the building. Six units were excavated- 4 50x50 cm tests in yard, one 1.5x1 meter unit on east wall, and one 0.5x1 meter unit on north wall. The test unit adjacent to the wall and a buttress on the east side of the building exposed the builder’s trench and the building foundation at the interface of the foundation and buttress (figure 20). The original ground level in this unit was determined, and roofing elements were discovered at this level. A large pile of slate and what
appear to be several pieces of ceramic ridge tile, were found (figure 21). Hand forged square copper nails were recovered, some still in the holes of roofing slates. Several experts said they are probably from the 18th century (figure 23). The unit adjacent to the north wall uncovered a trash pit. The materials recovered are dated c. 1850s-1880. Whiteware ceramics (1820s-c.1900), 19th century porcelains, mold made glass of different colors, a possible 18th century olive green bottle neck fragment, some unidentifiable nails, and oyster shells. Possibly indicating the old edge of the marsh (figure 22). This pit did not touch the building, was not under the foundation. It is in a location indicating that the building was standing while the pit was being dug. The four 50x50 cm test units were excavated around the building, one in each yard (north, south, east, west) at 3-10 meters (10-30 feet) from the building.

Tests will be run for components of human decomposition residue and explosive materials. Methodology of sampling of suitable buildings has been discussed with forensic and medical experts and simple chemical tests are being determined to sort the known buildings into the two categories. Is likely that samples from the “Dead House” would fall into a distinct category. This sampling may be inconclusive in some cases. One mortuary structure has been extensively remodeled; and a powder house now in ruin was reused as a brick or tile kiln. The “Dead House” was used by the Navy to store petroleum products.

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64 Agha, Andrew, Brockington and Associates April 25, 2007.
lawn mowers, and possibly chemicals. Testing methods will be found to
overcome these concerns.

III. Measurements of bricks from buildings in the study to determine a date of
construction for the “Dead House.”

1899 National Brickmaker’s Association Standards (in inches).\textsuperscript{65}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Thickness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Bricks</td>
<td>$8\frac{1}{4}$</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$2\frac{1}{4}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face Bricks</td>
<td>$8\frac{3}{8}$</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$2\frac{3}{8}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Bricks</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$1\frac{1}{2}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dead House” (unknown)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$4\frac{3}{8}$</td>
<td>$2\frac{3}{4}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Tomb at Magnolia Cemetery (1850)</td>
<td>$9\frac{1}{4} - 9\frac{1}{2}$</td>
<td>$4\frac{1}{2} - 4\frac{3}{4}$</td>
<td>$2\frac{5}{8}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Dorchester powder magazine (1757)</td>
<td>$8\frac{3}{4} - 9$</td>
<td>$4\frac{1}{4}$</td>
<td>$2\frac{1}{4}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top of fort wall (after 1757)</td>
<td>$9 - 9\frac{1}{4}$</td>
<td>$4\frac{1}{4}$</td>
<td>$2\frac{3}{4}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacklock House</td>
<td>18 Bull Street (1800)</td>
<td>$9 - 9\frac{1}{4}$</td>
<td>$4\frac{1}{2} - 4\frac{3}{8}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{65} Hollings, Marie Ferrara, Brickwork of Charleston to 1780. Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of History University of
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