

Fort Frederick

A SCDNR Heritage Preserve
and the World It Changed



Fort Frederick Heritage Preserve

This South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Cultural Heritage Preserve is three acres in size and includes Fort Frederick (c. 1733) - the oldest surviving tabby fort in South Carolina, and the oldest known tabby structure in Beaufort County. The fort was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. In 1999, the site was acquired and dedicated as a heritage preserve by the SCDNR with funds from the Heritage Land Trust Fund and by a donation from the National Park Service's Federal Lands to Parks Program. In 2017, the preserve was included in the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park.

Visit at:
601 Old Fort Rd.
Port Royal, SC 29935

The preserve is open from one hour before sunset
until one hour after sunset.

Visit the SCDNR's Heritage Trust website
<https://heritagetrust.dnr.sc.gov/> to learn more about Fort
Frederick and other preserves, view documentary films, and
download lesson plans and activities.

Hey there! I'm
Laura! Welcome to
Fort Frederick! It may not
look like much, but some of
America's most important
events took place here. These
walls have seen so much
history - they have a story
that I can't wait to tell you.



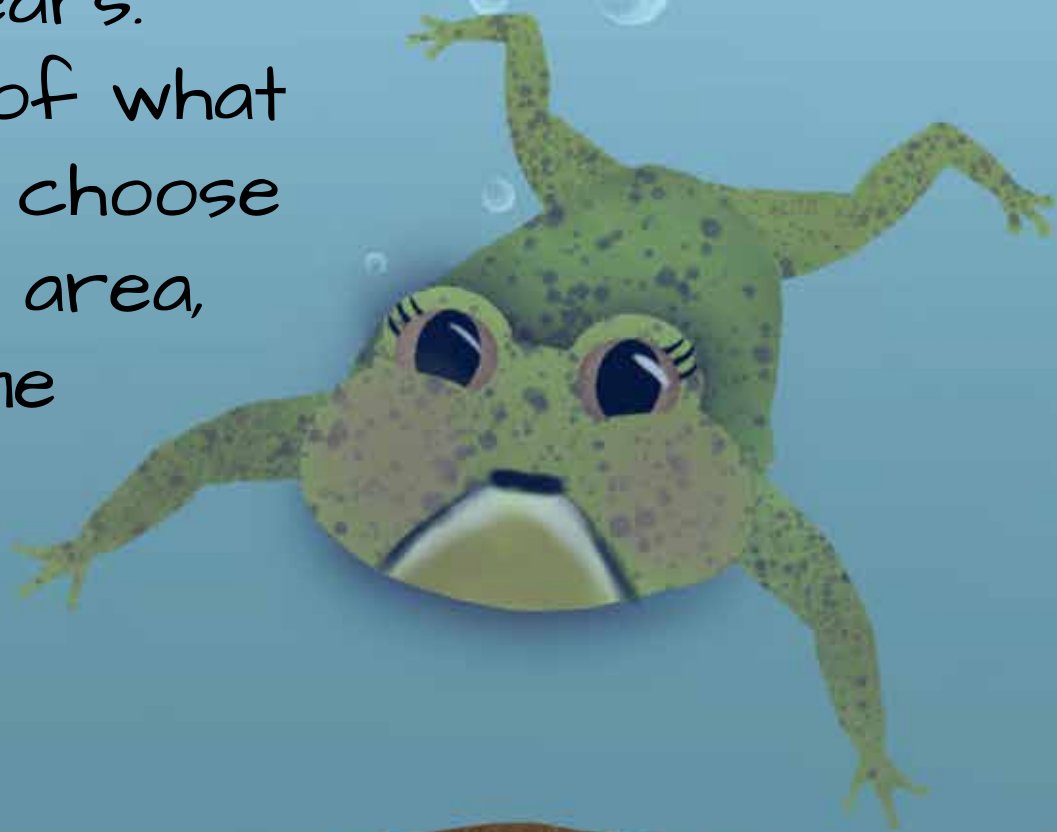
Tours
Today!



Fort Frederick is in Port Royal, South Carolina. It is very close to Beaufort, one of the oldest cities in the United States.

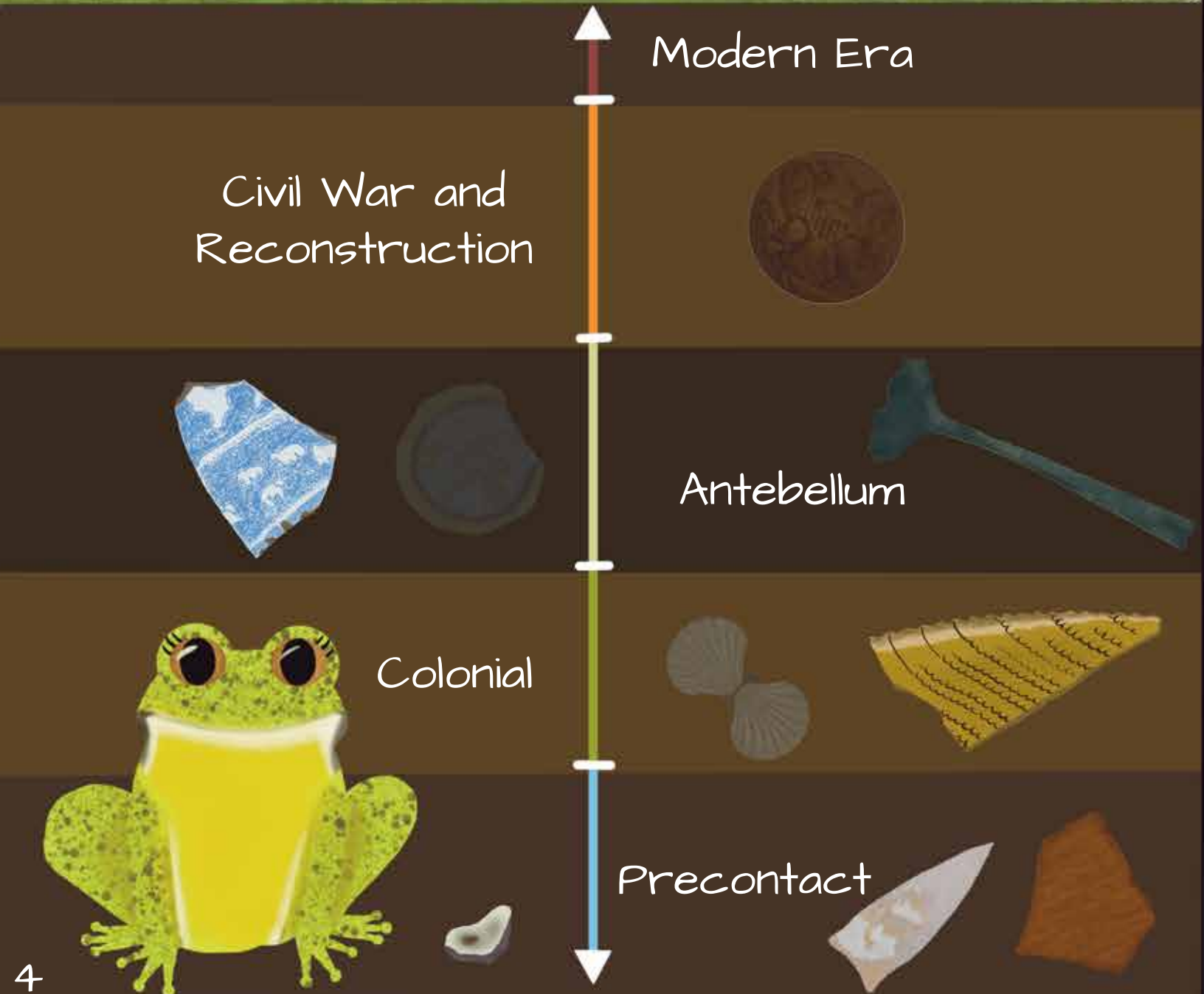
The river beside the fort, Beaufort River, is very deep. It is about sixty feet deep in the middle, or the height of six basketball goals stacked on top of each other. Large ships and smaller boats like canoes have moved along the river easily for many years.

This is part of what made people choose to live in this area, which became known as Port Royal.

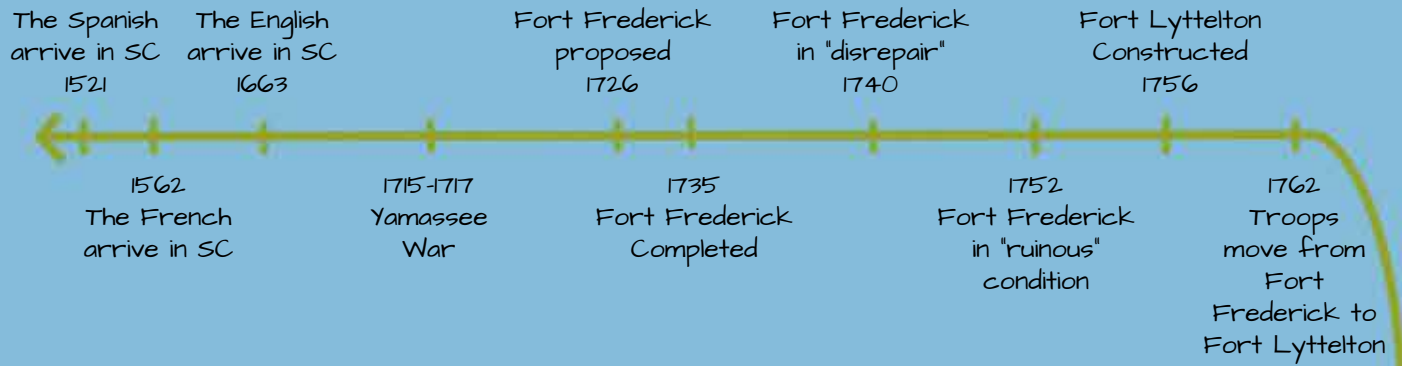


The Fort Frederick story is a long one. It can be divided into a few time periods.

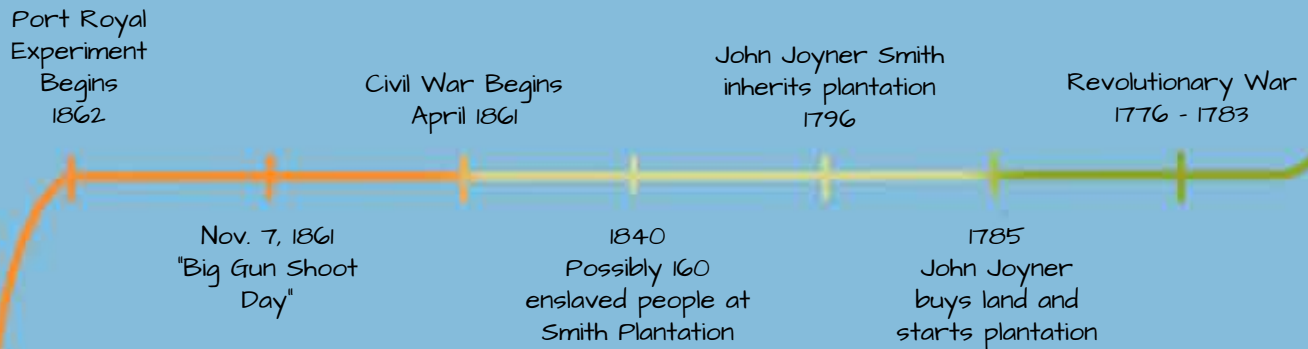
Those time periods are: Precontact, Colonial, Antebellum, Civil War and Reconstruction, and the Modern Era.



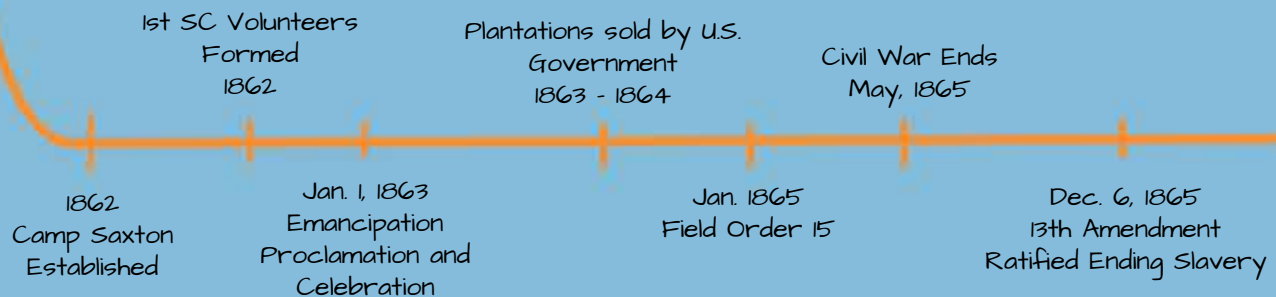
Colonial Period



Antebellum Period

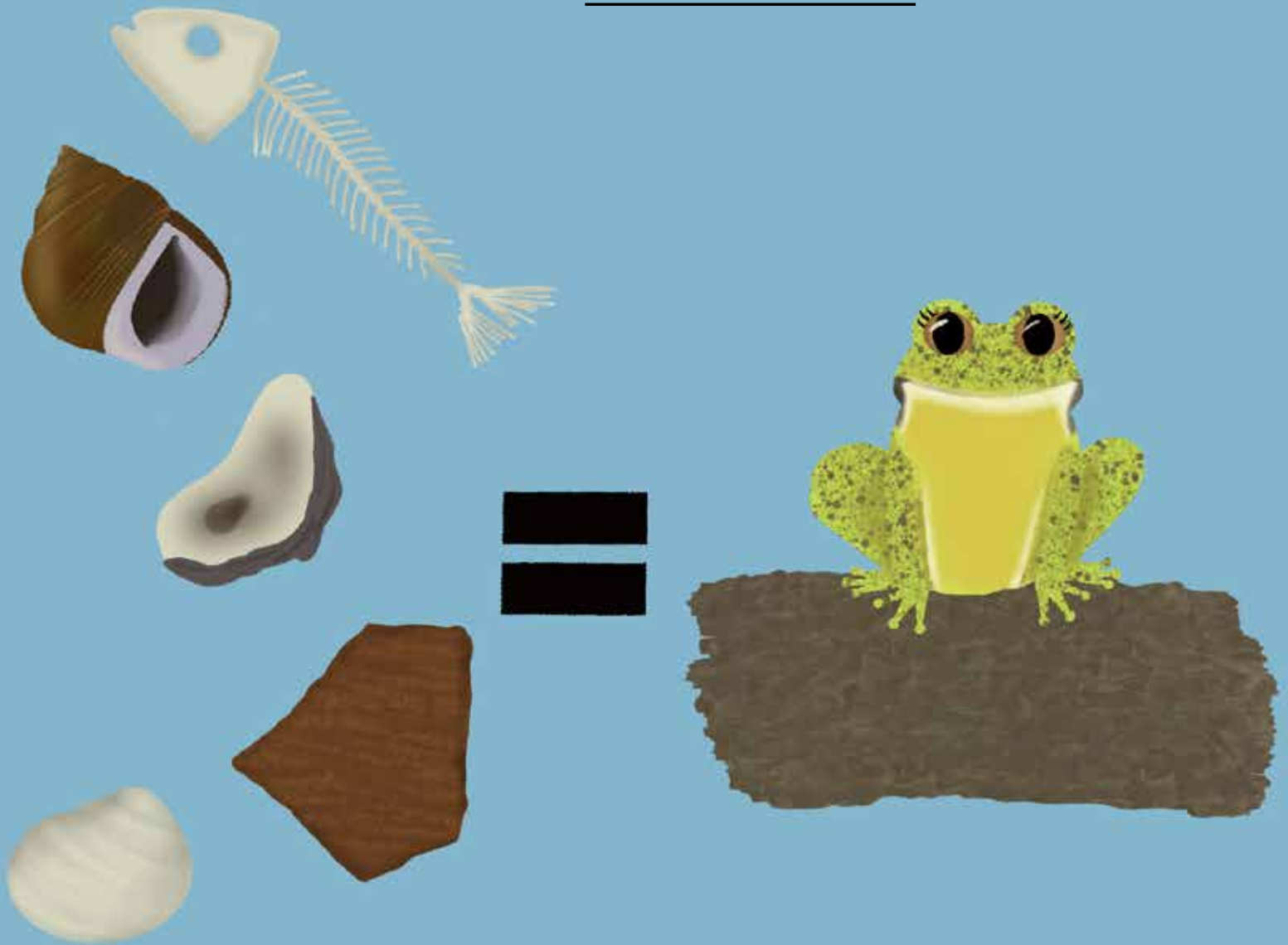


Civil War and Reconstruction Period



Here are some events that took place during three of those five time periods.

Precontact means the time before Europeans arrived in North America. More than 4,000 years ago, the Natives in this area ate seafood such as oysters or clams. Their trash, the leftover shells from their meals and broken pieces of pottery, formed shell middens.

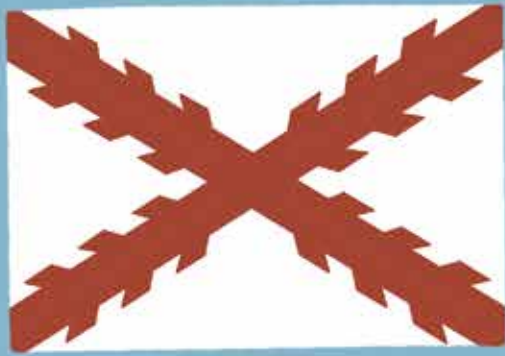


Shell middens can be very big. They can be as tall as a basketball goal and as far across as a football field! Shell from a midden like this one was used to build Fort Frederick.

Archaeologists don't know exactly where the shell midden that was used for building Fort Frederick is. They do know it was nearby from the amount of shell and pottery that is in the walls of the fort. The pottery in the wall is a broken piece called a sherd. Look closely! How many pottery sherds can you see?



The Precontact Period ended and the Colonial Period began when Europeans arrived in North America. At Fort Frederick, this would be around 1521. The Spanish arrived in Beaufort in 1521, followed by the French in 1562. The English arrived 100 years later in 1663.



Spain, 1521



France, 1562



England, 1663

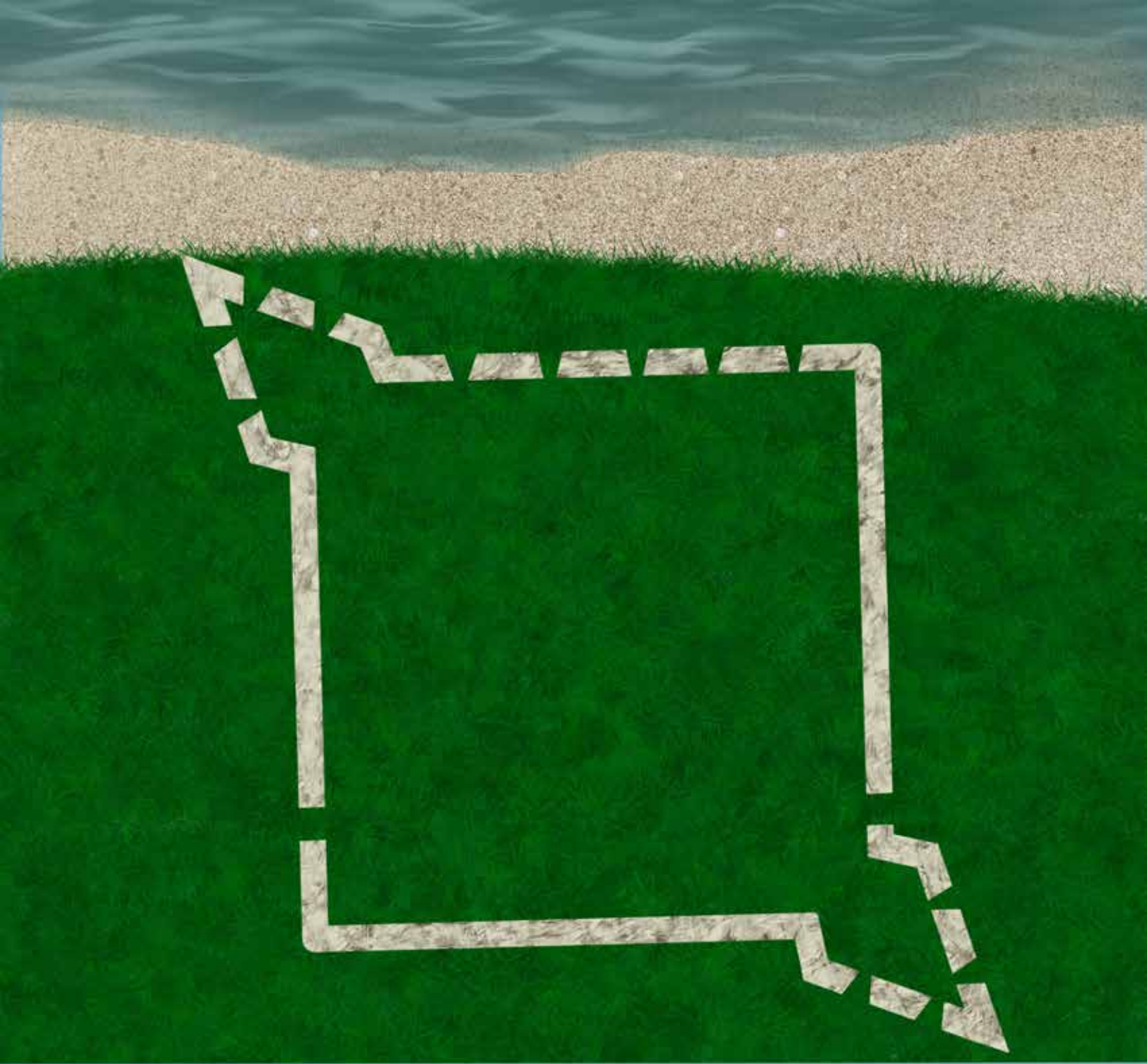
During the early Colonial Period, Beaufort was the southern frontier of English North America. This meant it was the farthest place south that English people lived in all of America! It was a dangerous time to live in Beaufort due to the Yamasee War and attacks from the Spanish and Native Americans who were trying to get back their land.



The walls of Fort Frederick were built in 1733, during the Colonial Period, when the British settlers wanted protection from all of the fighting. Fort Frederick was named after Prince Frederick of Wales, the oldest son of King George II of England.



The walls are made from tabby, a type of concrete made from shell, lime, sand, and water that is poured into wooden frames to harden. The walls were built five feet wide and five feet thick. That's a lot of tabby!



This is what Fort Frederick looked like when it was completed in 1735. It was about 130 feet by 128 feet and had two bastions. It also had openings for cannons facing the river. Today, more than half of the fort is gone. The Beaufort River has washed some of it away as the river changed paths.

By 1740, Fort Frederick was falling apart even though it was only seven years old. The walls of the fort crumbled when soldiers fired cannons to announce ships passing by. There was even a letter that described the fort as "ruinous" in 1752!





In 1756, the Colonial government began building Fort Lyttelton upriver to replace Fort Frederick. In 1762, the last soldiers from Fort Frederick moved to Fort Lyttelton leaving behind only the crumbling walls of the fort.



John Joyner bought Fort Frederick and its surrounding land in 1784. He turned it into a plantation, a place where cash crops are grown for money.

Indigo was grown on Joyner's plantation.



Joyner's grandson, John Joyner Smith, took over the plantation in 1796 and began growing Sea Island Cotton instead of indigo. The plantation was given the name "Old Fort Plantation" because of Fort Frederick. It was also called "Smith's Plantation."

Growing indigo and cotton was hard work, so plantations needed a lot of people. Most of the people who lived and worked on plantations were enslaved. This meant they were not free and did not get paid for their work. They had no rights and were owned by other people. It was a very dark and sad time in our country's history.





In April of 1861, everything changed when shots were fired at Fort Sumter in Charleston. This was the beginning of the American Civil War, bringing enslaved people hope for freedom.

By November 1861, the Union Army took over Port Royal on what became known as "Big Gun Shoot Day." Between 8,000 to 10,000 enslaved people living in Port Royal were emancipated. Some of these freedmen joined the Union Army and gathered at Camp Saxton.



Camp Saxton was based at the Smith Plantation, which means Fort Frederick was part of it!

One group of soldiers that called Camp Saxton home was the First South Carolina Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the first African American group to join the Union Army. The regiment was made up of freedmen from South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.



The soldiers at Camp Saxton build a dock over the ruins and off boats. The dock acted like a bridge, connecting the river to the shore. On the most important day at Fort Frederick, many people crossed it to hear that they were going to be free.



On January 1, 1863, lots of people gathered under the big trees next to Fort Frederick. The Emancipation Proclamation was read aloud to the crowd on the same day that President Lincoln signed it in Washington D.C. and made it official.



The Emancipation Proclamation was read to more than 4,000 people here on that special day! The Proclamation was the first big step to ending enslavement in the United States.



The now freed people were so happy that some began singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee" in celebration!



The freed people worked alongside abolitionists who fought to end enslavement. They believed that all people were equal and deserved to be free.

A special group of 53 abolitionists came to help the people who were freed from enslavement. In Port Royal, their work was part of the "Port Royal Experiment." This is the Penn School, which was a school for African Americans started by Laura Towne and Ellen Murray on St. Helena Island. A school like this one, was opened near Fort Frederick by Elizabeth Botume in 1864.



The American Civil War ended in May of 1865 with a Union victory. The end of the war brought many changes for the previously enslaved.

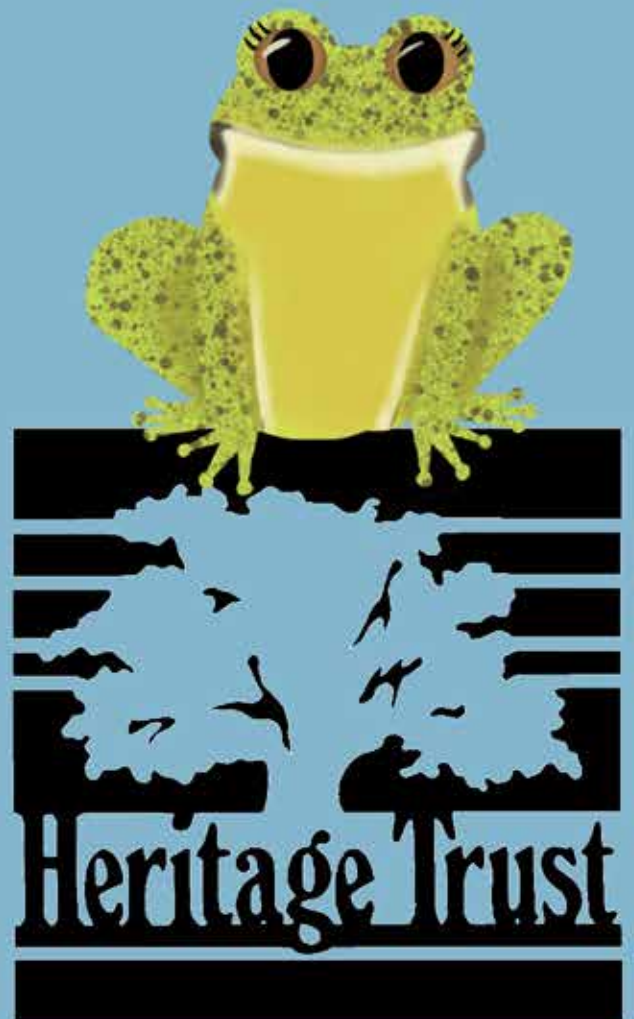


On December 6, 1865 the 13th Amendment became law, ending enslavement.

The 14th Amendment also became law, granting citizenship to the previously enslaved.

The 15th Amendment granted Black men the right to vote. Together these three amendments hoped to protect Black people from ever being enslaved again, and aimed to give them rights like white men.

In 1974, Fort Frederick was added to the National Register of Historic Places. In 1999, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Heritage Trust Program acquired the property through the National Park Service. This property is now called the Fort Frederick Heritage Preserve, which serves to protect the site, as well as tell its story.





* Artifacts not to scale

In 2014 and 2015, a team of SCDNR archaeologists dug at Fort Frederick to find information about its history. Here are some of the cool artifacts they found that help tell the story you just heard.

Artifact Guide

1. Kaolin Pipe Bowl with stem, featuring Hanoverian coat of arms, matches pipe in Noel Hume's Guide to Colonial Artifacts in America
Artifact ID: 3002-U8L5-DRS--00019, 3002-U8L6-DRS--00016, 3002-U8L7-DRS--00025, 26, 29
2. Eared Yadkin Point, stone tool from around 2,000 years ago
Artifact ID: 3000-I295E1075N-DRS--00009
3. Seashell Cuff Links from the 1700s
Artifact ID: 3002-U9L2-DRS--00050
4. Glass Wine Bottle Seal from the late 1700s or early 1800s
Artifact ID: 3001-U5LI-DRS--00050
5. Eagle Military Button, possibly from the 1st South Carolina Volunteer Regiment.
Model 1859 Enlisted
Artifact ID: 3000-I210E990N-DRS--00001
6. Iron Spoon Handle and Half Bowl
Artifact ID: 3000-I190E1010N-DRS--00002
7. Pearlware Ceramic Sherd with blue transfer print sheep
Artifact ID: 3001-U2L3-DRS--00149
8. Native American Cord Marked Pottery Sherd
Artifact ID: 3000-I295E1090N-DRS--00001
9. North Midlands Slipware Rim Sherd
Artifact ID: 3000-I305E1095N-DRS--00022



Scan the QR code to view some of these objects in 3D.

In 2017, Fort Frederick became part of the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park in Beaufort. It was reopened to the public in February of 2021. It's great getting to see everyone and tell them the story of this place so they know just how important this little fort is!



Glossary

13th Amendment - Ratified on Dec. 6, 1865, this amendment ended enslavement in the United States.

14th Amendment - Granted citizenship to all people born in the US and protects their rights including the right to vote.

15th Amendment - Protected the rights of people and tried to prevent attacks on those rights because of race, color, or previous enslavement.

Abolitionist - A person who wanted to end enslavement.

American Civil War - The war between the Union and the Confederacy over states' rights, including the political and economic impacts of enslavement and the existence of the practice.

Antebellum Period - The time between the Colonial Period and Civil War at Fort Frederick when plantations were common in the South.

Archaeology - The science of studying the things (like sites and artifacts) that people left behind to understand past human cultures.

"Big Gun Shoot Day" - Nov. 7, 1861 The Union Army takes control of Port Royal and the enslaved are no longer under the control of their former enslavers.

Camp Saxton - Civil War Era Union camp site named after General Rufus Saxton.

Cash crop - A crop that was grown in large amounts on plantations for money

Colonial Period - The time between the Pre-contact and Antebellum Periods at Fort Frederick when the United States were colonies under England's control.

Other European countries like Spain and France also had colonies in North America at this time.

Confederacy - The states that split from the Union during the Civil War, fighting for the states' rights to keep enslavement.

Emancipation/Emancipated - To be freed.

Emancipation Proclamation - Created by Abraham Lincoln, this document ended enslavement in the Confederacy.

Enslavement - The keeping of a person against their will and forcing them to work without pay. In the United States, this meant the enslaved were viewed as property and not people who had rights and deserved freedom.

First SC Volunteer Infantry Regiment - First African American regiment in the Union Army consisting of formerly enslaved men from South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The uniform of this regiment was originally red pants, a dark blue coat, and a black hat.

Fort Frederick - Colonial era fort in Beaufort County, South Carolina. It was built out of tabby and named after the King of England's son, Prince Frederick of Wales.

Glossary Continued

Fort Lyttelton - A triangular shaped fort built on Spanish Point in Beaufort, this fort replaced Fort Frederick.

Fort Sumter - The Union fort in Charleston Harbor that was fired upon in April of 1861 marking the start of the Civil War.

Freedmen - A formerly enslaved person who is now legally free.

Indigo - Plant used to make blue dye that was a popular cash crop in the American south during the early Antebellum period.

Penn School - One of the first schools for the formerly enslaved, located on St. Helena Island, started by Laura Towne and Ellen Murray.

Plantation - A place where a large amount of a crop is grown for money using enslaved labor.

Port Royal Experiment - The first 53 abolitionists moved to Port Royal to oversee the building of schools and hospitals with the federal government. They did this to help the formerly enslaved live on their own for the first time. Hundreds more followed by the end of the war.

Precontact period - A time in history prior to European activity in the Americas.

Reconstruction - A time during and after the Civil War when the states affected by the Civil War began rebuilding and people attempted to

(cont.) address the evils of slavery and the end of the practice.

Sea Island Cotton - Plant grown and sold as a cash crop in the American south during the mid-late antebellum period. The long fibers of sea island cotton made it valuable, and it grew best in the warm wet conditions such as those found in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia.

Shell Midden - A large pile of shell, animal bone, pottery, and possibly ash from Native American activity over 4,000 years ago.

Sherd - A piece of broken pottery or ceramic.

Tabby - A mixture of lime and shell kind of like concrete; modern tabby consists of lime, water, shell, Portland cement, and sand.

Union - The states that stayed part of the United States during the Civil War, fighting against the states' rights to secede and later against the right to enslavement.

Yamasee War - A war from 1715-1717 between the English Colonists and the Yamasee with their allies in the American southeast.

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Name: Laura Smalls

Birthday: Feb. 27, 1974

Species: Barking Tree Frog (*Dryophytes gratiosus*)

Home: Fort Frederick Heritage Preserve,

Beaufort County, South Carolina

Hobbies: Playing leapfrog, singing, guiding tours, and sharing history and culture



Your Visit to Fort Frederick

Date: _____ Time: _____

Who are you with? _____

What is the weather like? _____

What plants and animals do you see? _____

What did you learn? How do you feel? _____



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