

# Wormsloe Plantation: cultural Landscape Laboratory



Work Progress Report

March 2013

## Background

During the summer of 2010, the University of Georgia (UGA), College of Environment and Design (CED) initiated a long-term, in-depth study of the Wormsloe Landscape, resulting in the formation of the Wormsloe Cultural Landscape Laboratory. The study is a collaborative venture of the Wormsloe Institute for Environmental History (WIEH), the UGA-CED, and other allied disciplines. Together, these partners are working to develop an inspiring vision for the long-term management and interpretation of Wormsloe's significant cultural landscape—an area encompassing unique natural features, rich ethnographic landscapes, and other educational and recreational opportunities. The UGA-CED's partnership seeks to ensure the stewardship of Wormsloe as one of America's most treasured cultural and ecological resources for generations to come, and to advance the site as a leading contributor in the study, interpretation, and outreach of environmental history.

## Work Progress

My work this semester has concentrated on the Wormsloe Foundation Property and its acquisition by the University of Georgia in the near future. The acquisition represents an important step for Wormsloe, enabling research opportunities to continue for future generations.

As part of the acquisition by the university, the Foundation Property will undergo some change in order to expand its research capabilities and accommodation capacities. Dormitory expansions will permit more individuals to stay on the site simultaneously, while a fully-functioning research laboratory will increase research opportunities taking place on site. Internal circulation improvements within the property will also be necessary as site use increases. Such changes will assist Wormsloe in obtaining its goal of becoming a leading contributor in the field of environmental history.

The College of Environment and Design was tasked with facilitating future development decisions for the property. It is imperative that considerable care and attention be paid to how the site is developed in order to avoid causing irreparable harm to site archaeology and culturally-significant features. Structures, utilities, and even circulation improvements must be vetted against all known historic data in order to best determine a proper placement that minimizes disturbance.

## Final Product

The work will build off of the field work that was conducted during the summer of 2011. All significant vegetation was surveyed for the area surrounding the remaining slave cabin, with those locations added to the GIS database. Information collected included identifying tree species, DBH, and overall health. Site features were photographed, and data was collected on material, condition, and size.

In order to further the understanding of the site history, detailed basemaps are currently being compiled for both existing conditions and historic periods in Wormsloe's history, reflecting land use changes within the foundation property and its immediate surroundings.

To date, data has been incorporated from the following:

- Historic Maps (Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, DeRenne Collection)
- Aerials
- Vegetation (Historic Maps, GPS Mapping from CLL and CRMS)
- Structures (Historic Maps, GPS Mapping CLL and CRMS)
- Water Features (LiDAR-derived DEM)
- Property Boundary (1965 Survey)
- Small Scale Features (GPS CLL)
- Circulation (Historic and Existing)
- Land Use (Historic and Current)
- Utilities (GPS CRMS)
- Research Plots (GPS CRMS)

The resulting “periods of significance” maps, stretching from pre-Columbian inhabitation to the present, will offer a glimpse of how the site evolved over time. The maps will also be crucial for determining the locations of lost or unrecognizable features, thus providing a solid base for informing future design decisions.

A historical analysis of the Foundation Property revealed three main periods of significance: Pre-Columbian (prior to European inhabitation), Cotton Culture (1791-1860), and the Family Retreat and Tourism Period (1896-1940).



Liza standing in front of slave cabin / Quarters Field w/Fencing / Slave Cabins (source: Hargrett Manuscript Collection).



Historic Photographs of Slave Cabins (source: Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, DeRenne Collection).