

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF DATAW ISLAND

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
ARCHEOLOGICAL & ARCHITECTURAL INVESTIGATIONS

PREPARED FOR ALCOA SOUTH CAROLINA, INC.



BROCKINGTON AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

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The Historical Development of Dataw Island

Note: This document only contains the three page Summary and Conclusions pertaining to the Archaeological and Architectural Investigations.

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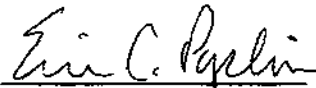
**THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF
DATAW ISLAND**

**ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS
AT THE SAMS PLANTATION COMPLEX**

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CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY

Data recovery investigations at the B.B. Sams and L.R. Sams Plantation sites (38BU581, 38BU496, 38BU507, 38BU515, and 38BU565) were undertaken in an effort to document the historic development of Dataw Island as reflected in the architectural and archaeological artifacts that remain on the island. These investigations were initiated in 1983. Extensive excavations were conducted at the B.B. Sams Plantation Site (38BU581) over a five year period. Analysis of the recovered artifacts were conducted since that date until the spring of 1993.

As noted in Chapter I, this report attempts to address specific research issues appropriate for the kinds of data recovered from the Sams Plantations sites. Brief summaries of how these issues were approached follow.

The construction and settlement history of the B.B. Sams Plantation main house were documented through the analyses of architectural and archaeological data. The main house and the walled enclosure possessed two episodes of construction. The Middle House (or central rooms) of the main house apparently were built in the eighteenth century, possibly as early as 1760. At the latest, it may have been built by William Sams in the early 1780s after he acquired Dataw Island. Then, a major construction episode occurred, probably around 1826 under the direction of B.B. Sams. Variations in tabby construction techniques were noticeable but not significant, probably due to the nearly complete renovation of the Middle House in the 1820s. Artifact distributions within the rooms of the main house demonstrated that earlier deposits were present, particularly to the rear and east side of the Middle House. This distribution would be in keeping with refuse disposal patterns noted by South (1977) for eighteenth century houses in the region. Thus, B.B. Sams renovations of the main house and the surrounding areas disrupted and disturbed artifact deposits associated with the earlier occupations of 38BU581. Few late nineteenth century artifacts are present in the main house, supporting the historical accounts of the abandonment of the site in the 1860s and its destruction by fire soon thereafter.

Efforts to identify components within the artifacts recovered from the main house were not as successful as anticipated. However, analysis of relative ceramic costs among creamwares, pearlwares/whitewares, and ironstones indicated that the early to mid-nineteenth century occupation of the house (B.B. Sams) possessed the more expensive ceramic vessels than those employed by earlier residents (William Sams and others). The late nineteenth century types retain the relative costs of the early/mid-nineteenth century types.

Functional roles of each room or component of the main house could not be clearly defined. J.J. Sams' (n.d.) memoirs provide descriptions of how most of the rooms were employed. Artifactual evidence to support or refute these functions were ambiguous.

Diachronic changes in the occupation of the main house could not be interpreted from the artifacts recovered.

The functions of the attached outbuildings were documented fairly well by their associated artifact assemblages. A history of occupation suggests that the area around Structure I probably served as an eighteenth century activity area within the site. Structure IV also may have been used during the early occupation of the site. Structure I was interpreted as a kitchen as a result of historical accounts and the artifacts present. The other structures attached to the tabby enclosure appear to represent residences, presumably of slaves who served the main house or nearby plantation facilities. Structures IV and VII witnessed some variation from the other residences. Structure IV was slightly larger and possessed the highest density of faunal remains after Structure I (the kitchen). Possibly, Structure IV served as a food preparation area for Structure VII or other nearby residences. Structure VII possessed no chimney but possessed a similar artifact assemblage as the other residences along the tabby enclosure. Possibly, this structure served as a communal residence for unmarried male or female slaves.

The functions of other buildings at 38BU581 generally were supported by the artifacts recovered. Structure VIII was interpreted as a dairy or storage facility. Artifacts recovered from this structure display higher frequencies of utilitarian vessels. The West Room of this structure also was built before the adjoining East Rooms. Ceramics recovered from the rooms of Structure VIII support an eighteenth century construction date for the West Room. Structure X, similar in size and plan to the slave residences on the eastern wall of the enclosure, was suggested by Lepionka (1988) to represent an overseer's house. Ceramics recovered from Structure X display higher relative costs than those from any other structure. The ceramic assemblage from Structure X also displays the highest density of later ceramic types. These data support the interpretation of this structure as the residence of an individual of higher social standing than the slave residences. An overseer or driver would certainly fill such a role.

Comparisons between the slave residences at 38BU581 and its associated slave settlements (38BU496, 38BU507, and 38BU496) indicate few differences between the kinds of vessels and the relative cost of vessels associated with each. This suggests that all of B.B. Sams slaves had equal access to ceramic vessels and other commodities. The main house and kitchen do display greater diversity in ceramic and vessel types. However, socioeconomic indicators are fairly equal among all structures at 38BU581 and the outlying slave settlements. The occupation dates for the outlying settlements appear to vary, possibly in relation to B.B. Sams' renovations of the 38BU581 main house.

Comparisons between the L.R. Sams Plantation residence at 38BU515 and those associated with the B.B. Sams Plantation suggest that L.R. Sams' slaves possessed less expensive ceramic vessels than the slaves of his brother. The occupation period for 38BU515 appears to correspond well with the subdivision of Dataw Island by L.R. and B.B. Sams and the hurricane of 1893.

Artifact assemblages associated with the slave residences on Dataw Island possess few traits that are expected to be associated with African American sites. Vessel types are

nearly identical to those recovered from the main house and kitchen at 38BU581. The relative cost of vessels is also quite similar, and higher than many sites in the region. These data suggest that the slaves on Dataw Island had developed lifeways fairly similar to their owners, the Sams family, at least as these lifeways are reflected in the refuse from their former residences. The generally late date of occupation (1820s-1850s) for these sites may account for much of this apparent acculturation. The relative size of the slave population on Dataw Island also may have contributed to a rapid assimilation into Euro-American lifeways.

Finally, B.B. Sams would be described as a middle sized planter, based on his holdings on Dataw Island. However, ceramic vessel assemblages from his residences and his slave houses display fairly high relative costs. This suggests that Sams was willing to invest portions of his income in the material culture of his laborers and his country home. As noted above, L.R. Sams does not appear to have purchased vessels of equal value for his slaves as B.B. Sams. Perhaps this attests to the relative wealth of the two brothers beyond Dataw Island.

In closing, this report culminates over ten years of effort on the part of ALCOA South Carolina, Inc. to document the historic development of Dataw Island. This effort has involved innumerable individuals, all of whom provided information that contributed to the present report. Given the great length of time and the variation in personnel throughout the course of the project, the results of the analyses as presented herein provide an interpretation of the development of the island that could not be acquired through other sources. As such, this research provides a major contribution to the growing body of data concerning plantations in the South Carolina Low Country and beyond.