

# **Crowfield and Broomhall: Early Research at Two Eighteenth Century Goose Creek Plantations**

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## Preface

This monograph presents a summary of historical and archaeological research on two plantations, Broomhall and Crowfield, in the Goose Creek vicinity of Berkeley County, South Carolina. To some extent this discussion is superceded by more extensive archaeological studies that were conducted on these two plantations and reported by Trinkley and his colleagues (Trinkley et al. 1992, 1996, 2003). The earlier research did, however, establish many important aspects about the plantation sites, including their archaeological extent, areas of significance, as well as samples of the material culture from various loci within these sites. Early survey work by archaeologists working in the 1980s identified many previously unknown resources on the plantations, including housing for the enslaved, other dependencies, and the remnants of an extensive rice irrigation network. The written reports on this early historical and archaeological work was not widely distributed, as typical for many of the cultural resource management (CRM) projects of that era. The projects at Broomhall and Crowfield were funded by Westvaco Development Corporation, South Carolina Department of Highways and Public Transportation, and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Archaeological groups involved in the work include the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Garrow & Associates, Inc., Law Environmental, Inc., Chicora Foundation, Inc. and the LAMAR Institute, Inc. This discussion presents a summary of the major findings from this period of research, particularly those made by the author as a result of work performed in 1987 (Byrne 1987; Elliott 1987). This monograph was partially derived from a presentation, which was given by Daniel T. Elliott, Robert S. Webb, Mary E. Gantt, and Eric C. Poplin at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Society of South Carolina, March 21, 1994, Columbia, S.C.(Elliott et al. 1994).

## Introduction

In the mid-1700s the Goose Creek area of South Carolina contained many rice plantations. This report focuses on two of these—Broomhall and Crowfield. Of these, greater emphasis is placed on Crowfield plantation, which is the better known and more researched.

More than one writer has commented on the elaborate house and garden plan of Crowfield plantation. Cothran (1995:23-24) wrote, ““Located on the Cooper River, [William] Middleton built a brick manor house along with 20 acres of formal gardens and ornamental grounds. The plan of Crowfield was reminiscent of an early English Country estate with fine house and gardens that were laid out in an elegant fashion so as to convey the social and economic position enjoyed by its owner. Its reputation soon became famous throughout America and abroad.” Eliza Lucas Pinckney visited several Goose Creek plantations as a young woman in May 1743 and wrote to her friend, Miss Bartlett in London, providing this detailed description of Crowfield plantation,

“The first we arrived at was Crow-field, Mr. Wm. Middletons seat where we spent a most agreeable week. The house stands a mile from, but in sight of the road, and makes a very handsome appearance; as you draw nearer new beauties discover themselves, first the fruitful Vine mantling up the wall loading with delicious Clusters; next a spacious bason in the midst of a large green presents itself as you enter the gate that leads to the house, which is neatly finished; the rooms well contrived and elegantly furnished. From the back door is a spacious walk a thousand feet long; each side of which nearest the house is a grass plat enlaid in a Serpentine manner with flowers. Next to that on the right hand is what immediately struck my rural taste, a thicket of young tall live oaks where a variety of Airy Chorristers pour forth their melody; and my darling, the mocking bird, joined in the artless Concert and enchanted me with his harmony. Opposite on the left hand is a large square boeing green sunk a little below the level of the rest of the garden with a walk quite round composed of a double row of fine large flowering Laurel and Catulpas which form both shade and beauty.

My letter will be of unreasonable length if I dont pass over the mounts, Wilderness, etc., and come to the bottom of this charming spott where is a large fish pond with a mount rising out of the middle—the top of which is level with the dwelling house and upon it is a roman temple. On each side of this are other large fish ponds properly disposed which form a fine prospect of water from the house. Beyond this are the smiling fields dressed in Vivid green. Here Ceres and Pomona joyn hand in hand to crown the hospitable board” (Pinckney 1997:60-61).

Goose Creek, a tributary of the Cooper River, was one of the most important and influential regions in colonial South Carolina (Heitzier 1983). History records many important plantations in Goose Creek, among them Otranto, the Elms, Fredericks, but in the mid-1980s only two neighboring plantations, Crowfield and Broomhall had received any significant archaeological study. This paper attempts to summarize early advances in archaeological knowledge of these two plantations in the Goose Creek region.

European colonization of the region was begun in the 1670s by Barbadians of English ancestry, followed by a significant influx of French Huguenot refugees after 1682. The parish of St. James Goose Creek was created in 1706 and by 1720 it contained an estimated population of 2,562 people, including 535 free men and 2027 slaves. The parish was the most involved in agriculture of the South Carolina parishes and it boasted 107 tax payers, 153,276 taxable acres or 8 percent of the taxpayers and 13 percent of the developed land in the colony. An upland (or nontidal) rice industry was established on Goose Creek by 1700, supplemented by naval stores and indigo production.

Rice cultivation was a labor intensive enterprise, but one with which the African slaves were already familiar.

Ladson Road, formerly the main road to Dorchester, is located on the south end of the tract and the tract is about 12 miles northwest of Charleston. Two arms of Huckhole Swamp, formerly Deas Swamp, form a “Y” in the approximate center of the tract. Elevations range from 7-51 feet above sea level and the area is beyond the main influence of tidal activity, except during hurricanes and major storms. The tract contains prime farmland with Duplin, Goldsboro, and Norfolk soils (Long 1980). The area receives over 47 inches of rain annually.

Historical and archaeological attention began in the late nineteenth century with the writings of Henry A. M. Smith who visited several plantation ruins in Goose Creek, including Crowfield and Broomhall (Smith 1928). Importantly, Smith's observations were made prior to the 1886 earthquake, which was centered not far from Goose Creek near Summerville. Langdon Cheves, III provided a brief description of Crowfield Hall in 1913. A. T. S. Stoney made scaled drawings of it in 1938, which were published in Gaillard Stoney's *Plantations of the Carolina Low Country* that same year. Figure 1 shows Stoney's plan of Crowfield with an approximate scale added.

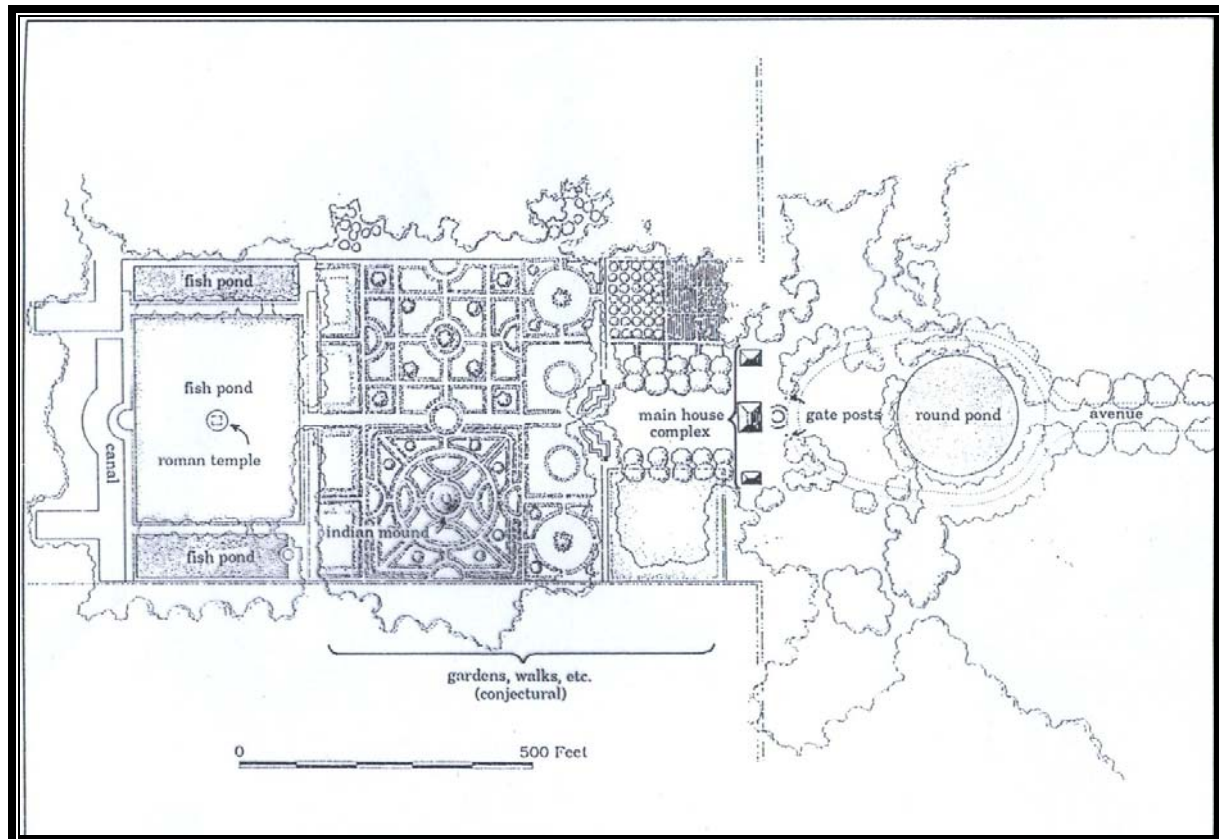


Figure 1. Plan of Crowfield (Elliott 1987, adapted from Stoney 1938).

Crowfield Hall was recorded by the National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey in 1940 (HABS 1940). The HABS documentation included the compilation of a brief history of the plantation, the preparation of scaled drawings of the elevations and plan of Crowfield Hall, as well as a series of photographic views of the building ruins. Examples of the HABS documents are shown in Figures 2 -4.



Figure 2. Crowfield Hall Ruins, 1940 (HABS 1940).

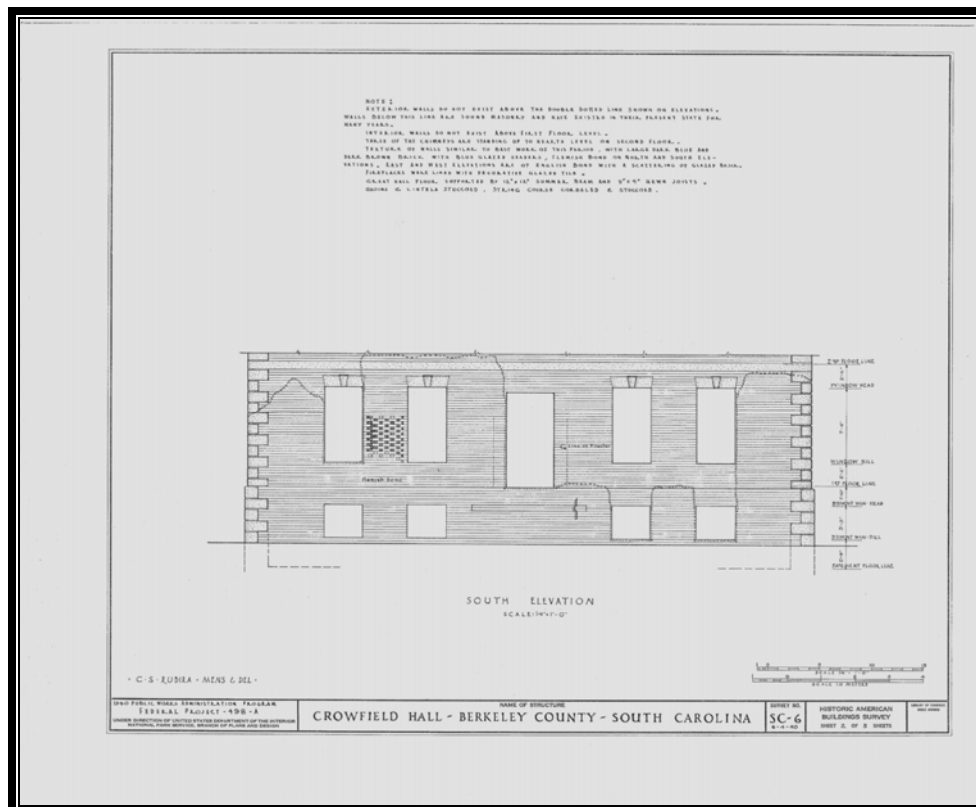


Figure 3. Crowfield Hall Ruins, South Elevation (HABS 1940).

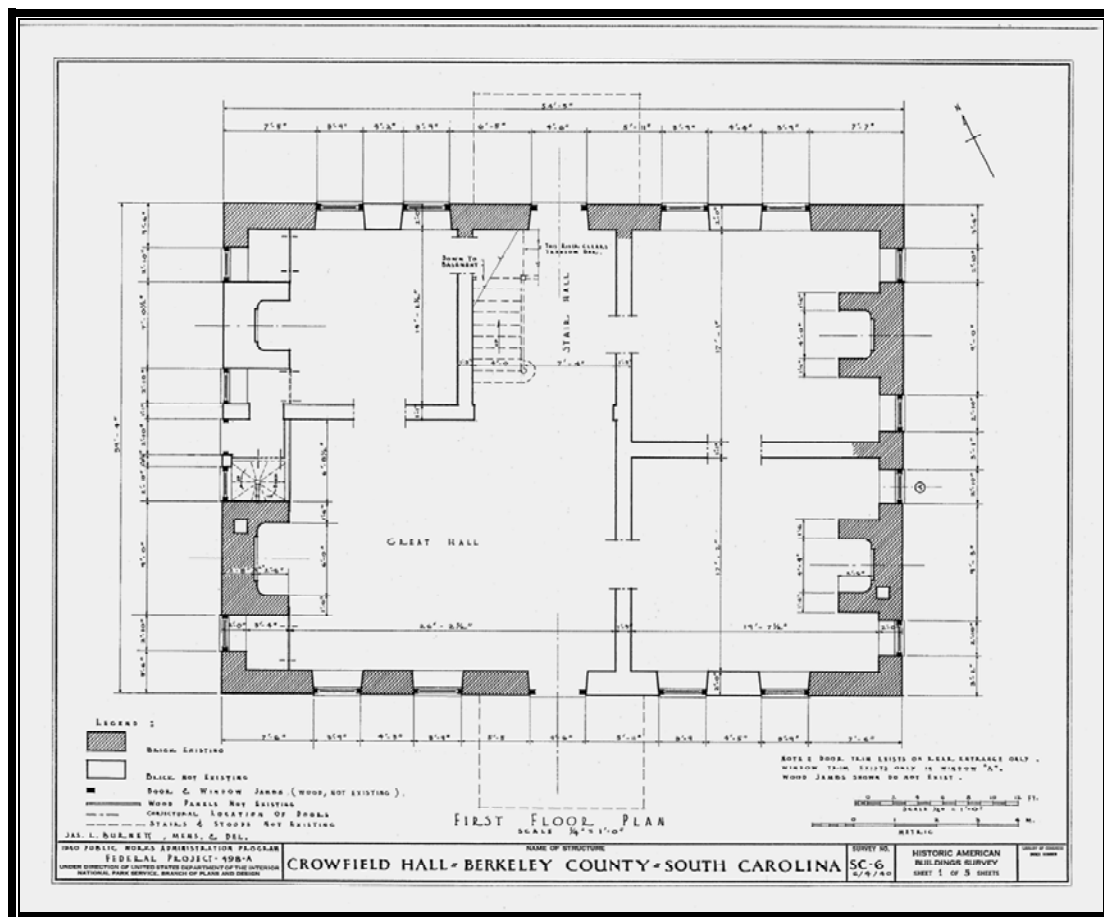


Figure 4. Crowfield Hall, Plan (HABS 1940).

Archaeologists first visited Crowfield in 1974. University of South Carolina archaeologist Travis Bianchi recorded the Crowfield Hall manor house and adjacent ruins, which were recorded as state site 38Bk103. Four years later archaeologist Eric Poplin and others with SCIAA, conducted a reconnaissance of the Crowfield tract, recording four sites, photographing and digging a few shovel tests at Crowfield (Poplin et al. 1978). A highway survey for the proposed Ladson-Goose Creek Connector by the South Carolina Department of Highways and Public Transportation traversed the northwestern portion of the Crowfield plantation and the Crowfield site was visited but no excavation was conducted (Trinkley and Tippett 1979). Broomhall manor house (38Bk600) was recorded in 1982 by Carl Steen, as was an associated slave dwelling (38Bk601) that has since been destroyed. The Crowfield tract was extensively logged in 1985 and a gravel road was cut through the Broomhall site, thereby destroying a large section of the main house ruin and exposing its cellar. The exposed cellar was filled with eighteenth century midden and building rubble.

Tommy Charles, of the SCIAA, conducted another reconnaissance of the Crowfield Tract in 1986 (Charles 1986). The South Carolina SHPO's office became involved and their archaeologist (Patricia Criddlebaugh) requested a cultural resources survey of the property, which resulted in subsequent CRM studies by Garrow & Associates, Inc. In 1987, intensive archaeological survey of the Crowfield Plantation Development Tract for the Westvaco Development Corporation was conducted by Garrow & Associates, Inc. and a report was prepared (Elliott 1987). Elliott also

prepared a nomination package for Crowfield Plantation at that time, which was submitted to Westvaco, but the official nomination was not pursued by the landowner.

The survey examined 1672 acres located on the Huckhole Swamp drainage, an upper tributary of Goose Creek and part of the Cooper River system. The area was covered by systematic shovel testing and 33 sites and 23 isolated finds were found, including nine historic sites that were considered potentially significant. Four sites yielded important colonial information including slave quarters associated with Crowfield and Broomhall. A detailed survey also was conducted on the Crowfield site itself.

Concurrent with the Crowfield survey was the testing of Broomhall Plantation, also by Garrow & Associates, which included site mapping, systematic shovel testing, and test excavation. A management summary of the work was prepared by Bryne (1987) but a full report of the testing project was never completed. Garrow & Associates also prepared a NRHP nomination for the Crowfield site during 1987. The data recovery option for Crowfield, Broomhall, and other NRHP eligible sites on the tract was not taken by HUD and the Westvaco developers, following a heated debate involving the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and others.

A limited archaeological data recovery operation at Broomhall was undertaken by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History under the direction of Patricia Cridlebaugh and Michael Trinkley of the Chicora Foundation, Inc. Cridlebaugh's untimely death, and a lack of funds, have delayed the reporting of this work. The Chicora Foundation secured a research grant to complete the analysis of the Broomhall collection, but a final report is not yet available (Debbi Hacker personal communication March 3, 1994).

Archaeologists with Law Environmental, Inc., conducted test excavations at the Crowfield Slave Quarter (38Bk1011) and the southern end of Crowfield site (38Bk103) in 1990, which was documented in a technical report (Webb and Gantt 1991). Their testing included additional archival research, excavation of 757 shovel tests placed on a 20 by 20 foot grid and 16, five by five foot test units. They identified a service area as containing a storage barn, possible smokehouse, and at least two other buildings. Webb and Gantt recommended additional work on the site.

Trinkley described the work of the Chicora Foundation, Inc. in the interior terrace garden immediately north of Crowfield Hall (Trinkley 1993). Their research was conducted after the golf course, which surrounds a portion of the Crowfield ruins was constructed. Fill dirt deposits in the garden were identified and the privy was sampled. The ceramic assemblage recovered from the Crowfield privy excavation yielded a MCD of 1751. Chicora's work discovered that the garden had been in cultivation prior its construction (Williams 1993).

Archaeologists Dan Elliott, Rita Folsie Elliott, and Theresa Hamby made an informal visit the Crowfield tract during the summer of 1993. They observed that Broomhall Plantation and its slave quarter had been destroyed by housing and road construction and the Crowfield Plantation ruins were surrounded by a golf course.

## Broomhall

Broomhall is the older of the two plantations on the Crowfield Plantation tract. The land was originally part of a 1000 acre grant to Edward Middleton, a Barbadian planter in 1680. In 1684 he sold the land to Robert Mallock, a merchant, who left it to his son Robert Mallock, Jr. by 1706. Mallock sold it in 1708 to Moses Madina who then sold it to Thomas Broughton who conveyed it to Benjamin Gibbes in 1711. Gibbes was probably the first to reside on the plantation, and it was he who named it Broomhall after a home of his ancestors in England. Gibbes died in 1721 and left the plantation to his wife and daughters. His wife remarried Peter Taylor, then she died by 1732 and Taylor acquired his stepdaughter's portion of the plantation. Taylor owned it until 1765 when he died leaving Broomhall to his brother Thomas Smith. Smith had conveyed a portion of the tract to his son Peter Smith by 1779 and by 1799 Peter had acquired total ownership. The 1814 will of Peter Smith dictated that the land was to be sold, but this wish was apparently unheeded as Henry Middleton Smith, one of Peter Smith's heirs, resided there until the 1850s. His wife Elizabeth sold it to Arthur S. Gibbes in 1853, and in 1855 it went to Henry A. Middleton. Broomhall had more than a dozen slaves in the 1760s and 21 slaves by the 1850s. By 1865, Broomhall manor was already abandoned when it was accidentally burned by deer hunters. By 1887 Middleton sold the lands including Broomhall.

A total of 328 shovel tests placed at 25 foot intervals and five 5 by 5 foot test units were excavated at Broomhall (38Bk600) during testing by Garrow & Associates, Inc. A total of 283 shovel tests contained artifacts. Nine building ruins were identified on the surface, as were other features including two Oak-lined avenues, terraced formal garden area, reflecting pond, and a spring house. Five of the nine buildings were tentatively identified as slave housing. One additional possible structure was identified during testing. Artifacts near five structures date before and after the American Revolution. Mean ceramic date estimates from three test units at Broomhall ranged from 1791 to 1828, and the overall site dated to 1805 (Bryne 1987; Elliott 1987).

The Broomhall slave quarter (38Bk985) was located immediately south of Broomhall site. It was covered by systematic shovel tests spaced at 25 m and 40 m intervals, and 35 tests yielded artifacts. The site contains remains of an earthen mill dam, a silted-in mill pond containing a midden of eighteenth and nineteenth century artifacts, wheel pit, grinding stone, a domestic habitation area, and an a non-domestic area, possibly containing plantation support buildings. A MCD calculation of a small pottery assemblage (n=55) produced a date of 1821.

## Crowfield

Crowfield plantation was created in 1730, one year after the land was conveyed by Arthur Middleton to his eldest son William as a gift. Eliza Lucas provided a flowery contemporary description of the plantation in 1743. Middleton owned the property until 1754 when he left Carolina and conveyed it to William Walters. Walters owned Crowfield, as well as other plantations in Carolina, and upon his death in 1767 left it to his daughter Elizabeth. Elizabeth married William Haggatt and conveyed Crowfield to him in 1770. Haggatt owned other Carolina plantations and he probably did not reside at Crowfield. Haggatt's 1773 will left Crowfield to his wife Elizabeth, and in 1774 it was bought by Samuel Carne, who sold in 1776 to Rawlins Lowndes for £2000. The state of the plantation declined drastically during the war years, as it was vulnerable to raids. Lowndes lived at Crowfield for a time, but in 1782 he moved to another plantation and in 1784 sold Crowfield to John Middleton for £3800. Middleton died the same year and the land went to his son John Middleton who owned it until his death in 1826, when it went to Henry A. Middleton. By 1845, Crowfield was no longer functioning as an agricultural plantation. Crowfield Hall was a shell of a manor house in 1886, when the remains were devastated by a major earthquake.

The Crowfield Plantation site contained a massive brick ruin of the manor house, flanker brick ruins on either side of the main house, a reflecting pond, three fish ponds, an imitation "Indian Mound" made on top of an early eighteenth century tar kiln, other small brick ruins of unknown function, and terraced garden features (Figure 5). The survey of the Crowfield site included limited site mapping, and excavation of shovel tests spaced at 25 meter intervals, of which 69 positive tests were found, and excavation of five 2 by 2 foot test units. Four of the test units were placed near the manor house and flankers, while the fifth was placed north of the main house near an unidentified brick building ruin. The eastern flanker appears to have burned. A refuse pit, postmold, and rich midden deposit were found near the manor house and flanker ruins. A simple species list of identified fauna include cow, pig, sheep or goat, bear, oyster, and unidentified bird, mammal, fish, and turtle. Artifact frequency over much of the site was surprisingly low.

A mean ceramic date (MCD) of 1773 and a tobacco pipe stem date of 1758 was obtained by Elliott for Crowfield. Trinkley obtained a MCD of 1751 from the Crowfield privy. Fewer than five artifacts dated after 1800, and primary occupation of the site was from 1730 until the American Revolution (Elliott 1987; Williams 1993).

Site 38Bk1011 contains the remains of the primary slave quarter associated with Crowfield. At least three buildings were identified within this site during testing by Webb and his colleagues (Webb and Gantt 1991). An arbitrary northern site boundary was established for the quarter since it was contiguous with the Crowfield Hall site. The slave quarter at 38Bk1011 produced a TPQ of approximately 1762.

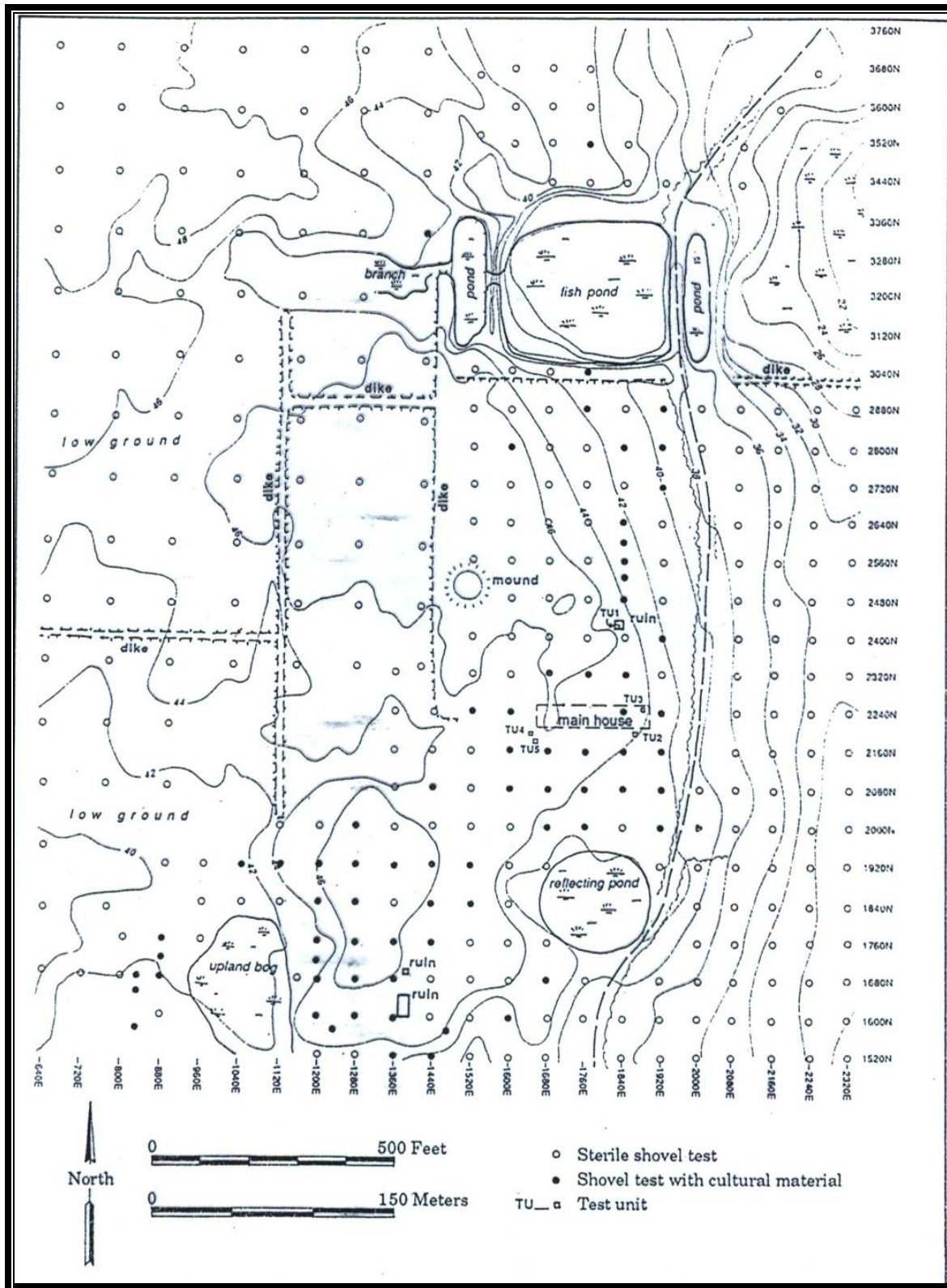


Figure 5. Crowfield (38Bk103) Plan (Elliott 1987).

Elliott and his colleagues documented many miles of rice dikes, ditches, and artificially constructed reservoirs that were once part of Broomhall and Crowfield plantations. The rice irrigation network was defined through a combined use of field observations and examination of a detailed aerial photograph (Elliott 1987). By one estimate a 500 acre rice field required 60 miles of dikes and ditches. The Crowfield tract contains visible remnants of more than 70 miles of dikes and ditches, and doubtless many more miles have been obscured by erosion and development. A composite view of these improvements is shown in Figure 6. Although the age of these earthworks was not determined, we assume that most were in place by the mid-eighteenth century, possibly with modifications continuing into the early nineteenth century. Construction of this system was a herculean task, and one that probably was completed in less than a decade.

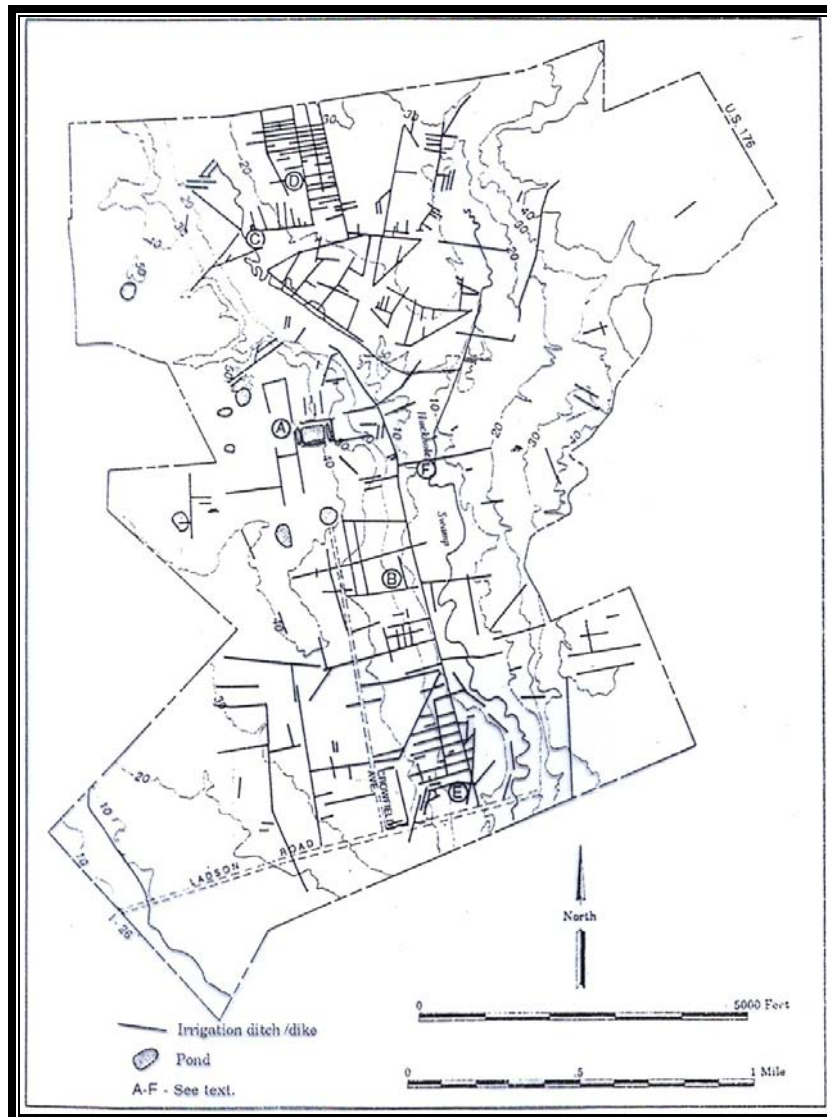


Figure 6. Surviving Rice Ditches and Dikes at Broomhall and Crowfield Plantations (Elliott 1987).

## Comparison of the Two Plantations

There are many similarities between Crowfield and Bloomhall plantations. The plantations are approximately 3300 feet apart in similar topographic settings at the headwaters of Goose Creek. Crowfield was several hundred acres larger, but at their peak, both covered more than 1,000 acres. Both plantations experienced multiple owners of English ancestral stock and not all of the owners lived on site. Both had sizeable slave populations, Broomhall had nearly two dozen by the early nineteenth century. By the mid nineteenth century, both parcels were owned by a single individual, Henry A. Middleton. Both were upland rice plantations during their glory, but Crowfield was gone by .

Both plantations exhibited use of bilateral symmetry in their plan. Both plantations were accessed by long straight avenues oriented along cardinal directions, but both of Broomhall's avenues extend further than Crowfield's. Broomhall's eastern avenue is the longest, extending 6,600 feet from the main house to the public road. Its southern avenue extends for 5,000 feet to the banks of Goose Creek. Crowfield's southern avenue extends 4,700 feet to the old Dorchester Road, but it may have continued on an irregular course to the banks of Goose Creek. Crowfield's avenue may have served a dual function for accessing land and water transportation routes, while Broomhall required two paths. Heavy cargo, such as barrels of rice, may have been more easily transported by water, hence the access to Goose Creek, while the plantation owners used the land route to access their homes by carriage. The placement of Crowfield's slave quarter along the approach to the main house may have been a compromise decision based on the economic benefits of building only one avenue, whereas Broomhall's slaves were relegated to the back avenue. Crowfield's quarter was located on the northern approach to Crowfield Hall, whereas Broomhall's slave population lived behind (south and west) of Broomhall manor.

Many of the obvious slave house ruins at Broomhall may date to the nineteenth century, after the concern for the Georgian ideal was waning. Trinkley states that "Crowfield's gardens represent perhaps the earliest example of the transitional classical or early picturesque landscape movement in the United States and are thought to have served as a structural model for the widely acclaimed Middleton Plantation gardens" (Williams 1993:20). Broomhall's original plantation layout predates that of Crowfield, and indeed, may have served as the original model for subsequent plantations in the Americas.

Both had large manor houses, flanker support buildings, reflecting pools, rectangular fish ponds, terraced gardens, and other unidentified brick buildings. The main plantation complex, measured as the distance from reflecting pool to fish pond at Crowfield is more than 1,400 feet, while the distance at Broomhall was less than 800 feet. The north-south extent of Crowfield, including the slave quarter, measured more than 2,300 feet, whereas Broomhall measured more than 1800 feet. The two plantations shared some of the rice irrigation features on Huckhole Swamp. The land around the main plantation complex was extensively modified by dikes, ditches, ridged rice fields, and artificial ponds. Crowfield was built on slightly higher ground than Broomhall, but the "miasma factor" was probably high on both sites and they were probably not healthy places to live.

Crowfield had several unique features including a large imitation "Indian Mound" built on top of an early eighteenth century tar kiln. Crowfield Hall was made entirely of brick, while Broomhall only had brick on the lower course and basement.

Broomhall had a grist mill and mill pond separating the southern slave quarter from the main complex. Broomhall had a spring house. Crowfield displayed none of these features.

Broomhall, built around 1711 was constructed nearly 20 years earlier than Crowfield, which was built in 1730. Both plantations were abandoned by the mid nineteenth century, but Crowfield was probably abandoned many years before Broomhall and this is reflected in the artifacts. Crowfield has yielded MCDs of 1732, 1751, and 1773 and a tobacco pipe stem date of 1758, while Crowfield quarter produced MCDs of 1736 from test units and 1741 from shovel testing and pipe stem dates ranging from 1738 to 1743. Nineteenth century artifacts were extremely rare at Crowfield Hall and slave quarter. The complex was probably abandoned sometime between 1790 and 1800. The ceramic assemblage from Broomhall produced an overall MCD of 1805 and ceramics from Broomhall's slave quarter gave a MCD of 1821. The Broomhall site contains nearly equal amounts of eighteenth and nineteenth century artifacts.

There were significant differences in the types of artifacts found on the two plantations. Some of these differences may be due to the periods the sites were occupied, while others may reflect status or ethnic variations. The owners of both plantations were in the South Carolina elite and to a certain extent this is reflected by the pottery assemblage. There were at least 28 varieties of pottery recovered from Crowfield, including three types of porcelain. European pottery comprised only 23 percent of the ceramic assemblage, while Colonoware made up 77 percent at Crowfield Hall. Porcelain accounted for slightly more than 2 percent of the wares at Crowfield Hall. The Broomhall site shovel test pottery assemblage had far less colonoware relative to Crowfield with 48 percent. Kitchen glass comprised more than 18 percent of the kitchen group artifacts at Crowfield, while at Broomhall it made up 33 percent of the kitchen group. Artifact tabulations from test units at Broomhall are unavailable.

The pottery assemblage at Crowfield slave quarter was overwhelmingly colonoware, which made up 95 to 96 percent of the assemblage. Colonoware on the Broomhall slave quarter comprised nearly 52 percent, while porcelain made up less than one percent of the pottery. Broomhall's slave quarter contained more European ceramics than the Crowfield quarter. Kitchen glass was 11 percent of the kitchen class artifacts at Crowfield, and just over 38 percent of the kitchen artifact class at Broomhall. The early data indicated that Broomhall's enslaved had more access to imported goods than did Crowfield's.

Window glass outnumbered nails by more than 2 to 1 at Crowfield Hall, whereas at Broomhall the reverse was true, with nails outnumbering window glass 3 to 1. In the Crowfield quarter, nails outnumbered window glass more than 28 to 1. Broomhall quarter had a moderate amount of nails, but no window glass. From this we can surmise that few of the field housing for the enslaved at either plantation had glass windows. The domestic slave housing at both probably did have glass windows.

## Summary

Figure 7 shows a post-development view of the Crowfield Hall ruins, as depicted on an internet website for the Crowfield Golf Club. Today most of the land that was formerly Broomhall and Crowfield plantations is a series of housing subdivisions, golf courses, and other service-related facilities. The archaeological fabric of cultural landscapes for these two rice plantations has been largely obliterated. In the nearly two decades that have passed since the initial systematic archaeological survey of this section of the Goose Creek watershed, many other archaeological sites and rice irrigation tracts have been transformed for modern urban use. Archaeological studies were performed at some of these sites, but mostly this development took place without archaeological study. The cultural resources in those areas are now gone and we are left with little idea of what had existed. This loss of the resource base, without adequate inventory or assessment, is only partially offset by the studies that were done in the Goose Creek area, including the work at Broomhall and Crowfield.



Figure 7. Crowfield Hall Ruins, Modern View.

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