**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM**

**TYPE all entries – complete applicable sections**

1. **NAME**
   - COMMON: Fig Island
   - AND/OR HISTORIC: (38CH42)

2. **LOCATION**
   - STREET AND NUMBER: 
   - CITY OR TOWN: Edisto Island
   - STATE: South Carolina

3. **CLASSIFICATION**
   - CATEGORY (Check One)
     - District
     - Site
     - Structure
     - Object
   - OWNERSHIP
     - Public
     - Private
     - Both
   - PUBLIC ACQUISITION
     - In Process
     - Being Considered
   - STATUS
     - Occupied
     - Unoccupied
     - Preservation work in progress
   - ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
     - Yes:
       - Restricted
     - No

   PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)
   - Agricultural
   - Government
   - Park
   - Private Residence
   - Religious
   - none
   - Transportation
   - Other (Specify)

4. **OWNER OF PROPERTY**

5. **LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**
   - COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
     - County Courthouse
   - CITY OR TOWN: Charleston
   - STATE: South Carolina

6. **REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**
   - TITLE OF SURVEY:
     - none
   - DATE OF SURVEY:
     - OTHER
   - DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
     - Other (Specify)
   - STREET AND NUMBER:
   - CITY OR TOWN:
The Fig Island site consists of three prehistoric Indian shell middens with evidence of occupation. It contains a great quantity of oyster and other mollusc shell and pottery sherds. Shell has been removed in the past along the north end of the midden, but a large, presumably deep, deposit remains. Fig Island 2 is a midden deposited in a ring shape in the crest to crest and stands to a maximum height of four feet above a flat central area. The rim, virtually intact, contains abundant shell, animal and fish bone, and pottery sherds. Fig Island 2 is currently under excavation by the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina (July and August 1970). Fig Island 3 slightly less than half this ring remains.
The Fig Island Shell Rings, Nos. 2 and 3, are two of 20 or more prehistoric shell rings located from the central coast of South Carolina to the central coast of Georgia, a distance of about 150 miles. All are believed to date early in the second millennium B.C., and they contain some of the earliest pottery known in North America. Only very limited excavations have been undertaken in a few of these rings. Consequently, the function of the ring shape is unknown, although the rings appear to be carefully planned and systematically deposited structures. As such, they also present one of the earliest records of sedentary life among people who must have lived entirely by foraging. The shell rings can be expected to yield valuable information about past habitats on the coast, both from their rich content of food refuse and from their relationships to modern environments. Most are situated about 5 feet above present mean sea level, but the relationship to sea level at the time of occupation is unknown. It seems unlikely that sea level was a great deal higher about 4000 years ago than at present from the evidence of these lowlying rings. An unknown number of shell ring sites has been lost to marine erosion and to borrowing shell for road building; many of the remaining rings show the effects of unauthorized digging.

Fig Island represents a complex of at least two rings (Nos. 2 and 3), and possibly one or more others on No. 1 which are obscured by shell removal, overlying deposits, or dense vegetation. Other shell ring complexes are located at Sapelo Island, Georgia (3 rings), and Hilton Head Island, S.C. (2 rings). Excavations at Fig Island, now underway, should yield much information about the use of rings and ring complexes, past environments, and so on. Fig Island 2, which is virtually intact, is exceeded in diameter only by the largest shell ring at Sapelo Island, Georgia.
### 10. Geographical Data

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
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Approximate acreage of nominated property:

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11. Form Prepared By

**Name and Title:**
Dr. E. Thomas Hemmings

**Organization:**
Institute of Archeology and Anthropology

**Street and Number:**
University of South Carolina

**City or Town:**
Columbia

**State:**
South Carolina

**Code:**
39

**Date:**
7-23-70

### 12. State Liaison Officer Certification

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National □ State □ Local □

**Name:**

**Title:**
Director, South Carolina Department Archives and History

**Date:**
August 29, 1970

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

**Signature:**

**Attest:**

**Date:**
OCT 15 1970

**Signature:**

**Date:**
OCT 6 1970