

(X) NOT FOR PUBLICATION

SOUTH CAROLINA INVENTORY FORM FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND
INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES IN A MULTIPLE PROPERTY SUBMISSION

NAME OF MULTIPLE PROPERTY SUBMISSION: Edisto Island Multiple Resource Area

PREFERRED NAME OF PROPERTY: Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend's Tabby Oven Ruins

COMMON NAME OF PROPERTY: Same

LOCATION: [REDACTED]

CLASSIFICATION: Site

[REDACTED]

DESCRIPTION

The Tabby Oven Ruins [REDACTED]

Vegetation at the tabby ovens site consists of herbaceous plants, small trees and shrubs, such as Oak (Quercus) and Cassina (Ilex), and vines. The tabby remains are partially obscured by this vegetation. The most dense vegetation is comprised of shrubs and vines growing within the tabby rubble and along the margins of the ruins.

The site consists of in situ tabby walls and foundations as well as portions of fallen walls and tabby rubble. In situ walls suggest a square structure; however, rubble, humus, and vegetation obscure architectural evidence of fire boxes or ovens. The somewhat eroded tabby walls are comprised of oyster shell and mortar with a greater ratio of shell than mortar.

SIGNIFICANCE

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Archaeology-Historic/Commerce/Women's History

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: L

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend Tabby Oven Ruins are archaeologically significant, as no other extant early nineteenth century tabby ovens have been inventoried in the South Carolina Low Country. The remains represent what was essentially a commercial bakery. Historic documentation indicates the ruins are ovens which were constructed by ca. 1815.(1) Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend, of Bleak Hall on Edisto Island (outbuildings of this plantation listed on 3/7/73), used the ovens to prepare quantities of baked goods which were sold in Charleston. Since her husband, Daniel Townsend, refused to lend financial support to his wife's mission work on Edisto, proceeds from the sale of the baked goods went for this cause, and eventually the building of the Edisto Island Baptist Church (listed 4/1/82), constructed ca. 1818.(2)

Inspired by the sermons of her minister in Charleston, Dr. Richard Furman, Mrs. Townsend began her work on Edisto Island as early as 1807.(3) She was successful in enlisting other women nearby to give their energies in procuring mission funds, culminating in the organization ca. 1811 of the Wadmalaw and Edisto Female Mite Society, reputedly the first such organization in the South.(4) Mrs. Townsend was probably inspired to found this organization after a sermon given by Dr. Furman which made reference to the Boston Mite Society, founded by Mary Webb. In 1812, the Wadmalaw and Edisto Female Mite Society contributed \$122.50 to the missionary fund of the Charleston Baptist Association. Sparks from this society started mission fires among women in Baptist churches all over South Carolina.(5)

Although no archaeological testing has been conducted at the site, there is no evidence that the ruins have been disturbed. Site integrity is good. The site has the potential to yield information pertinent to the construction, form, and function of the ovens/structure in addition to data regarding early nineteenth century domestic and social activities.



FOOTNOTES

(1) Papers of Hephzibah J. Townsend, S. C. Baptist Historical Collection, Furman University, Greenville, S. C.

(2) Charleston Baptist Association, "Minutes of the 79th Anniversary Held at Darlington Court House October 31-November 4, 1829," p. 28; Joe M. King, A History of South Carolina Baptists (Columbia, S. C.: The R. L. Bryan Company, 1964), p. 260.

(3) King, p. 260; Leah Townsend, South Carolina Baptists, 1670-1805 (Florence, S. C.: The Florence Printing Company, 1935), p. 38.

(4) King, p. 260; Loulie Latimer Owens, Saints of Clay, The Shaping of South Carolina Baptists (Columbia, S. C.: The R. L. Bryan Company, 1971), p. 55.

(5) King, p. 260.