

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0698172

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RECEIVED FEB 26 1979

DATE ENTERED MAY 18 1979

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Brown's Ferry Vessel or Black River Boat (38GE57)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Columbia

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2

VICINITY OF

STATE

South Carolina

CODE

045

COUNTY

Richland

CODE

079

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME [REDACTED]

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Current location of Vessel; Registry of Deeds and Mortgages  
Richland County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1401 Sumter Street

CITY, TOWN

Columbia

STATE

South Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Preliminary Report; Hull Construction Features of the Brown's Ferry  
Vessel by J. Richard Steffy, Nautical Archeologist, Texas A&M University

DATE

March 15, 1978

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina

CITY, TOWN

Columbia

STATE

South Carolina 29208

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION  
 EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR  
 DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE  
 UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE  
 ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE August 28, 1976

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This boat is a merchant vessel that sank [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The vessel was in no way associated with the operations of ferrying.

The physical dimensions were developed by Mr. J. Richard Steffy, Ancient Ship Reconstructor, Institute of Nautical Archeology, College Station, Texas and are as follows:

### "Principal Dimensions and Scantlings

Length between perpendiculars (sheer) - 50 feet, 5 inches along the centerline of the kingplank - 45 feet, 9- $\frac{1}{4}$  inches

Breadth, extreme - 14 feet

moulded - 13 feet, 5 inches

Height, bottom of kingplank to sheer amidships - 3 feet, 10- $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

to sheer at bow rabbet - 6 feet, 6- $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

to sheer at stern rabbet - 7 feet, 5- $\frac{1}{4}$  inches

Depth in hold (est.) - 3 feet, 1- $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

Draft, afore and abaft - 2 feet, 10 inches

Burthen - c. 30 tons

Bottom planks, of yellow pine, 4 inches thick

Frames, of oak, floors sided  $\pm$  5 inches, moulded  $\pm$  4 inches

futtocks sided  $\pm$  4 inches, moulded at the head  $\pm$  4 inches,

at the heel  $\pm$  2- $\frac{1}{2}$  inches

Posts, of oak, dimensioned as in text, p. 6-10

planking of pine, 1 inch thick

Wale, of cypress, 3 inches thick  $\pm$  7- $\frac{1}{2}$  inches broad

Keelson, of cypress, moulded 4 inches, sided 12 inches amidships, 10 inches in

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Brown 's Ferry Vessel sank between 1730 and 1740 as indicated by artifacts found on the wreck, i.e. pipes, bottles, etc. (see attached photographs). The vessel itself is probably older judging from several "small square and rectangular wooden patches (that) were found along some seams, especially near the butts. They seemed to have been used to repair split edges, a condition which may have been created during the removal of old caulking" (Steffy, 1978a: 14).

There is only one other vessel that could be compared to the Brown's Ferry Vessel and that is the gundalow Philadelphia on display in the Smithsonian Institution. Mr. Steffy, in comparing the two vessels says "...the only major similarity being that each had a flat bottom. The Philadelphia is hard-chined throughout, is separately framed on bottom and sides, and is of extremely simple design and build. Conditions at Lake Champlain demanded such a craft. The cargo vessel at Brown's Ferry, on the other hand, was both simple and complex in design and construction. It's (the Brown's Ferry Vessel) form was not quickly decided to meet an emergency, but evolved slowly and thoughtfully in a competitive atmosphere" (Steffy 1978a: 20).

Steffy continues, "What is the value of such a small, unimpressive little freighter? In my opinion, it is the most important single nautical discovery in the United States to date. In the first place, it establishes primary evidence for American shipbuilding nearly fifty years earlier than previous discoveries.



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the bow, 8 inches in the stern" (Steffy 1978a: 30).

In addition, she was flat bottomed and keelless. The vessel was hard-chined above the ends and had a soft dead rise amidships.

The present appearance is very similar to the original. The starboard side was intact to the wale, but had been collapsed by the vessel's cargo of bricks thus was removed during recovery prior to raising the hull. The port side has approximately 50% remaining; while the stern is severely damaged.

There is, however, enough left to give a good idea of the stern structure. There is no mast remaining. This was probably removed when she sank in 20 feet of water over 230 years ago.

The vessel was excavated in the summer of 1976. Before it was raised, its cargo of bricks was removed and the vessel was mapped. It was then transported to Columbia, South Carolina for study. Removal to dry land for this purpose was made necessary by the fact that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] While on land, the vessel was kept wet 24 hours a day to prevent deterioration.

After study, the Brown's Ferry Vessel was removed in 1977 to its present site, [REDACTED] and

Anthropology. This was done for the following reasons:

1. The vessel needed to be kept underwater to safely await conservation.

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2. There was no way to protect this valuable and important find from any souvenir seeker or unscrupulous diver with no regard for its historical value.

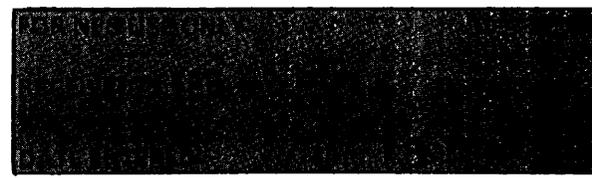
3.

[REDACTED]

The boat will remain at its present position for several years, but may eventually be moved for public display.

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More importantly, this was a merchant hull, built without the anxiety, bureaucracy, and inefficiency often associated with vessels of war. As such, it defines everyday technology in a competitive atmosphere. Additionally, this was a local type--important to any maritime scholar--representing a period and area in which far too little maritime information has been forthcoming.

"The southern colonies had farmland, timber, deep rivers, and seaports. Certainly, South Carolina and neighboring states must have been heavily involved in shipbuilding and waterborne commerce. In some respects, these ventures must have been as impressive as the well-documented maritime ventures of New England and the Chesapeake. Hopefully, the Brown's Ferry vessel will signal the beginning of more fruitful research into those Southern maritime activities." (Steffy 1978a: 25)

Howard Chappelle in The History of American Sailing Ships states, "It has been the fashion to dismiss shipbuilding south of New York as unimportant and underdeveloped in colonial days. This is probably due to a lack of records as compared to New England. (In the case of the Brown's Ferry Vessel, for example, the Institute of Archeology and Anthropology has since 1976 had an archivist searching without success through colonial records for references to the boat.) But the conclusion is ridiculous..." (Chappelle 1935: 8). Mr. Chappelle continues, "Description alone is quite

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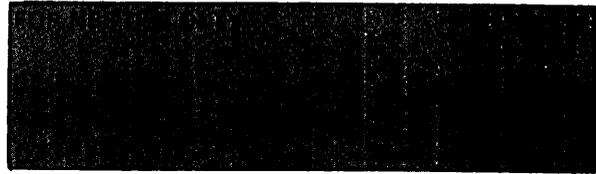
insufficient to give a picture of what colonial vessels were like in appearance and design. Obviously paintings or plans are required. Paintings exist, either in rare ship portraits or in pictures of harbors and towns.

Plans are of far greater assistance and few can be found." (Chapelle 1935: 17).

Because of the Brown's Ferry Vessel, scholars in maritime history have something even more than Howard Chapelle could have hoped for. They have a well preserved hull of an early 18th century merchant vessel to study. Since its recovery, very few alterations have occurred. To Quote Steffy (1978a: 27), "The hull is in such fine condition that conservation, not reconstruction, poses the major obstacle... . One thing is certain--the Brown's Ferry Vessel is far too important a piece of Americana to be neglected. Its secrets of early American technology should be shared by all". "Preservation and reconstruction of the surviving hull members will insure a continuation of new discoveries through the eyes of many scholars for years to come" (Steffy 1978b: 61).

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Chapelle, Howard I.  
1935

The history of American sailing ships. W.W. Norton, New York.

Steffy, Richard J.  
1978a

Preliminary report: hull construction features of the Brown's Ferry vessel. Institute of Archeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, Research Manuscript Series, in preparation.

1978b

Construction details of the Brown's Ferry ship. In Beneath the waters of time. The proceedings of the Ninth Conference on Underwater Archaeology, edited by J. Barto Arnold. Texas Antiquities Commission, Publication 6: 55-61.