

Cultural Resources Investigations at Buford's Massacre Battlefield

Lancaster County, South Carolina



Above left: Brockington archaeologist uses a metal detector on the battlefield site. *Above right:* Interpretive signage designed by Brockington's History Workshop now marks the site of the Waxhaws battlefield.

CLIENT

South Carolina Department of Transportation

In 2006, Brockington conducted a cultural resources survey at the intersection of SC Route 522 and SC Route 9 in Lancaster County as a part of several South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) statewide safety projects. A review of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listings showed the Buford's Massacre, or Waxhaws, Battlefield district is adjacent to the project area and includes a mass grave with the remains of about 84 Virginia Continental troops killed during the battle on May 29, 1780. The Battle of the Waxhaws was a significant event during the Revolutionary War in which retreating American forces from Charleston were overwhelmed by British cavalry thereby inflaming sympathy to the Patriot cause. Lancaster County purchased the two-acre tract in 1940 for its maintenance and protection as a small historic park. The project corridor was redesigned to avoid the historic district; however, Brockington advised that as the battlefield itself had not been delineated, proposed intersection improvements would adversely affect the resource.

ELEMENTS

- Archaeological survey and testing
- Metal detection
- Kocoo analysis
- Historic architectural survey
- Interpretive signage

SCDOT contracted with the History Workshop, a division of Brockington and Associates, Inc., to create interpretive outdoor signage for the Buford's Massacre Site. It was installed in fall 2011, fulfilling the final mitigation stipulation outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement.

In 2010, Brockington was contracted to conduct mitigative archaeological investigations and boundary delineation for the Waxhaws (Buford's Massacre) Battlefield. Brockington recommended avoidance of the battlefield, but this option was not practical in this case since the intersection improvements were considered a public safety issue. However, the adverse effects were minimized through redesign. As traditional data recovery excavations are not an effective mitigation technique for historic battlefields, project effects and potential mitigation options were discussed by all parties. A subsequent Memorandum of Agreement outlined appropriate

mitigation including delineation of the core battlefield boundary, archaeological investigation of a suspected second mass grave on county-owned land, and development of interpretive signage to be placed at the Buford's Massacre Historic District. While archaeological excavation by Brockington debunked the second mass grave location, a metal detector survey and KOCOA analysis (Key Terrain, Obstacles, Cover and Concealment, Observation and Fields of Fire, Avenues of Approach and Retreat) allowed us to conclusively delineate the core boundary for the Waxhaws Battlefield. Long-term preservation options for the battlefield are currently being discussed.