

The Cluskey Embankment Stores Signage

Addendum to Savannah-Chatham County Historic Site and Monuments Historical Marker Application
Rita Elliott, September 15, 2014

Please see attached Marker Application Form. Information below expands on portions of that form.

2. Themes. For each theme checked, provide a statement explaining why you believe the subject is significant in respect to the history of Chatham County or Savannah, stressing the historical importance of the subject.

Arts & Humanities, Science & Engineering. Charles B. Cluskey, the architect of the Cluskey Embankment Stores (more commonly referred to as the Cluskey Vaults), was a renowned, trained architect and master builder. The signage examines his artistic and engineering works in terms of the vault construction, as well as some of his other projects in Savannah and Georgia. The signage touches on the mix of engineering and artistic accomplishments in his use of columns and arches. The signage also discusses the use of the vaults for the scientific purpose of mapping the Savannah Harbor and Georgia coastline using telescopes and telegraphs. The panels investigate the role of the science of archaeology in discovering the history of the vaults.

Civic & Institutional, Local History. The signage investigates the vaults through the lens of local history as well as its broader context. Interpretive panels examine Cluskey and his involvement in social, political, fraternal, and architectural issues in Savannah, as well as in Georgia and Washington, D.C. The panels touch on the social, economic, and environmental climate of the period, as it related to the vaults and Cluskey. Signage discusses ways local citizens became involved in civic engagement related to the vaults. The signage details the background of the vaults during the 19th through 21st centuries, and the related local history pertaining to them, Factors Walk, and City Hall.

Industry & Commerce, Maritime History. The interpretive panels examine the role the vaults played in Savannah's commerce and maritime history, so visible on the adjacent Factors Walk and nearby River Street. This included its primary function as a structure within a retaining wall, enabling Factors Walk to function as a vehicular and pedestrian passageway for shipments through the port and providing a means of easy access to factors and brokers working in the area. The vaults also functioned as a storage facility and cooper venue, which facilitated Savannah's maritime and shipping commerce. The use of the vaults in the completion of the Coast Survey map further facilitated maritime commerce and industry in Savannah, Georgia, and South Carolina.

4. Design. Provide a drawing indicating the shape, size, material, color, and text placement of the marker. For temporary markers, provide a plan for removal or replacement of the marker at the end of the temporary period.

The four rectangular panels will each measure 24" x 36". They will be constructed of high pressure laminate. The signs are full color, with a background shade of blue reminiscent of blueprints. The signs contain text, photographs, drawings, maps, and other images. They will have a 10 year warranty from the firm manufacturing the signs. Signs needing replacing can be reordered through this sign manufacturing company or others, using the Photoshop files in which the signs were created by the Exhibit contractor. Please see attachments for location of markers and color/text placement.

5. Text. Provide exact text for the marker and attach to this application. Indicate the size of and type of font to be used. Include footnotes and a bibliography. Be sure to include primary sources of documentation when possible. County histories should not be relied upon solely as sources of information and should be considered secondary sources. Final wording of text will rest with the Commission. Should quotations be a part of the proposed text, include written permission letter from appropriate authority.

Please see attachments for print outs of each sign design. Fonts and font sizes are as follows:

- Title (Flux Architect font) 100 pt;
- Subtitles (Frank the Architect) 60 pt;
- Headings (Frank the Architect) 48 pt;
- Text Subheading (Arial) 30 pt;
- Main Text (Arial) 24 pt;
- Citations (Arial) 14 pt

Bibliography

Ayala, Blake

2014 "An Archaeological Investigation into the Cluskey Embankment Stores (9CH1352)", Masters Thesis, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, Georgia

Creative Commons

2014 St. Simons Lighthouse photograph (Romulus 1272, Lighthouse on st-Simons island, Georgia-2014-05-03 10-09.jpg)

Creative Commons

2014 Governor's Mansion photograph (Stephen Matthew Milligan)

Gordon, Peter

1734 "A View of Savannah," [Lithograph copy made in 1876], Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. Accessed on American Memory at <http://www.loc.gov/item/97683565>

Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)

1962 Charles B. Cluskey Embankment Stores photograph by Louis Schwartz. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. (HABS GA, 123-AUG,11-1) Accessed at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ga0151/>

1936 Champion-McAlpin-Fowlkes House photograph by L.D. Andrew (LC-DIG-csas-00700) Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs, Washington, D.C. Accessed at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ga0005.photos.055254p/>

1936 Sorrel-Weed House photograph by Lawrence Bradley (LC-DIG-csas-00760) Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs, Washington, D.C. Accessed at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ga0220/>

National Archives and Records Administration Coast & Geodetic Survey Collection (NARA C&GS)

1855 "Reconnaissance of Romerly Marshes, Georgia." Triangulation by Alexander Wadsworth Longfellow, hydrography by Lt. John Maffitt (cgs05156), U.S. Navy. Accessed online at <http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/htmls/cgs05156.htm>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Library Collection (Treasures of the NOAA Library Collection)

1820 "Plan for an Observatory" (libr0065). Accessed online at <http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/htmls/libr0065.htm>

1825 "Repeating Circle with Two Telescopes", Drawn by Caroline Hassler (libr0061), accessed online at <http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/htmls/libr0061.htm>

Research Library & Municipal Archives

n.d. "View of East Bay Street, "Cotton Row", Savannah, Georgia. On behalf of V. & J. Duncan Antique Maps & Prints, Savannah, Georgia.

Savannah Daily Republican

1842 "Sheriff's Sale", March 5, 1842, p.4. Savannah Historic Newspapers Archive, Digital Library of Georgia, University of Georgia Libraries. Accessed August 12, 2014.

<http://savnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/svr/svr1842/svr1842-0216.mets.xml;query=Cluskey;query-join=or;brand=savnewspapers-j2k-brand#page/n0/mode/1up>

1845 "Coopering", November 19, 1845, p.3. Savannah Historic Newspapers Archive, Digital Library of Georgia, University of Georgia Libraries. Accessed August 12, 2014.

<http://savnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/svr/svr1845/svr1845-1087.mets.xml;query=%22tombs%22%20east;brand=savnewspapers-j2k-brand#page/n0/mode/1up>

1851 "Coast Survey", January 7, 1851, p.2. Savannah Historic Newspapers Archive, Digital Library of Georgia, University of Georgia Libraries. Accessed August 12, 2014.

<http://savnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/svr/svr1851/svr1851-0018.mets.xml;query=%22tombs%22%20east;brand=savnewspapers-j2k-brand#page/n0/mode/1up>

1852 "Coast Guard Survey", March 11, 1851, p.2. Savannah Historic Newspapers Archive, Digital Library of Georgia, University of Georgia Libraries. Accessed August 12, 2014.

<http://savnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers-j2k/view?docId=bookreader/svr/svr1851/svr1851-0234.mets.xml;query=%22coast%20survey%22;brand=savnewspapers-j2k-brand#page/n0/mode/1up>

U.S. Secretary of the Interior

1853 Letter from Charles B. Cluskey to President Franklin Pierce. Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, (Record Group 48), Series: Field Office Appointment Papers, Entry Number A1 15, Container 217.

Quotations are derived from public domain sources that can be freely quoted when properly cited, as they have on these panels.

6. Funding. Provide estimate of costs (including marker fabrication and installation). Provide statement indicating the amount of funds currently secured by the applicant. If complete funding has not been secured, indicate the plan to secure the remainder of the funding. NOTE: If the marker is to be installed on public property, the applicant will be required to submit an Escrow Payment in the amount determined by the Mayor and Aldermen to fund the future maintenance cost of the marker. This Escrow Payment must be submitted before erection of the marker.

Cost of Creation, Design, Layout, Proofing: \$2,978

Cost of Fabrication: Approximately \$3,000

Cost of Installation: Approximately \$1,000

Funding has been secured by the City of Savannah for this project. The City of Savannah Research Library and Municipal Archives is spearheading this project, partnering with the City's Park & Tree Department and Tourism Management & Ambassadorship Department. The Cluskey Vaults are on City-owned property, therefore, the escrow payment has been waived.

7. Installation. If the installation of the marker is to be on an historic building, indicate how the marker is to be installed.

The markers will be installed on two posts in the ground or surface mounted pm (post-mounted) posts on top the ground.

Photographs of Proposed Site

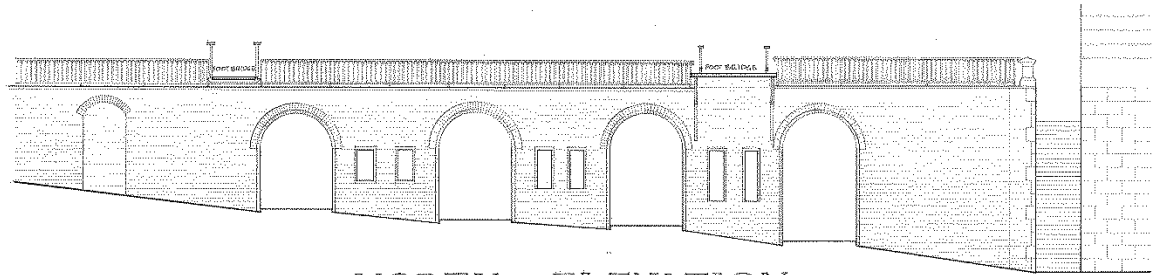


Looking south from the Thomas Gamble Building down at the Cluskey Vaults, City Hall is in the far right of the view.

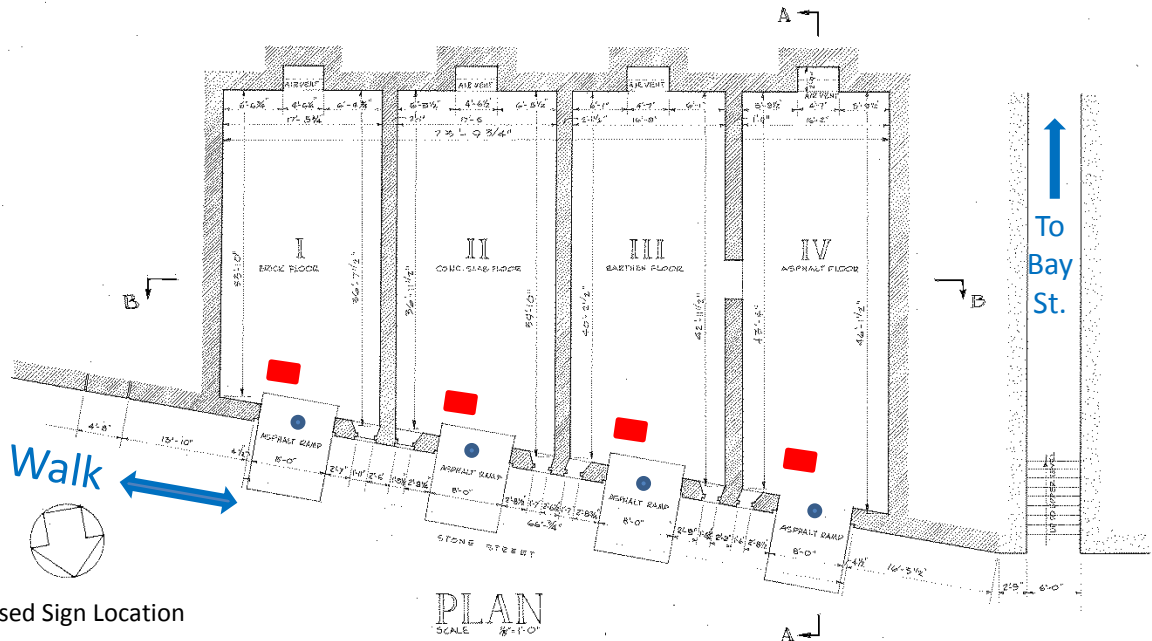


Looking east up the Bull Street Ramp from City Hall. The Cluskey Vaults are at the right with the arched openings.

Cluskey Vaults Interpretive Signage



NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



Factors Walk

- Proposed Sign Location
- Bollard Location

PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

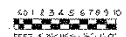
HARRY OLIVER JOHNSON JR., DEL., SUMMER, 1962
 SAVANNAH FIELD OFFICE
 SAVANNAH 4 PROJECT 1962
 UNDER DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

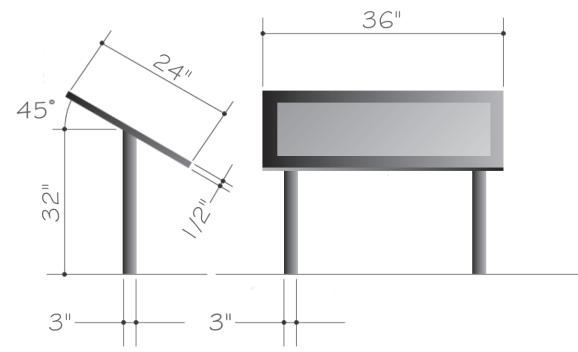
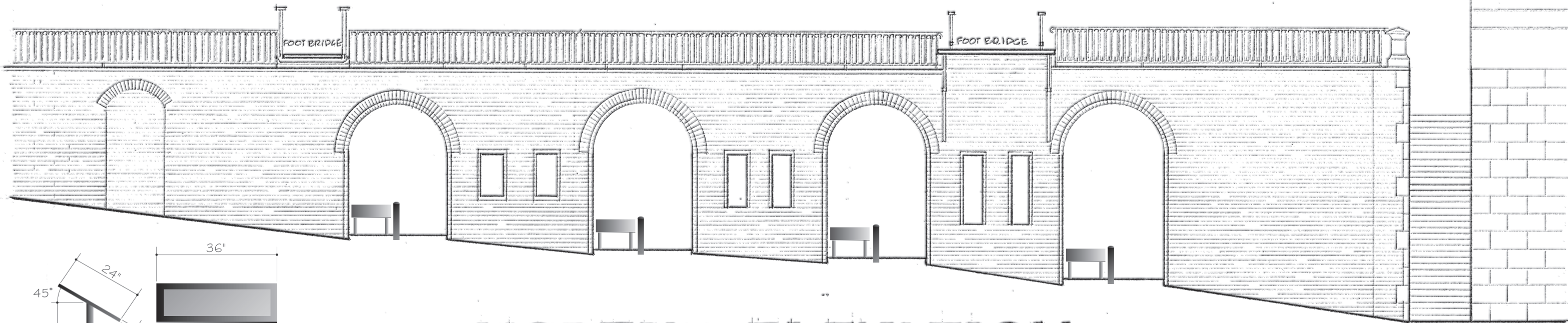
NAME OF STRUCTURE
 THE CHARLES B. CLUSKEY EMBANKMENT STORES
 EAST BAY STREET, SAVANNAH, CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

SURVEY NO.
 GA
 1180

HISTORIC AMERICAN
 BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 2 OF 3 SHEETS

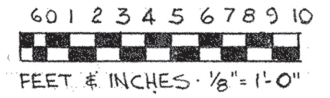
LISTED BY OWNER
 JACK ROBERT





NORTH ELEVATION

SCALE $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$



A STOREROOM BY ANY OTHER NAME

Cluskey's Embankments, Stores, Vaults, or Tombs

In 1840, the City hired architect Charles B. Cluskey to build part of a much-needed retaining wall along the north side of Bay Street, east of the City Exchange Building (where City Hall now stands). Cluskey used brick for his embankment wall. The contract called for the wall to be built along the slope adjacent to "the Strand," or park lying along the north side of Bay Street. The space between the wall and the slope was to be filled with sand. Instead, Cluskey saw an opportunity to design arched, vaulted storage rooms in that embankment. City aldermen agreed to this change and directed him to "...build four stores east of the Exchange under the proposed extended walk, with proper wall and arched across, so as to leave at least 3 feet in depth of earth over the arches." Instead of pay, Cluskey was to "...control and receive the rents of the premises" for 20 years. The contract called for four vaults. How many do you see?

The Bluff

It all began with the bluff. In 1733, General James Oglethorpe established Savannah on a 40 foot high bluff along the Savannah River [Right]. Colonists hauled goods from ships with hoists while passengers climbed steep stairs leading to the top of the bluff.

A Retaining Wall

Wagon and foot traffic created decades of bluff erosion, making it increasingly difficult to get to the river. A retaining wall along Bay Street was needed to stabilize the bluff and keep sand from washing into the road that skirts the south side of the commercial buildings lining the river. Cluskey's 1840 brick embankment was part of a series of retaining walls built along Bay Street.



A View of Savannah, 1734, Library of Congress, American Memory.

Today

The Cluskey Stores are some of the oldest buildings owned by the City of Savannah. In 1962, the vaults were documented for the Historic American Building Survey by the National Park Service. The structure is identified as a contributing element to Savannah's National Historic Landmark District.



Courtesy of City of Savannah, Research Library & Municipal Archives on behalf of V.A.J. Dunson Antique Maps & Prints.

Factors Walk

Cluskey's embankment bordered the south side of the road known by the mid-1800s as Factors Walk. Cotton factors or brokers, shipping merchants, and later dealers of lumber and naval stores worked in the row of buildings conveniently fronting the river on one side and Factors Walk on the other [Left]. Brokers accessed Bay Street and "the Strand" greenspace by the iron bridges over Factors Walk.

*Kids, Look Up!
Why Arches?*

- ★ An arch holds itself up using its own weight!
- ★ Arched bridges in Europe that Romans built 2,000 years ago still work!
- ★ Each three-foot section of arch above your head supports 2,700 pounds of soil!

CHARLES BLANEY CLUSKEY

What Do We Know About the Architect of These Vaults?

No images of Charles Blaney Cluskey appear to exist. He emigrated from Ireland in 1827 at age 19 and trained with a New York architectural firm for two years before moving to Savannah. He married Johanna Elizabeth Walsh two years later. Starting in the 1830s he designed impressive buildings throughout Georgia [examples Below]. Charles returned to Savannah in 1838, becoming active in political, fraternal, and civic organizations. He received City and private contracts, some resulting in legal disputes.

In 1842, Johanna died, leaving their son and five daughters. Charles declared bankruptcy in 1843. In 1845, he was appointed City Surveyor. Disillusioned by the loss of a major contract, Charles moved to Washington, D.C. and lived there from 1847-1871. His renovation designs for the White House, U.S. Capitol, and Patent Building were not used. He died of malaria in 1871, after returning to Georgia to rebuild the St. Simons island lighthouse, destroyed during the Civil War.

Augusta
Husband
Businessman
Irishman
SAVANNAH
ARCHITECT
HIBERNIAN
Washington
Arches
D.C.

C. Cluskey
Credit to Engle



Champion-McAlpin-Fowlkes House,
Savannah, Georgia, built 1844.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs, LC-DIG-casa-00700.



Lighthouse, St. Simons Island,
Georgia, rebuilt 1869-1871.
Creative Commons (Romulus1272).
Lighthouse on St. Simons Island, Georgia-
2014-05-03 10-09.jpg



Sorrel-Weed House, Savannah, Georgia, built 1844.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs, LC-DIG-casa-00760.



Governor's Mansion, Milledgeville, Georgia, built 1837.
Creative Commons (Stephen Matthew Miligan).



Medical College of Georgia, Augusta, Georgia, built 1835.
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs, HABS GA, 123-AUG.11-1.

"He was employed on some of the most important works in Georgia; he was afterwards Surveyor & Engineer in this City [Washington, D.C.], Engineer of the Washington City Canal, Architect employed by the Committee on Public Buildings of the House to make a survey of the Public Buildings in this City. His plan for the Extension of the Capitol was considered the best."

—Thomas Bartlett, Washington, D.C. 1847, Letter to His Excellency Franklin Pierce, President of the United States.

ONE BUILDING - MANY STORIES

Wooden Barrels, Storage Wars, Catastrophes, and Twinkling Stars

An urban legend suggested that this structure served to hold enslaved African Americans temporarily while being transported on ships through Savannah's port during the mid-1800s. Researchers have found no evidence supporting this theory. Historical documents and archaeology reveal a complex and varied history of this building. The name of the building changed through time, known variously as "stores" and "vaults." One newspaper article referred to the "Improvements East of the Exchange, or more familiarly known as the *tombs*," due to the arches and dimensions of the structure.

Sherid's Sale.
On the 1st Tuesday in April next, will be sold, before the door of the Court House, in the City of Savannah, between the west tower of said Court House, and a house held by Charles B. Cluskey, from the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah, and the House lots thereof, of all that range of five great brick streets, (five) in number, situate, lying and being east of the Exchange in the City of Savannah, and all that range of five great brick streets, commencing on the 1st October, 1840, and levied upon at the instance of John Dillon, to satisfy two Executions, for Writs, of A. S. in satisfaction of mortgages, from the said Charles B. Cluskey to the said John Dillon.
*Frequently pointed out by Mr. A. C. Y. ward
J. R. DAVIS, s. r. c.

Digital Library of Georgia, Savannah Daily Republican, 3/5/1842

Storage Wars

Ironically, the builder and first lease holder of this structure, Charles Cluskey, probably never used it. In 1842, less than two years after receiving the 20-year lease, Cluskey was ordered by the court to auction the lease to pay debts owed to John Dillon. John came into ownership of the lease at that time.

COOPERING.—The Subscriber begs leave to inform his friends and the public that he has established himself in the COOPERING BUSINESS in this City, at Town No. 4, East of the Exchange, and hopes by diligence and attention to business to merit the patronage which he respectfully solicits.
nov 12 18 P. D. NELLIS.

Digital Library of Georgia, Savannah Daily Republican, 11/12/1845

Wooden Barrels

The vaults served functions other than storage. In 1845, Vault Number 4 (referred to in the newspaper advertisement as "TOMB No. 4") provided P. D. Nellis with a venue for his coopering, or barrel-making, business. This location placed Nellis in the heart of the port's shipping activities. Grocers, merchants, factors, and tradesmen needed barrels to store and ship an assortment of goods.

Twinkling Stars

One intriguing use of the vaults involved the survey and mapping of the Savannah harbor and southeastern coast in 1851. The U.S. Coast Survey used state-of-the-art technology long before Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and satellites. By the mid-19th century, a system of telescopes [Left] and telegraphs used triangulation and the paths of stars to determine locations of landforms to each other and the planet. Such techniques created this 1855 Georgia marsh map [Right].

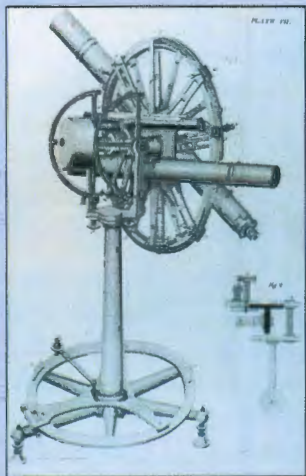
January 7, 1851. Mr. Boutelle has contracted, "...to erect a small temporary observatory over the Tombs east of the Exchange, for the purpose of making observations for latitude and longitude. In connection with these calculations, Mr. B. will make use of the telegraph."

Digital Library of Georgia, Savannah Daily Republican, 1/7/1851.

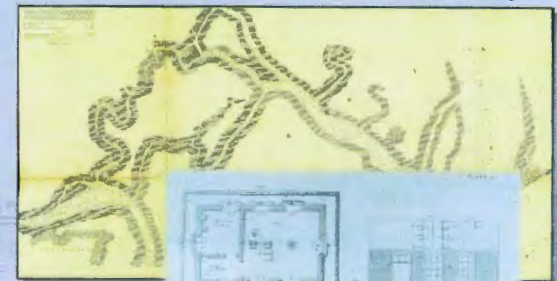
Why did mapping require the storeroom vaults? The vaults stood next to the City Exchange Building, which had a tall spire on its clock tower. Engineers could use the spire to send and receive telegraph signals to telescope locations and the vaults provided office and equipment space. Here is an 1820 "Plan for an Observatory" for Coast Survey [Right].

Catastrophes

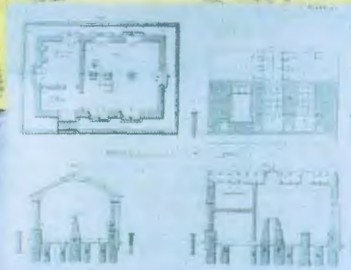
In 1904, three African Americans were seriously injured in the western-most vault as they constructed the new City Hall building. The vault collapsed during excavations for the foundations of the neighboring structure. Workmen survived, despite being crushed under massive amounts of brick and timber. City Hall's contractor rebuilt the collapsed vault.



Treasures of the NOAA Library Collection, Ibr0051.



NARA C&GS Collection, cgs05156.



Treasures of the NOAA Library Collection, Ibr0055.

VAULTING THROUGH TIME

Archaeology at the Cluskey Vaults

Like much of the soil in Savannah, the loam beneath the Cluskey Vaults tells a great deal about the past when it is studied scientifically through archaeology. Interest by the community led the City to have such a study of the vaults. Like all professional archaeology projects, this one consisted of historical research, careful excavation, mapping, and documentation of the stains and other clues in the soil. The results and documentation of this study, including all artifacts, are preserved by the City of Savannah Research Library and Municipal Archives for future study. This project also used technology: LiDAR to make a spectacular 3-D map of the vaults; Ground Penetrating Radar to locate pit features before excavating; and a fiber optic video camera to see behind the sealed fifth vault. The public participated in the project from the very beginning to the very end, and many people visited the site during fieldwork.



The Impetus

Young men in the Earl T. Shinhoster Leadership Institute approached the City of Savannah with concerns about the history and current use of the vaults. The group requested that research and archaeology be conducted to determine whether the vaults had been used to hold African American slaves.



The City was responsive, and thus began an important partnership. City archivists and other staff, archaeologists and students at Georgia Southern University, local high school and college students, girl and boy scouts, and others in the community worked together to uncover the history of the vaults.



[Top Left] Shinhoster members sift soil with the Georgia Southern University anthropology graduate student directing the project. [Middle Left] Excavating a trash pit feature containing Savannah druggist bottles. [Bottom Left] Mapping the location and dimensions of soil layers and features.

More Than Simply Artifacts



Discoveries!! Discoveries!! Discoveries!!

Vault 1 (farthest from City Hall) contained a hearth likely made by Civil War Union soldiers who took Savannah in December 1864. Artifacts around the campfire included an 1864 Infantry button, a medical thermometer, and a latch possibly from a doctor's satchel. Elsewhere in the vault lay a U.S. Navy button from the same period. Vault 4 also contained a pit with cast iron pots, hoes, and an ax rusted together [Below], on top of a stash of 19th century, corked wine bottles. The pit lay deeper than the hearth layer, therefore pre-dating the hearth. Since these easily-ruined items were placed in a pit, it appears that they were intentionally buried.

Vault 2 may have been used as a stable and for coal storage. A pit here contained a variety of artifacts, suggesting that it was either a trash pit or a privy used to discard trash.

Vault 3 contained a pit with 1880s Savannah "Lawrence and Weichselbaum Druggists" bottles. Unfortunately, the presence of plastic and cement indicated modern disturbance of this area.

Vault 4 (nearest City Hall) revealed evidence of the vault's 1904 collapse and its immediate reconstruction, which destroyed portions of the clues underground.



Kids, Look Down!
What's Beneath Your Feet?

★ Can you save a site like the Shinhoster group did?

★ Can you think of ways artifacts become buried?

★ A site is like a crime scene, with clues about what happened in the past. What happens if someone not trained in archaeology digs through the clues?