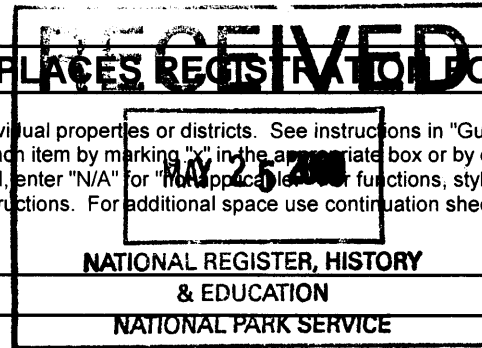


714

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "Not Applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.



1. Name of Property

historic name Vernonburg Historic District
other names/site number Vernonburg, Vernonburgh, 9CH703

2. Location

street & number Dancy Avenue, Rockwell Avenue, and South Rockwell Avenue
city, town Vernonburg (n.a.) **vicinity of**
county Chatham **code** GA 051
state Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 31406, 31419

(n.a.) not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

Category of Property:

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property:	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	38	43
sites	2	0
structures	1	0
objects	0	0
total	41	43

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: none
Name of previous listing: none
Name of related multiple property listing: n.a.

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Richard Coover
Signature of certifying official

5-22-00
Date

W. Ray Luce
Director, Historic Preservation Division
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Edson H. Beall 6/23/00

() determined eligible for the National Register _____

() determined not eligible for the National Register _____

() removed from the National Register _____

() other, explain: _____

() see continuation sheet

for
Keeper of the National Register _____
Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

domestic: single dwelling
domestic: secondary structure
domestic: hotel
domestic: camp

Current Functions:

domestic: single dwelling
domestic: secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Mid-19th Century: Greek Revival
Late Victorian: Italianate
Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Colonial Revival
Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Classical Revival
Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Spanish Colonial Revival
Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Bungalow/Craftsman

Other: hall-parlor (house type)
Other: I-house (house type)
Other: Georgian (house type)

Materials:

foundation brick, concrete
walls wood, brick
roof metal, asphalt
other

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Introduction

Vernonburg is a small coastal residential community situated on a low bluff along an inland waterway. It is located on the Vernon River, within the White Bluff district of Savannah, about eight miles south of downtown Savannah. The community developed in three distinct phases, the first being a small ethnic colonial settlement during the mid-18th century, the second being a resort community and railroad suburb of Savannah in the mid- to late 19th century, and the third being a "bedroom suburb" of Savannah in the 20th century. Physical development took place throughout Vernonburg's history along two principal streets, Dancy and Rockwell Avenues, which intersect forming an inverted "L" configuration that closely follows the high ground at a sharp bend in the Vernon River.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

The Vernonburg Historic District is comprised of the historical and archaeological resources representing Vernonburg's two historic phases of development: the initial 18th-century colonial ethnic settlement, represented exclusively by archaeological sites, and the subsequent mid-19th- to early 20th-century resort and suburban development, represented by a range of historic houses dating from the 1840s to the 1940s along with associated archaeological resources.

Summary Description of Historic District

Located on the White Bluff of the Vernon River, the Vernonburg Historic District consists of a residential community and archaeological remains from the initial 18th-century German settlement, 19th-century resettlement as a resort community and Savannah railroad suburb, and early 20th-century development as a bedroom suburb of Savannah. The original development of Vernonburg was situated close along one of the two main streets in the district, now known as Rockwell Avenue, on small 60' by 90' town lots. By the early 19th century, these smaller lots and their houses had been abandoned for newer, larger house sites further off the street, closer to the bluff and nearer the river; this development pattern continued to the late 20th century, and had the effect of preserving the archaeological remains of the original 18th-century development along with the 19th- and 20th-century buildings. An initial archaeological survey in 1990, followed by more intensive testing in 1993, revealed the pattern of 18th-century settlement along with a variety of 18th- and 19th-century artifacts. Architectural field surveys conducted in 1975, 1992, and 1994 identified a concentrated area of approximately two dozen historic houses dating from the early 19th century through the early 20th century. Most are built of wood, although there are several brick and stucco structures. Central-hall houses and cottages predominate, although other houses types including single-pen cottages are present. Greek Revival, Italianate, Victorian Eclectic, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman architectural styles are evident. Outbuildings in the district include historic and nonhistoric wooden boathouses, servants quarters, guest houses, and garages, including two small structures that originally may have been slave houses. The landscaping within the district includes broad lawns with mature oaks, Spanish moss, camellias, azaleas, and other native flora. The two principal streets in the district, Rockwell and Dancy Avenues, intersect forming an "L" configuration paralleling the bluff at the bend in the Vernon River. Both streets are narrow and are shaded by oak canopies; South Rockwell Avenue remains unpaved.

Description of Environment

Vernonburg is located approximately eight miles southwest of Savannah in Chatham County, Georgia. The village rests on the "White Bluff" on a prominent bend on the Vernon River. The boundaries of present-day Vernonburg, incorporated in the 1860s, include both sides of Dancy Avenue and, generally, the east side of Rockwell Avenue. The dimensions of modern Vernonburg differ somewhat from the original colonial town plan. Modern Vernonburg includes Dancy Avenue,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

Rockwell Avenue South, and portions of Vernonburg Avenue and Rockwell Avenue North, but with a few exceptions does not include property on the west side of Rockwell Avenue North. Chatham County has ownership of the street of Vernonburg Avenue. The area today is dominated by residential housing and landscaped yards, although other land uses include undeveloped forest and a horse stable and riding area.

The general environment of the Vernonburg area can be classified in terms of geography and soils, climate, and biology. Geographically, Chatham County has very little elevational difference. The town of Vernonburg is situated on one of the few high-relief areas, that of White Bluff (approximately 20 feet above mean sea level), west of and following the bend of the Vernon River. The Vernon River is a tidal stream that originates within the lower coastal plain near downtown Savannah and flows a short distance before merging with the Burnside River and joining other minor coastal rivers that form the Ogeechee River delta at the Atlantic Ocean. In 1741, the Vernon River was reportedly navigable for "ships of 200 Tun" (Candler 1916:Vol. 5:651). The river continued to support moderately large vessels during the Civil War, as evidenced by the wreck of the *U.S.S. Water Witch*. Today the river has small boat traffic.

Soils in the project area belong to the Ocilla-Pelham-Albany association that occur on low ridges and depressions; they consist of a poorly drained soil made up of a sandy surface overlying loam (USDA 1974:73; Latimer and Buchner 1911). The underlying loam undoubtedly contributes to the slower drainage of the surface sands. The Ocilla series is a result of loamy marine materials found on very modest ridges with slopes of 0 to 2 percent. Such soils are highly acid, low in natural fertility, and have a moderate permeability rate (USDA 1974:28). The Ocilla soil series primarily supports the native loblolly pine, hardwoods including hickory and red oak, and understory growth of yaupon holly, gallberry, and waxmyrtle. Specific soil areas along Rockwell Avenue, North and South, consist of Lakeland and Capefear soils. The former consist of excessively drained ridge top soils, while the latter constitutes poorly drained, low lying soils (USDA 1974:13, 23). Both are very low in natural fertility, which would explain reoccurring problems colonial Vernonburgers had with non-productive gardens, reflected in the petition to the Trustees of the Georgia Colony in 1765 stating "...unwearing and continued Industry has been employed in improving a soil so barren that without the effectual efforts they [Vernonburgers] have made would scarce be fit for any purpose of Cultivation..." (Candler 1916:Vol. 14:185). The area of Vernonburg along present-day Dancy Avenue consists of slightly more fertile Albany soils.

The project area is dominated by residential development with extensively landscaped yards and greatly modified vegetation. A minor percentage of the study area is second or third growth woodlands composed of mixed pines and hardwoods. According to a local resident, her father, Mr. Von Dell Williams, a resident of Vernonburg at the beginning of the 20th century, cultivated land

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

north of Vernonburg Avenue and west of Rockwell Avenue North (Mrs. Vonice Williams Dressel, personal communication, December, 1993).

The climate of this area is warm and moist, with an average temperature of 66 degrees Fahrenheit and between 45 and 50 inches of rainfall. Winters average 51 degrees and summers average 81 degrees Fahrenheit.

A marsh habitat north of the town, the Vernon River, and patchy wooded areas in the town support biota appropriate for each area. The remainder of the town consists of landscaped yards dominated mostly by birds and small rodents and reptiles. Native fauna observed during the present study include several species of hawks, osprey, buzzards, crows, pileated woodpecker, various other woodpeckers, many species of song birds, gray squirrels, hog-nosed snake, black rat snake, and toads. Bald eagles have recently been reported in the area, and one unconfirmed sighting was made by the survey team. Significant introduced species include dogs, cats, horses, burros, and cattle. A wide variety of aquatic resources are present in the Vernon River and adjacent marshlands. The White Bluff is predominately well drained, although drainage patterns in some areas along the bluff were modified in historic times. For example, a mid-19th-century deed describes a dam, implying that some sort of mill pond may have been present. No permanent streams are located within town at present, however. In 1886, the Chatham County Commissioners and the County Surveyor visited Vernonburg to arrange for the drainage of the lowlands and swamps near that town (Savannah Morning News February 19, 1886:8). Hydrology of the area has changed in recent memory. Mrs. Clara Guerry recalls a flowing public spring at the foot of White Bluff just south of Vernonburg Avenue that was active in the 1940s, but the spring no longer flows (Clara Z. Guerry, personal communication, December, 1993).

Historical Research

Historical research for the project was conducted at the Georgia Historical Society, Savannah Public Library, and the Chatham County Courthouse in Savannah; the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Office of Historic Preservation (now Historic Preservation Division), Emory University Library, and Georgia Department of Archives in Atlanta; the University of Georgia Libraries and Department of Anthropology in Athens; and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in Columbia. Interviews also were conducted with several individuals in Chatham County who were knowledgeable about Vernonburg including Elizabeth Arndt, Vonice W. Dressel, Clara Guerry, Laura Jelks, Joseph Purvis, Ret. Col. R. Beverly H. Rockwell, and Gordon Smith.

The historical research included a review of contemporary sources including: the *Colonial Records of Georgia* and the *Revolutionary Records of Georgia* (Candler 1916, 1908); *The Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigration who Settled in America...*, edited by Samuel Urlsperger (summarized in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

Jones 1984); and historical maps (Avery 1780; Campbell 1780; DeBrahm 1757; McKinnon 1816; Platen 1875).

WPA indexes (1763 to 1840) and digests (1841 to 1891) for early Georgia newspapers were examined for information about Vernonburg. Early Georgia newspapers on microfilm at the University of Georgia were sampled for information about the colonial and early federal period settlements including the *Columbia Museum* and *Savannah Advertiser*, *Daily Morning News*, *Daily News Herald*, *Gazette of the State of Georgia*, *Georgia Gazette*, *Republican* and *Savannah Evening Ledger*, and *Savannah Morning News*. The earliest newspaper to survive in Georgia is the *Georgia Gazette* dating to the 1760s, which is after Vernonburg had probably achieved its peak settlement and many of the original Germans were beginning to exit the town.

Primary documents and published compilations of primary data were examined including colonial land claims, grants, and deeds, and Chatham County deeds, maps, plats, and probate records (Hemperley 1975; Fortson and Bryant 1973; Schreck 1906). Map collections on file at the office of the Georgia Surveyor General (Blake 1980), Georgia Department of Archives; the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, and the Science Library, Map Collection at the University of Georgia Libraries; South Carolina Department of Archives and History; and the Georgia Historical Society were consulted. A "Map of the Georgia Coast" drawn by William DeBrahm and published in DeVorse (1971) was examined and it contained the earliest representation of the Vernonburg region, albeit showing few details of the town. A preliminary letter inquiry to the British Public Records Office (BPRO) failed to locate any other maps of Vernonburg. A more detailed search of BPRO records of the Colonial Office, particularly record class "CO 5 America and West Indies Original Correspondence 1606 to 1822," may prove fruitful (Nicholas Coney, BPRO Reader Services Department, personal communication, March 1, 1994).

Published histories of the settlements were examined including studies of Savannah such as DeBolt (1976), Hardee (1934), Harden (1913), Historic Savannah Foundation (1968), Hough (1975), and several articles and manuscripts specifically written about Vernonburg (Floyd 1932a, 1932b; Anderson n.d.; Stephens 1960; Smith 1975). Other valuable sources that were used include the manuscript collections of the Georgia Historical Society, particularly the D. B. and M. H. Floyd Collection (1308) and the Charles Hartridge Collection (1349), and other published early histories of Georgia (Georgia Historical Society 1842; Jackson and Spalding 1984; McPherson 1962; Morse and Morse 1821; Oldmixon 1969; Sears 1977; Stephens 1740; Stevens 1859; White 1849).

Archaeological site data on file at the University of Georgia, Laboratory of Archeology were reviewed. Previous archaeological reports on file at the University of Georgia and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources also were examined.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

Archaeological Investigations

The Colonial Vernonburg town site (Site 9CH783) was initially investigated archaeologically in 1990 during a survey of nine colonial towns conducted by the LAMAR Institute with a grant through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Office of Historic Preservation (now the Historic Preservation Division) from the National Park Service (NPS) (Elliott 1990). A more detailed study was conducted in 1993 by the LAMAR Institute through another grant from the same source (Elliott and Elliott 1994). The latter study was conducted to provide a context for the Vernonburg National Register nomination.

The archaeological study examined areas along Dancy and Rockwell Avenues. Dancy Avenue is a narrow paved street flanked by well-groomed lawns and patches of overgrown woods. Several prominent and stately houses are visible along the route, which terminates as a dirt and shell driveway. A mixture of 19th and 20th century dwellings is present along its route. It begins at the intersection of Rockwell Avenue North and goes to the east. Its course is nearly straight.

Rockwell Avenue ("North," between Dancy Avenue and Vernonburg Avenue) is a narrow paved street flanked by spacious well-groomed lawns, areas of overgrown woods, and a large horse stable and pasture. A mixture of 19th and 20th century dwellings is present along its route. The north end of the avenue begins near the tidal marsh at the intersection of Rendant Avenue, and it continues south, terminating at the intersection with Vernonburg Avenue. Its course is perfectly straight.

South Rockwell Avenue (south of Vernonburg Avenue), the slightly offset southern continuation of Rockwell Avenue North, is a narrow gravel, dirt, and shell road that begins at Vernonburg Avenue and continues south ultimately terminating as a private driveway. Most of its course is perfectly straight, although it makes a angled turn before reaching the southernmost historic house, "Bonnie Doone." 19th- and 20th-century houses are located along its route with most of the dwellings located on the east side of the road. Patches of overgrown woods and poorly drained land also are present.

The 1993 archaeological fieldwork included 329 additional shovel tests, of which 254, or 77 percent, were positive. Combining this data with that from the previous survey shovel tests, information is available from 363 shovel test locations across the town site. 18th-, 19th-, and/or 20th-century artifacts, as well as oyster shell, defined positive shovel tests. The majority of shovel tests contained 18th- and/or 19th-century artifacts or oyster shell. Most of the shovel tests were located on either side of Rockwell Avenue, but a small sample were placed down Dancy Avenue to determine if any colonial period artifacts were present in that area. Generally, three rows of shovel tests were placed off the road to completely encompass the 60' x 90' lots from the colonial period.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

Shovel tests measured 30 x 30 cm in diameter and were excavated to sterile soil. Test units measured 2 x 1 meters, except for Test Units 1 and 16, and were excavated in natural and arbitrary 10 cm vertical levels within natural soil zones. All contents of the shovel tests and test units were screened through 1/4 inch mesh.

The shovel test data was used to select areas for test excavation. Since the primary focus of the project was to locate the colonial town site, test units were placed in areas where the shovel tests yielded colonial period artifacts. While artifacts from various time periods were widely distributed across the site, one distribution map is particularly informative: the distribution of pre-1800 artifacts. Two main concentrations were identified on this map: one in the vicinity of the Northup, Kennedy, and Wallace Tracts and one in the vicinity of the Guerry Tract. Both areas were later sampled by test units.

Sixteen test units were excavated on the site. Except for Test Unit 1, which measured 50 x 50 cm, and Test Unit 16, which was a 130 cm by 60 cm extension of Unit 6, all of the test units measured 2 x 1 m. The tests included two clusters, one encompassing parts of the Kennedy and Northup properties (Test Units 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 16) and one cluster on the Guerry property (Test Units 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14). Test Unit 1 was an isolated test placed on the Ellis property ("Bonnie Doone"), while Test Unit 15 was an isolated test placed on the Wallace property. Features from the colonial or early federal periods were identified in all four areas.

One of the survey shovel tests located in the yard of the "Bonnie Doone" plantation house encountered a possible pit feature, designated Feature 1, containing colonial and early federal period artifacts. Feature 1 has a mean ceramic date (MCD) of 1805.3 based on a total of 57 sherds.

Test Units 4, 5, 6, 7, and 16 were placed on the northwestern part of the Northup Tract in the grassy yard, south of the fence line dividing the present Kennedy/Northup property. Feature 12, located in this area, was the most complex feature investigated. The mean ceramic date (MCD) for Feature 12 is 1776.2, based on a total of 39 diagnostic sherds. The Terminus Post Quem (TPQ) [the date after which the feature was formed] of 1762 results from the presence of 25 plain light creamware sherds, providing a reliable date. This data indicates that the pit was not filled in before 1762, and most likely the majority of fill was deposited around 1776.

Examination of all the units on the Kennedy and Northup tracts provides additional chronological data. The two units on the Kennedy tract, based on 35 diagnostic ceramics, have a MCD of 1783.2 and 1788, only five years apart. The average MCD of the Kennedy tract area, based on these two units, would be 1784.6. The MCD range of five units on the Northup tract, based on 90 diagnostic sherds, runs thirteen years from 1768 to 1781. The average MCD of this area would be 1776.2. Based on the MCD information the Northup tract shows a slightly older period of occupation and was occupied more than two and one half times longer than the Kennedy tract.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

Test Units 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 formed a contiguous block that was placed within a large, recently logged tract just north of a suspected colonial property line on the Guerry Tract. Artifact density was very high in this block as compared to other areas investigated with test units around Vernonburg. The block unit on the Guerry property contained one possible builder's trench, located along the southern edge of the block, containing two square posts. Other posts include a well-defined square post located in the center of the block, and a possible post or small basin approximately 1.5 m north of the builder's trench. Two other basins, one large and one small, were located on the eastern edge of the block. If the assumption that the fence line immediately south of the block unit is an old boundary line is true, then the structure associated with the builder's trench must extend to the north. This would place most, if not all of the test units within the structure.

The recovery of 500 diagnostic artifacts within the seven units in the Guerry block (averaging 71.4 per unit) produced one of the most statistically sound mean ceramic dates (MCD) of all of the excavation blocks. The presence of large numbers of creamware, a later, more abundant, and diagnostic ceramic, undoubtedly contributed to the greater sherd totals. The MCD of these seven units are in a tight five year range from 1789 to 1794. If these seven MCD are averaged, the MCD for the block becomes 1792.3. The large numbers of artifacts and the MCD indicate definite activity within this area during the late 18th century. The presence of features, including pits, posts, and a possible builder's trench, suggest activity of a long-term and more permanent nature, such as that associated with a structure. Both diagnostic features date to 1796, just two years later than the end of the 1789 to 1794 date range.

The MCDs derived from Test Unit data were summarized by tract. Some features revealed older MCDs than the general MCD of the units; for example, Feature 10 (MCD 1730), Feature 3 (MCD 1732.5), Feature 5 (MCD 1753) and probably some of the features containing no diagnostic artifacts predate the MCDs of the units. When considering these dates, it must be remembered that the MCD from the majority of features were derived from very small diagnostic sherd samples. Based on the MCD information, four of the five areas tested date to the late 18th century and the fifth dates to the early 19th century. The average MCD of all units is 1790.92. The five study tracts at various locations within town have MCD averages ranging 29.2 years, from 1776.2 to 1805.3. These dates make a pattern when one examines the geographic locations of the tracts associated with each. The two tracts with the oldest MCD averages both extend directly to the river, followed by the next two tracts with MCD in the 1790s located across Rockwell Avenue North with no river frontage. The tract with the most recent MCD, 1805.3, is located at the far southern end of town more than 475 m from the southernmost excavation area tract.

Based on this limited data, it can be hypothesized that by the beginning of the last quarter of the 18th century lots on the bluff were still occupied. The auctioning of the entire town of Vernonburg in 1799 resulted in a change in lot ownership. This change may reflect absentee landowners purchasing lots

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

as speculation or some purchases made by people actually intending to live in Vernonburg. Two lots appear somewhat curious in that both have the same MCD of 1792 (plus or minus 3 months) and may represent results of the 1799 town-wide auction. It is possible that both these lots changed hands during this auction. Unfortunately, without any extant 18th-century deeds, plats, or town maps, it is virtually impossible to discover whose hands these lots may have passed through during this time. If these lots were purchased during the auction, the buyers appear to have been more interested in occupying them or renting them, rather than purchasing them solely for speculative purposes. One would expect, however, that the tracts extending to the river would have been more valuable and purchased at this time, prior to those on the opposite side of the street. The artifact data, however, does not indicate occupation of most river lots during this period.

By the early 19th century Vernonburgers were constructing larger houses near the outskirts of town, rather than in areas along the bluff, immediately north and south of Vernon Avenue. This outward migration and extension of the colonial limits of town is most visible in the tract with unit excavations providing the most recent MCD of 1805.3. This tract, currently owned by the Ellis family, is not the only tangible sign of town expansion. Dancy Avenue, the northernmost limits of modern Vernonburg, contains several standing 19th-century houses. The archaeological and historical data have yet to reveal the reason behind this 19th-century northern and southern expansion of town at a time when artifacts suggest that the majority of interior lots had not been occupied for most of the 18th century. Perhaps these lots were still held by speculators and not inhabited. It is possible that many of them, when they were no longer inhabited, were purchased in large tracts as holdings of newly established 19th-century plantations.

The MCDs also provide tentative evidence that Vernonburg is a stratified site. The MCDs for all units were averaged together by level. The average MCD of Level 1, for all test units, is 1791.97; Level 2 is 1789.62; Level 3 is 1787.28; and Level 4 is 1772.31. This textbook example of stratigraphy indicates that increasing depth results in increasing age. There is a 19.66 year range between the most recent MCD average and the oldest one. During this range there is a difference of 2.35 years between the first and second level and a difference of 2.34 years between the second and third level. This very gradual aging changes to a difference of 14.97 years between the third and fourth level.

Faunal and floral preservation was fairly good and indicates that the Vernonburgers' diet included oysters, clams, freshwater mussels, fish, crabs, pigs, cows, peaches, and nuts. While fine-screened soil samples did not produce large amounts of faunal and ethnobotanical samples, standard quarter-inch screening revealed a moderate and varied inventory.

Vernonburg has good visibility and good focus as an archaeological site. The 18th-century town site is well preserved and contains abundant subsurface features that have good research potential as well as public interpretive value. The site contains stratified deposits in several of the areas that were

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

test excavated. The 19th- and 20th-century architecture of the town complements the archaeological site in its visual, diagnostic, and interpretive value.

Archeological Field Methods

The archaeology project began with the establishment of a grid with a baseline extending down Rockwell Avenue North. The base line was oriented with grid north 18 degrees east of magnetic north. The main datum (Datum A) was established as 700 meters North and 200 meters East, or 700N 200E. This point was located on the western edge of Rockwell Avenue immediately adjacent to the mailbox for 12812 Rockwell. The shovel tests excavated on the Guerry property during 1990 were incorporated into this grid (Elliott 1990). Datum nails were established at 60 meter intervals along the baseline. An arbitrary elevation point of 100.00 meters was established by a placing a nail in a water oak tree near Datum A. The utility companies were notified of the impending project and crews were sent out to mark the location of underground lines within our project area.

Shovel tests were excavated at 20 meter intervals along this grid with closer interval shovel tests (10 meter and 5 meter intervals) placed at selected locations. Generally, three rows of tests were excavated on each side of Rockwell Avenue corresponding to the suspected extent of the colonial lot boundaries. Shovel tests also were placed at selected locations along the bluff and to define the western limit of the town site.

Once shovel testing was completed, a series of 2 x 1 meter test units was excavated in selected areas of town. The selection criteria were based on the presence of colonial period artifacts in shovel tests; lack of soil disturbance; access to the property; and absence of hazards or other underground obstructions such as sewerage drain lines, gas lines, or water pipes.

The test units were excavated using standard field methods. Soil from the test units was screened through 1/4 inch hardware cloth. Sod was carefully cut, removed, and saved for replacement following back-filling of the test units. Following removal of the plow disturbed zone as a natural level, excavation proceeded in 10 cm arbitrary intervals, or until natural strata were identified. Excavation continued until all historic resources were exhausted and all historic period features identified. Prehistoric artifacts were extremely rare on the site, and while not part of the research focus, they were recorded, noted, and recovered when found.

Profile drawings were made of at least one unit wall of each test unit. Munsell color notations were used to describe the soils. Color slide and black and white print 35 mm photographs were made during the project. A VHS-C format camcorder also was used throughout the project to record selected excavation areas and work in progress. A photo log was maintained throughout the project. All features were mapped in plan and profile and selected features were photographed. Feature fill

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

was screened through 1/4 inch mesh and was kept separate from the surrounding matrix. Soil samples were taken for fine screening from selected features where the potential for floral or faunal ecofact recovery was indicated. All test units were back-filled upon completion.

Laboratory Methods

Following the completion of field work, all artifacts, maps, photographs, and other records were returned to the Elliott's Vanna laboratory near Royston, Georgia. Most of the artifacts were cleaned in the field, while the remainder were cleaned and analyzed in the Vanna laboratory. Bone was pulled from the collection for specialized analysis by a zooarchaeologist. Marine shell from shovel test contexts was counted and discarded. Shell from test unit contexts was weighed and discarded. Brick, daub, and mortar from all contexts was counted and discarded. All other artifacts were analyzed and saved for permanent curation.

Historic artifacts were placed into one of South's (1977) eight artifact groups (Kitchen, Architecture, Clothing, Arms, Furniture, Personal, Tobacco, and Activities). Major sources for artifact identification include: Hamilton (1976), Newman (1989), Noel Hume (1985), Olsen (1963), Peterson (1956), South (1977), Stone (1974), and Wheaton et al. (1983).

Kitchen artifacts included mostly ceramics and glass. Ceramics were identified by type, vessel form, and sherd position on the vessel (rim, body, handle). Bottle glass was grouped by color since most of the fragments were too small to group them by shape or vessel type. Glass color categories included dark green, medium green, and light green, amethyst, amber, blue, white (milk), and clear. Some of the clear glass probably included table glassware (e.g., goblets, tumblers, pitchers) and was identified whenever possible, but most pieces were too small to be identified. Whenever possible, the analysts attempted to distinguish hand-blown from modern machine-made glass. Some clear and light-green glass could only be identified as flat or curved. The curved glass category includes pharmaceutical bottles, table glassware, or lamp globe glass. Flat glass could include either panel bottle glass or window glass. Other kitchen artifacts were described by form and raw material (e.g., pewter spoons, cast iron pot).

The architecture group included nails, spikes, brick, daub, mortar, slate, lock parts, hinges, and window glass. A distinction was made between clear and light-green window glass. Nails and spikes were grouped into the following categories: wrought, machine cut, unidentified square, wire, and unidentified nail. Brick was defined as having a minimum of three flat sides, while daub was fire-hardened clay fragments that could have up to two flat surfaces but usually contained only irregular, uneven areas. By definition some brick missing most of its outside surfaces fell into the daub category. This definition, however, appears to be the clearest method to differentiate between the two architectural materials. Attempts were made to distinguish between various mortar types

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

including tabby mortar (moderate sized shell fragments within a ground shell base), sandy mortar (no shell, gravel, or other tempering agents), sandy/gravel mortar (a sandy base with some small gravel temper), and cement mortar (modern late 19th-20th century cement with gravel). Slate color was noted and included a majority of gray slate and low frequencies of purple slate. Lock parts and hinges were analyzed by material (usually iron), shape, and function, when possible. A great deal of flat clear glass, aqua-tinted flat glass, and light-green flat glass was recovered. It proved difficult to define and separate the window glass from bottle glass and tableware, particularly the smaller pieces. Some window glass was placed in the less descriptive category of flat glass.

The clothing group included beads, buckles, buttons, eyelets, straight pins, scissors, and thimbles. The arms group included lead shot, bullets, lead sprue, and brass shell cartridges. Tobacco artifacts included clay pipe stem and bowl fragments, both plain and decorated. All of the tobacco pipes were of the long stemmed ball clay (kaolin) type. Personal artifacts included glass mirror fragments, a bone brush handle, hand-made pencil lead fragments, and a copper or brass planchet (possibly a worn coin). Activities group artifacts included: miscellaneous iron, brass, and pewter fragments; bolts, nuts, washers, and miscellaneous hardware; a wrought ax head; barbed fence wire; iron barrel straps; lamp globe glass; an iron oar-lock; a horseshoe; and lead fishing weights.

Aboriginal ceramics were identified by surface decoration, temper, and body position. Whenever possible the sherds were assigned to established pottery types. Prehistoric lithics were classified by raw material and function. Diagnostic bifaces were identified, and other tools were grouped by morphology. Chipped stone debitage was grouped into four categories: cores, percussion flakes and thinning flakes, flake fragments, and shatter. Chipped-stone raw material categories included light colored chert, petrified wood, quartz, quartzite, and metavolcanics. With the possible exception of the metavolcanics, all of these raw materials occur within 50 km of the project area, either in outcrops or as water-transported gravels. Other stone tools were described by raw material and function.

Historic Architectural Field Surveys

The Vernonburg area has been surveyed for extant historic buildings and structures at least three times during the past 25 years: as part of a 1975 "windshield" survey of Chatham County by Van Jones Martin, as part of a 1992 resurvey by Beth Reiter, and in 1994 by the LAMAR Institute as part of this National Register nomination. These surveys were conducted according to standard field survey methods prescribed by the state historic preservation office which provided partial funding. These surveys have documented 25 principal historic buildings and structures in the Vernonburg historic district. Also identified were significant historic landscape and planning features, such as the canopied streets, as well as a variety of smaller buildings and structures, most of them docks, boathouses, and outbuildings along the river, most of which are poorly documented due to their small size and evolutionary nature. Owing to the setback distances of some historic houses and the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

inability to obtain owner permission for on-site inspections, some historic properties (especially those on the north side of Dancy Avenue) could not be surveyed in detail. Each of these surveys is recorded in reports on file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (the state historic preservation office).

Historic Buildings and Structures

Historic houses in the Vernonburg historic district date from the 1840s to the 1940s (no historic houses from the initial 18th-century settlement have survived). They reflect the resettlement of the Vernonburg community in the early 19th century, its growth and prosperity as an incorporated town, resort, and railroad suburb of Savannah in the second half of the 19th century, and its gradual transformation into a "bedroom suburb" of Savannah in the early 20th century.

The 25 extant historic houses are located along the two principal streets in the district, Rockwell and Dancy Avenues. The houses are situated on long, narrow lots. Most of these lots run from the streets to the river, although a few on the north side of Dancy Avenue are "landlocked," ending in marshland rather than the river.

For the most part, the houses are oriented toward the Vernon River--that is, the "front" or principal facades face the river rather than the streets--even though they are approached today from the street or "back." Unlike their 18th-century predecessors, none of which survive, most of the extant houses are situated toward the middle or on the river half of their lots, along the edge of the bluff, rather than close to the streets on the highest ground along the ridge (as a result, the historic community is best viewed from the river rather than land). Together, they form two roughly perpendicular rows of historic houses, one between Rockwell Avenue and the river, the other between Dancy Avenue and the river. A few houses at the northern edge of the district are located in more isolated settings, along a tidal creek, some distance north of Dancy Avenue; others on the north side of Dancy Avenue near Rockwell are situated at the north edge of the bluff overlooking the marsh along the tidal creek. Dancy Avenue thus is a "double-loaded" street, while Rockwell Avenue has historic houses along only one side.

Half of the houses in the Vernonburg historic district are two-stories high, a much higher percentage than is found statewide; the other half are the more typical one story. The great majority are wood-framed; houses built before the 1880s have heavy-timber braced frames, in most cases with hand-hewn timbers, mortised and tenoned and pegged together, while houses dating after the 1880s have "balloon" or platform frames made of light dimensioned lumber nailed together. Both gabled and hipped roofs prevail. A variety of vernacular house types is present; stylistic detail is modest and tends to be in the form of applied ornament. Porches, one and two stories in height, are prominent.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

Historic houses in the district date from the 1840s to the 1940s. Nearly 15% of these houses date from the antebellum period, the interregnum between the initial ethnic colonial settlement and the subsequent 19th-century suburban community. These houses appear to have functioned as farmhouses or plantation homes. Two are situated at the extreme north and south ends of the district (30 South Rockwell, 834 Dancy); two are situated along Dancy Avenue (703, 823). All are two-story, wood-framed, central-hall or hall-parlor houses with either modest Greek Revival (e.g., 30 South Rockwell) or Italianate (e.g., 703 Dancy) stylistic detail. Also present and believed to date from this period are several small, altered, wood-framed cottages reported to have been slave houses (611 Dancy, 823 Dancy, 834 Dancy, 14 South Rockwell). Thirty percent of the houses in the district date from the 1870s to the 1890s when Vernonburg was establishing itself as a small resort and suburban community. These houses vary widely in type, style, and size, although Italianate stylistic influence predominates. Some are rambling, almost free-form in their floorplans and massing (e.g., 611 Dancy); others represent vernacular interpretations of Italian villas (e.g., 623 Dancy, 717 Dancy). Approximately 10% of the houses in the district date from the first two decades of the 20th century. They represent the final phases of Vernonburg's resort era. Stylistically, they reflect Neoclassical Revival (e.g., 729 Dancy) and Craftsman (e.g., 504 Dancy). Approximately half of the houses in the district date from the 1920s through the 1940s. This period marks the end of Vernonburg's resort era and the hey-day of its historic suburban era. These 20th-century houses range in style from modest one-story cottages to substantial two-story dwellings. A variety of house types including Bungalow and Georgian is represented. A variety of early 20th-century architectural styles is portrayed, including Craftsman (e.g., 528 Dancy), Georgian or Colonial Revival (e.g., 22 South Rockwell, 12730 Rockwell), and Spanish Colonial Revival (e.g., 18 South Rockwell).

Most of the houses are accompanied by docks and/or boathouses on the river. These are generally small, modest, vernacular structures, although a few rather large examples are present. Many have been extensively added to, altered, renovated, repaired, or rebuilt, in part because of the harsh maritime environment in which they are located, in part in response to changing social and recreational activities. It is difficult to document the history and integrity of many of these small-scale structures. Therefore, they have not been individually classified as "contributing" or "noncontributing," but they are an integral part of the traditional Vernonburg waterfront and contribute overall to the character and appearance of the district.

Several houses are accompanied by substantial historic outbuildings such as detached kitchens or guest houses (most share a street address with the main house, but at least two have been assigned their own street addresses); these eight historic buildings are better documented than those along the river and have been individually classified as "contributing" where present.

Individual Buildings in the Historic District (historic/contributing)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

504 Dancy Avenue (photograph 4): This house was constructed about 1910. It is a single-story, wood-framed, weatherboarded cottage, rectangular in plan with a side-gable roof and a central hallway. The central narrow double doorway has a transom. The house has a full-length front porch with round posts. In 1994 the house was owned by Lottie Monsees but it was unoccupied. The house sits some distance north of Dancy Avenue, overlooking the marsh at the northern edge of the district. It is one of several similar houses built in this vicinity during the early 20th century.

528 Dancy Avenue (photograph 5): This house, currently owned by the Weigel family, was constructed about 1920. It is a single-story, wood-framed, front-gabled Bungalow. Modest Craftsman-style details include exposed rafters, composite porch posts with tapered wood columns on stuccoed brick piers, and ganged double-hung windows with triple sash above single sash. The house sits some distance north of Dancy Avenue, overlooking the marsh at the northern edge of the district. It is one of several similar houses built in this vicinity during the early 20th century.

602 Dancy Avenue: This house was built c.1930. It is a one-story house, rectangular in plan, with a metal-covered gable roof and a front-gabled porch. The house is wood-framed and sheathed in wood weatherboards. The house sits some distance north of Dancy Avenue, overlooking the marsh at the northern edge of the district. It is one of several similar houses built in this vicinity during the early 20th century.

611 Dancy Avenue (photograph 23): The Rockwell-Murray House was reportedly built in 1871 for W. S. Rockwell and is presently owned by the Murray family. It is a two-story, wood-framed, weatherboarded house. It features an irregular plan off a central hall, irregular massing, a polygonal projecting bay, double front door with a transom, a small one-story front porch with square posts and balusters, and some Folk Victorian details. A smaller single-room, wood-framed cabin also is located at 611 Dancy Avenue. The age of this building is probably early to mid-19th century; it may have been an original attached kitchen. It has a single gabled roof with an offset plain front door and a porch covered by the main roof.

620 Dancy Avenue: The Hiers House is a single-story, wood-framed, weatherboarded bungalow built about 1930. It has a rectangular plan, central hallway, low hipped roof, and a wide front porch with round posts. It has twin dormers and a central front door with side lights and transom. The house sits some distance north of Dancy Avenue, overlooking the marsh at the northern edge of the district. It is one of several similar houses built in this vicinity during the early 20th century.

623 Dancy Avenue (photograph 23): "Rokeby," also known as the Dancy-Strong House, and currently owned by J. S. Diamond, is a one-story, Italianate-style house with a weatherboarded exterior, central hall, screened porches, brick foundation, a low hipped roof, and an almost-square plan. It has two-story additions on the rear, and a former second story has been removed (date

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

unknown but apparently within the historic period of the district). The porch is recessed under the extension of the roof line and it has square columns. Tax records list the age of the house as 1870, and Hendry dates the house about 1877. The house was the home of the C. S. Rockwell family during the 1930s; the Rockwells may have been responsible for removing the original second floor (Hendry 1937; Martin 1975).

634 Dancy Avenue: The house sits a considerable distance north of Dancy Avenue, overlooking the marsh at the northern edge of the district, and is shielded from view from the public right-of-way. According to the 1993 resurvey of Chatham County, it is a relatively small house built c.1925 (CH-V-9). It is one of several similar houses built in this vicinity during the early 20th century.

703 Dancy (photographs 24, 25): "Vernon Hall," also known as "The Cedars," was built c. 1840-1847, reportedly by the Oemler family. A. Oemler acquired Lot 2 and 3 in Vernonburg in 1859 from I. D. LaRoche. Later residents include the W. T. Knight family, and the current property owner is the Bolch family. The house was built by George Cornwall. It is a Georgian-plan, two-story, hipped-roof house with basement. The front and rear facades feature five symmetrical bays with tall, narrow windows. Italianate-style embellishments include brackets and frieze panels under the eaves and two-story polygonal bays or extensions at each end of the house. The house is wood-framed with exterior weatherboard siding. The basement is brick and board-and-batten. The house features a one-story, wrap-around porch with square posts and balusters. The rear porch is partially enclosed. This is one of the oldest houses in the Vernonburg historic district.

717 Dancy Avenue (photograph 26): The Remshart-Roux or Mauer house, built about 1880, was originally owned by the Remshart family. Its present owner is P. H. Harris. It is a two-story, wood-framed, weatherboarded house with a Georgian or central-hall plan, symmetrical five-bay front facade, a hipped roof with Italianate brackets under the eaves, a lateral interior brick chimney, and a kitchen in the rear connected by a breezeway. The front door is flanked with side lights and a transom. It has a single-story front verandah and a screened rear porch.

721 Dancy Avenue: The Purvis House is a small, two-story house of wood-framed construction with a single gabled roof, a modern porch, and a one-story enclosed shed addition on the south side. It has a narrow, simple front door that is slightly offset. (This house was reported in the 1992 survey as "731 Dancy" which is non-existent.)

729 Dancy Avenue (photographs 9, 28): "Waldmere," or the Troup-Brandt House, located at 729 Dancy Avenue, was originally owned by the Troup family. It may have been built as early as the 1870s and remodeled c.1910. It is a Neoclassical Revival-style house with two stories, a shallow side-gabled roof, a cellar, a central hall, and side wings that were later additions. It has double verandahs in front and rear that have been recently enclosed with glass. The front has large two-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

story columns, the enclosure now screened in, while the rear has two-story columned porte-cochere. This house is presently owned by the Brandt family. On the landward side of the yard, near Dancy Avenue, is a two-story servant's/guest house.

823 Dancy Avenue: "Nosredneh" was constructed about 1840. The house is a single-story, wood-framed, weatherboarded, hall-parlor house with a side-gabled roof, interior end brick chimneys, and a wrap-around porch. It has a simple front door. Portions of the house have been remodeled. The house was used as a school by a Mr. LaRoche, and later owners include the M. Y. Hendersons, C. O. Drumond, and H. G. Strachan. "Nosredneh" is Henderson spelled backwards. Isaac D. LaRoche sold lands in Vernonburg Lot 4 in 1859 to A. B. Luce and Rear Lots 3 and 5 in 1869 to William N. Davidson. A small outbuilding, also located at 823 Dancy Avenue, is a small board-and-batten house with a single gabled tin roof. It has a simple central front door with no evidence of a porch. The siding is badly weathered. It may represent a kitchen or slave cabin (Hendry 1937; Chatham County Deed Book 4D:35, 3T:292).

830 Dancy Avenue: Built c.1914, this house is a one-story, wood-framed, gable-roofed bungalow. It sits some distance north of Dancy Avenue on a restricted-access driveway. It is one of several similar bungalow-type houses built in this vicinity during the early 20th century.

834 Dancy Avenue (photographs 7, 29): This is the northernmost house in the district and one of the oldest houses in the district. It is located some distance north of Dancy Avenue at the edge of the marsh. Built c.1840, it is a rectangular, two-story, wood-framed, weatherboarded house with a simple side-gabled roof extended to cover a double verandah supported by square posts. Both levels of the verandah feature later 19th-century sawn railings; the upper verandah has been screened. The house has two plain front doors, an exterior brick chimney, brick piers, and a small shed screened porch. A small cottage is associated with the Austin House. It is a rectangular, single-story wood building with a single gabled roof and a plain shed porch. It has a plain central front door. This cottage is believed to date from the mid-19th century and may be a former slave dwelling.

842 Dancy Avenue: Built c.1930, this house is a one-story, wood-framed, weatherboarded bungalow. It sits some distance north of Dancy Avenue on a restricted-access driveway. It is one of several similar bungalow-type houses built in this vicinity during the early 20th century.

12730 Rockwell Avenue (photograph 21): Formerly known as "Brushwood-on-the-Vernon," this house is a two-story, brick, Georgian Revival-style house, with a side hall plan and two-story additions on either side of the original house. Tax records list the age of this house as 1924, and according to Hendry, it is built on the site of the former Vernonburg Hotel. The first-floor windows on the landward side of the house are all round topped. The house has a two-story shed portico with

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

square posts in front. The balcony is supported by ironwork. The house was originally the home of the J. H. Allen family and it is presently owned by Page Hungerpillar.

12824 Rockwell Avenue (photograph 18): This house, currently owned by R. N. Kennedy, was built about 1880 on the site of the former Sisters of Mercy Orphanage and Convent (Hendry 1937). It appears to have been extensively remodeled in the early 20th century, probably around 1910. The house is a one-story, wood-framed building with a main side-gabled roof, multiple secondary gables, and a partially enclosed shed porch supported by composite, battered brick-and-wood columns. Exposed rafters highlight the eaves. The foundation is simulated tabby construction and the walls flare. A small automobile garage is located nearby, probably dating from the early 20th century as well; it features weatherboard siding, a hipped roof with exposed rafter ends, and two braced wooden sliding doors.

12826 Rockwell Avenue (photographs 17, 19): This unusual house is not well documented. It may be a remnant of a former hotel or orphanage (the Sisters of Mercy Orphanage and Convent was established c.1880 and, according to Clara Guerry, was a brick building located in the vicinity of the current Kennedy residence next door at 12824 Rockwell Avenue). Built of brick, the building is nearly square in plan and two stories high with a low end-gable roof (the roof does not appear to be original). Original window openings on the side walls vary in height and are topped by segmental arches; the front or river-side windows appear to have been enlarged in the mid-20th century. The corners of the building are highlighted with heavy brick quoins. Between the building and the river is a semi-depressed, one-story, concrete structure with a central exterior stairway and metal sash windows; its flat roof, at the ground-floor level of the main building, serves as a deck overlooking the river. This poorly documented structure appears to be a nonhistoric addition.

4 South Rockwell Avenue: The Seckinger-Minis House is a single-story, wood-framed house with a side-gabled roof and recessed front porch built about 1870. The front porch has been enclosed with large glass window-walls.

14 South Rockwell Avenue: This is a small cottage associated with the former Avon Hall plantation, currently owned by Laura C. Lawton Jelks, a descendant of the Habersham family. The age of this building is not known, but since it was associated with Avon Hall, it may date to the early or mid-19th century. Tax records date the building to 1970 when the cottage was remodeled, but the core of the house dates, at least, to the mid-19th century. The single-story cottage has a wood-shingled, side-gabled roof, a single plain front door, and a shed porch that extends the length of the house. The porch is supported by four round posts.

18 South Rockwell Avenue (photograph 13): "The Camellias" was the home of the Clarence G. Andersons, and it is currently owned by J. A. Diamond. It was built in 1922. The house is a large,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

symmetrical, two-story dwelling, vaguely Spanish Colonial Revival in style. It features a terra-cotta-tile hipped roof and stucco exterior finish. The second-floor level is slightly cantilevered out over the first floor with exposed support beams. There is an open balcony that wraps around the front of the house, decorated by a low railing of decorative iron grillwork. The front door has sidelights and a half-oval transom. The house has a single central dormer and an enclosed sunporch covered by a massive arched roof that supports the balcony. The interior features a central hallway. The landscaping around the house is considerably more formal than most yards in the district. A historic two-story guest house and a small historic gatehouse near South Rockwell Avenue also are on the property.

22-24 South Rockwell Avenue (photograph 12): The current Chisholm House was constructed in 1927. It is a two-story, rectangular, wood-framed building with a side-gabled roof and a small gabled porch at the front door. The front door is flanked by side lights and a transom, and the porch has double square-post supports. A two-story enclosed porch at one end of the house is either a recent addition or an alteration of an original sunporch. The exterior of the house is covered with wood shingles. Architecturally, the house represents the Colonial Revival (or Georgian Revival) style in its overall massing, symmetrical design, and detailing. Also on the two-parcel property is a two-story, shingle-sided guest house contemporary with the main house.

30 South Rockwell Avenue (photographs 1, 10): "Bonnie Doone" was originally built for Dr. John Law around 1840. It is the southernmost house in the historic district, and it is among the oldest houses in the district. The house is a two-story, rectangular, wood-framed and weatherboarded structure with a central hall and a side-gabled roof with exterior end brick chimneys and a two-story recessed verandah. The verandah-front has heavy square columns with thin square balusters. The front door has sidelights and transom with pilasters and pediments. The windows in front are all vertical sash and open like doors onto the porch. The two story verandah is a reproduction of the original; the lower story has been enclosed with screen wire. The side windows and interior molding were replaced in 1975. The house has a one-story shed-room addition in the rear. Hendry (1937) notes that the house contains twelve rooms and was "believed to have been built ... by slave labor" (Hendry 1937). Former residents of "Bonnie Doone" include Jonathan Tucker, Dan Tucker, Mrs. W. O. Rockwell, and Archie Davis. The house is currently occupied by the Wiley Ellis family.

431 Vernonburg Avenue (photograph 2): This small house was built c.1940 near the end of the district's period of significance. It is one-story high, with a nearly square plan, and built of wood-framed construction with brick veneer. It has a side-gabled roof with two dormers and a central chimney.

433 Vernonburg Avenue (photograph 3): The "Guerry Cottage" (formerly known as the "Constantine Cottage") was built between 1900 and 1920 at what is now 12830 Rockwell Avenue; it was moved

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

several years ago about 500 feet, across the intersection of Rockwell Avenue and Vernonburg Avenue, to its current location, to make way for new home construction on its original site. Although it no longer fronts the river, it is but a short distance away, in its immediate neighborhood, and has retained its physical integrity. It is a one-story, hip-roofed, wood-framed house, with a central-hallway plan and a front porch recessed under the low hipped roof.

Nonhistoric/Noncontributing Buildings and Structures

Forty-three nonhistoric/noncontributing buildings are present in the Vernonburg Historic District. All of these noncontributing buildings are nonhistoric--that is, they post-date the district's period of significance. All are houses. Most are relatively small wood or brick structures, in scale with the historic buildings in the district, and most are situated in a manner consistent with the way in which the historic buildings are sited. As a result, none seriously detracts from the historic character and appearance of the district. (See, for example, photographs 11, 15, and 16, which show nonhistoric cottages and small houses in the line of historic houses along the bluff.) Even though, numerically, their numbers seem relatively high, their overall effect on the district is minimal. Moreover, many of these noncontributing houses are located on house lots that have been tested positively for archaeological resources (for example, the 10 nonhistoric houses west of Rockwell Avenue). Others at the southern and northeastern edges of the district occupy but do not severely intrude upon important views from major historic buildings to the river.

Burned or Destroyed Dwellings

Fires and natural disasters claimed a number of Vernonburg's architectural resources during the late 19th and 20th centuries. Other houses were replaced by more modern dwellings with very little documentation of the original dwellings. The Connerat House, located between "The Camellias" (18 South Rockwell Avenue) and the Constantine Place, was reportedly burned prior to 1937. The Derst house, part of which was reportedly 150 years old in 1974, had formerly belonged to the Danenfelters (Sewell 1974; Hendry 1937).

Avon Hall, formerly located at 14 Rockwell Avenue South and built sometime prior to 1848, was destroyed by fire in 1970, and no recent photographs of the building have been located. The approximate location of the house foundation is known. A 1934 photograph of the plantation house is located in the Cordray-Foltz Collection at the Georgia Historical Society. Avon Hall was a large, three-story, wood-framed building, on a basement, with a single gabled tin roof. The front of the house, facing the Vernon River, had porches on both upper stories with square posts. Although the house burned, a small cabin, reported to be an old slave cabin, is being used and maintained by the present owner (see 14 South Rockwell Avenue) (Anderson 1954:5; Hendry 1937; Laura Lawton Jelks personal communication, December, 1993). Residents of Avon Hall included the Benjamin

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

Burroughs, William Neyle Habersham, J. A. P. Crisfield, and L. Lawton Jelks families. Schreck provides a chain of title for the tract, which is on file at the Chatham County, Superior Court Records Room (Anonymous n.d.; Hendry 1937; Schreck 1906). A photograph of the house located at the Georgia Historical Society shows a family (either the Habersham, Jones, or Crisfield family) having a picnic in front of the house around the turn of the century. The photograph shows six adult females, five adult males, three children, and a dog surrounding a table formed by covering a brick well with a board (Georgia Historical Society c. 1880-1920, Hartridge Collection 1349, Box 47, Folder 677). Anderson (n.d.) notes that Dr. Benjamin Burroughs, a Presbyterian minister, ran a boys' boarding school at Avon Hall before selling the house to the Habershams in 1854 (although the deed was recorded in 1856) (Anderson n.d.:5; Schreck 1906; Chatham County Deed Book 3P:461). Anderson also notes that life at the school is described in the memoirs of Col. Charles Olmstead who was a pupil there in 1848. The name Avon Hall was given by Mrs. W. N. Habersham, because of "her love for all things Shakespearean" (Anderson n.d.:5).

Fire also consumed the Sisters of Mercy Orphanage and Convent, which according to Clara Guerry, was a brick building located in the vicinity of the present Kennedy residence (12824 Rockwell Avenue). According to Hendry: "For many years after the convent was burned the confession boxes remained, mute evidence of the holy order there" (Hartridge 1945, 1973; Hendry 1937; Clara Z. Guerry, personal communication, December, 1993). The unusual brick building at 12826 Rockwell Avenue may be a surviving remnant of the orphanage/convent.

The Vernon House, a popular hotel that was constructed around 1860 on the Hungerpillar property (12730 Rockwell Avenue), was destroyed by fire about 1878. The hotel was reported to have had a hall "some 60 feet wide" (Hendry 1937). The current house was built on the site in the 1920s.

The Crisfield home, formerly the Noble Jones place, located on Rockwell Avenue South, also burned down (Mrs. Vonice Williams Dressel personal communication December, 1993).

Unknown Cemetery

A small graveyard was reportedly relocated from Vernonburg during the early 20th century. Two older Vernonburg residents remember seeing the cemetery earlier this century. Col. Rockwell, born in 1903, recalled that it was a small cemetery enclosed by a wooden fence and containing four to five graves, some possibly marked with tombstones, located in the woods on the north side of Vernonburg Avenue approximately 100 feet west of its intersection with Rockwell Avenue. Mrs. Dressel, age 87, remembered that her father had the cemetery moved after buying the property. She did not remember a fence surrounding the graves but noted that there were three large oaks in the vicinity and that the graves were outlined by bricks; when she saw it, the coffins had already been removed and there were only open holes. According to Mrs. Dressel, the cemetery was located

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

beneath the house on Vernonburg Avenue recently moved from the Adler property (not in the historic district). She stated that her father told her that the cemetery had contained the body of a Catholic priest (Col. Robert Beverly Habersham Rockwell and Mrs. Vonice Williams Dressel personal communication December, 1993).

Savannah, Skidaway and Seaboard Railroad

A narrow gauge railroad track spur of the Savannah, Skidaway and Seaboard Railroad was constructed on the north side of Vernonburg in 1872 and a train was in service until about 1879, when the track was taken up. A deed from Thomas Arkwright to the railroad company for Lots 5 and 6 in Vernonburg was recorded in July, 1872. An 1872 newspaper account noted that the lessees of the Savannah, Skidaway and Seaboard Railroad purchased the rights and properties to the White Bluff Railroad branch for \$16,000. The train ran to White Bluff twice daily. The trestle across the Vernonburg River and marsh included a drawbridge with a 20-foot span. The railroad company went into receivership following a bond-interest default in 1876. This railroad track was located on the north side of Dancy Avenue. (Purvis 1976; Col. R. B. H. Rockwell, personal communication, January, 1993; Chatham County Deed Book 40:60; Savannah Morning News, July 17, 1872:3.) The rail bed appears to have been largely obliterated, and its location has not been confirmed in the field.

Early Roads

Vernonburg Avenue (leading into the historic district from the west) and Rockwell Avenue (one of the two principal streets in the district) are roads that date to the mid-18th century; Dancy Avenue clearly dates from at least the mid-19th century and may date back to the 18th century as well. DeBrahm's map of the Georgia coast, made during the late 1750s, shows what are probably Rockwell Avenue and Vernonburg Avenue, but the large scale of the map precludes absolute identification. Prior to 1941, Vernonburg Avenue extended to a landing on the Vernon River, but the road now ends at its junction with Rockwell Avenue. Vernonburg Avenue is probably the same as Center Street, referenced on original colonial grants. Rockwell Avenue (north), and possibly South Rockwell Avenue as well, were formerly known as Back Road; this road is mentioned 19th-century deeds as a street 30 feet wide. Dancy Avenue, formerly known as Davidson Avenue, existed by the mid-19th century and, judging from its alignment with other early streets, may possibly date to the 18th century. Rockwell Avenue appears to have changed little since its creation; although the northern segment has been paved, it is still extremely narrow, and the southern section remains unpaved. Likewise, Dancy Avenue has been paved but remains a very narrow street and follows its historic alignment.

Maritime Resources

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

The *U.S.S. Water Witch*, a Federal blockade steamer captured in June 1864 by the Confederates, was salvaged, burned and sunk in December 1864 at a bend in the Vernon River a short distance from the White Bluff near the eastern end of present day Dancy Avenue (Georgia Historical Society 1974); its location is believed to be within the boundaries of the historic district. According to a local informant, the vessel remains in the river, although a contract to salvage the vessel was let in 1866 (Elizabeth Arndt, personal communication, December 1993; Daily News Herald, June 14, 1866:2). The vessel was stationed at Vernonburg during the Civil War, and it was manned by Confederate Navy men who patrolled and delivered supplies along the coastal zone. The maritime resources associated with Vernonburg were not examined archaeologically during the present study, but these resources likely will contribute to the significance of Vernonburg as a National Register Historic District. River transport was the primary transportation mode for colonial Vernonburg, and the river has continued to be a significant feature throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Other sunken vessels, wharves, and submerged refuse dumps are likely to occur along Vernonburg's river front (Arndt 1991:131). Based on local tradition, the river site associated with the wreck of the *U.S.S. Water Witch* is considered contributing to the Vernonburg Historic District.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Archaeology: Historic Non-aboriginal; Architecture; Community Planning and Development; Ethnic Heritage: European; Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance:

1742-1947

Significant Dates:

1742, 1799

Significant Person(s):

n.a.

Cultural Affiliation:

Euro-American

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

n.a.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

Exploration and Settlement, Community Planning and Development, Ethnic History: European

The Vernonburg Historic District is significant in the related areas of exploration and settlement, community planning and development, and ethnic history (Euro-American), under National Register Criterion A, for its direct associations with the settlement of Georgia under the direction of the colonial government during the mid-18th century. The district is directly related to colonial government social policies and programs that encouraged the establishment of organized communities generally at the centers of larger agricultural settlements; also, Georgia was to be a diverse colony, socially and religiously, although Catholics were banned, and slavery was prohibited. Owing to Georgia's relatively short colonial period, limited colonial lands, and slow initial growth, there were relatively few colonial settlements, and even fewer remain today, Vernonburg being among them, one of a very few to have been investigated archaeologically as well as researched historically to the extent that it has. Within four decades of Vernonburg's initial settlement, Georgia's restricted colonial period was superseded by a long and vigorous era of upland interior settlement through the creation of new counties and county-seat towns, with their distinctive plan-forms centered on county courthouse squares. The Vernonburg Historic District continues to have significance in this subsequent era, due to its transformation starting early in the 19th century into an excellent example of a small coastal resort community and then later a railroad suburb and "bedroom" suburb of Savannah; indeed, it appears to be among the oldest known examples of this important 19th-century community type in the state.

Vernonburg was founded in 1742 in direct response to Georgia's colonial government's policies and programs encouraging European settlement of colonial lands by diverse groups of people. From 1733 to 1752, the colony of Georgia was managed by a Board of Trustees under royal charter. Under the Trustees' direction, growth and development were slow, although the colony was socially diversified, and colonization was encouraged by providing settlers with land, farming supplies, cattle, and in some instances for the old or infirm, direct financial support. Agriculture was the mainstay of the colonial economy. Records for the Trustee period (1742-1752) are scant, however. For Vernonburg, extant records show that in 1743, lots had been granted to Henry Auderly, Widow Croft, and George Uland. Settlement on the south side of town began in 1744 when Frederick Keiffer, Matthias Rheinstetler, and Jacob Berrier were granted lots. Thomas Frazier was granted a lot in 1747, and John David Fisher in 1750. Grants for house lots in Vernonburg were issued as late as 1763. Thirty-three colonial grants for Vernonburg town lots are extant, or grants for roughly half of the original town lots.

When the Trustees' charter expired and Georgia became a crown colony in 1752, new aggressive settlement policies were put into place by the new colonial government. In 1763 the colonial

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

government obtained a large tract of former Creek Indian land through the Treaty of Augusta. In 1766 (some sources say 1764), a colonial "Act for Encouraging Settlers to Come into this Province" was passed, offering land for new townships in the new upland interior territory to any group of at least 40 Protestant families. Free land surveys and claim registrations along with a 10-year tax exemption were included in the offer. Under this Act, qualifying organized groups could petition to have land surveyed and reserved for them. Upon actual settlement, the reserved land would be distributed, or granted, to individual settlers. In this way, the colonial government hoped to encourage the establishment of towns as well as the distribution of land to settlers, a continuation of the humanitarian social goals of the colony's original Trustees. It should be noted that this Act was later vetoed by the Crown, but settlements already were underway by then and continued to develop.

Vernonburg's initial settlement in 1742 and its early development spanned the period of colonial governance by the Trustees under royal charter (1733-1752) and as a crown colony (post-1752). Its initial settlement by German emigrants desiring to own and farm their own land reflects the relatively open immigration policies of the Board of Trustees. However, it was somewhat unusual in that the entire original colony of German immigrants settled Vernonburg after having worked off their indentured servitude (1737-1742) to primarily English colonists in and around Savannah. In other ways, the Vernonburg settlement differed from other colonial settlements. In particular, the original community plan, as conceived by the Trustees' surveyor Joseph Avery, called for a nucleated settlement of houses on 64 small lots, each measuring 60 feet by 90 feet, surrounded by 50-acre tracts of agricultural lands, similar to the planning concepts behind Oglethorpe's famous Savannah plan, although not nearly so elaborate. However, this plan was altered almost immediately to create long, narrow lots stretching outward from the town center so that each settler's farmland would be contiguous with his house yard--at the request of the Vernonburg colonists, and against the recommendations of the surveyor, who later reported that "The running out the Farm lots long and Narrow for the people of Vernonburgh, was against my Inclination, but it was at their own desire and importunity, nor would they have it other ways." As a result, the early development of Vernonburg assumed a distinct physical pattern, organized along two intersecting streets, with agricultural lands extending outward from home plots, and without the initial provision of blocks of land for public purposes found in many other colonial settlements. This pattern is still evident today in the principal intersecting streets and the geometry of lot lines in Vernonburg (although the agricultural lands have long since been superseded by modern residential development), and it forms the basis for this National Register historic district. Although unusual when compared to the majority of communities founded during the colonial and early American periods, the Vernonburg plan is similar to that of other coastal-waterway communities including the nearby Isle of Hope and the more distant Ridge community near Darien.

In spite of all this planning, colonial Vernonburg did not prosper, and the town was abandoned by its Germanic settlers by the end of the 18th century. The reasons for the outmigration and abandonment are not clear; the most likely reason is the relatively poor quality of the soil in the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

vicinity which made agriculture difficult, although vigorous promotion of inland and upland settlement in the colony and state of Georgia in the latter part of the 18th century and continuing into the 19th century certainly diverted people and resources from such fledgling coastal communities.

Starting in the early 19th century, after the exodus of many of the original families, Vernonburg slowly transformed itself into a small resort community and eventually a suburb of nearby Savannah, Georgia's largest port city. Proximity to Savannah, the availability of land for recreational and resort purposes, and the development of transportation routes including an improved shell highway and a railroad all fostered this transformation. In this respect, Vernonburg joined other small communities, such as nearby Isle of Hope, in becoming weekend and seasonal retreats, small resorts, and suburbs associated with Savannah. Vernonburg's historic architecture and its situation along the bluff near the Vernon River, rather than close to the streets, most evidently represents these eras of community development, although Vernonburg's archaeological record is extensive for this period as well.

Historic Archaeology (non-aboriginal)

The Vernonburg Historic District is significant in terms of historic archaeology (non-aboriginal), under National Register Criterion D, because it has yielded important information and has the potential to yield further information about colonial settlement in Georgia and the settlement and subsequent development of Vernonburg itself. Archaeology at Vernonburg already has helped answer important research questions about the establishment and development of the community within the larger context of colonial settlement in Georgia. Because of the documented relatively undisturbed nature of the archaeological sites in the historic district, it is expected that additional archaeology would produce significantly more information that will help answer many more questions about the actual physical development of this unusual coastal colonial Georgia town and, in particular, about the German immigrants who initially developed, inhabited, and then abandoned it. Archaeology also has already yielded important information about the subsequent development of the town after the German exodus in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; again, because of the relatively undisturbed nature of the district's archaeological resources, it is expected that additional information about this era in Vernonburg's history could be recovered through further archaeological investigations.

Through the Georgia Archaeological Research Design, the archaeological history of Georgia has been organized into 36 historic contexts or "study units." Each study unit is based on a cultural theme, chronological period, and geographic region of the state. Archaeological study units relating to the colonial settlement of Georgia, along the coast and in the interior, have not been completely developed, in part because of the paucity of historic archaeology dealing directly with associated sites. No comprehensive archaeology has been done in Savannah, the state's first and foremost English colonial settlement. Little has been done at other English colonial settlements such as Brunswick, Darien, Midway, Hardwick, or Sunbury, and in some cases, notably Darien and Brunswick, the archaeology that has been done has focused on later, 19th-century development or

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

on waterfront development only. Some archaeology has been done at early historic-period ethnic settlements such as Ebenezer and New Ebenezer, but none of these investigations has been exhaustive.

The archaeology done at Vernonburg, although also preliminary in nature, already has yielded important information about the actual settlement pattern of this coastal colonial community that will contribute significantly to our understanding of the larger picture of colonial settlement in Georgia. In particular, it has shown how a community initially planned by the Georgia Colony's English administrators actually developed by its Germanic-immigrant residents on the Georgia coast during the mid-18th century: how the original plan, conceived by the Colony's surveyor, calling for a dense community of homes on small lots surrounded by more distant agricultural lands (a derivative of the original colonial plan for Savannah) was adjusted from the very beginning to tie agricultural lands directly to the settlers' house lots, and how in this way settlement seems to have responded more to the potential of private land ownership with contiguous residential lots and agricultural lands and less to the more abstract concepts and expectations of the original Colonial community planners. Also, because of the relatively undisturbed nature of the archaeological sites and resources in the historic district, it is believed that additional sites and resources possessing a relatively high degree of physical integrity will be found in any future archaeological investigations which will yield even more information about colonial settlement patterns in Georgia.

The first recorded archaeology at Vernonburg took place in 1990 through initial investigations by the LAMAR Institute. The recovery of artifacts was sufficient to designate Vernonburg as an archaeological site, and an official state archaeological site number (9CH783) was assigned. Subsequent field work by the LAMAR Institute in 1993 expanded and intensified the archaeological investigations of Vernonburg. The fundamental purpose of the 1990 and 1993 archaeology was to answer two very basic archaeological questions: is there an archaeological record of the Vernonburg community--are there archaeological sites and features relating to the establishment and development of the community--and, if so, does the archaeological evidence retain sufficient integrity to yield reliable, useful information through archaeological investigation and analysis? The answers to both questions proved to be "yes." After surveying several hundred acres of land at the Vernonburg town site, in the process discovering a variety of artifacts and other features, and more extensively testing several selected sites, the LAMAR Institute investigations demonstrated that: (1) a clear archaeological record is present at Vernonburg; (2) this archaeological record dates from the 18th-century German occupation to the mid-20th century; (3) the local archaeological resources, in particular those from the 18th century, have retained a relatively high degree of integrity, due primarily to the relatively undeveloped nature of the area in which they are situated; and (4) these resources can be expected to yield significant additional information about the historical development of Vernonburg through further archaeological investigation. While much of the site has been plowed in the past, excavation has determined that it is relatively stratified. Dates of excavation levels become older with increasing depth. In spite of the 20th-century domestic development of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Vernonburg, much of the site remains relatively undisturbed, primarily because newer buildings and structures were located at some distance from the sites of their 18th-century counterparts. Features are abundant on the site and range in time from the 18th through the 20th centuries. Artifact presentation is fairly good, particularly for the southern coastal plain; this includes a wide diversity of informative artifacts, midden, and subsurface features (postmolds, pits, trenches, and other types of features), as well as important ecofacts from the early historic period (including, but not limited to, pig, cow, and fish bones, crab and oyster shell, and burned seeds and nut shells). Patterning in the archaeological record has been recognized by the work conducted on the site. The site has good horizontal and vertical integrity.

The 1993 Vernonburg archaeological and historical investigations was conducted in an effort to answer numerous questions about the lifeways of past residents, with particular emphasis on those living during the 18th century. Initial archaeological research in 1990 (Elliott) demonstrated that there were buried cultural materials in at least two modern Vernonburg lots. Limited time and funding at that time did not allow investigations of more than these two areas, but observation indicated that only limited disturbance, in the nature of house construction and development, had taken place in the area of old Vernonburg.

In 1993 additional archaeological work was undertaken at Vernonburg. This work centered on several issues, including ethnicity, occupation, gender, economics, and archaeological potential. Several site-specific research questions concerning Vernonburg that could be answered through archaeology were postulated:

Did five years of indentured servitude among the British and others affect the culture of the Swiss Germans following their settlement of Vernonburg? Is a cultural assimilation visible or not in Vernonburgers' material culture? Why did the town not continue to maintain and attract Swiss Germans? While most of the Vernonburgers were craftspeople, did they practice their trades following the establishment of Vernonburg? If so, did they work in the town or travel to Savannah to conduct their trade? Did women participate in skilled trades or did they work only on the domestic front? How did Vernonburgers fare economically following the initial establishment of the town, after the American revolution, and in the early and mid-19th century? How did the character of the town change during these periods? What contributed to the town's decrease in population? What are the limits of the original town, as established in 1742? Where are the original lot boundary lines? Were certain parts of town occupied during different periods? Were some parts never occupied? Who owned each lot in town through time? Are the archaeological resources fairly undisturbed in many areas of town? Are they stratified? Are features present dating to different periods of the town's history? Is preservation of archaeological material good?

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Data derived from Vernonburg excavations would not only be enormously important in understanding the town's history and its people but would provide another yardstick of comparison to other colonial towns. The way in which Vernonburg compares or contrasts will greatly add to the overall picture of the southern colonies and early Georgia, particularly for future research. For example:

Do the Swiss German settlers at Vernonburg differ in their material culture from British, Scottish, and German Salzburger in other colonial towns? If there is a difference, in what ways is it manifested? How does a town's ethnic majority shape its role in developing? How does ethnicity help or hinder a town develop relationships with other communities? Is the type of ethnic background a factor in the answers to these questions? Were all colonial towns of fairly equal size similar in terms of economic and social status? Was location a major factor of a town's success or failure? How does the major industry of a town contribute to its success or demise? How do communities with various industries compliment or compete against each other and how does this affect their survival?

It has been demonstrated that historical research can contribute some answers to these questions. For instance, more extensive deed research and a thorough chain-of-title trace at the courthouse could provide information on land ownership through time. Archival research at historical societies, libraries, and other archival repositories may provide diaries, wills, and inventories describing life in Vernonburg and presenting an economic picture of various town residents. Given the known pronounced gaps in the historical record, however, archaeology may have the greatest potential to answer many if not most of these questions, especially questions to which the historical records are mute.

What in particular has the archaeology at Vernonburg revealed about the history and development of this coastal colonial Georgia town? First, and most fundamental, it has confirmed the historical existence of the colonial Vernonburg community, which had all but disappeared from the landscape during the 19th century. It also has confirmed through the discovery of physical evidence the general location and to some degree the overall size or extent of the "proper town" at Vernonburg. In this way, the archaeology at Vernonburg has confirmed the early historical record of the community.

Second, and perhaps even more important, the archaeology at Vernonburg has indicated that the actual physical development of the colonial community did in fact follow the pattern suggested by the historical record: Initial development took place along two principal intersecting streets which closely correspond to the streets in the historic district today; colonial-period houses were built along and very close to the two principal streets, some distance from the bluff and the river, and were subsequently abandoned; and later development occurred parallel to but at a greater distance from the main streets, with 19th- and 20th-century houses built on the bluff adjacent to the river, thereby preserving the archaeological record of the 18th-century settlement.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

The distribution of artifacts discovered archaeologically revealed the specific boundaries of the 18th-century town. This distribution pattern provided evidence of areas of town that were and were not occupied and the periods of this activity. Distribution maps of artifact density based on shovel test excavation reveal that the colonial and early 19th-century portions of town that were occupied occur along Rockwell Avenue, with the largest concentrations along Rockwell Avenue North. Dancy Avenue was not occupied at this time and did not become inhabited until later in the 19th century. Many of the modern lot boundary lines appear to be original to the town, although further archaeological work will provide the necessary data to determine which lines do not date to the 1700s.

Third, the archaeology at Vernonburg has helped document the social evolution and physical transformation of the community from a planned 18th-century German colonial town to an English-American 19th-century resort and suburban community with its own distinctive characteristics. Clearly, Vernonburg did not “die” after the late-18th-century German exodus. Instead, Vernonburg transformed itself, physically as well as socially, into one of the several small coastal resort and suburban communities in the Savannah vicinity. Many of the archaeological sites in Vernonburg have yielded information about this era in the community’s history.

Fourth, Vernonburg archaeology has revealed some interesting aspects of ethnicity in colonial Georgia settlement. Colonial Vernonburg is somewhat unusual in that it was settled by a small group of German immigrants after they had served a period of indentured servitude for their English colonial “hosts.” As a result, they were exposed to the predominant English colonial culture in ways that other immigrants who went directly to their ethnic communities were not. The archaeological record seems to express this. Excavation of hundreds of shovel tests and 16 test units showed a very small amount of specifically ethnic material culture. German ceramics, such as gray salt-glazed and Rhenish stoneware, represented but a very small percentage of the overall total. Coarse earthenware cream pans, found in abundance among the Germans at New Ebenezer, and strongly associated with other German settlers at the Moravian colony in North Carolina and among the Pennsylvania Dutch in New England, were lacking in any quantity at Vernonburg. No ethnic or religious symbols, icons, or artifacts particular to Swiss Germans were excavated.

This relative paucity of ethnic material culture at Vernonburg, unlike that seen in other ethnic enclaves, is likely the result of two occurrences. First, the indentured servitude likely forced the Swiss Germans to acculturate quickly in their new environment. Second is a question of simple mathematics: The original Swiss Germans at Vernonburg numbered only 30 families, and by the late 18th century most of these were replaced by English colonists. This small number of poor ethnic settlers residing in the area for a relatively short time would likely have produced and left behind relatively few artifacts, of which even fewer would be ethnically differentiated. Ethnic differences in material culture may be difficult to distinguish, but at least a minimum number of artifacts (German pottery, cream pans) seem to suggest variation. If these differences are real, then the relatively small

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

number of such artifacts at Vernonburg suggests an attitude of acculturation different from that found in other ethnic settlements, and it confirms the short occupation of the town by a small group of ethnic colonists.

Negative evidence indicates that most of the Swiss Germans in Vernonburg did not practice their crafts commercially. Those who did not farm for an income probably were craftsmen in Savannah. The lack of any commercial or industrial districts on the site suggests that Savannah may have been too large, too close, and too varied a market for Vernonburg to compete. A commercial area would reveal itself in the archaeological record through evidence of large structures, such as massive brick scatters, large post molds, and structural features concentrated in one area of town. In addition, one would expect to find large numbers of artifacts unique to specific occupations, such as coal, slag, and iron for a blacksmith, tanning pits and preserved leather fragments for a tanner; and medicine bottles, apothecary weights, and medical/pharmaceutical instruments for a doctor or apothecary. For example, at the New Ebenezer colonial settlement on the Savannah River, three areas were located archaeologically that contained evidence of blacksmithing activity. The lack of evidence for a commercial district and artifacts of specific craftsmen indicate that 18th-century Vernonburg was not the hub of commercial or industrial activity. A thriving commercial district could have helped maintain the ethnic identity of the original Swiss Germans settlers, and it might have encouraged population growth regardless of ethnic background; its absence suggests the corresponding absence of strong continuing ethnic associations on the part of Vernonburg's inhabitants.

A fifth result of the archaeology at Vernonburg is information about the lifestyles of early Vernonburg residents, about which relatively little is known from the historical record. Most of the areas tested date to the late 18th and early 19th centuries and give small glimpses into life at Vernonburg during this time. The test unit excavated on the Bonnie Doone tract indicates an greater opulence than the other areas. Large quantities of ceramics, many more costly hand-painted varieties and porcelains, along with large quantities of meat bones, indicate a high economic status for the household occupying that tract. Other areas of town tested indicate that late 18th-century Vernonburgers were not wealthy, nor were they poor. Unlike at New Ebenezer, where general poverty made coarse earthenware vessels the most common ceramic type, Vernonburgers enjoyed a variety of ceramics imported from overseas and from cities within America. The recovery of some goblet fragments, glass tableware, and wine bottle fragments support the presence of a middle- to upper middle-class lifestyle in at least some areas of the community.

The 1990 and 1993 archaeological investigations answered a large number of research questions. The remainder of the unanswered ones, and new questions originating with this recent work, must await additional archaeological excavation. Greater historical research and archaeological excavation can only result in greater information about an intriguing aspect of Georgia's past.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

What more could archaeology tell about the history and development of Vernonburg and about colonial settlement in Georgia? The answers to these questions must be seen within the context of Vernonburg's history and historiography, its distinctive historical community characteristics, and outstanding research questions.

From a historical point of view, Vernonburg is still something of an enigma: founded by ethnic settlers with the support of the colonial government, it survived for only a short period of time and then was abandoned, only to be resettled in the 19th century by Anglo-Americans. Further archaeological investigations complemented by whatever additional historical research is possible (see below) may help better explain how and why the Vernonburg community failed as an ethnic settlement. Stepping back from the purely local arena, additional archaeological information about Vernonburg's settlement and development also may enhance our understanding of broader colonial settlement issues.

Historical research for this project revealed few specific deeds and wills. The lack of the original town maps with numbered lots and the associated deeds present a virtual dead-end for constructing a complete chain of title necessary in determining which individuals lived where in Vernonburg. Indeed, the lack of 18th-century documents in the county courthouse or elsewhere, many of which were known to have existed as late as the middle of this century, represents a major loss of Vernonburg's historical record. Given these circumstances, historic archeology at Vernonburg may be the only available source of information in the future about the history and development of the colonial community.

The archaeology at Vernonburg also relates to the increasing attention on colonial settlements which is resulting in the compilation of a broader data base that can be used to answer many questions about colonial history. Vernonburg is distinctive as a colonial community in Georgia. Because of its relatively late founding as an English colony (1733), Georgia had a very short colonial period--in fact, the shortest of the original thirteen American colonies. Settlement also was slow to occur in Georgia until the late 18th century--it was a remote colony, the southernmost of the English colonies, and precariously situated between the more established English colonies to the north and hostile Spanish territory to the south and French territory to the west. As a result, there are relatively few colonial communities of any kind in Georgia, and even fewer with documented intact archaeological records or that have not been intensively redeveloped. Thus, the importance of Vernonburg's potential contribution to our understanding of the history and development of Georgia's colonial settlements cannot be overstated.

Information from Vernonburg already has been and will continue to be a major asset to this data base. Preliminary assessment of Vernonburg in relation to the study of other colonial towns illustrates the potential of such a data base. For example, with regard to ethnicity and colonial settlement, the Vernonburg work has shown that, for most of the town's history, it did not share in any

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

common ethnic bonds with other German settlements, even those relatively near by. At this point it is unclear whether the initial ethnic make-up of the town was an asset, liability, or of no importance to the town's settlement and subsequent development. Additional archaeological and historical research could shed light on this. Also, other ethnic colonial settlements began with approximately the same numbers of colonists (for example, New Ebenezer, Abercorn, Darien), yet some prospered and some like Vernonburg did not. Few settlers in New Ebenezer were wealthy, by standards of the day. Abercorn was eventually abandoned, and Darien continued to exist. Vernonburg appeared to have had trouble maintaining its population, judging from artifact quantities; however, at least some residents living there in the late 18th century seem to have been successful economically. The excavation of other lots in the future can help determine if everyone in town shared in this economic status or not, and whether this status evolved over time. Also, analyzing the data from many colonial settlements has begun to reveal that location is of great importance to the growth and success of a town. In Vernonburg's situation, its proximity to Savannah may have thwarted any attempt for it to become a major commercial entity.

Archaeological testing at Vernonburg to date has shed little light on the lives of women and children in the community. Testing is a hit-or-miss proposition by its nature, however, and it is most likely that further testing and/or large-scale data recovery would produce more information concerning these shadowy figures of the past. The lack of any commercial craft loci in town is especially unfortunate in that it provides no evidence of women crafters.

The underwater resources of Vernonburg cannot be adequately evaluated at this time, since no survey data is available. However, given its location along the Vernon River and the abundant evidence of the use of the river historically for practical as well as recreational purposes, underwater archaeology within the Vernonburg Historic District could likely yield information about the various uses to which Vernonburg residents put the river from the mid-18th century through the early 20th century. Underwater archaeology also could locate the site of the *U. S. S. Water Witch* and confirm the events leading up to its demise.

Finally, although it never actually "died" as a viable community (although it very nearly demised in the late 18th century) as many colonial settlements did (Ebenezer, New Ebenezer, Hardwick, Queensborough, for example), its colonial-period settlement areas were not intensively redeveloped as they were other colonial communities (for example, Savannah, Brunswick, even Darien to some degree). As a result, Vernonburg presents a unique opportunity to study community transformation from a "colonial" and "ethnic" community in the 18th century to an Anglo-American resort and suburban community in the 19th century.

Architectural Significance

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Historic houses in the Vernonburg historic district date from the 1840s to the 1940s (no historic houses from the initial 18th-century settlement have survived). They reflect the resettlement of the Vernonburg community in the early 19th century, its growth and prosperity as an incorporated town, resort, and railroad suburb of Savannah in the second half of the 19th century, and its gradual transformation into a "bedroom suburb" of Savannah in the early 20th century. They are significant in the area of architecture under National Register Criterion C for representing architectural styles, types, materials, and methods of construction that characterized Georgia's historic residential architecture from the early 19th century through the mid-20th century.

Half of the houses in the Vernonburg historic district are two-stories high, a much higher percentage than is found statewide; the other half are the more typical one story. The great majority are wood-framed; houses built before the 1880s have heavy timber braced frames, in most cases with hand-hewn timbers, mortised and tenoned and pegged together, while houses dating after the 1880s have "balloon" or platform frames made of light dimensioned lumber nailed together. These building technologies, and the change from heavy timber framing to balloon framing in the 1880s, are characteristic of residential construction throughout Georgia during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Unlike coastal cottages built on barrier islands, like those on Tybee Island with their distinctive designs and framing techniques, the Vernonburg houses exhibit no unusual construction or design characteristics; rather, they represent mainstream practices found throughout the state. In this respect, they are like the houses in other inland-river-oriented coastal communities like the nearby Isle of Hope community or the Ridge community near Darien.

The principal houses in the district date from the 1840s to the 1940s. They represent a wide variety of architectural styles and house types found in Georgia during this time period.

Nearly 15% of the houses in Vernonburg date from the antebellum period, the interregnum between the initial ethnic colonial settlement and the subsequent 19th-century suburban community. These houses are especially important because so few houses from this time period exist statewide (although they are more frequent along the coast, which was the area first settled in the state). Two are situated at the extreme north and south ends of the district (30 South Rockwell, 834 Dancy); two are situated along Dancy Avenue (703, 823). All are two-story, wood-framed, central-hall or hall-parlor houses with either modest Greek Revival (e.g., 30 South Rockwell) or Italianate (e.g., 703 Dancy) stylistic detail. The house at 30 South Rockwell ("Bonnie Doone") (photographs 1, 10), with its two-story, full-width, columned front porch and overall symmetry, is perhaps the best example of the Greek Revival style in the district; with its central hall flanked by rooms on either side, it also is an excellent early example of a locally unusual central-hall I-house, distinguished by its relatively tall, narrow profile. The house at 834 Dancy Avenue (photographs 7, 29) is likewise stylistically distinguished, and with its two front doors leading directly into the two main rooms, it is an excellent and locally unusual example of the hall-parlor type of house. The one-story house at 823 Dancy Avenue is an early local example of the hall-parlor cottage. Also present and believed to date from

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

this period are several small, altered, wood-framed cottages reported to have been slave houses (611 Dancy, 823 Dancy, 834 Dancy, 14 South Rockwell).

Thirty percent of the houses in the district date from the 1870s to the 1890s when Vernonburg was establishing itself as a small resort and suburban community. These houses vary widely in type, style, and size, although Italianate stylistic influences predominate; the presence of the Italianate style is noteworthy since it is relatively rare statewide, having been eclipsed by the enduring popularity of the Greek Revival style. Some of the houses from this period are rambling, almost free-form in their floorplans and massing; a good example is the house at 611 Dancy (photograph 23) with its asymmetrical massing, irregular floor plan, and polygonal bay. Others represent vernacular interpretations of Italian villas. The house at 703 Dancy ("The Cedars" or "Vernon Hall") is perhaps the best example, with its symmetrical two-story massing, tall narrow windows, polygonal end bays, and wide eaves with elaborate brackets (photographs 24, 25); it took its current form from an 1870s remodeling of an 1840s house. Also representing the Italianate style are the houses at 623 Dancy Avenue ("Rokeby") (photograph 23) and 717 Dancy Avenue (photograph 26); the latter is a good example as well of the central-hall type of house, "dressed up" with stylish Italianate brackets under its eaves.

Approximately 10% of the houses in the district date from the first two decades of the 20th century. They represent the last phase of Vernonburg's resort era. Stylistically, they reflect Neoclassical Revival and Craftsman. The house at 729 Dancy Avenue (photographs 9, 28) with its monumental columned portico is the best local example of the Neoclassical Revival style; its unusual proportions are perhaps a reflection of the fact that it was an 1870s house remodeled c.1910. The houses at 528 Dancy Avenue (photograph 5) and 12824 Rockwell Avenue (photograph 18) are both excellent examples of the Craftsman style as it first appeared during the first two decades of the 20th century; their most striking features are the exposed rafter ends at the eave, while the house at 12824 Rockwell Avenue also sports compound wood-and-brick front porch columns with battered bases, another hallmark of the Craftsman style. Other local examples of the Craftsman style are found in the smaller houses set back from the street along the north side of Dancy Avenue. All these Craftsman-style houses also feature the low, horizontal massing and the irregular floor plans of the Bungalow house type.

Approximately half of the houses in the district date from the 1920s through the 1940s. This period marks the end of Vernonburg's resort era and the hey-day of its historic suburban era. These 20th-century houses range in style from modest one-story cottages to substantial two-story dwellings. A variety of house types including Bungalow and Georgian is represented. A variety of early 20th-century architectural styles is portrayed. A few late examples of the Craftsman style are present (e.g., 528 Dancy Avenue, photograph 5, described above). Good examples of the Georgian or Colonial Revival are represented by the house at 22 South Rockwell (photograph 12), with its symmetrical five-bay massing and modest doorway surround, and by the house at 12730 Rockwell,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

an unusual side-hall plan brick house. The Spanish Colonial Revival style is well represented by the large house at 18 South Rockwell Avenue (photograph 13) with its symmetrical massing, hipped red-tile roof, and stuccoed walls; it also is a good example of the Georgian-type house with its central hallway flanked by two rooms on either side. Other houses dating from this period correspond to the Bungalow type with their low, horizontal massing, irregular floor plans, and lack of stylistic architectural details; examples are found along the north side of Dancy Avenue.

National Register Criteria

The Vernonburg Historic District has significance under National Register Criterion A in the related areas of exploration and settlement, community planning and development, and ethnic history (Euro-American) for its direct associations with the settlement of Georgia under the direction of the colonial government during the mid-18th century. The district is directly related to colonial government social policies and programs that encouraged the establishment of organized communities generally at the centers of larger agricultural settlements; also, Georgia was to be a diverse colony, socially and religiously, although Catholics were banned, and slavery was prohibited. Owing to Georgia's relatively short colonial period, limited colonial lands, and slow initial growth, there were relatively few colonial settlements, and even fewer remain today, Vernonburg being among them, one of a very few to have been investigated archaeologically as well as researched historically to the extent that it has. Within four decades of Vernonburg's initial settlement, Georgia's restricted colonial period was superseded by a long and vigorous era of upland interior settlement through the creation of new counties and county-seat towns, with their distinctive plan-forms centered on county courthouse squares. The Vernonburg Historic District continues to have significance in this subsequent era, due to its transformation starting early in the 19th century into an excellent example of a small coastal resort community and then later a railroad suburb and "bedroom" suburb of Savannah; indeed, it appears to be among the oldest known examples of this important 19th-century community type in the state.

The Vernonburg Historic District has significance under National Register Criterion C for its historic houses dating from the 1840s to the 1940s (no historic houses from the initial 18th-century settlement have survived). They reflect the resettlement of the Vernonburg community in the early 19th century, its growth and prosperity as an incorporated town, resort, and railroad suburb of Savannah in the second half of the 19th century, and its gradual transformation into a "bedroom suburb" of Savannah in the early 20th century. They are significant in the area of architecture for representing architectural styles, types, materials, and methods of construction that characterized Georgia's historic residential architecture from the early 19th century through the mid-20th century.

The Vernonburg Historic District has significance under National Register Criterion D in terms of historic archaeology (non-aboriginal) because it has yielded important information and has the potential to yield further information about colonial settlement in Georgia and the settlement and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

subsequent development of Vernonburg itself. Archaeology at Vernonburg already has helped answer important research questions about the establishment and development of the community within the larger context of colonial settlement in Georgia. Because of the documented relatively undisturbed nature of the archaeological sites in the historic district, it is expected that additional archaeology would produce significantly more information that will help answer many more questions about the actual physical development of this unusual coastal colonial Georgia town and, in particular, about the German immigrants who initially developed, inhabited, and then abandoned it. Archaeology also has already yielded important information about the subsequent development of the town after the German exodus in the late 18th and early 19th centuries; again, because of the relatively undisturbed nature of the district's archaeological resources, it is expected that additional information about this era in Vernonburg's history could be recovered through further archaeological investigations.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

n.a.

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Vernonburg Historic District begins in 1742 with the founding of the colonial settlement and ends in 1947. Archaeological resources in the district, as well as the overall plan of the community, originate with the 1742 founding of the community. The community was continuously occupied (although with a hiatus in the late 18th and early 19th centuries) and in fact went through several distinct periods of historical development into the mid-20th century. The end of the period of significance, 1947, represents the 50-year cut-off when historical documentation about the district was compiled.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Contributing resources date from the period of significance of the district, retain their integrity, and relate to the important historical themes of the district. Noncontributing resources post-date the district's period of significance.

Contributing buildings include 25 main houses and 8 ancillary buildings (detached kitchens, servant's houses, guest houses, gate houses). The contributing structure is the historic street system with its two principal historic cross-streets (Dancy and Rockwell avenues). Contributing sites include the consolidated Vernonburg archaeological site (9CH783) and the reported location of the wreck of the *U. S. S. Water Witch* in the Vernon River. Not counted as contributing but adding to the overall historic character and appearance of the district are the many boat docks, boat houses, and other

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

river-related ancillary structures (see Section 7 for a more complete discussion of these small-scale resources).

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

Histories of Vernonburg have been compiled by Floyd (1932a, 1932b), Smith (1975) and Jones (1990). The area of White Bluff on the Vernon River first was settled by Europeans during the mid- to late 1730s, although this area earlier had been part of a South Carolina barony and the land was under legal dispute until 1765 when South Carolina relinquished claim to the land. Vernonburg itself was established in 1742.

Colonial Vernonburg

Vernonburg was settled primarily by Germans from the Palatine region who arrived in Savannah in 1737 as passengers on the sailing ship *Three Sisters*. The first settlers came as indentured servants and settled at Vernonburg after completing their five years of servitude. Shortly before the end of their indentures, approximately 40 of the German immigrants applied to the Trustees of the Georgia Colony "that they might have lands granted to them at a Place now called the White Bluff on Vernon River." On September 29, 1742, the Trustees instructed a surveyor, Joseph Avery, to lay out a town with adjoining farm lots. Regarding the distribution of land, the Trustees directed that "each Man should take his equal chances by Lott." The Trustees also granted the immigrants' children freedom from indentured service upon the expiration of their parents' servitude. (Ellis 1994: 2)

Reverend John Martin Balsas of New Ebenezer (a colonial settlement upriver from Savannah) provides this additional information about the initial settlement of the town:

Thursday, the 11th of November [1742]. The Lord Trustees have given freedom to all the children of their German servants here in Savannah. They would have had to serve some years for the desired freedom of their parents. They will now be able to move to their plantations, which will be laid out for them by a large stream in the vicinity of the orphanage, around Christmas. They are supposed to set up their own city, cooperatively. (Jones 1988:225)

The town of Vernonburg, named for James Vernon, one of the Trustees of the Georgia Colony, was laid out in 1742 by Joseph Avery. In its original form, Vernonburg consisted of 64 town lots each measuring 60 feet by 90 feet, and these were surrounded by the Vernonburg township which contained many 50-acre tracts. The 64 town lots were bisected along an east-west axis by Center Street. Although a plan of the town was drawn by the Surveyor Joseph Avery, it no longer exists. Lots were issued for Vernonburg following a lottery in December 1742. The lottery apparently was

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

for lots on the north side of Vernonburg. All of the original lottery participants were Palantines and most had emigrated aboard the *Three Sisters*. (Ellis 1994: 4)

In a 1743 letter to the Trustees of the Georgia Colony, the surveyor, Joseph Avery, described the initial settlement of Vernonburg:

In my last ... I signefied [sic] that I was going to run out the Duch Town at White Bluff upon Vernon River, since that I have done so and have given out the Town and farm lots, and have settled the people upon their farm lots so that they may clear the land and plant a crop this Season, by which they will be supply'd with provision for next year, and therefore be no farther an expence to the Trustees and publick.

Between the Crops they will clear the ground build houses and make gardens &c: upon the Town lots there is not above thirty familys, which contains about a hund^r: people, Men Women and Children but there is room for eighty or a hund^r Familys, the Lots in Town are lay'd out for that Number....The Plan of the Town of Vernonburgh and the land about it, is the form and manner I design to make Use of for all the other different parts of the Colony, one of them to be kept here at my Office for all persons Information, and the Other return to the Hon^{ble}. Trustees, with Notes and Observations, and all the Land run out, set off upon it, within that bounds.

All persons to whom land is Granted will have perticular Plans (or plots) of their own Ground, which said plans will be annex'd to their Grants for to set forth their Rights,

The whole when done (or what is done yearly) will be Abridged into one Plan and returnd to the Hon^{ble}: Trustees and these being General another will be kept here for the (Information and) Use of the Colony. (Candler 1916, Vol. 23:475-483)

In another 1743 letter to the Trustees, Avery discussed the plan as well as the initial settlement of the new town. In this letter he noted that the town plan was laid out in response to the settlers' desires and not according to Avery's initial configuration. He also observed that the early settlement did not seem to be prospering as well as could be desired:

The running out the Farm lots long and Narrow for the people of Vernonburgh, was against my Inclination, but it was at their own desire and importunity, nor would they have it other ways. the reasons they gave was that so they might be near together to help one another and that they might be more conveniently Situate in case of an Enemy.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Tis true by this means they have Open'd a Country and Planted it on each Side the 1st: line (from the Bluf or Town) two miles long, and built houses upon there lots, But yet I am sorry to say notwithstanding their Incouragement, that they have not been as Industrious (unless it be some few of them) as it was Expected. (Candler 1916, Vol. 24:80-81)

The Trustees sent a letter to Avery in October 1743 instructing him to return the plan of Vernonburg, but the plan was not returned. Apparently there was a dispute between the Trustees and Avery over payment for his services. In November 1744, the Trustees' representatives "went to Mrs. Avery's to demand the Plans &c that were in her custody: the Plans in particular She obstinately persisted in the Refusal of" preferring to wait for payment of her Husband's account by the Trustees. (Candler 1916, Vol. 6:120-121)

Thomas Ellis served as surveyor to the colony following Avery's death, and in February 1745 Ellis was employed finishing the dividing lines between several lots at Vernonburg. In November 1745, Ellis was "attending to several Disputes relating to limits of Lots at Abercorn, Acton and Vernonburg &c." (Candler 1916, Vol. 5:126). By December 1746, however, the Trustees finally received copies of Avery's Vernonburg plan when "Avery's widow delivered four different plans drawn by her husband." (Candler 1916, Vol. 1:492-493; Candler 1916, Vol. 24:160-161)

Unlike the town plan, the original settlers of Vernonburg are reasonably well documented, in light of the fact that record-keeping during the Trustee period was sporadic. Others probably owned town lots, but either died, moved, or exchanged the lots without leaving any record.

The early history of Vernonburg was closely linked with that of neighboring Acton. The two towns shared a common church and minister, and the church was located between the two towns, probably on the present site of the Whitebluff Presbyterian Church on Whitebluff Road. The dead of Vernonburg, of which there were undoubtedly many during the colonial period are mostly buried in the churchyard cemetery on that site, but no colonial period tombstones have survived.

The Trustees of the Georgia Colony provided the settlers of Vernonburg with land, farming supplies, cattle, and in some instances for the old or infirm, direct financial support. Grant records for the Trustee period (1742-1752) are scant, however. In 1743, lots were granted to Henry Auderly, Widow Croft, and George Uland. Settlement on the south side of town began in 1744 when Frederick Keiffer, Matthias Rheinstetler, and Jacob Berrier were granted lots. John David Fisher was granted a lot in 1750, and Thomas Frazier in 1747. Grants for house lots in Vernonburg were issued as late as 1763. Thirty-three colonial grants for Vernonburg town lots are extant, or grants for roughly half of the original town lots. However, the town layout cannot be reconstructed from the available historical documentation. Lots 1, 2, and 3, south of Center Street [Vernonburg Avenue], granted in 1744, were the first three lots on the south side of the road, indicating that the southern lot numbering

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

system increased from north to south. The sequence for the lots north of Center Street, however, could not be determined.

Life at Vernonburg was harsh, owing in part to the relatively poor soils, although the early settlers worked hard to establish their farms, homes, and community. In 1746, William Stephens, President of the Colony of Georgia, reported to the Trustees that contrary to the lack of practical knowledge and disaffinity to field work possessed by many of Savannah's inhabitants, the Vernonburgers had "scarcely a man among 'em, that was not born to hard work, as soon as he was able to be doing." And in 1747, the Reverend Balsas of New Ebenezer reported to the Trustees that the Vernonburg settlers had planted and harvested flax on such a scale that they had been able to weave sufficient cloth for their own needs with a surplus to sell on the market (even though this practice contradicted British policy). Also during the mid-1740s, residents in the nearby communities of Acton, Hampstead, and Highgate, along with those in Vernonburg, banded together to form what later was known as the White Bluff Congregation (one of the first congregations in Georgia to follow the Reformed or Calvinistic protocols) and build a church, situated between Vernonburg and Acton. In 1755, the General Assembly of the Georgia Colony resolved to construct public roads including one to "... Vernonburgh and lands beyond the settlement on Vernon River." Note, however, that this road was not a southward extension of Savannah's Bull Street as it is today; as shown on the DeBrahm Map of 1757, the road likely was reached on a branch of what ultimately became the Skidaway Road (not until 1816 would the White Bluff Road assume its alignment as an extension of Bull Street). In 1757, the colonial government required all male residents and their male slaves between Savannah and Vernonburg to work on the road. (Ellis 1994: 4-5)

In spite of these accomplishments, however, some of the early settlers in Vernonburg were not successful, again most likely because of the relatively poor quality of the local soils, and many suffered from poor health, in particular an ailment probably resulting from the practice of pica or "clay eating". Reverend Balsas noted in a July 1747 report that:

Some time ago I heard in Savannah that some grown people in Vernonburg also ate all strange sorts of things, such as sand and clay, and damaged their health considerably. The children in this country do these things frequently, complaints on that are common. Some of them have died already, as I have noted in this diary" (Jones 1989a:85).

Balsas also noted in August 1749 that many in Vernonburg were sick with fever.

Some settlers, like Adam Straube, left the town fairly soon for a better life at New Ebenezer, several miles up the Savannah River. Others apparently moved to Savannah or Augusta; in March 1751, Balsas reported that "some of the Reformed people at Vernonburg and Acton are now moving to Augusta and are thereby plunging themselves and their children into complete spiritual perdition" (Jones 1989b; 1990:28). Still others died during the town's first decade. Reverse migration also

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

occurred, however: in December 1744, Christoph Ortman, having been expelled from the Ebenezer community because of his worldly wife, moved to Vernonburg and was appointed schoolmaster, in which capacity he served until 1751 (Ellis 1994: 6). More new settlers arrived after 1748 when soldiers were disbanded from Oglethorpe's Regiment (Jones 1992).

Settlers at Vernonburg experienced difficulties in claiming secure title to their land throughout the colonial period. Most problematical were contending claims from the South Carolina colony. These problems came to a head in 1765 when the English holders of grants to a Carolina barony, which predated the grant of lands to the Trustees of the Colony of Georgia and which included the Vernonburg area, demanded that they be put in possession of their property. The Vernonburgers responded with a petition to the governing body of Georgia, read by Representative Sir Patrick Houston and others in March 1765 before the Commons House of Assembly of the Province of Georgia (Ellis 1994: 6); it provides details of the contention as well as proof of the continued existence of the Vernonburg settlement in spite of hardships:

That your Petitioners have had allotted them several Tracts of Land in the said Province the major part of which Allotments were made during the Government of the Trustees for establishing the Colony of Georgia and for which they have since obtained His Majesty's Grants.

That your Petitioners to their equal Surprise and Concern are informed that the said Lands are said to be claimed by Sir William Baker Knight under a Grant from the proprietors of South Carolina prior to the Division and Settlement of this Province.

That some of your Petitioners had some of their Lands allotted them as a Recompence for their Services in this Province and others who were Soldiers in General Oglethorpe's late Regiment disbanded here had each a Tract of fifty acres within the Limits said to be claimed as aforesaid ordered them in Consequence of His late Majesty's Instruction at the Reduction of the Regiment.

That it appears that several of the Farm Lots laid out at the first Settlement of the Province and annexed to the Town Lots in Savannah and conveyed by the Trustees to several persons in Trust for the Freeholders of the said Town are also within the said Claim.

That the Village of Vernonburgh in particular (the greatest part of which is included in the said Claim) was laid out in Small Tracts to several of your Petitioners or their Ancestors whose unwearied and continued Industry has been employed in improving a Soil so barren that without the effectual Efforts they have made would scarce be fit for any purpose of Cultivation... (Candler 1916, Vol. 14:239-241)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Political and legal maneuvering on both sides took place over the next several years; only the declaration of independence by the American colonies and the subsequent Revolutionary War put an end to the English, in favor of the Georgians, and life continued at Vernonburg. The *Georgia Gazette* contains several references to residents of the White Bluff area from the 1760s through the 1790s, but none directly references the Vernonburg settlement.

Other signs of the continuing, albeit declining settlement at Vernonburg can be found in other political arenas. Throughout the period of British rule in the Georgia colony, the town of Vernonburg sent at least one local representative to the General Assembly of the Province. The *Georgia Gazette* also reported that 12 Vernonburg residents attended a meeting supporting the rights of American colonists in 1774 (*Georgia Gazette*, September 7, 1774), and another historian claims that Vernonburg sent three delegates to the first meeting of the Revolutionary Provincial Congress in Savannah in July 1775 (Ellis 1994: 6).

Abandonment and Resettlement (1799--1866)

In the years following the American Revolution, Vernonburg experienced an outmigration of its German inhabitants who gradually were replaced by people of English ancestry. The original town plan, composed of the sixty-four 60 foot by 90 foot house lots, was abandoned, along with the earlier Germanic houses, and town development shifted to the bluff of the Vernon River. This focus on the river has continued to the present day, and several examples of houses dating to the early 19th century remain. Later plats of the town were drawn in 1798 by the County Surveyor John McKinnon and in 1859 by County Surveyor John B. Hogg, but neither plan has survived (*Georgia Gazette*, March 21, 1799, p.2, c.2; Chatham County Deed Book 3Y:302).

The abandonment and resettlement of the original town is well documented. A legislative act by the Georgia General Assembly authorizing and empowering the Trustees of the White Bluff Congregation to sell and convey the Vernonburg town land was advertised in a local newspaper on February 9, 1798 (*Georgia Gazette*, February 9, 1798:3). An auction advertisement, dated March 12, 1799, documents the resettlement of the town and its realigned town plan:

The Trustees of the White Bluff Congregation, being authorized, by an act of the General Assembly of this state, to dispose, by public auction, of a Piece of Land, commonly known by the name of the Town or Village of Vernonburgh, about eight and an half miles from Savannah, do hereby give notice, That, in pursuance of said act, the said Piece of Land will be exposed at public sale, on Friday the 12th day of April next, before the Courthouse in the City of Savannah, in the manner and on the terms and conditions following, viz.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

The Said piece of land has been laid off into lots, containing from nearly two acres to half an acre each, so as to present convenient fronts on the high bluff known by the name of White Bluff, on the beautiful River Vernon, having two streets, one of which is parallel with the main road, and the other running from the main road to the river, nearly through the centre of the lots; each lot has a valuation affixed to it, and all sums which may be offered will be considered in addition to said valuation.

A credit of one and two years will be given, the purchaser giving bonds and mortgages; the purchasers to be at the expense of the same and titles; a plan of the said lots, with their situation, may be seen, by applying to Mr. John M Kinnon, the County Surveyor.

(*Georgia Gazette*, March 21, 1799:2)

The Trustees of the White Bluff Congregation in April 1799 were David Johnston, Edward Loyd, Nathaniel Adams, Sr., Nathaniel Adams, Jr., George Nungazer, David Fisher, and Michael Densler (Chatham County Deed Book 2F:266-267).

A third notice regarding the sale of lots in the town of Vernonburg, dated June 20, 1800, appeared in the *Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser*. The text of the notice is difficult to read on the microfilm, but a partial transcription follows. It shows that the auction was at least partially successful and that land had been sold for resettlement:

NOTICE

THE purchasers of LOTS in the village of Vernonburgh are hereby notified that their ... Lot purchases are signed ... [P]ersons who do not avail themselves of these ... are hereby informed that auction of them will take place at the Court-House in Savannah on Tuesday the ... day of July next

By authority of the Trustees of the White Bluff Congregation. June 20.

(*Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser*, July 8, 1800:4)

A deed for Lots 5 and 6, purchased for \$122 from the Trustees of the White Bluff Congregation by William Wallace on April 20, 1799, contains language providing additional background on the resale of lands in Vernonburg:

... [On a] tract of land known by the name of the town of Vernonburg and which was originally laid out into lots for the use of the holders or owners of fifty acre lots in the township aforesaid to be improved by them as a Town. But a majority of said lot

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

holders having relinquished as to the use originally intended as is declared in and by their petition to the Georgia Assembly of the State and the said General Assembly in conformity to the said petition having passed an act on the 2nd day of February, 1798 authorizing the said trustees to have the said tract of land sold at public sale after giving 30 days notice ... the trustees after having the said tracts of land laid off into lots and giving public notice ... (Chatham County Deed Book 2F:266).

Deeds for lands transferred through the 1799 auction provide additional information about the new Vernonburg settlers and their layout of their new town. For example, George Nungazer purchased Lots 1, 2, and 3 at the 1799 auction which were described as each "100 feet in width and in depth from a street 30 feet wide at the bottom of the fifty acre lots to the river" (Chatham County Deed Book 3V:318). Robert Bolton purchased Lot 12 at the 1799 auction, and his lot was described as "120 feet wide; and in depth from a street thirty feet wide at the bottom of the 50 acre lot to the River" (Chatham County Deed Book V:237). William Wallace, listed as a Savannah merchant, acquired four town lots in Vernonburg. A deed from Jacob Thiess to William Wallace, dated June 20, 1800, included town lot 32, a 90 foot by 60 foot lot originally attached to a 50-acre tract that was "bounded on the East by Town of Vernonburg; on South by original Walter Denny's; West by Lots 24 and 25; north by original David Ranstatlers." Wallace also acquired town lots 4, 5, and 6. Lot 4 was described as 105 feet by 105 feet wide, significantly wider than the original 60 x 90 foot dimensions, and the lot was adjacent to a 30 feet wide street. Lot 4 was purchased for \$62 (Chatham County Deed Book 2F:266-267; T:267; V:131).

In spite of the 1799 land sale, by the early 19th century Vernonburg had ceased to exist as an incorporated town. Although the community is shown on McKinnon's 1816 map of Chatham County (but not in detail), Morse's 1821 *Gazetteer* contained no listing for Vernonburg. This suggests that many of the new property owners did not build houses on their newly acquired land. Some may have used the land for farming, and others may have simply held the land for speculation. The former community retained its identity as a place, however, as evidenced by language in property deeds. For example, a deed for 45 acres, dated December 1836, from Patrick Houstoun to Dr. John S. Law, describes property bounded on the east by "a street or road which separates the building lots of the Town of Vernonburg; on the south by the Marshes of Vernon River; on the west by a ditch and dam" (Chatham County Deed Book 3C:32-33). An 1856 plat of the late Benjamin Burroughs estate (reproduced in a WPA-era re-drawing) includes the area of Vernonburg along South Rockwell Avenue; this plat shows seven numbered tracts with four smaller divisions designated by letters A, B, C, and K. In May 1861, at the onset of the Civil War, Jonathan D. Delannoy of Savannah contributed a "fine building lot in the Village of Vernonburg" to be raffled off for \$500 with proceeds going to support the volunteer soldiers of Savannah (*Daily Morning News*, May 24, 1861:2). Throughout much of the first half of the 19th century, Vernonburg appears to have been inhabited by only a few families living on relatively large tracts of land. The few oldest houses which still exist in Vernonburg, dating from the 1840s, document this era of the community's history.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

By the middle of the 19th century, Vernonburg apparently had been transformed into a suburb of Savannah featuring a number of resort homes and plantations which also served as weekend and summer retreats for owners who maintained their principal residences in the nearby city. At least three major houses (two of which are extant), each on considerable acreage, were built during the first half of the 19th century, and each illustrates the changes that had occurred in the Vernonburg community.

"Avon Hall" (formerly at 14 South Rockwell Avenue) was one of the first "new" 19th-century houses to be built in Vernonburg. It and its owners vividly illustrate the social and cultural as well as physical changes that took place in Vernonburg during the first half of the 19th century. Situated near the center of the community, Avon Hall was a large, three-story-over-basement house constructed sometime between 1799 and 1840. It was built by the Burroughs family, among whom was Benjamin Burroughs, pastor of the White Bluff Congregation, who ran a school in the house. In 1848 "Avon Hall" was sold to William Neyle Habersham, a Savannah rice broker and rice mill operator with the firm of R. Habersham and Son (founded by James Habersham in 1744). Habersham was Harvard-educated, an accomplished flutist, an avid fisherman, and an authority on Maderia wines. His wife Josephine Clay Habersham was likewise an accomplished scholar, linguist, musician, and nature lover. They also owned a house on Pulaski Square in Savannah. Josephine kept a diary of life in Vernonburg from June 17 through November 1, 1863 (her diary later served as the basis for *Ebb Tide*, a book written by Spencer Bidwell King, Jr., and her accounts of daily life were later corroborated by her grandson and granddaughter). Although preoccupied with the Civil War (two of her sons would be killed at the Battle of Atlanta), Josephine recorded a life of leisure, culture, and abundance at Avon Hall. Each day usually included crabbing, fishing, swimming, learning, and music (swimming usually took place within a covered bath house built over the river). Her husband had a little steamboat, the *Mary Isabella*, while Josephine enjoyed her *Sunset*, in which she was rowed down the river below Tucker's Point to view the sunset. The Habershams imported some of the first camellias to Georgia from France in 1856, planting them at their Savannah town house as well as their country retreat. Avon Hall burned to the ground on December 28, 1970. A small historic cottage, probably an original outbuilding, survives. (Ellis 1994: 8-10)

Three other houses, all still standing, also reflect the pronounced "gentrification" of Vernonburg at the middle of the 19th century. "Bonnie Doone" (also "Doon") (30 South Rockwell Avenue) was built between 1830 and 1840. It is a large, two-story, wood-framed house with Greek Revival-style architectural elements. It is located at the extreme southern end of Vernonburg, at what was once called "Tucker's Point." Its owner, John Tucker, was well known in Savannah for his racing horses and his interest in bowling. His wife owned the house during the Civil War and oversaw its use as a field hospital for wounded and sick Confederate soldiers. In 1872 the house was purchased by the Habershams of Avon Hall and then given to their son, Robert Beverly Habersham, on the occasion of his marriage to Margaret Cunningham Schley. The house at what is now 834 Dancy Avenue at the very northern edge of Vernonburg was built in the 1840s in an architectural style similar to Bonnie

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Doone. "Vernon Hall" (703 Dancy Avenue) is the largest of the remaining 19th-century houses in Vernonburg. It was built in 1847 by the Oemler family. (Ellis 1994: 10)

Vernonburg's mid-century transformation into a fledgling place of resort was further documented by a letter from a "Northern visitor" published in the August 6, 1859 edition of Savannah's *Daily Morning News* which complimented Savannah on having such fine places of resort like Vernonburg (Ellis 1994: 11). At nearly the same time, the Georgia General Assembly in 1859 incorporated the "Vernon Shell Road Company" to lay out, build, and maintain a "shell road" (an unpaved highway surfaced with seashells, locally available in great quantities, rather than gravel, which was much more scarce). Company revenues were to be derived from tolls. Incorporators included many Vernonburg residents including William Neyle Habersham (Ellis 1994: 7). Such an improved country road would have made Vernonburg much more convenient to Savannah.

The Civil War did not leave Vernonburg untouched, although no battles were fought in the community and there was no wholesale destruction of property. Josephine Habersham's diary records cannon bombardments in the distance and daily visits by Confederate soldiers stationed nearby, and a local home (Bonnie Doone) was pressed into service as a field hospital. The most noteworthy event was the capture and scuttling of the *U.S.S. Water Witch*, a Federal blockade steamer. After capturing the ship in Green Island Sound at the mouth of the Little Ogeechee River in June 1864, the Confederate navy moved it to safe-keeping at Vernonburg on the Vernon River. However, with the open ocean and ocean sounds dominated by the Federal navy, and the inland waterways too shallow or debris-clogged to permit further movement, the *Water Witch* was for all intents and purposes marooned. On December 19, 1864, the ship was salvaged, burned and sunk in the Vernon River at a bend near the eastern end of present-day Dancy Avenue to prevent its recapture by Sherman's advancing Federal army. (Ellis 1994: 13-14, Georgia Historical Society 1974). Although a contract to salvage the vessel was let in 1866 (*Savannah Daily News Herald*, June 14, 1866), a local informant believes that the vessel remains in the river (most likely within the boundaries of this historic district) (Elizabeth Arndt, personal communication, December 1994; Arndt 1991: 131).

Vernonburg after the Civil War (1866-1900)

Vernonburg was reincorporated as a town by an act of the Georgia General Assembly in 1866. This act restored Vernonburg's legal identity as a community. It also marked the beginning of a new era of development and prosperity as a Savannah suburb and small resort community.

Vernonburg's 1866 corporate limits were set at the Vernon River on the east, the White Bluff Road on the west, and White Bluff Road mileposts 7 on the north and 9 on the south (milepost 7 would have been just south of the current Montgomery Crossroads, milepost 9 would have been near the present location of the First and Second Mount Pleasant Baptist Churches, and milepost 8 between the two would have been near the present intersection with Vernonburg Road). This incorporated

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

tract would have included all the lands associated with the initial colonial settlement of the town. (Ellis 1994, p. 1).

The new local government consisted of an "Intendent" and three "Commissioners" who were elected by popular vote of property owners in the municipality. In addition to general municipal authorities, the Commissioners were empowered to license billiard tables and ten-pin (bowling) alleys and to grant licenses to sell spirituous and fermented alcoholic beverages within one mile of the corporate limits. This governmental charter and scope of responsibilities continued in force until 1965 when the Georgia General Assembly increased the number of Commissioners to four. In 1993 the state legislature abolished the requirement that voters in local elections be property owners. (Ellis 1994: 14-15)

Vernonburg's new government quickly passed local ordinances dealing with a variety of issues. The sale of spirituous liquors apparently was prohibited, at least for a time, along with discharging firearms, and bathing or swimming in the Vernon River was prohibited except in "bath houses." (Ellis 1994: 14-15)

Property deeds from the 1860s refer to lot numbers in Vernonburg, but they make no distinction between the original town lots and farm lots. However, it is clear from the property descriptions that these lots are in the vicinity of the former town. A deed from Nathaniel Nungazer to John Oliver, dated April 13, 1863, for Lots 1, 2, and 3, describes the lots "in the village of Vernonburg each 100 feet in width and in depth from a street 30 feet wide at the bottom of the fifty acre lots to the river" (Chatham County Deed Book 3V:318). A deed from Edwin M. Converse to Charles Van Horn, dated December 15, 1866, for Lots 5, 6, and 7 describes Lot 6 as "having a front 134 feet on Vernon River and running back 400 feet more or less to a road 30 feet wide and bounded on the one side by Lot 7 and on the other by Lot 5" (Chatham County Deed Book 3Y:302).

Resort development followed closely on the heels of the 1866 incorporation. An 1866 advertisement for the Vernonburg House, run by W. and R. McIntyre and Company with P. L. Constantine serving as "Agent and Proprietor," boasted bath houses (used for river swimming) and boats for the public (*Savannah Daily Herald*, March 27, 1866:2). The Savannah Fire Company held its anniversary reunion at the Vernonburg House in May 1879 when it was reportedly run by Mrs. Converse (*Savannah Morning News* May 31, 1879:3). Mrs. Converse also is listed as running the Vernonburg House as late as 1883 (*Savannah Morning News*, May 31, 1883:2). Other small resort hotels in Vernonburg at this time included the Vernon House (E. H. Kibuin, proprietor) (burned in 1878), the Branch House (Thomas Arkwright and Company, proprietors) which offered rooms for \$3.00 a day, and the White Bluff House (T. F. Churchill, proprietor) which advertised a "bar, tenpin alley, billiards room, dancing platform, and floating bathhouses" (Purvis 1976). Several of these small resort hotels still exist in Vernonburg and are now used as homes (which they were built to resemble).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

In addition to the numerous hotel guests, Vernonburg supported a growing summer-resident population. Summer residents included the Hendersons, Kinseys, Chisholms, Converses, Remsharts, Cornwells, Douglasses, Dancys, Rockwells, Constantines, Connerats, Neyle Habershams, and Robert Habershams" (Jones 1959:6). Virtually all the houses in Vernonburg built between the 1870s and the 1890s are associated with summer families; representing nearly one-third of the extant historic houses in the historic district, these historic seasonal retreats are now used as year-round single-family houses.

Collateral transportation improvements supported the development of Vernonburg as a suburban resort community after the middle of the 19th century. On November 19, 1868, the *Savannah Daily Morning News* reported on the construction of the Savannah, Skidaway and Seaboard Railroad, of which William Neyle Habersham (Avon Hall) was a principal inventor. The railroad began at the head of Whitaker Street in Savannah and ran directly south for seven miles, the mainline continuing to Isle of Hope (another river-oriented resort suburb similar to Vernonburg, listed on the National Register in 1984) with one branch to Montgomery and another, off the Montgomery spur, across the Vernon River on a draw bridge to Vernonburg and the White Bluff area. The White Bluff line is shown clearly on an 1875 Map of Chatham County by Charles G. Platen, "Surveyor," running just north of Dancy Avenue through the northern reaches of Vernonburg (no evidence of this rail line in Vernonburg can be found today). The Vernonburg line was characterized as the "wealthiest" of the three lines (Isle of Hope, Montgomery, and Vernonburg) with its "train of equipages that would do credit to a city of metropolitan standing." (Ellis 1994: 11-12) In 1870, the Georgia General Assembly expanded the authority of the 1859 Vernon Shell Road Company to include branch highways throughout Chatham County (although it is unclear how many, if any, branch roads actually were built), and to empower the corporation to "use and run over said shell road ... steam friction or common road engines ... with vehicles connected therewith, for the purpose of transportation of freight and passengers." In 1899 the Company was authorized to use electric or other motive power but was prohibited from using steam. (Ellis 1994: 8)

A contrasting development occurred in Vernonburg in the 1870s, one commonly associated with small rural and suburban locations near larger cities. A girl's orphanage was established in Vernonburg in 1875 when three Sisters of Mercy and 25 orphaned girls took up residence in the former summer home of Mrs. J. Lama. In 1877 the Female Orphan Benevolent Society was formed to relieve the Sisters of their individual responsibility for the orphanage. In 1883 the girls' home moved to the 1600 block of Habersham Street in Savannah and in 1938 to its present location. (Ellis 1994: 12-13; Hartridge 1945:8)

Vernonburg in the Early 20th Century

Local government remained active through the 1910s. At a 1913 council meeting, the city amended its 1866 bathing ordinance to allow swimming in the Vernon River, provided that the bathers "are clad

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

in suitable bathing suits.” However, in the 1920s, ‘30s, and ‘40s, the city council failed to meet regularly and apparently failed to hold elections as required under the city’s charter (Ellis 1994: 15). Vernonburg once again was undergoing a change, from an upper-class resort and retreat community to a cottage and “bedroom” suburb of Savannah.

Two 1918 plats provide clues about the ongoing physical development of the town. The first plat shows three tracts in Vernonburg sold by Henry D. Grewe to H. F. Kuck. Rockwell Avenue North is identified as Back Road. The three tracts, labeled A, B, and C, from north to south are bounded on the west by Back Road, on the east by the Vernon River, on the north by property of J. Grimm, and on the south by Vernonburg Avenue. Vernonburg Avenue no longer extends to the river, as shown on this plat. Tract A has 124 feet frontage on Back Road, Tract B has 100 feet, and Tract C has 100 feet. The distances to the Vernon River range from 213.5 feet on the south to 266 feet on the north. (This plat includes areas of archaeological Test Units 2 through 7.)

The second early 20th-century plat is for an 8.5 acre tract, which was property of the Savannah Institute of the Sisters of Mercy, located west of the previously described tracts on the opposite side of Back Road. It is presently known as the Wallace Tract. It is bounded on the south by Vernonburg Avenue and on the north and west by property of W. V. Davis. A small portion of the tract is bounded on the east by property of J. Grimm (Chatham County Map Book 1:132, 141). (This plat includes the area of archaeological Test Unit 15.)

These two plats along with other evidence show that many of the larger 19th-century lots in Vernonburg were being subdivided for the construction of smaller cottages and “suburban” houses. Especially with the advent of the automobile, Vernonburg was close enough to Savannah to become a convenient “bedroom suburb” as well as a place of seasonal resort for families of more modest means. The attraction of the river and its recreational possibilities still attracted new residents, as evidenced by the siting of new houses similar to the older ones, in a line along the bluff, facing the river (although some of the newer homes, especially on the far north side of Dancy Avenue, faced their driveways and the street, although at considerable setback distances). But many of the new residents, along with many of the residents of the older homes, were now permanent rather than seasonal. Half of the historic houses in the Vernonburg Historic District date from this period of incremental change and development.

Vernonburg in the Second Half of the 20th Century

In 1956 local elections again were held and the new city council resumed regular meetings. In 1957 the city council enacted Vernonburg’s first zoning ordinance. Most of the town was restricted to single-family residential use, but six parcels were placed in a separate zoning category which permitted commercial gardens, greenhouses, and a cement-products manufacturing plant along with residences. The commercial gardens and greenhouses provision was include to permit the activities

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

then being conducted by George P. Crisfield, a descendent of William Neyle and Josephine Habersham at Avon Hall (in the historic district). The cement-products manufacturing plant, known as "Lucken Concrete Products Co.," had been founded in 1945 by Nicholas C. Lucken; its principal product was concrete rail fencing widely used in Vernonburg and other areas of Chatham County (outside the National Register historic district). In the 1960s, the town turned its attention to pollution of the Vernon River and sued Chatham County to end the discharge of raw sewage into the river; this resulted in the construction of the county sewage treatment plant on President Street. In the 1980s the town blocked construction of a large-scale commercial marina across the Vernon River from the historic community. (Ellis 1994: 15) Currently the community is focusing attention on historic preservation as a way to maintain its distinctive historic character and appearance.

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Continuation Sheet

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Continuation Sheet

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Continuation Sheet

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

Zierden, Martha, Suzanne Buckley, Jeanne Calhoun and Debi Hacker
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other, Specify Repository:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Historic Resources Field Survey, Chatham County, Georgia (1992), resource numbers CH-V-1 through CH-V-23

Georgia Archaeological Site File number 9CH783 ("Vernonburg") (1990)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property

285 acres (acreage estimator)

UTM References

- A) Zone 17
Easting 488080
Northing 3537160
- B) Zone 17
Easting 489980
Northing 3536205
- C) Zone 17
Easting 487610
Northing 3535320

Verbal Boundary Description

The historic district is bounded by a heavy black line drawn to scale on the attached "historic district map" and on the attached USGS "Burroughs" and "Isle of Hope" quadrangle maps.

Boundary Justification

The district boundary includes all known contiguous historic resources including archaeological sites and historic buildings associated with the historic Vernonburg community as it developed between 1742 and 1947. It follows the historic development pattern of the community on the bluffs adjacent to (west and north of) a sharp bend in the Vernon River. It includes the Vernon River itself (to the east) since the community was historically oriented to and shaped by the river and because of the high probability of underwater archaeological resources in the river associated with the community's history including, in particular, the reported site of the wreck of the *U. S. S. Water Witch* off the east end of Dancy Avenue. It excludes more recent subdivision development to the west.

At the south, the district is bounded by the southern edge of the bluff which forms the town site. Along the west, the boundary is established along a straight line at 250 feet west of South Rockwell Avenue and 450 feet west of North Rockwell Avenue to incorporate known significant archaeological resources associated with the 18th-century Vernonburg community; much of the land between Rockwell Avenue and the western district boundary is undeveloped today or has been developed with relatively small nonhistoric houses. The northern district boundary is drawn along the northern edge of the bluff which forms the town site. The eastern boundary includes the Vernon River adjacent to the Vernonburg community.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Richard Cloues, Survey and Register Unit Manager, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

street & number 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street

city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303

telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** April 24, 2000

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)

name/title Daniel T. Elliot and Rita Folse Elliot

organization LAMAR Institute, Inc.

street and number Box 181

city or town Watkinsville **state** Georgia **zip code** 30677

telephone 706-245-4242

consultant

regional development center preservation planner

other:

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Name of Property: Vernonburg Historic District

City or Vicinity: Vernonburg

County: Chatham

State: Georgia

Photographer: James R. Lockhart

Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Date Photographed: March 1997

Description of Photograph(s):

Photo 1 of 30: 30 S. Rockwell Avenue, landward side; photographer facing east.

Photo 2 of 30: 431 Vernonburg Avenue; photographer facing southeast.

Photo 3 of 30: 433 Vernonburg Avenue; photographer facing southeast.

Photo 4 of 30: 504 Dancy Avenue; photographer facing north.

Photo 5 of 30: 528 Dancy Avenue; photographer facing north.

Photo 6 of 30: Dancy Avenue; photographer facing southwest.

Photo 7 of 30: 834 Dancy Avenue; photographer facing north.

Photo 8 of 30: 729 Dancy Avenue, servant's/guest house; photographer facing southeast.

Photo 9 of 30: 729 Dancy Avenue, main house; photographer facing south.

Photo 10 of 30: 30 S. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing west.

Photo 11 of 30: 28 S. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing northwest.

Photo 12 of 30: 22 S. Rockwell Avenue (left) and 18 S. Rockwell Avenue (right), river view;
photographer facing northwest.

Photo 13 of 30: 18 S. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing west.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Photo 14 of 30: 12828 (left) and 12826 (right) N. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing northwest.

Photo 15 of 30: Looking southwest from Vernonburg Avenue at Vernon River, river view; photographer facing southwest.

Photo 16 of 30: 12828 N. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing west.

Photo 17 of 30: 12826 (left) and 12824 (right) N. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing northwest.

Photo 18 of 30: 12824 N. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing west.

Photo 19 of 30: 12826 N. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing southwest.

Photo 20 of 30: River view of properties at intersection of N. Rockwell and Dancy avenues; photographer facing north.

Photo 21 of 30: 12730 N. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing northwest.

Photo 22 of 30: 12000 block of N. Rockwell Avenue, river view; photographer facing southwest.

Photo 23 of 30: 611 (left) and 623 (right) Dancy Avenue, river view; photographer facing northeast.

Photo 24 of 30: 703 Dancy Avenue, river view; photographer facing north.

Photo 25 of 30: 703 Dancy Avenue, river view; photographer facing north.

NOTE: Due to technical difficulties, Photograph 25 is unavailable.

Photo 26 of 30: 717 Dancy Avenue, river view; photographer facing north.

Photo 27 of 30: 721 (left) and 723 (right) Dancy Avenue, river view; photographer facing north.

Photo 28 of 30: 729 Dancy Avenue, river view; photographer facing north.

Photo 29 of 30: 834 Dancy Avenue, river (Derst Creek) view; photographer facing west.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Photo 30 of 30: River view of Vernonburg from the Vernon River; river in foreground, marsh in middle ground, Vernonburg Avenue at Vernon River in background; photographer facing west

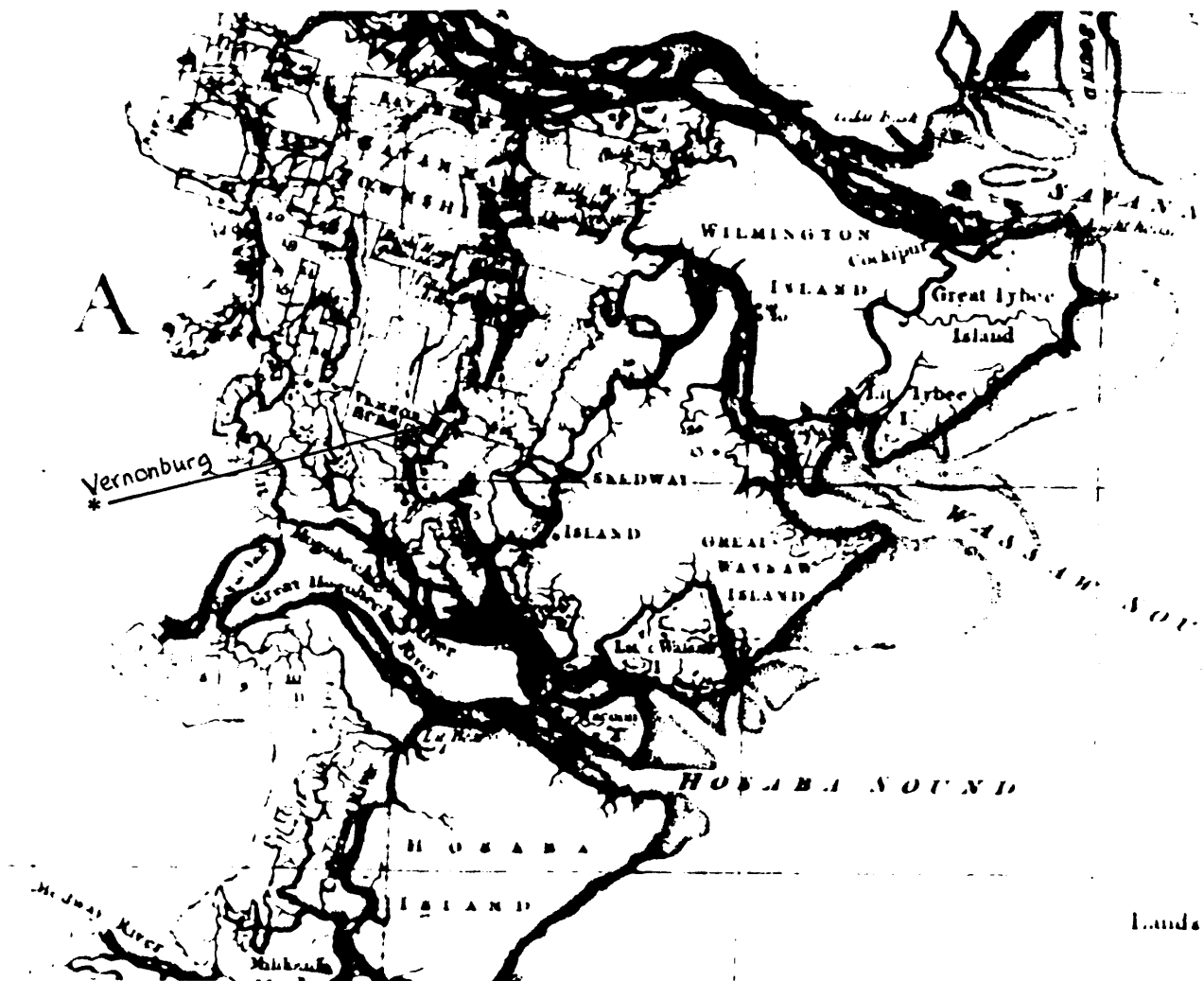
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 1. Portion of William DeBrahms' 1757 Map of South Carolina and a Part of Georgia showing Vernonburg.



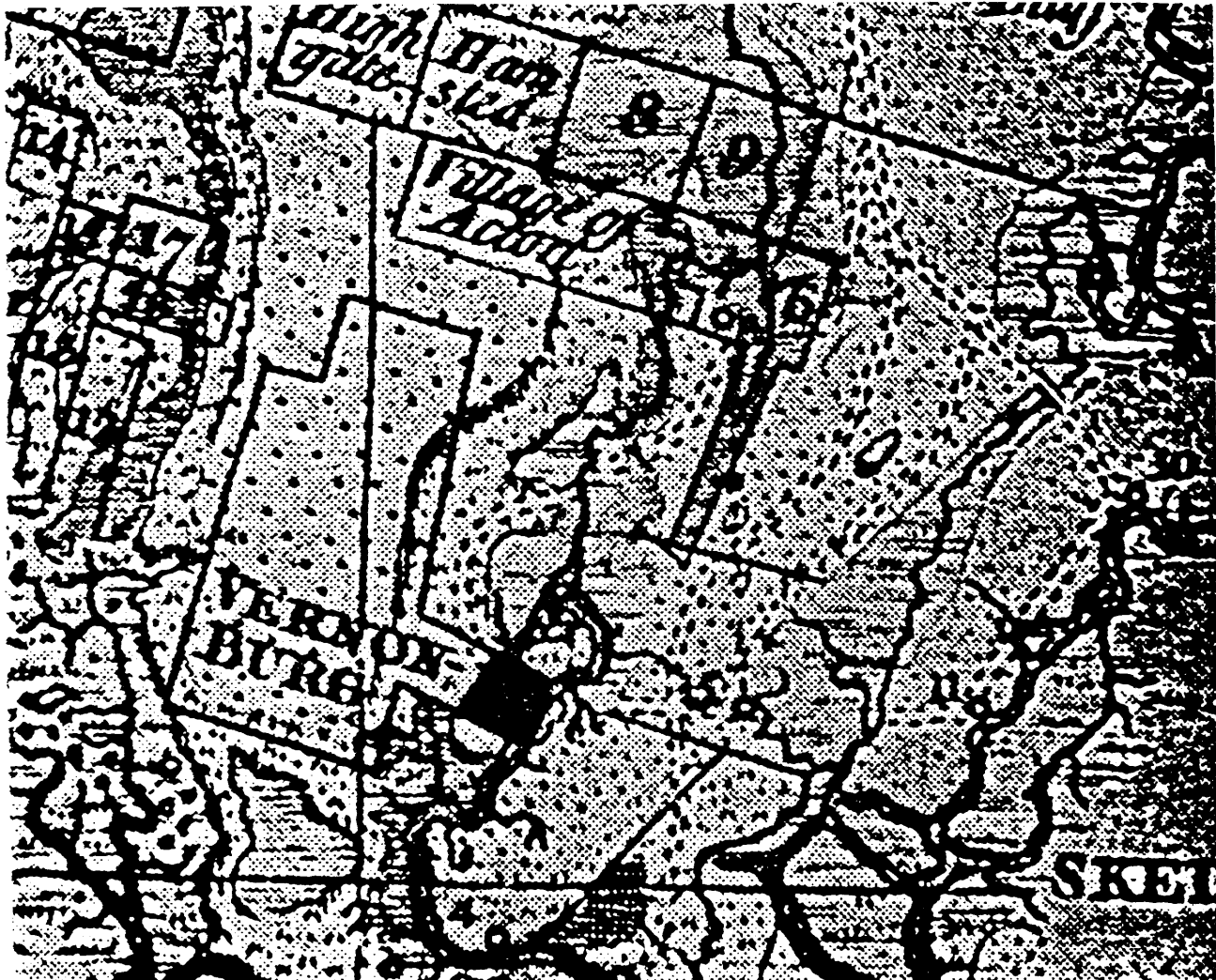
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 2. Detail of William DeBrahms' 1757 *Map of South Carolina and a Part of Georgia* showing Vernonburg.



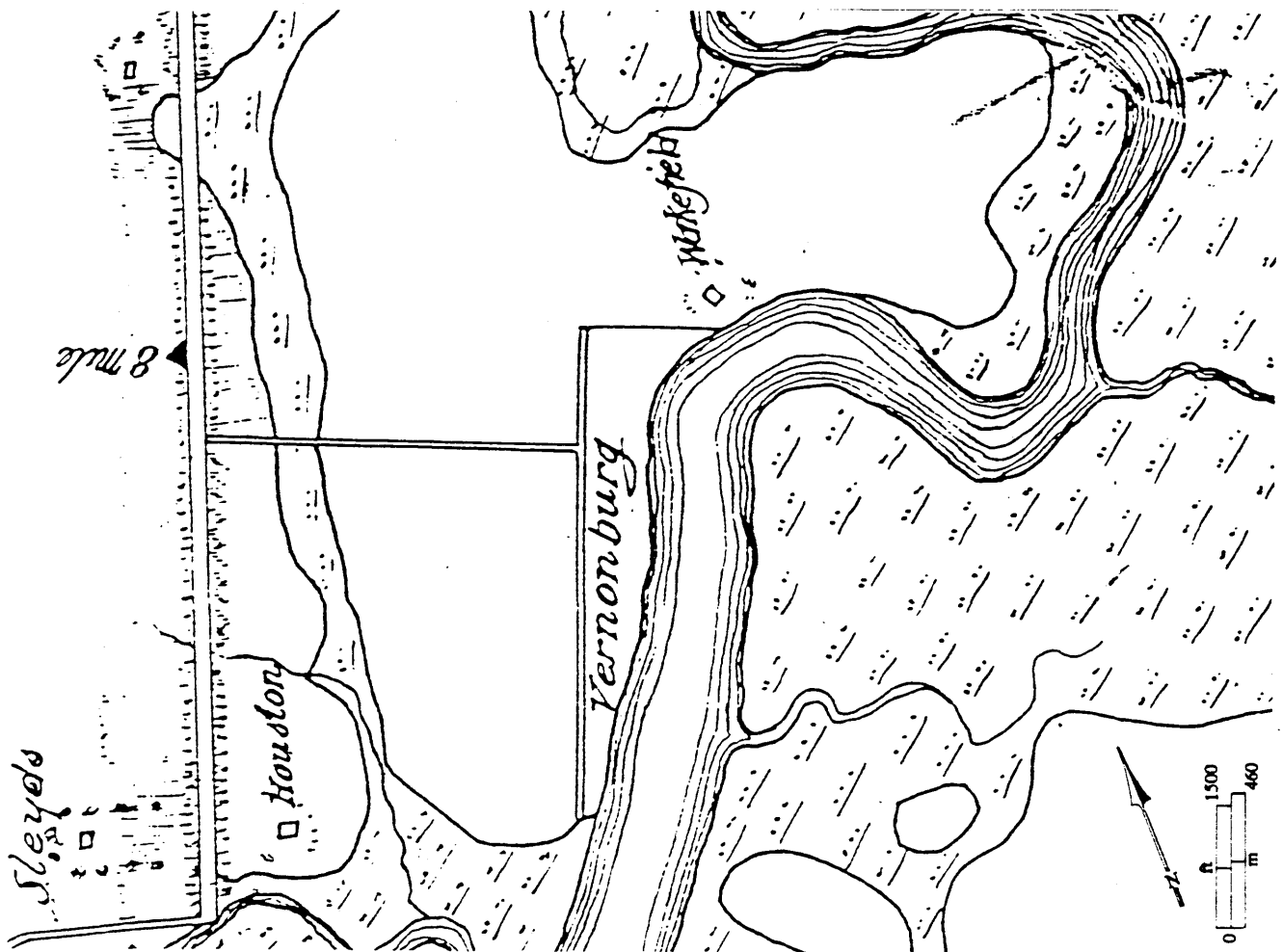
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 3. Portion of John McKinnon's 1816 *Map of Chatham County Showing All the Public Roads at the Request of County Road Commissioners* showing the general layout of Vernonburg in the early 19th century.



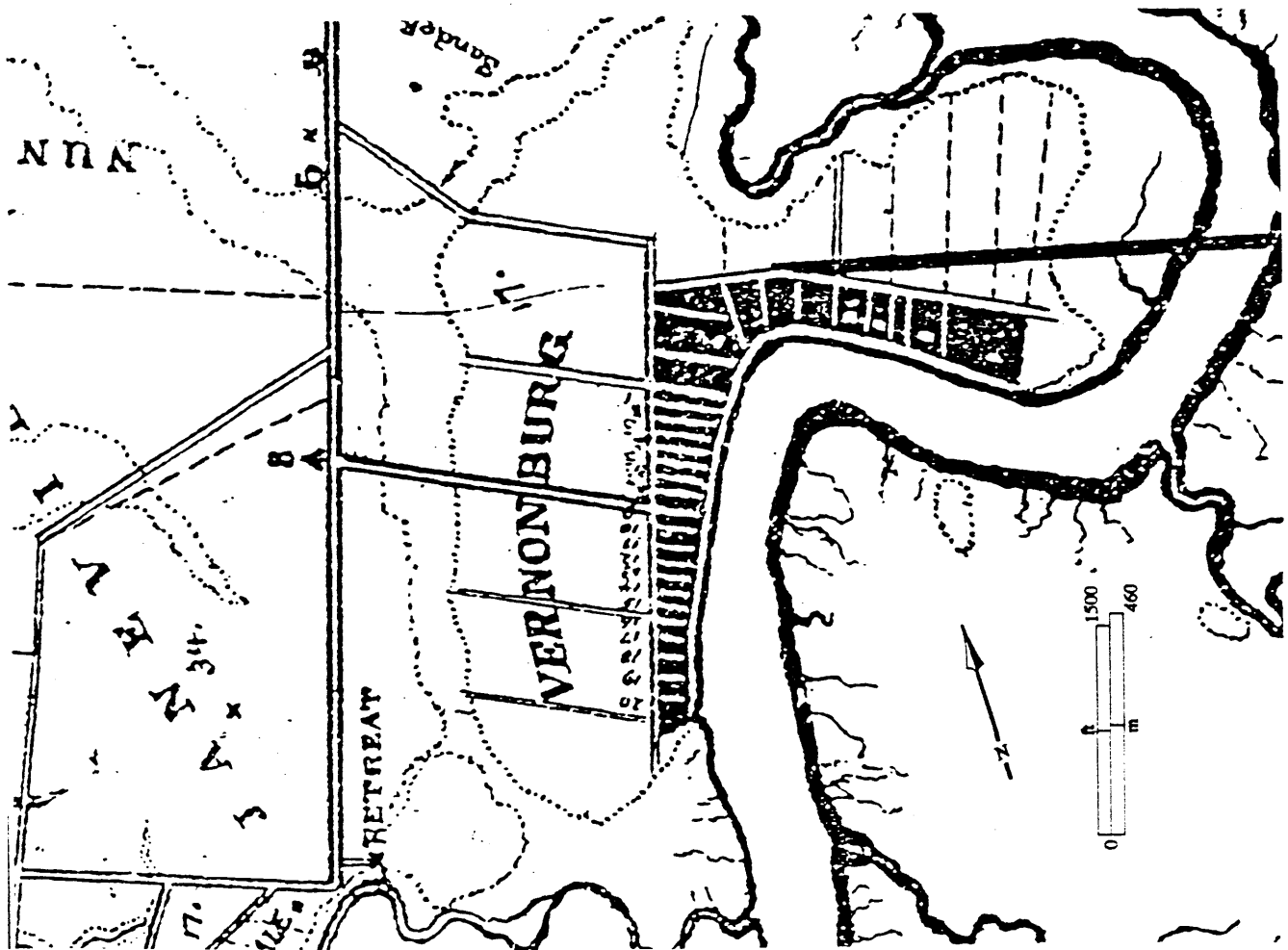
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 4. Portion of Charles G. Platen's 1875 *Chatham County, State of Georgia* map showing the layout and development of Vernonburg toward the end of the 19th century.



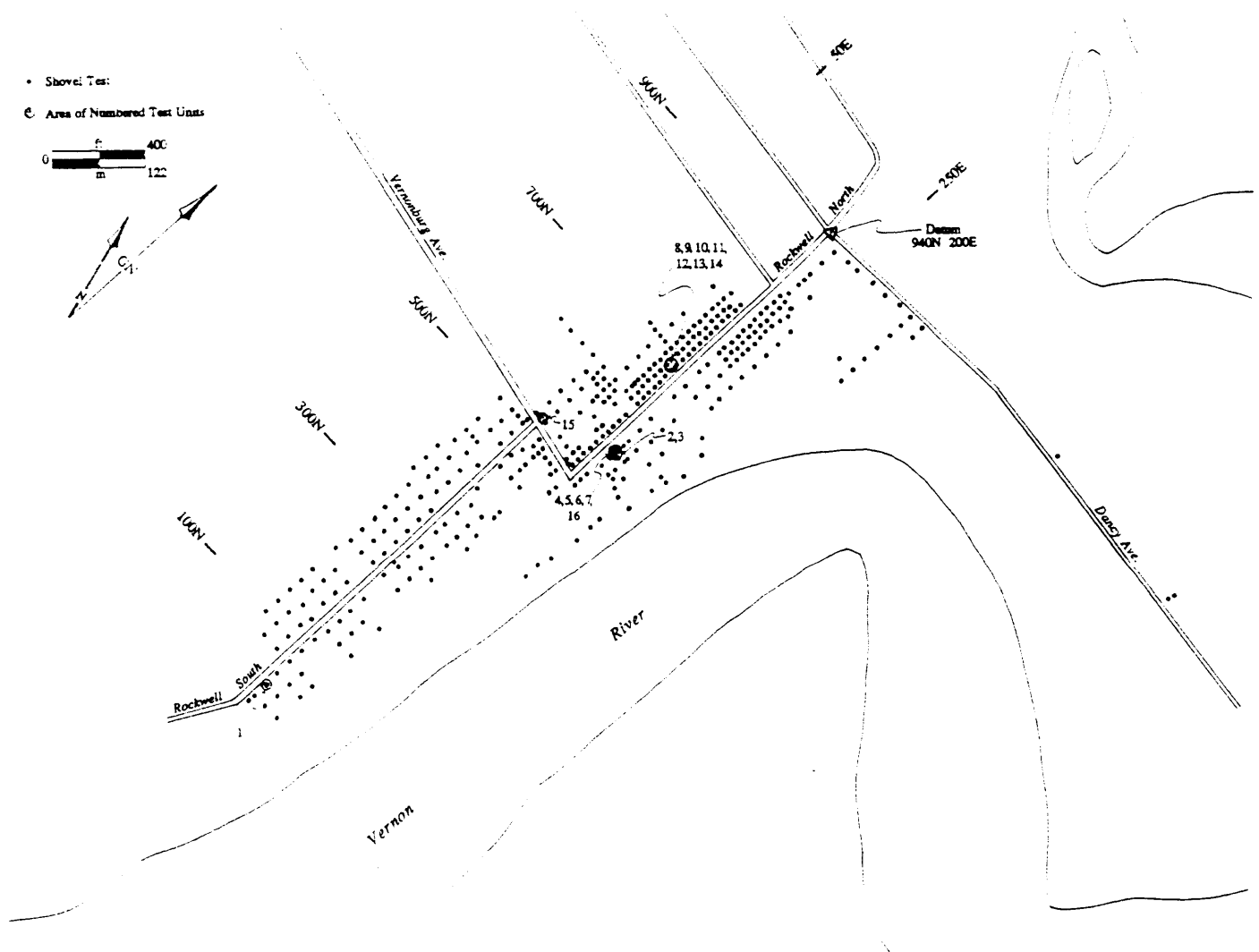
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 5. Plan showing locations of shovel tests and test excavation units for archaeological investigations at Vernonburg (from Elliot, Rita Folse, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).



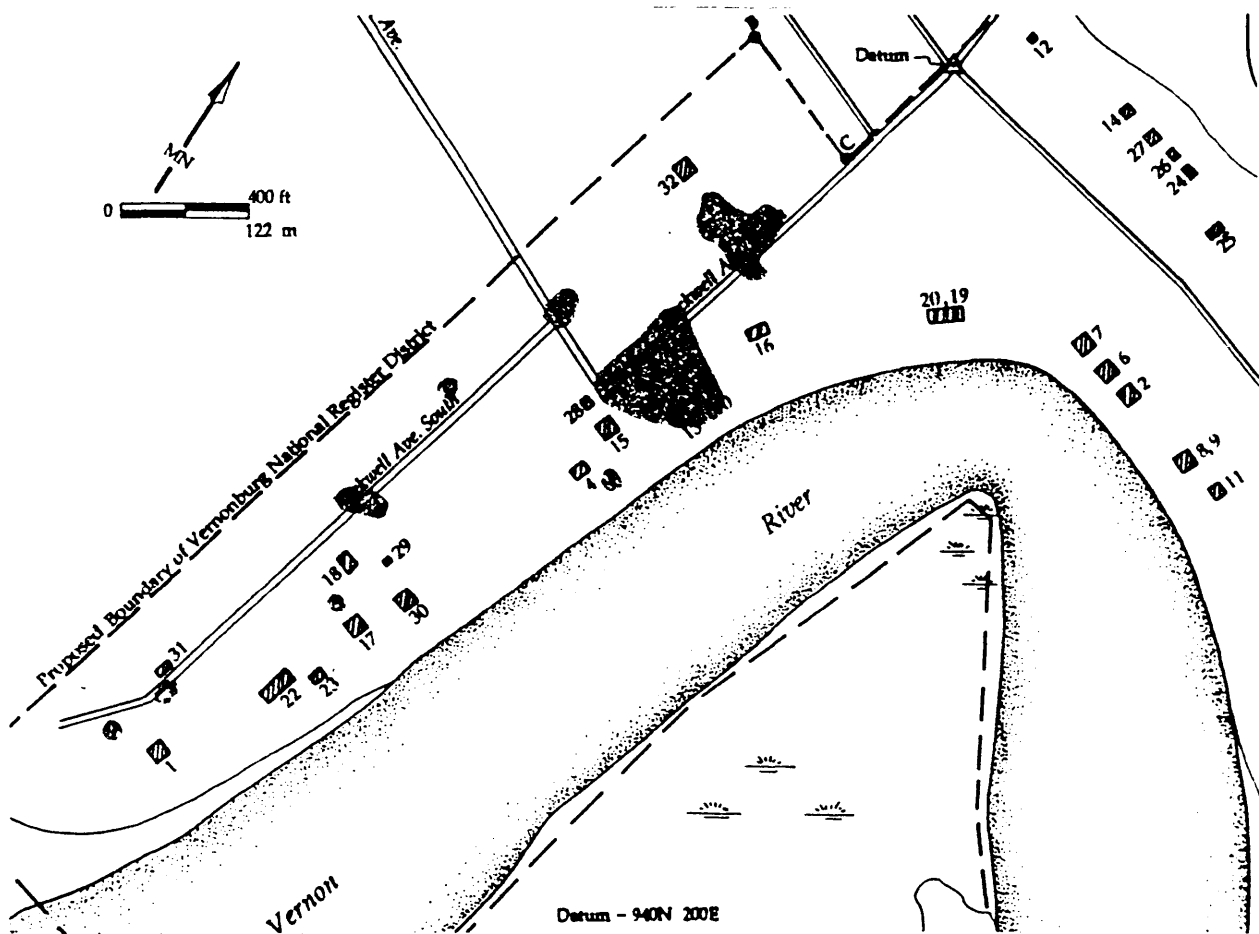
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 6. Plan showing distribution of areas in Vernonburg containing pre-1800 artifacts (from Elliot, Rita Folse, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).



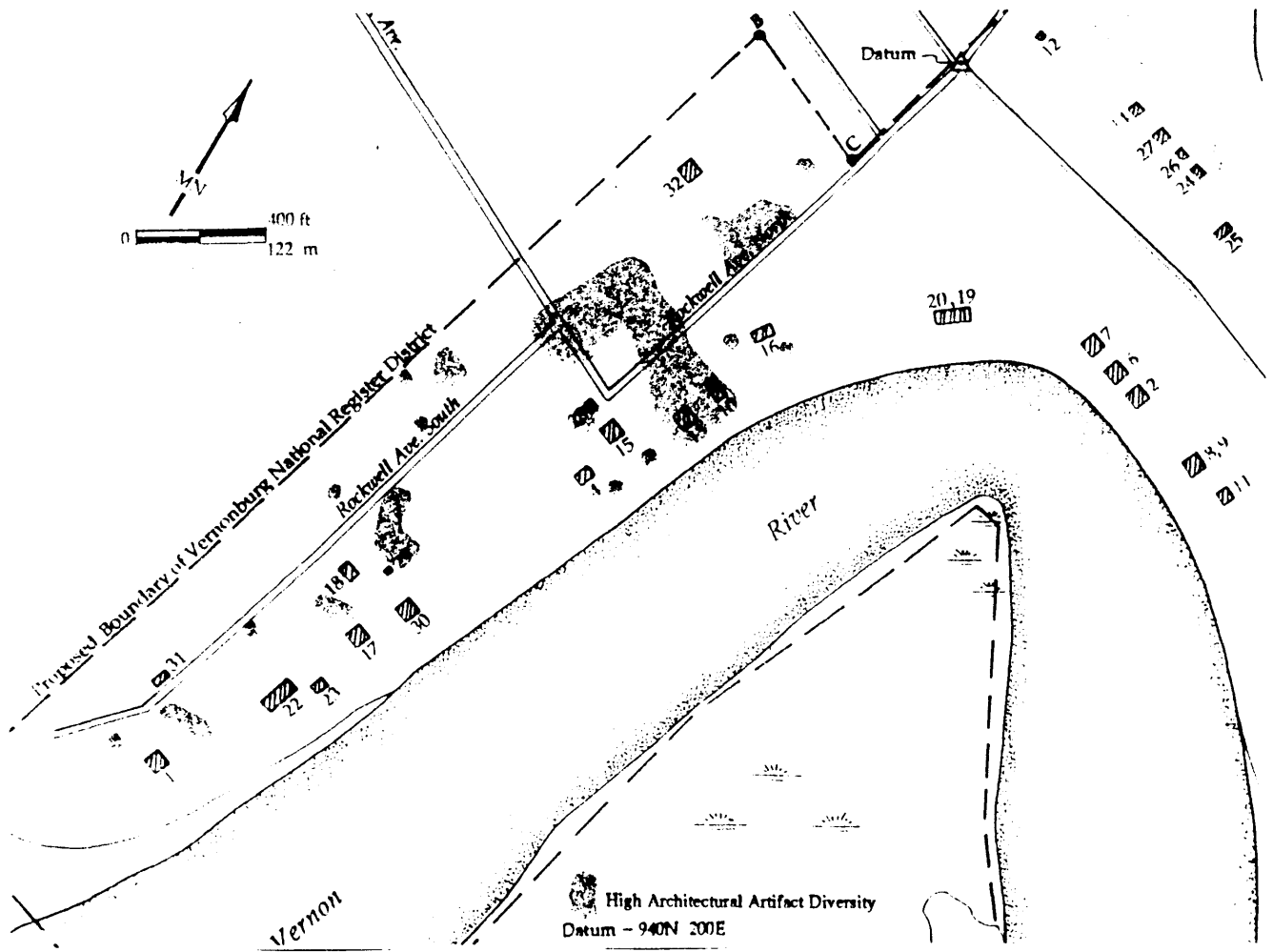
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 7. Plan showing distribution of areas in Vernonburg containing high architectural diversity (from Elliot, Rita Folse, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).



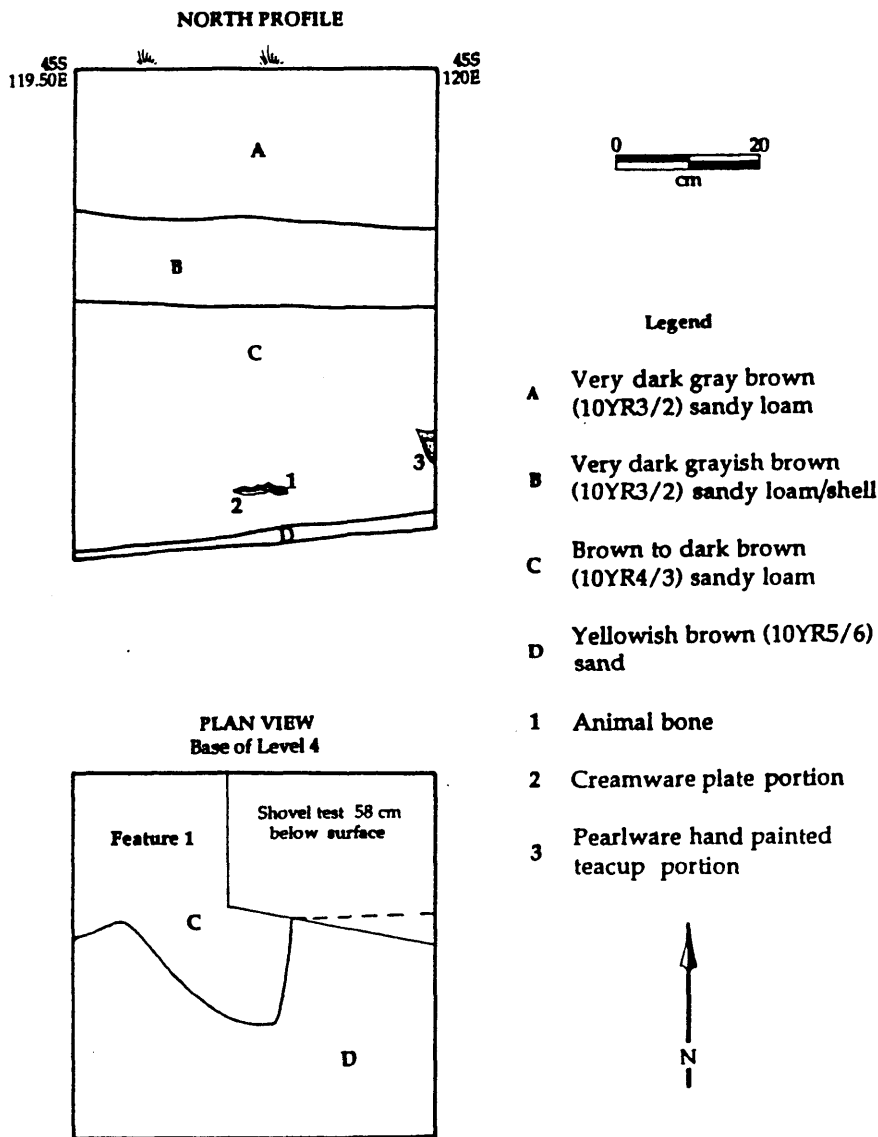
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 8. Plan showing profile and plan of Test Unit #1 in Vernonburg (from Elliot, Rita Folsie, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).



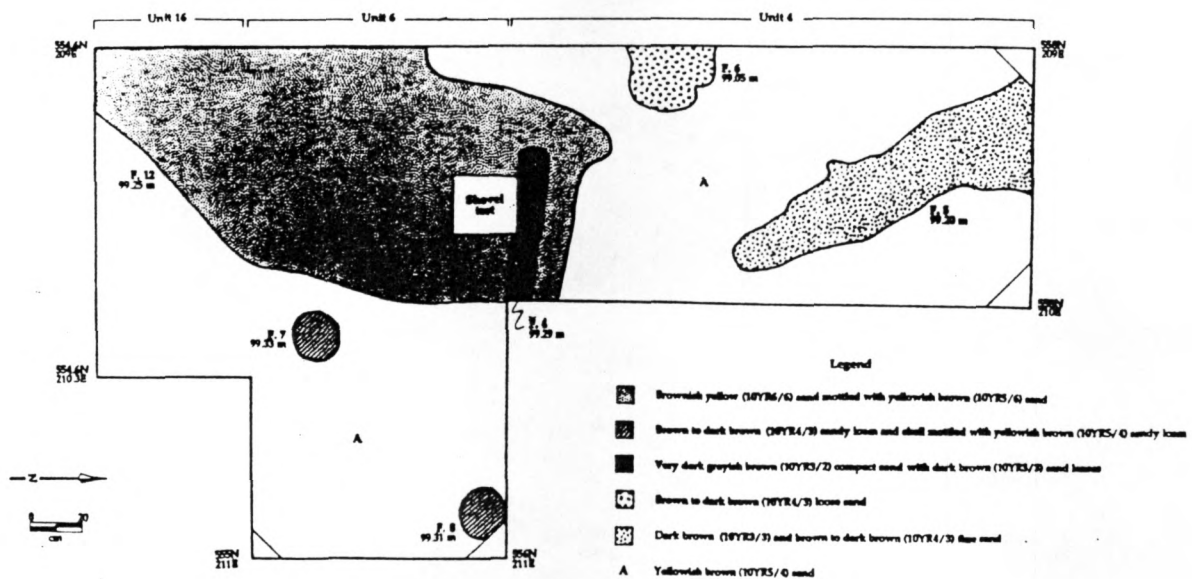
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 9. This scale drawing illustrates the plan view of six features found within test excavation units #4, 6, and 16 in the yard of 12826 N. Rockwell between the extant house and the street (from Elliott, Rita Folse, and Daniel T. Elliott, *Vernonburg Village. An Archaeological Study*, 1994). Shown are an 18th-century trash pit (F. 12), a building roof dripline (F. 4), a post mold (F. 6), and a gully overlying a post mold (F. 5), in addition to two more recent post molds that probably date to the late 19th or early 20th centuries (F. 7 and F. 8). Note the undisturbed nature of the feature outlines, which is typical for most of the town site. Nearly all the artifacts in this area dated to the mid- to late 18th century.



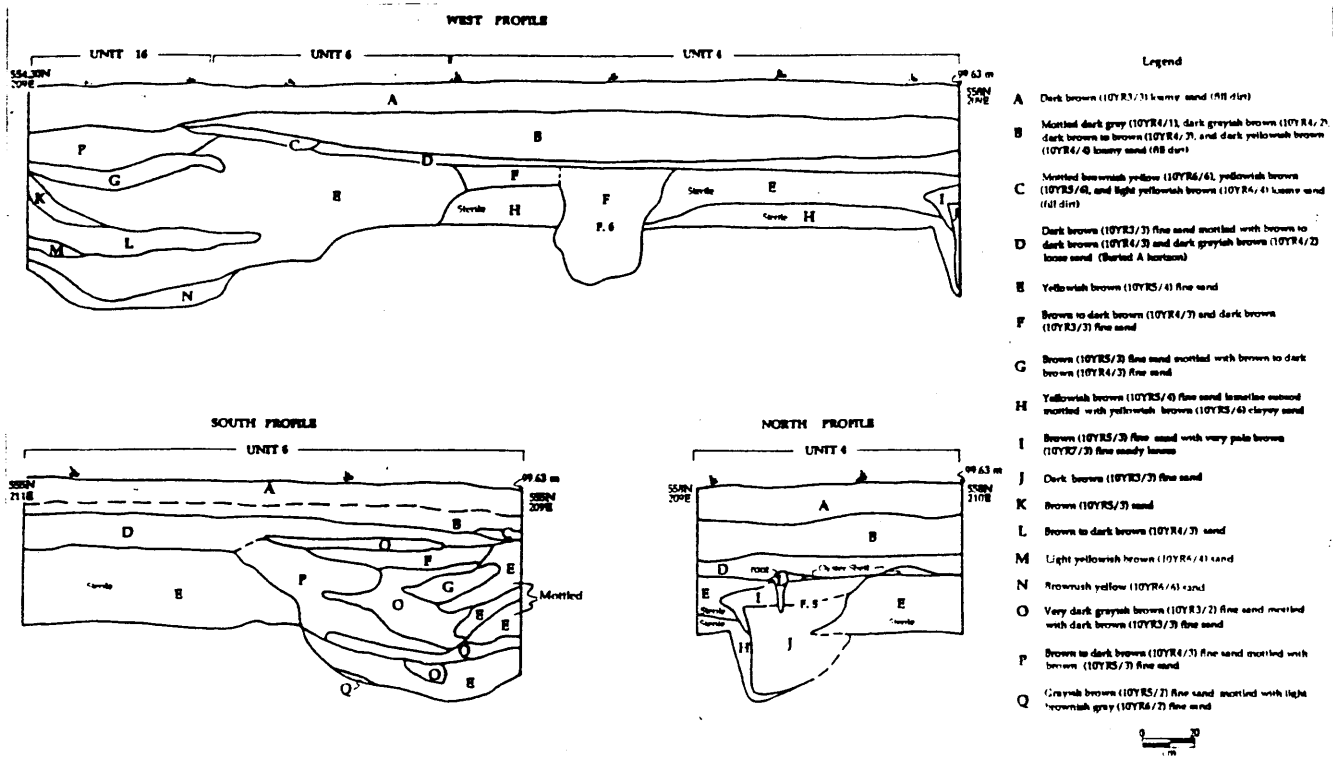
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 10. This is a representative soil profile of an archaeological test excavation unit at Vernonburg. This particular unit was located in the "back" yard (between the extant house and the street) at 12826 N. Rockwell Avenue. Note the complex stratigraphic layers resulting from 250 years of cultural deposition. Three archaeological features, which are abundant across the site, are illustrated below: a probable 18th-century post mold (F. 6), an 18th-century trash pit (bottom left: O, P, F, G, E, and Q), and a probable 18th-century gully and post mold (bottom right: I, J) (from Elliot, Rita Folse, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).



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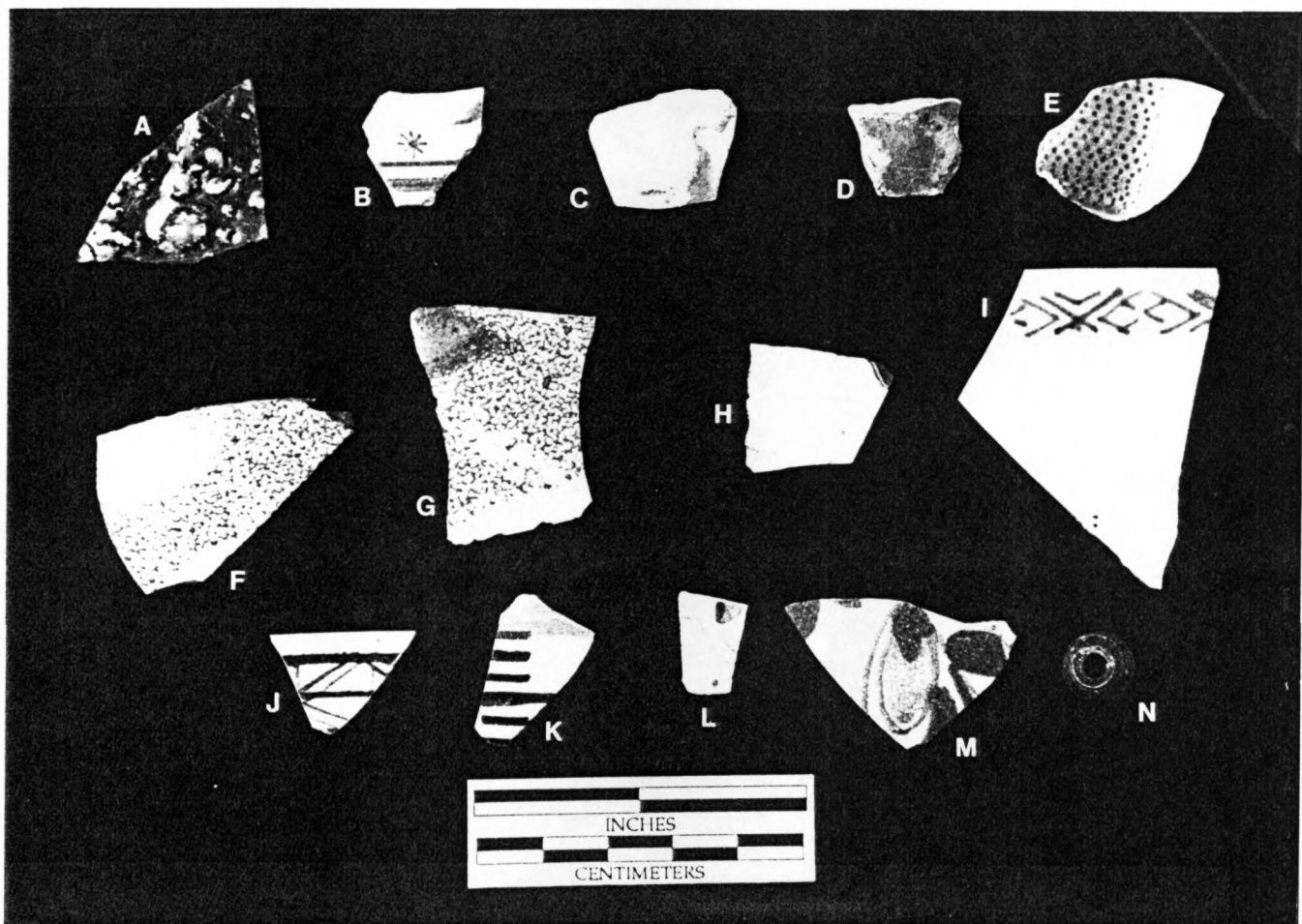
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 11. Photographed ceramic and glass artifacts from the Vernonburg site 9CH783 (from Elliot, Rita Folse, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).

A--Dark green glass with white impurities; B--Polychrome hand-painted pearlware; C--Pineapple applique burned refined ware; D--American redware; E--Green roulette creamware; F--Purple sponged delftware; G--Purple sponged delftware; H--Molded pearlware; I--Blue hand-painted porcelain; J--Blue hand-painted pearlware; K--Polychrome molded pearlware; L--Blue hand-painted pearlware; M--Blue hand-painted delftware; N--Blue glass wire-wound bead.



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National Park Service

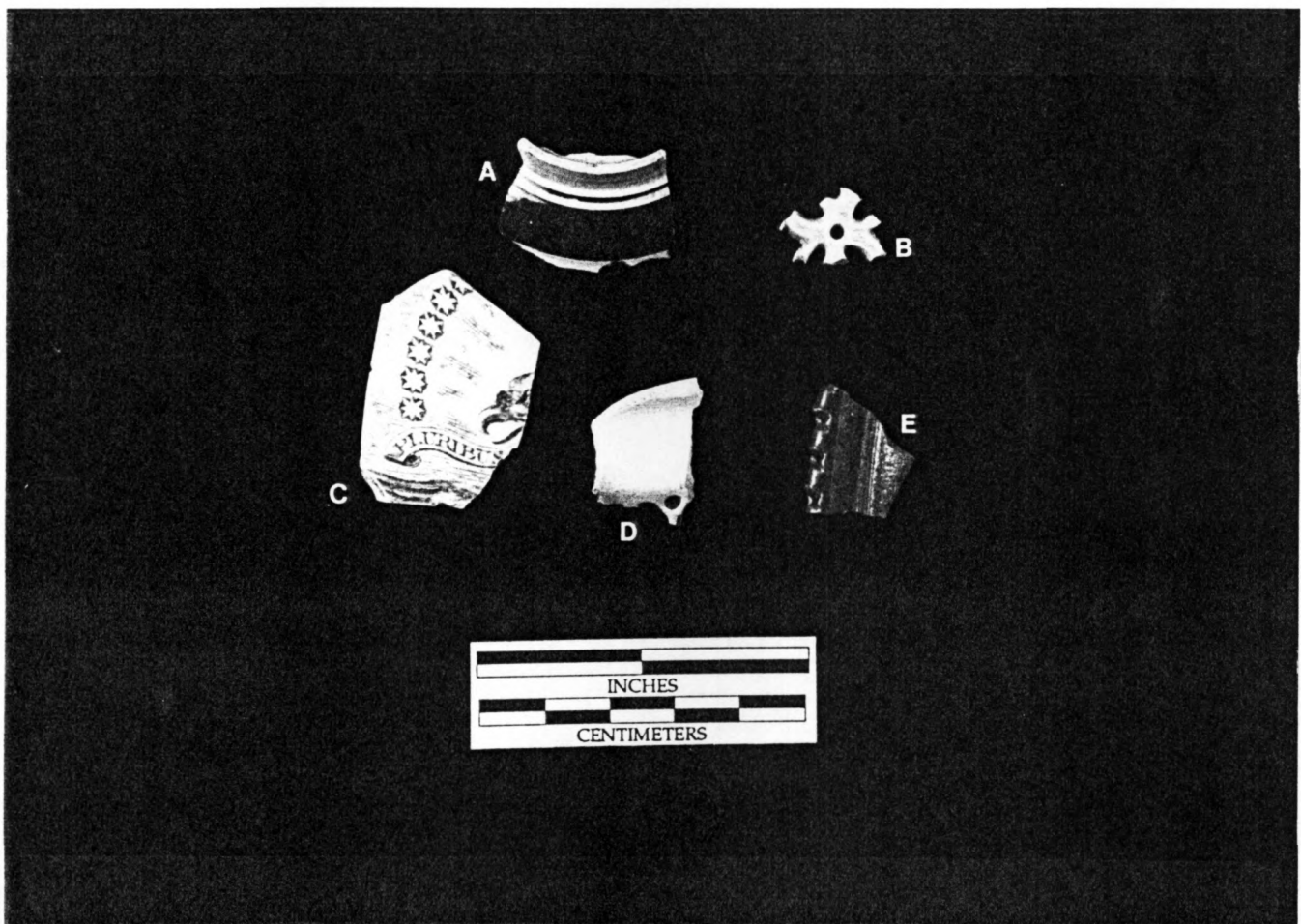
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 12. Photographed ceramic artifacts from the Vernonburg site 9CH783 (from Elliot, Rita Folse, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).

A--Annular pearlware; B--Plain creamware; C--Brown transfer print creamware; D--Plain creamware; E--Burslem stoneware.



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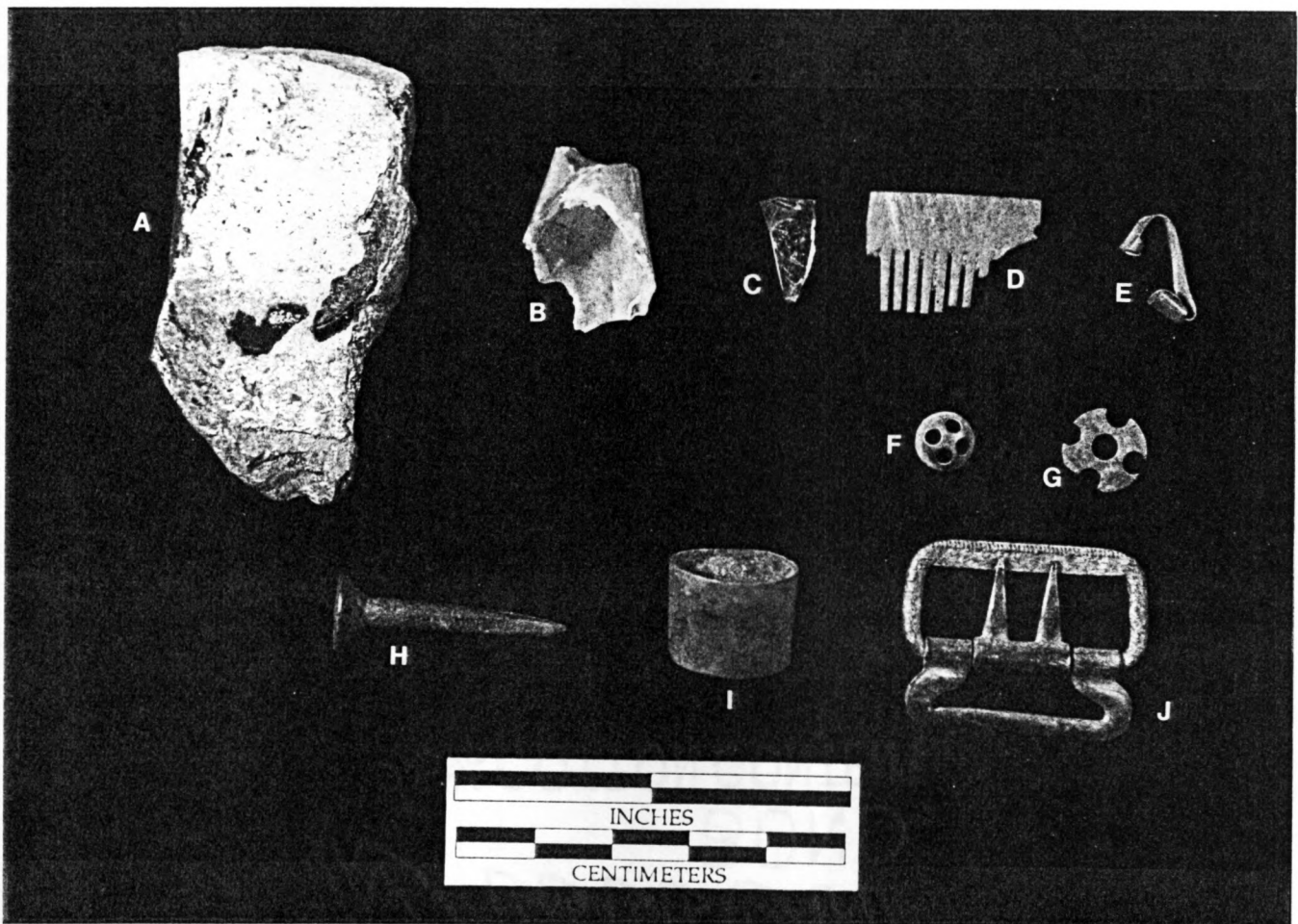
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 13. Photographed artifacts from the Vernonburg site 9CH783 (from Elliot, Rita Folse, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).

A--Heavily patinated dark green bottle glass; B--Clear goblet stem; C--Red swirled glass; D--Celluloid comb; E--Brass fragment; F--Brass button back; G--Brass button back; H--Brass wrought nail; I--Copper band; J--Brass buckle.



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National Park Service

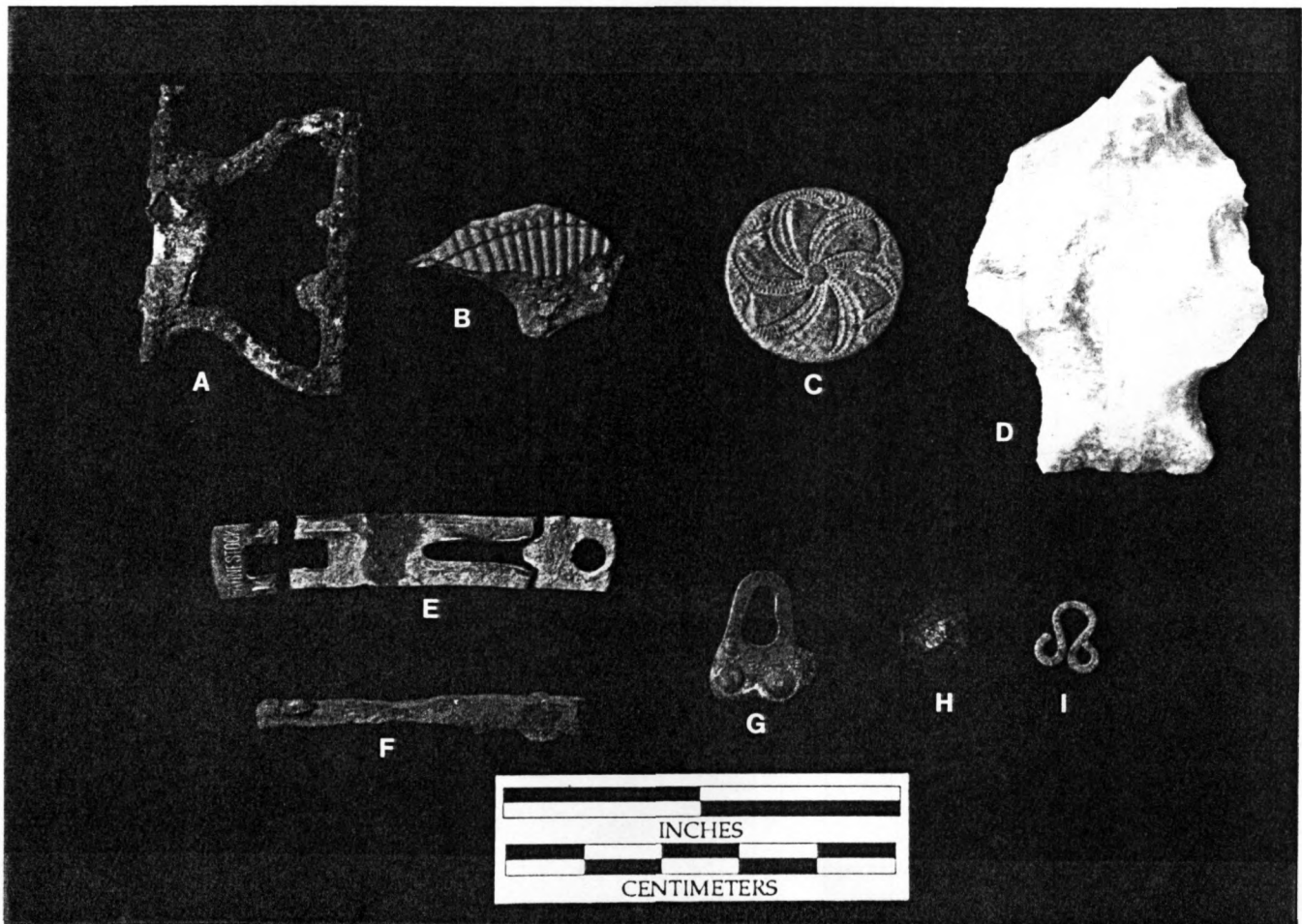
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vernonburg Historic District
Chatham Co., Georgia

Supplemental Documentation

Figure 14. Photographed artifacts from the Vernonburg site 9CH783 (from Elliot, Rita Folsie, and Daniel T. Elliot, *Vernonburg Village: An Archaeological Study*, 1994).

A--Iron buckle swivel; B--Molded black basalt sherd; C--Brass button; D--Late Archaic chert stemmed point; E--Musical instrument reed plate; F--Cut nail; G--Brass lock plate; H--Black glass faceted button; I--Brass eyelet.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Photograph 25 of 30:

NOTE: Due to technical difficulties, Photograph 25 is unavailable.