

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 10 1979  
DATE ENTERED

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

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Secessionville Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

On James Island, from Folly Beach Road (Highway 171) turn left onto Battery Drive, then turn right on Fort Lamar Road proceeding approximately 1 mile

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF Folly Beach

# 1

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

South Carolina

045

Charleston

019

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Multiple ownership (see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

— VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Mesne Conveyance

STREET & NUMBER

2 Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Charleston

STATE

South Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Inventory of Historic Places in South Carolina

DATE

1973 (update)

— FEDERAL  STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

South Carolina Department of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN

Columbia

STATE

South Carolina

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

## CHECK ONE

## CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

UNALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE

GOOD

RUINS

ALTERED

MOVED

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

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

The Secessionville Historic District is located on a narrow peninsula in the rural section of James Island near Charleston, South Carolina. The district extends down the length of Secessionville peninsula, encompassing the site of the Battle of Secessionville, the unmarked grave of over 300 Union soldiers and the remains of Fort Lamar. The district then runs along the marshlands of Secessionville Creek to include one Victorian and two antebellum residences constructed by James Island planters. There have been no major alterations to the area comprising the Secessionville Historic District since the late 1800s.

Buildings and Sites contributing to the character of the district:

Fort Lamar: Constructed by Confederate troops in 1862, Fort Lamar is located at the western end of the district at the narrowest point of the Secessionville peninsula (approximately 125 yards wide). Flanked by marshlands on both sides, the position for the fort was selected by Col. Lewis Hatch of Charleston. The fort was an earth-work battery which eventually mounted 13 guns. It had a central rampart and two additional ramparts which extended at obtuse angles down the peninsula toward Secessionville. (See diagram #1). Fort Lamar was the site of the Battle of Secessionville fought on June 16, 1862. Although the fort was originally called Tower Battery, it was renamed Fort Lamar in honor of Col. Thomas Lamar, its commanding officer during the Battle of Secessionville.

The walls of Fort Lamar and its two powder magazines are still clearly visible. Although a secondary road bisects a portion of the central rampart, this does not significantly alter the integrity of the site. The area of Fort Lamar is currently enclosed by barbed wire fence and used as a horse pasture. Intrusions on the property are two horse sheds located in the interior of the fort. Neither significantly affects the site.

Union Soldiers Grave Site: Directly west of the battery at Fort Lamar lies the unmarked mass grave of 341 Union soldiers who were killed during the Battle of Secessionville. Buried by Confederate troops, the majority of the Union dead were from the 79th New York (Highlanders) and the Eighth Michigan Regiments. A portion of the Battle of Secessionville was fought in the area of the Union grave site, directly in front of Fort Lamar. Like Fort Lamar, the unmarked grave site is currently being used as a horse pasture.

Seabrook-Freer House: Greek Revival residence constructed circa 1858 by William Benjamin Seabrook and subsequently sold in the same year to Edward Freer, a leading James Island planter. During the Civil War, tradition indicates that the house served as the headquarters for Confederate troops stationed at Secessionville. At this time the house is said to have undergone damage from Union shelling. In 1873 the Seabrook-Freer House became the manse for the James Island Presbyterian Church. It served as the manse until 1918 when it was purchased by Franklin Pierce Seabrook, grandson of the original builder of the house.

( continued )

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

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

## SPECIFIC DATES

## BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Secessionville Historic District is a small rural settlement which visually reflects the development of Secessionville from a remote antebellum retreat into an important Civil War outpost and the eventual home of prominent James Island agriculturalists. Secessionville was founded well before the Civil War as a summer retreat for the wealthy planters of James Island, Charleston. When Union forces beseiged the city of Charleston in 1861, Secessionville became an important outpost in the Confederate defense lines. In June of 1862 the settlement was the site of the Battle of Secessionville, one of the major engagements fought in the Seige of Charleston. With the conclusion of the Civil War, Secessionville became the home of several leading James Island planters. Especially notable among this group was Elias Lynch Rivers, a leading agriculturalist who did pioneer work in the improvement of Sea Island Cotton.

Social: Originally named Riversville, Secessionville was established well before the Civil War as a haven from the "country fevers" that plagued the lowcountry. Tradition indicates that the James Island planters who built this new settlement were ridiculed by their older peers who chose more established retreats. Taunted that they were "seceding" from the fold, the group defiantly renamed their settlement Secessionville. Subsequently, in the years immediately prior to the Civil War, Secessionville became a small community of summer homes laid out along streets bearing names such as Washington, Calhoun and Bay.

Politics/Government: William Benjamin Seabrook (1813-1870), one of the early builders of Secessionville, was a prominent leader in local and state politics. Born on Edisto Island, Seabrook was one of the leading planters of the state. William B. Seabrook served as Magistrate, Commissioner of Free Schools, and as a representative in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1852 to 1855.

Military: When Union forces beseiged Charleston during 1861, James Island became important as a key strategic element in the defense of the city. The leading military authorities of the period believed that Union occupation of James Island would leave Charleston open to attack on the southeast and thus make the fall of the city inevitable. The Confederate outpost at Secessionville was a vital element in the Confederate defense of James Island. It therefore served an important role in the defense of Charleston.

( continued )

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Battle of Secessionville." The News and Courier, 9 December 1924.

Burton, E. Milby. The Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1970. pp. 99-114.

Capers, Ellison. Confederate Military History, Atlanta, Ga.: Confederate Publish-  
continued

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 41 more or less

QUADRANGLE NAME James Island, S.C.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 598600 3618880

B 17 599530 3619100

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 17 599540 3618660

D 17 598620 3618480

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the district are clearly delineated on the attached sketch map (To Scale) and the attached aerial photograph. The boundaries have been drawn to include the important historic area of Secessionville.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Julie Burr  
Historic Preservation Division

Elias B. Bull  
Historic Preservation Planner for Berkeley-  
Charleston-Dorchester Council of Government

ORGANIZATION South Carolina Department of Archives & History DATE April 18, 1978

STREET & NUMBER Post Office Box 11,669, Capitol Station TELEPHONE 803 (758-5816)

CITY OR TOWN Columbia STATE South Carolina

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Charles E. Lee*

TITLE Charles E. Lee  
State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 5/23/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Paul Skell*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 10-1-79

ATTEST: *Carl A. Rubin*  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 8/27/79 9/26/79

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 10 1979
DATE ENTERED	OCT 1 1979

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE 1

Mrs. Mamie Bratton Robertson /  
Route 17, Box 247  
Charleston, South Carolina 29412

Dr. J. Wesley Edel /  
Fort Lamar Road  
Charleston, South Carolina 29412

Mrs. Juli Seabrook Skinner /  
Fort Lamar Road  
Charleston, South Carolina 29412

Martschink Realty /  
Post Office Box 581  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 10 1979
DATE ENTERED	OCT 1 1979

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Simple in detail, the Seabrook-Freer House is typical of the Greek Revival style of architecture in South Carolina. This 1½ story cottage-style house with raised basement has a gabled tin roof with twin exterior chimneys. Its front facade is dominated by 6 fluted pillars which support the roof of a one-story porch. Windows are 6/6. There is an early one-room addition on the north facade and a later one-room addition on the northwest corner of the house. The front and rear facades of the house have original clapboard siding; the clapboard of the side facades has been covered by shingles. A portion of the basement has been enclosed and the interior of the house has been Victorianized.

William B. Seabrook House: Greek Revival residence constructed circa 1858 by William Benjamin Seabrook, who was also the builder of the Seabrook-Freer House. Tradition indicates that this house served as a Confederate hospital during the Civil War. At this time, Union shelling is said to have damaged the house.

The William B. Seabrook House is an example of Greek Revival architecture. It is a 1½ story clapboard structure set upon a raised basement. Its west facade is characterized by a Greek Revival portico with four fluted pillars. The east facade is dominated by a one-story porch supported by eight evenly spaced fluted pillars and a balustrade of turned posts. Both this porch (which originally extended along 3 facades) and the basement have been enclosed. The interior of the house has a symmetrical layout and is simple in detail. On the walls of the hallway are several Confederate soldiers' signatures with dates.

Elias L. Rivers House: Victorian residence constructed circa 1875 by Elias Lynch Rivers, a leading agriculturalist who did pioneer work in the improvement of Sea Island Cotton.

This is a simple 1½ story clapboard house set on low brick pillars. Victorian in detail, it is characterized by an asymmetrical design, multi-gabled tin roof and a bay window on the east facade. Windows have 6/6 lights. The house has early additions on its north and west facades. On the site are two outbuildings, one of which may be original to the house.

Also included in the nominated acreage is an area of continuous marshland and open space. This area has played an integral part in the historical development of the area. The natural setting of Secessionville was the cause for the founding of the settlement as an antebellum retreat. Similarly, the topography (including high ground and encircling marsh) was considered a natural advantage for the construction of defense works and led

( continued )

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
JUL 10 1979
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

to Secessionville's subsequent use as a Confederate military outpost. This marshland and open space is consequently an integral part of the historic integrity of the Secessionville Historic District.

SURROUNDINGS: Located on a peninsula, the Secessionville Historic District is bordered by marshland on the north and south. The area directly to the west of the district contains a small residential development. Directly north of this development and adjacent to the district, there is an area of open space which has recently been purchased by the Charleston County Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission. This commission currently has no plans for development of the property. The area northeast of the district primarily contains farmland and woodlands. Also to the northeast of the district, along Secessionville Creek, there are several modern residences.

James Island itself is currently undergoing rapid development as a suburb of the city of Charleston. Although the Secessionville Historic District is at present located in an isolated section of the island, a new residential development is planned for an area directly across the marshland northwest of the district. At the present time, there are no known plans for the development of any of the area comprising the Secessionville Historic District.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 10 1979

DATE ENTERED

OCT 1 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

Secessionville's location on a peninsula made it a naturally strong position for military defense works. Early in the seige, Confederate military authorities decided to use Secessionville as the eastern anchor for the extensive defense lines of James Island. Fort Lamar was constructed at the neck of Secessionville's peninsula and several Confederate companies were headquartered at Secessionville itself. Tradition indicates that in order to accommodate the needs of the Confederate troops, five of the summer houses were demolished and their materials were used to build makeshift huts. This tradition also maintains that only two houses were saved - the William B. Seabrook House which was used as a hospital, and the Seabrook-Freer House which was used as a headquarters.

On June 16, 1862 Federal troops under Brig. Gen. Henry Benham launched a surprise attack on the Confederate force at Secessionville. The attacking Union troops numbered approximately 3500 men. The Confederates defending Secessionville numbered approximately 750 men. Confederate reinforcements and Union mismanagement combined to give the Confederates at Secessionville a victory. Union troops withdrew after suffering heavy casualties. Consequently, U.S.A. Gen. Benham was first arrested, then reduced to the rank of Major.

The Confederate victory at Secessionville led to the withdrawal of Union forces from James Island. It ended a major Union offense against Charleston. If Secessionville had fallen, James Island would have been open to attack on the south. The victory at Secessionville therefore served a decisive role in the defense of James Island and Charleston.

Agriculture: Secessionville was the home of Elias Lynch Rivers (1838-1911) a prominent South Carolina agriculturalist. A native of James Island, Elias L. Rivers graduated from South Carolina College in 1858 and was admitted to the bar in 1859. After service in the Confederate States Army as a Captain in the 2nd South Carolina Regiment, Elias Rivers returned to James Island where he became a leading figure in the cultivation and improvement of Sea Island Cotton. In the late 1890s the Sea Island Cotton industry was threatened with destruction by the spread of "wilt disease". Elias L. Rivers, under the sponsorship of the United States Department of Agriculture, developed a variety of Sea Island Cotton that was resistant to "wilt disease". This wilt resistant Sea Island Cotton was subsequently called either "Rivers cotton" or "Centreville cotton", in deference to Rivers' Centreville plantation, also located on James Island. Elias Rivers was also a leading figure in both the James Island Agricultural Society and the South Carolina Agricultural Society.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	JUL 10 1979 OCT 1 1979

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 5

ing Co., 1899. Vol. V, pp. 83-99.

Charleston Mercury, 18 June 1862. In "The Battle at James Island, South Carolina."  
In The Rebellion Records Vol. V, Doc. 72. pp. 209-221.

Columbia, S.C. South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Alexander and  
James Campbell War Letters.

Columbia, S.C. South Caroliniana Library. "A Geneological Chart of the Rivers Family."

Columbia, S.C. South Caroliniana Library. John L. and Benjamin Sheppard War Letters.

Deeds. Charleston, S.C.: Register of Mesne Conveyance, Charleston County, Vols. S12  
p. 71, C16 p. 301, C20 p. 31, W20 p. 141, H13 p. 69, O29 p. 8, J62 p. 292, J62  
p. 294, Y56 p. 1, V51 p. 363, L43 p. 32, L14 p. 5, R12 p. 334, V13 p. 562, Y36  
p. 371, W20 p. 146, W20 p. 147, X p. 173, G31 p. 235, K43 p. 135, Y50 p. 287.

Davidson, Chalmers G. The Last Foray: South Carolina Planters of 1860. Columbia,  
S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1971. p. 248.

"Do You Know Your Charleston?" The News and Courier, 23 October 1946.

Edgar, Walter B., ed. Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Repre-  
sentatives, Vol. I. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1974.  
pp. 366, 368, 370, 372.

Federal Census of the United States, Charleston County, South Carolina. Washington,  
D.C. 1850, 1860, 1870.

Hagood, Johnson. Memoirs of the War of Secession. Columbia, S.C.: The State Company,  
1910. pp. 83-99.

Johnson, John. The Defense of Charleston Harbor (1863-1865). Charleston, S.C.:  
Walker, Evans & Cogswell Co., 1889. pp. 24-27, 38.

Lebby, Anna Royall. James Island Presbyterian Church celebrating the 150th Anniversary.  
James Island, S.C.: n.p., 1956. pp. 13, 19.

( continued )

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

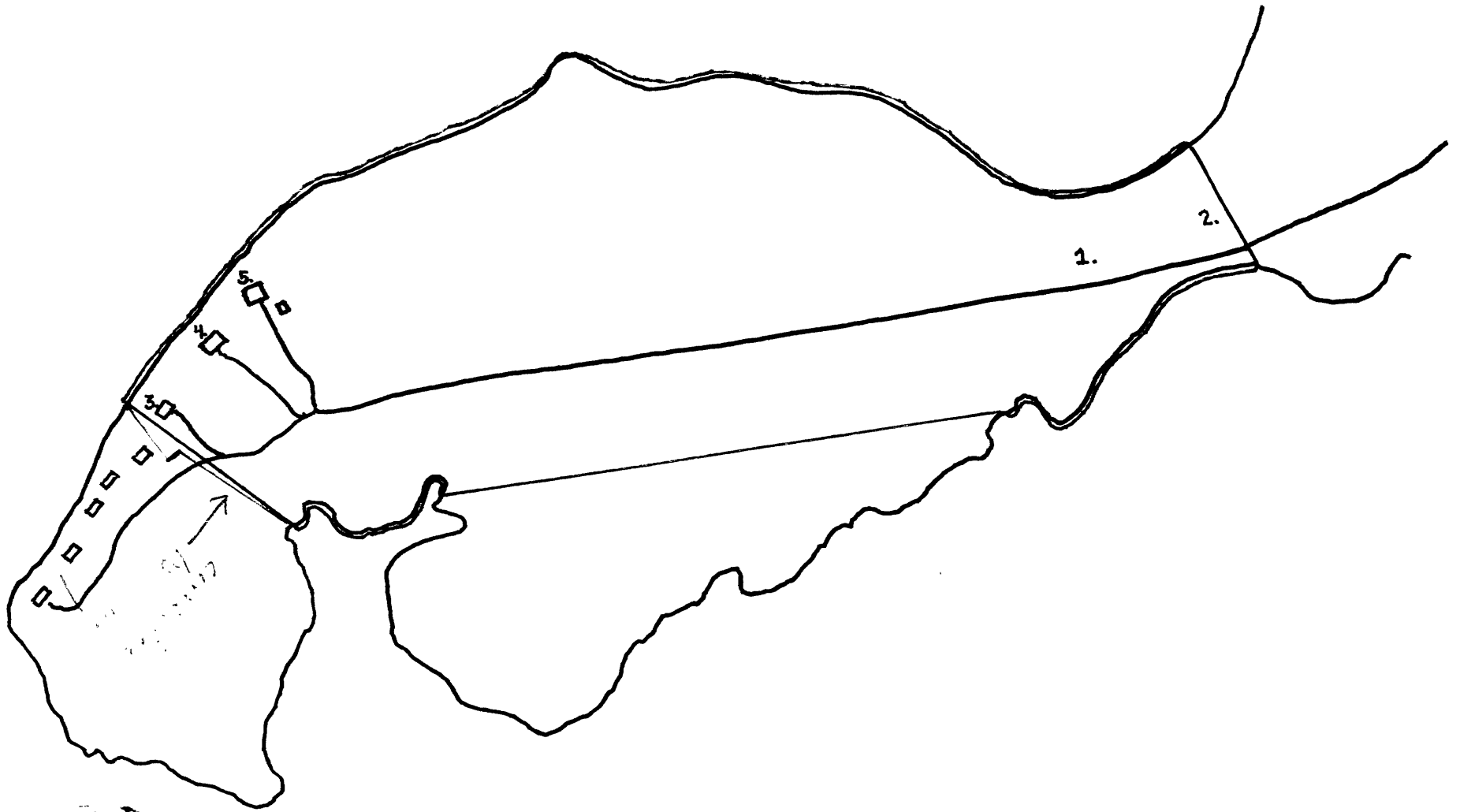
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 10 1979
DATE ENTERED	OCT 1 1979

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 6

- Lord, Walter, ed. The Fremantle Diary: Being the Journal of Lieutenant Colonel James Arthur Lyon Fremantle. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, p. 150, 284-285.
- Neuffer, Claude H., ed. Names in South Carolina, Vol. 8. Winter 1961, pp. 84-85.
- "Paladins of South Carolina: Elias Lynch Rivers." The State, 19 October 1921, Sect. C.
- Patterson, Gerard A. and Nye, Wilbur S. "Battle of Secessionville." Civil War Times Illustrated Vol. VII, No. 6 (October 1968), pp. 4-10, 43-47.
- Porter, A. Toomer. Led On! Step by Step: Scenes from Clerical, Military, Educational and Plantation Life in the South 1828-1898. New York: Arno Press, 1967. pp. 138-142.
- Ripley, Gen. R.S. "Charleston and its Defences in the late War." The Yearbook 1885. Charleston, S.C.: News and Courier Presses, 1885. pp. 347-360.
- Snowden, Yates, ed. History of South Carolina Vol. III. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1920. p. 77.
- The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1, Vol. XIV. Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 1890. pp. 50-53, 91-97, 100-101.
- Walker, C. Irvine. History of the Agricultural Society of South Carolina. Charleston, S.C.: n.p., n.d. pp. 30-36, 47-48, 127.
- Webber, Mabel L. "Early Generations of the Seabrook Family." South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine Vol. XVII, 1916, p. 72.



## Secessionville Historic District

1. Fort Lamar
2. Union Grave Site
3. Seabrook-Freer House
4. William B. Seabrook House
5. Elias L. Rivers House

