



Preliminary Report on Trustees Garden History and Archaeology

Covering the period Febuary/March

Abstract

Arguably the most historic spot in Savannah, Georgia and the Southeast, the ten acres known as Trustees' Garden must be considered as unique in its role in the story of America. In the 281 years since 1733 and the founding of the British Colony the sloping terrain has been built upon again and again. It was the site of the first agricultural experimentation site in the New World when it was created by James Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees. The area at the bottom of the image below shows various buildings that made up the Kehoe Iron Works. This report studies the building sequence of that section of the Garden project. The buildings at the top of the image are those of the Manufactured Gas Works first built in the late 1840's. Today the Gas Works serves as the Charles H. Morris Center. The multiple military fortifications on the site will be reviewed in a later report.



Figure 1. Above, is an aerial view of the Trustees' Garden. The area marked in red indicates the topography that may have approximated the ten-acre boundary of the original Garden. The blue line shows the bounds of the property in the current project. *Google Earth image.*

Preliminary Report on Trustees Garden History and Archaeology

Covering the period February/March 2014 by James Byous

Introduction

Savannah, Georgia has many historic sites. Battlefield Park and the Georgia State Railroad Museum lie at the western terminus of Yamacraw Bluff, a sandy mound that stands forty feet above of the Savannah River and arcs along the watery course for one mile west to east. The park commemorates the battle referred to as the Siege of Savannah where in 1779 American and French forces attacked British redoubts in a futile attempt to regain the city for the rebel cause. Below the bluff on the water's edge is the wharf area and River Street with a rich history of maritime shipping and sailing lore.

Trustees Garden anchors that historic arc on the east and is the location of the first agricultural experimentation site in the New World. It was created by James Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees in 1734 one year after the city and British colony was settled by Oglethorpe and just over 120 pioneers. At this location in the city - which was also a battle site from the Siege of Savannah - many historic structures have marked the landscape since the forming of the Garden.

Buildings are currently being renovated by Mr. Charles H. Morris. The Garden is being aligned to become a civic and cultural facility with a goal of teaching Trustees' Garden, local and American history as well as health related disciplines to children and their families. Below are views of the area showing the locations of flora in the original garden including later prominent structures.

The Kehoe Iron Works Machine Shop building is under renovation at this time. Kehoe Iron Works stands as a symbol of the Industrial Age when coke and coal burning furnaces reshaped the face of our city, state and country. Other buildings within that complex will be likewise refurbished as time progresses.

The Manufactured Gas Works site on the north end of the Garden sits on a historically strategic location for the military defense of Savannah. On that site were a minimum of six earthen fortifications over the years. The first battery of cannon was a simple platform set up in 1733 and apparently required no excavation. It was followed by the six earthen forts over a span of eighty years. The Gas Works now serves as the Charles H. Morris Center.

The area spanning the acreage between the two complexes served as a community for industrial workers. Newcomers from Ireland lived, worked and socialized in the surrounding working class stores, bars and homes. Included on the Garden grounds was the house of worship, the 1st Morning Star Baptist Church which served the African-American community. The front steps to the old church are still visible at the site on Reynolds Street.¹

¹ Little Crooked Houses: If These Walls Could Talk, Susan B. Johnson, The History Press, Charleston, SC, 2007; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Digital Library of Georgia.

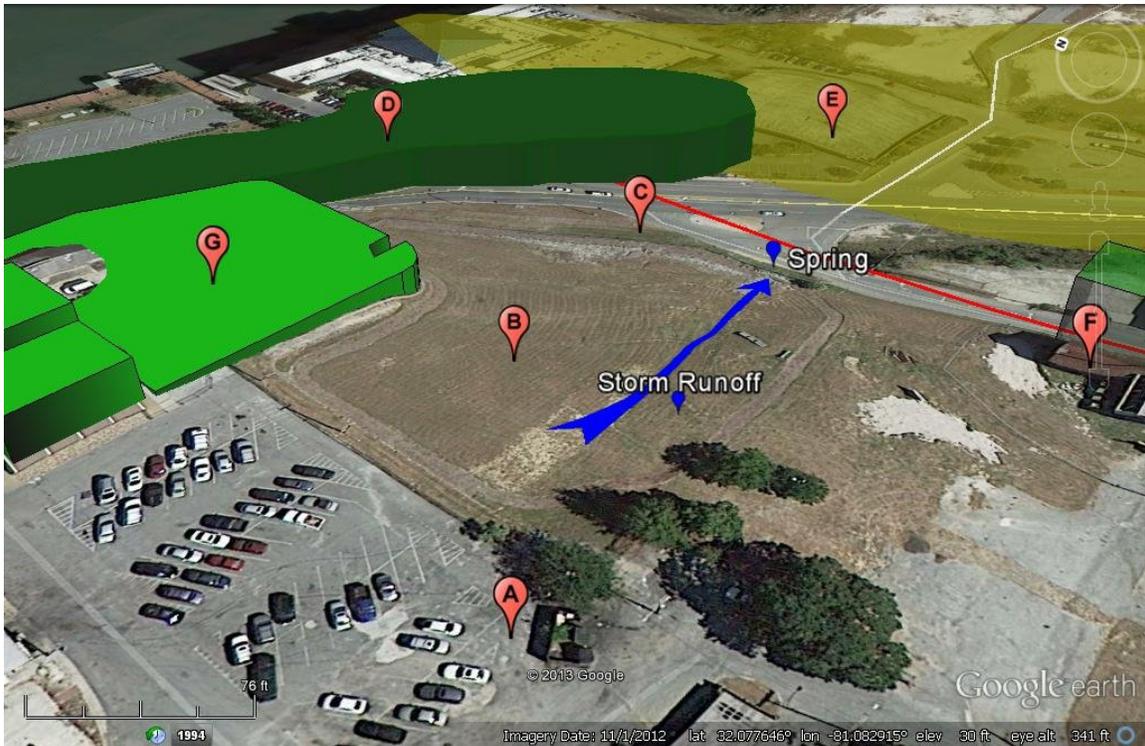


Figure 2 The first description of Trustees’ Garden by Francis Moore. View is looking west-southwest. *Google Earth image.*

The first description of the Garden.

Writer Francis Moore visited the Georgia Colony in 1735. He wrote of the Trustees’ Garden and described the soil type and plants growing on the acreage in his narrative, *A Voyage to Georgia*. The areas noted by Moore are quoted in points A through D and inferred in E. They are as follows with a Google Earth view in figure 2 from the west-southwest:

In the Garden is a variety of Soils; the top is sandy and dry, [A] the Sides of the Hill are Clay, [B] and the Bottom is a black rich Garden-Mould [C] well watered. On the North-part f the Garden is left standing a Grove of Part of the old Wood, [D] as it was before the arrival Colony there. The Trees in the Grove are mostly Bay, Sassafras, Evergreen Oak, Pellitory, Hickary, American Ash, and the [magnolia] Laurel Tulip.

The other areas noted in the image are, E, a swamp at the time of Moore’s visit and the later structures are, F, the Kehoe Machine Building and, G, the Gas Works terrace. The label marked “Spring” corresponds to Moore’s description of spring area at the base of the hill and matches the current area of seepage along Randolph Street below the area of storm runoff on the slope. Moore describes the area, “The Remainder of the Garden is the Side and some plain low Ground at the Foot of the Hill, where several fine Springs break out....”



Figure 3 & figure 4 Though Savannah’s water level is lower today than it was in 1734, water still seeps from the hillside at the base of Trustees’ Garden matching Moore’s description of “fine Springs” in that area. A close up view of the seepage along Randolph Street is seen in the top photo, figure 3, with a wider view in the lower, figure 4. *Photos, J Byous Company.*

Also described in the narrative are a variety of plants from England that grew in the Garden. They included apples, pears, figs, grapes and pomegranates. Exotic plants studied on the site included coffee, olives, coconuts, cotton, palms and tea. Tea was the only failing herbaceous plant mentioned by Moore. It refused to survive in the Georgia climate.

Mulberry trees were the main experimental plant due to the Trustees’ desire to find a source for silk outside of the British realm. They were grown in groves outlined by orange trees along unspecified areas of the Garden. Moore mentions this feature along with differing temperatures and elevations along the slope saying, “The Garden is laid out with Cross-walks planted with Orange-trees, but the last Winter, a good deal of snow having fallen, had killed those upon the Top of the Hill down to their roots, but they being cut down sprouted again, as I saw when I returned to Savannah.”²

² A Voyage to Georgia Begun In The Year 1735, Francis Moore, 1744, London.

Buildings of southern Trustees' Garden Project area in 1884

**Kehoe Iron Works
1884 Building Locations
Per Sanborn Map**



Figure 5 View is looking southwest. *Google Earth image.*

Buildings of southern Trustees' Garden Project area in 1884

At this point in 1884 the earlier foundry building is not in use. The Sanborn Fire Insurance map from that year records the location having a wooden structure with a metal roof standing one and one-half stories tall on brick piers, open to the roof.³

The current southwestern brick structure is shown as being used as the foundry. To the east across Randolph Street the Savannah Flour Mill buildings are shown as “ruins”. In a birds-eye drawing of the city in 1871 the mill is shown with smoke rolling from the stack suggesting that the property was productive at that time.⁴

³ Sanborn Maps.

⁴ Birdseye View of the City of Savannah Georgia 1871, A. Ruger, St. Louis, MO.

Buildings of southern Trustees' Garden Project area in 1888

**Kehoe Iron Works
1888 Building Locations
Per Sanborn Map**



Figure 6 View is looking southwest. *Google Earth image.*

By 1888 the Old Foundry had been razed for the addition of duplex apartment buildings. The Storage Shed was still in use while several small outbuildings were added and labeled as dwellings and stores. The Chipping and Fitting building was added in the center of the complex next to the office tower and cupola.⁵

⁵ Sanborn Maps.

Buildings of southern Trustees' Garden Project area in 1898

**Kehoe Iron Works
1898 Building Locations
Per Sanborn Map**



Figure 7 View is looking southwest. *Google Earth image.*

By 1898 three buildings were added to the Works including a wood-frame, partially-iron-clad blacksmith shop that covered the area that now holds the Annex section presently under renovation. Also added was a “fitting” building and another with a coke oven marked by the two smoke stacks on the right middle of the picture.⁶

⁶ Sanborn Maps

Buildings of southern Trustees' Garden Project area in 1916

**Kehoe Iron Works
1916 Building Locations
Per Sanborn Map**



Figure 8 View is looking southwest. *Google Earth image.*

By 1916 the Machine Building structure now under restoration, shown in transparent green, had replaced the duplex apartments on the foundation of the Old Foundry while several other workers' apartments were found along Reynolds Street. Among the new Reynolds Street housing was the 1st Morning Star Baptist Church, labeled "Negro" on the Sanborn map. Rail lines were added from the river to the Kehoe complex to provide access to Central of Georgia Railroad lines.⁷

⁷ Sanborn Maps; William Kehoe: Fulfilling the American Dream, Carol Ann Causey, Armstrong State College, November 1991.

Kehoe Iron Works Machine Building Archaeological Foundation Details

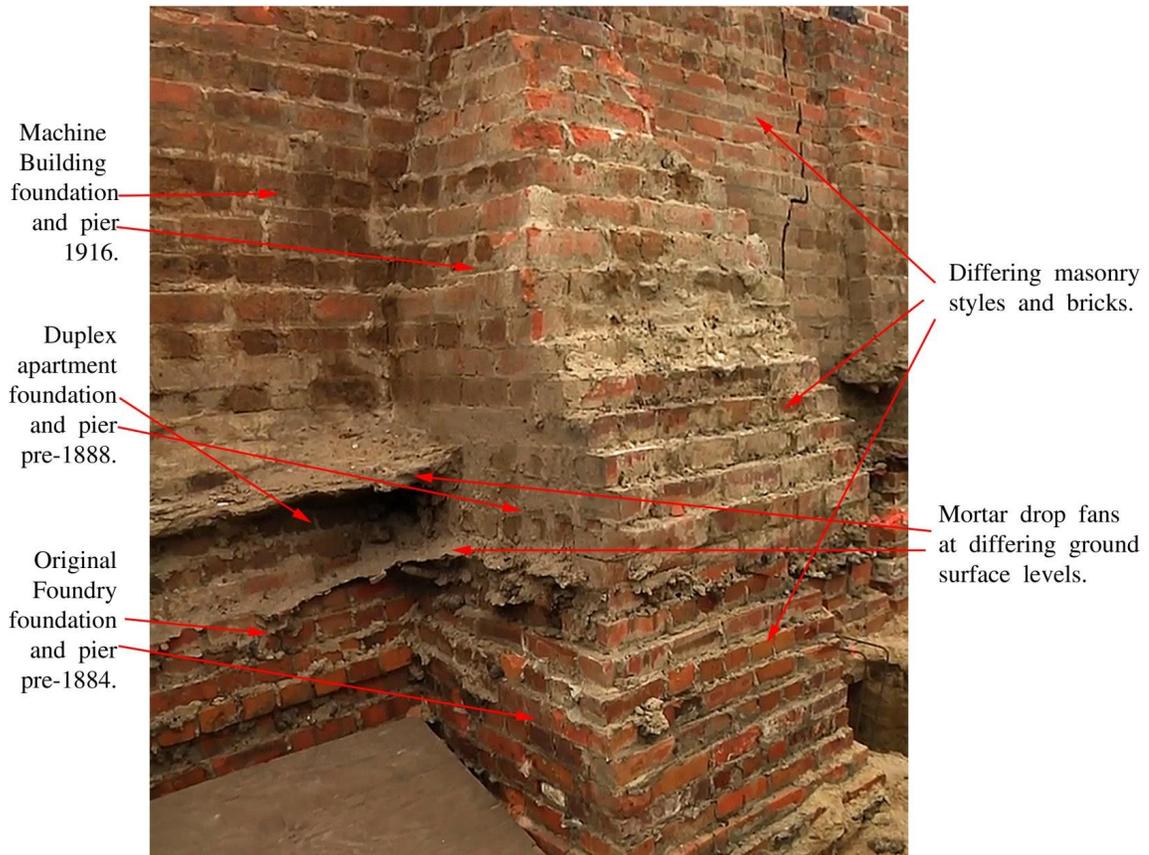


Figure 9 Buttress and structure of the eastern foundation wall.^o

Above are examples of the archaeological record of the excavated foundation on the eastern wall of the Kehoe Machine Shop building. The original piers and foundation can be seen at the bottom exhibiting different masonry and brick styles from other time frames above. The Duplex foundation is shown between masonry drop fans that indicate the level of the soil at the time of its construction. The pier also shows the differing styles. At the top is the Machine Building foundation and pier built prior to 1916. The lower masonry styles display uniform courses and tight mortar joints while the Machine building contains “sloppy” courses with wide mortar seams.⁹ These layers correspond with the Google Earth overlay photos shown buildings in images on pages above.

⁸ Image from video capture, Brian Williams Television, Raleigh, NC.

⁹ Field study of Kehoe building masonry style, J Byous.

Subjects for Possible Historical and Archaeological Review

Areas that suggest further study.

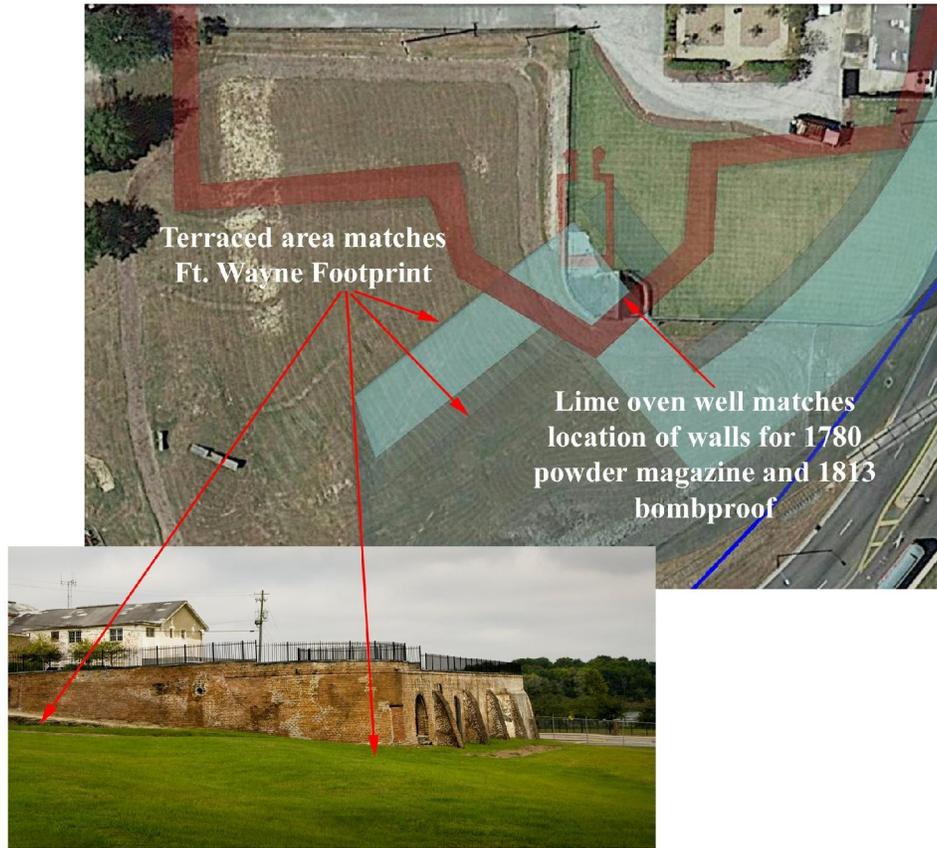


Figure 10 View of fortification overlay, above, and lateral view of terraces.
Google Earth image, to, J Byous Company, lower.

It is recommended that a closer look at the possibility that the bricks on the western section of the Lime Oven well be studied for ties to the 1780 Fort Prevost powder magazine and the 1814 Fort Wayne bomb proof.

Another study on the terraced section of the lawn area should be undertaken in an attempt to determine if the undulations are the remaining scar of the sickle-shaped “handle” of the fortification. The earthwork base location matches the terracing segment as shown above in the map overlay.¹⁰

A third study should be considered to find buried foundations of the 1st Morning Star Baptist Church and surrounding buildings.

Finally, logging, bagging and photographing artifacts found during the foundation excavation should be started soon.

Access to the site and building may be required after hours and weekends.

Preliminary studies can be covered by the current project agreement.

Other fortification and structure locations will be discussed in future reports.

- JB 3/17/14

¹⁰ Plan of the siege of Savannah: with the joint attack of the French and Americans on the 9h October 1779, in which they were defeated by his majesty’s forces under the command of genl. Augustin Prevost: Detail of Fort Wayne, Savannah, GA, Capt. Poussin, 1821, Waring Collection, Georgia Historical Society.