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March 17, 1992

Ms. Renee Binder  
Vernacular Landscape Project  
The Strom Thurmond Institute  
Clemson University  
Clemson, South Carolina 29634-5130

Dear Ms. Binder:

I was pleased to be asked by Carolee Williams, Planning Administrator for the City of Charleston, to participate in the Vernacular Landscape Project. I'm enclosing the negatives for 24 photos taken on Johns Island March 13, 1992. Louis Nelson, with the Preservation Programs Division of Historic Charleston Foundation, and I worked together on this roll, using an extra camera instead of one of the disposables. I hope it's not an inconvenience that we went ahead and had the film processed. We both thought it would be valuable to have a set of the photos and a copy of our log for us to review.

Defining and describing cultural landscapes is an important task, and too little has been done toward the kind of project you are working on. Your team has developed a good methodology for beginning to standardize the personal perceptions through which we all see a landscape. Louis and I found that working as a team was valuable. We discussed what was that we were seeing while we were in the field, and how to "say what we saw". Having strict limits on the number of photos, and space to write in, made us pay close attention to our own responses.

Because Louis and I both work in historic preservation, we expected that most of our "likes and dislikes" would be related to historic buildings and landscapes. Therefore, in reviewing our results, I was surprised at the pattern among our "dislikes". Far from being examples of unsympathetic treatment of historic properties, most of them are related to public utilities, construction codes, and engineering requirements. The excessively wide new roads, TV towers, power lines, water tank, and elevated house all tell more about rigid adherence to codes and policy when building infrastructure or private buildings than they do about individual neglect of cultural/ historic properties.

In one way, this is an encouraging finding. As evidenced by the Betsy Kerrison Parkway, Johns Island has begun to control the impact of public programs. Enormous projects, at least, are reviewed by citizens. But so far there seems to be little oversight of the impact that thoughtlessly installed utilities or roads will have.

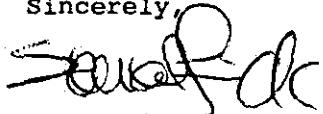
Planned Unit Developments must meet minimum standards. One result, the overly wide road, is our "Dislike #3". We contrasted it with Exchange Landing Road, a narrow historic route that is sufficient for the several new houses along

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it. The water tower on Bohicket Road is objectionable for two reasons: the excessive clearing at the site, and the vivid turquoise paint. Must a water tower be so garish?

Site-by-site questions and challenges to conventional wisdom should be included in public discussions of changes to Johns Island's landscape. Single changes will have a cumulative negative effect, and not all of them are necessary. The Vernacular Landscape Project offers a good way to direct the discussions. We will be very interested in knowing how the project proceeds from here. If there is anything we can do to help with it, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,



Sarah Fick

cc: Louis Nelson  
Carolee Williams  
George Miller

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM:  
Photographic Survey

NAME: Sarah Fick and Louis Nelson

DATE: 13 March 1992

CAMERA NUMBER: n/a

SHOT NUMBER:

1. liked/didn't like Like preservation of the oak canopy; lack of visual intrusions

location River Road, south of Cane Slash Road

2. liked/didn't like Like the view of house at end of shaded, unpaved drive; loose appearance of unclipped azaleas: unmanicured effect but not "untouched by human hands" - a very comfortable view.

location 2167 River Road, Anderson house and driveway

3. liked/didn't like Excessively wide road, built to conform to codes rather than natural or vernacular landscape. Although it will not be as raw when construction is complete, the boulevard effect will never be compatible.

location Coquina Drive, off River Road

4. liked/didn't like Agrarian activities result in simple utilitarian landscape: vine-covered wire fence at ditch line, unpaved farm road, parallel rows of drainage ditches. Open vista with trees terminating sightlines.

location West side of River Road, south of #3

5. liked/didn't like Like sense of gentle deterioration of unused storage structure & pecan trees; red barn still in use. Motion of broomgrass and goldenrod in the coastal breezes. Agricultural/ functional landscape.

location East side of River Road, opposite #4

6. liked/didn't like Like undeveloped marsh view; fishermen in the view give sense of timelessness of coastal recreational/ occupational activities.

location Exchange Landing, looking south along Stono River

7. liked/didn't like Like small scale of pilings, fencing; pelican. Like shrimpboat as example of the continuity of occupation/ rural economy based on individual and family enterprise

location Exchange Landing, looking north along Stono River

8. liked/didn't like Electric lines and poles

location Exchange Landing, looking north along Stono River toward Stono Bridge

9. liked/didn't like Don't like house; design is a clumsy response to flood elevation requirements. Don't like wholesale clearing of land.

location 2804 Exchange Landing Road, "Lane's End"

10. liked/didn't like Like narrow unpaved road - this historic road is a good contrast to Coquina Drive (#3). Like the tree canopy. Like the big plain RFD mailbox in view at left. CAR IN PHOTO-RESHOT

location Exchange Landing Road, about midway, looking east toward landing

11. liked/didn't like

SAME AS #10, but without car in photo

location

12. liked/didn't like Palmetto tree lends "coastal" aspect. House is of an early 20th century architectural type that recurs throughout the Lowcountry, and the "homemade" appearance of the repairs is very personal. Like

location 2425 River Road (just south of Plow Ground Road) unpaved drive.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM:  
Photographic Survey

SHOT NUMBER:

13. liked/didn't like Like the stand: sign reads "Lowcountry Basket For Sale" Like the grassy verge along the roadway. This is a fairly thickly settled neighborhood, but retains its rural feel.

location Across from 2886 River Road

14. liked/didn't like Like this view of cropfields ready for setting out tomatoes between rows of standing wheat. Like the view of marsh in the distance. Family-operated farms continue a long tradition despite modern methods.

location Jenkins & Legare Farm, River Road

15. liked/didn't like Like the vegetable stand, shaded by live oaks, adjacent to cropfields. Sandy pulloff and parking areas.

location Three J's Vegetable Market, south side of River Road, West of #14

16. liked/didn't like At left: white power box on short pole. In background: deteriorating former nightclub. Center and right: slick subdivision gates are jarring contrast; multiple real estate signs are discouraging intrusion.

location Royal Oak Drive (at River Road)

17. liked/didn't like Enormous TV tower

location River Road, between Abapoola Road and Bryans Dairy Road

18. liked/didn't like Beach resort feel of the shopping center: stuccoed buildings are inappropriate for Johns Island's agricultural setting. Wide thoroughfare speeds visitors past the island, into this center, to Kiawah.

location Island Center, Bohicket Road at River Road

19. liked/didn't like Like: well-maintained and well-used historic building; sandy driveway. Dislike: pipe fencing at churchyard; blank treelessness of cemetery

location Johns Island Presbyterian Church, Bohicket Road

20. liked/didn't like Blatant disregard of aesthetics in a residential/church neighborhood. Two treestumps next to power pole tell a lot.

location Bohicket Road, opposite Bethlehem United Methodist Church

21. liked/didn't like Like: fencing strung on simple poles. View of typical farmhouse, with workbuildings and cattle pastures. Small-scale economy of individual/family farming enterprise.

location Rush Landing Road (off River Road, north of Fenwick Hall)

22. liked/didn't like Like: beautiful marsh and water view bordered by pines. Scene is marred by power lines and poles.

location Rush Landing Road, looking east across marsh

23. liked/didn't like Like this packing shed operation with its mix of historic and modern functional structures, and adjacent greenbelt that is the disused railroad right-of-way. Important part of island's agricultural economy

location Junction of Belvedere Road and Main Road, looking east from Belvedere Rd.

24. liked/didn't like Don't like marina: but accept that this might be necessary evil in making possible the uncluttered, undeveloped stretches of river.

location Maybank Highway at Stono River Bridge, view of Bohicket Marina

25. Bonus shot. Like the uncluttered stretch of river.

location Maybank Highway at Stono River Bridge, facing opposite direction from Stono River Bridge.

## RESEARCHER'S BASE MAP

## JAMES ISLAND AND JOHNS ISLAND

