

Research Investigations at Potential Location of Lords Proprietors Plantation  
Ashleyville/Maryville, Charleston, SC

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In November 2012, Andrew Agha was contacted by Dr. Jeffrey Kline concerning artifacts he had recovered from a recent excavation for a house foundation in Maryville. Maryville is the historic late 19<sup>th</sup> century African American community that is still populated predominately by African Americans today. The house foundation was new excavation and the lot owner is Gary Hardy. Based on lot research, no house has stood on this lot for at least 70 years. This lot sits at the corner of Main St. and Chickadee lane, adjacent and to the south of the West Ashley Bikeway. It is also roughly 300 feet from the edge of the marsh, which lies to the east/southeast. Kline noted heavy oyster shell and brick on the surface and conducted a surface collection of many ceramic sherds, animal bones and teeth, and some metal and glass artifacts. He also noted that a narrow brick foundation was broken through inadvertently during the excavation. After contacting Agha

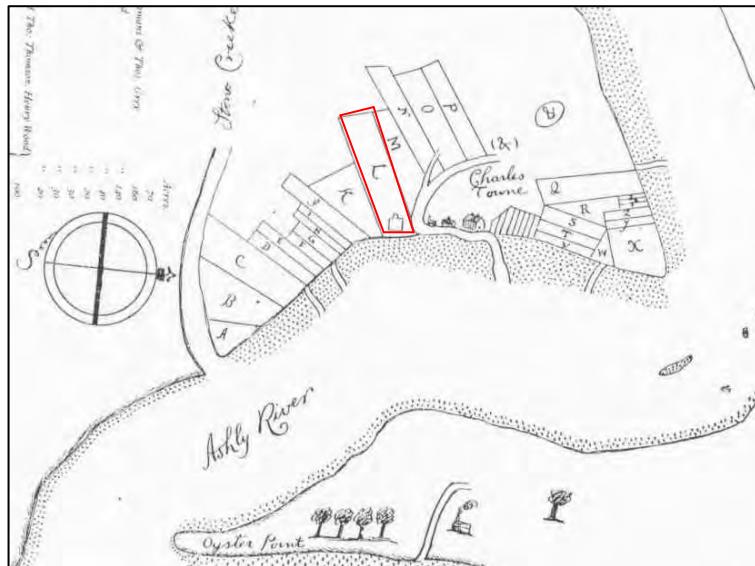


Figure 1. 1671 Culpepper plan of lots for Charles Towne, with Lot L highlighted.

about this discovery, they both made a site visit to confirm Kline's observations, at which time Agha provided insight into the dates of the artifacts and the foundation.

Based on the appearance, construction and quality of brick, the foundation was determined to be 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also, the large number and high variety of 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramics, matched with the foundation, led Agha to interpret the site as being mainly an early to late 19<sup>th</sup> century house site with heavy occupation history. The profiles of the trench show a dense trash midden 0.4-1.1' feet below surface (bs). Below this midden is a very dark grayish brown sandy loam that varies greatly in depth across the new house's footprint. One sherd of Tin-enamelled ware was

identified among the 50+ ceramics Kline collected, along with a small unglazed redware sherd and two sherds of Colonoware. Based on the colors of decorative paint on the sherd, and the vessel form, this Tin-enamelled sherd is likely not British Delft, which is commonly found on late 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century sites in and around Charleston, nor Spanish Majolica, which is rare but sometimes found on mostly late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> century sites. Attempts to further identify this ceramic and origin are currently underway. Figure 2 displays the 1671 Culpepper plat of Lot L, showing detail of the Lords Proprietors plantation and fort.

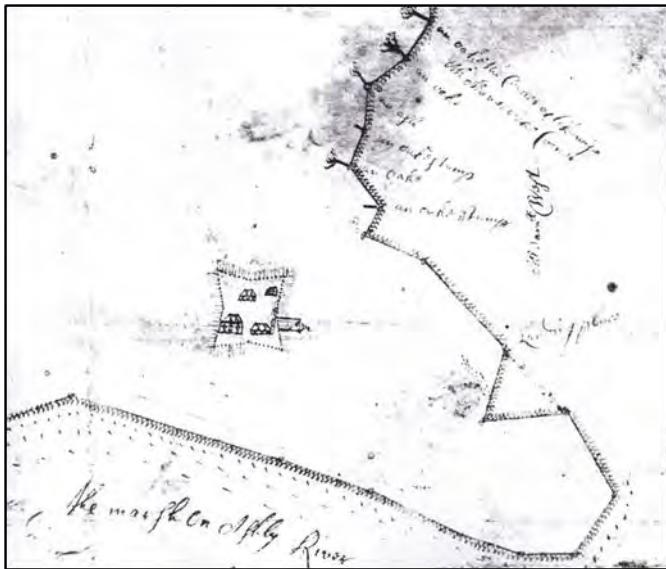


Figure 2. The 1671 Culpepper plat of Lot L, showing the star fort and projected buildings inside.

occupation of the lot. Based on this increased 17<sup>th</sup> century artifact count, Agha suggested that the site may be what Kline first suggested: the location of the Star Fort that once existed on Lot L of the original Charles Towne settlement. The Star Fort housed the Governor's residence, as well as some of the most important structures from the early town. Also, Lot L was where an experimental formal crop garden was built, as evidenced by a 1673 plat (Figure 3).

### Current Excavations

On 10 February 2013, Andrew Agha and Nicole Isenbarger of the Archaeological Research Collective (ARC) began excavations at the house lot in Maryville. This site is called Star Fort from here. A square excavation was started previously for a support pillar for the house, and we excavated below the planned depth unknowingly. Mostly overburden from

In late January 2013, Kline again approached Agha with more artifacts that he had collected through an excavation within the house footprint, as well as from screening backfill from the edges of the foundation trench. Dozens of 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramics of many varieties were collected, along with several very large sherds of lead glazed redware, manganese lead glazed redware, Chinese export porcelain, a possible Wrotham/Staffordshire slip decorated sherd, and Rhenish/Westerwald stoneware that may be 17<sup>th</sup> century (slipware book). These large, 17<sup>th</sup> century ceramics point to the presence of a large

pit feature or intact deposit that was avoided during the 19<sup>th</sup> century

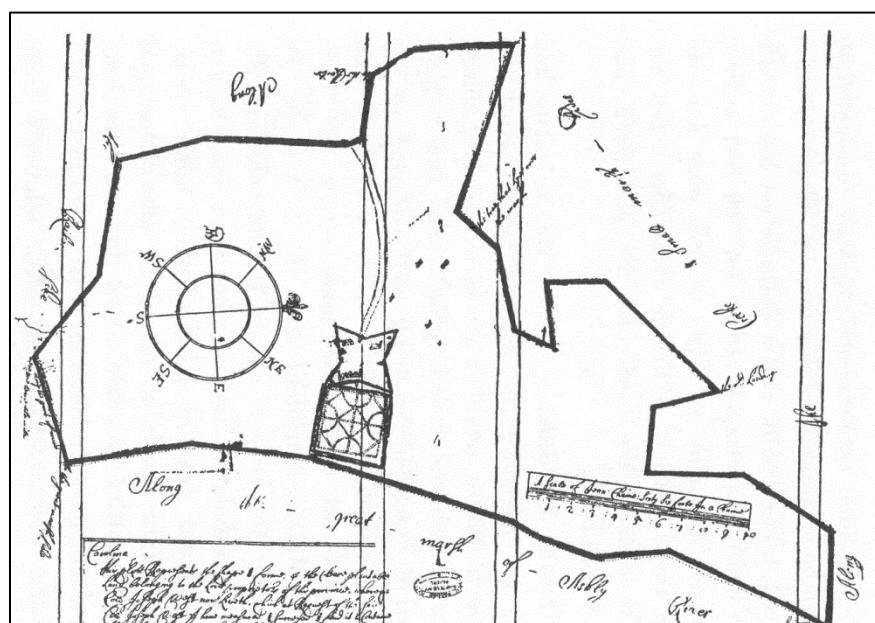


Figure 3. Lords Proprietors Plantation in 1673, after the formal experimental garden was constructed.

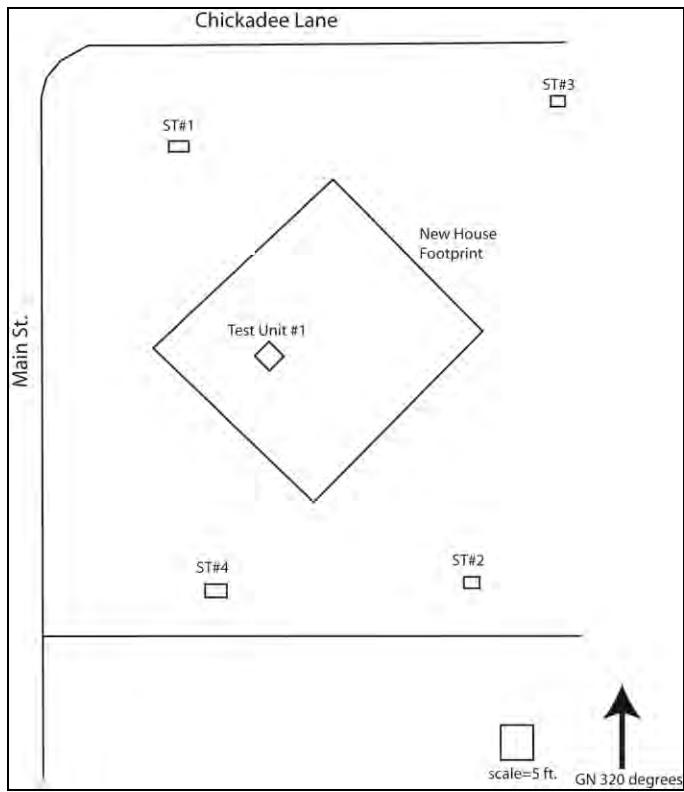


Figure 4. Plan view of all excavations.

and to avoid 19<sup>th</sup> century artifact contamination, we excavated a Level 2 of Zone 3. This second level went to 2.4'feet bs. The dark brown sandy loam soil did not end here, and its depth is unknown.

After this excavation, we excavated four shovel test units on 18 February 2013. These units were 1x2'feet and were oriented east/west to Main St. Each test sampled each of the four corners of the house lot. Shovel Test #1 was excavated in the northwest corner of the lot. Figure 4 displays a plan view of the lot and all excavations in relation to the house footprint. Overburden was encountered from ground surface to 0.4'feet below surface, followed by Zone 2, the 19<sup>th</sup> century midden seen in Test Unit #1. This was excavated from 0.4'-1.2'feet bs. The same soil as identified as Zone 3 in Test Unit #1 was seen here, and was excavated to a depth of 2.8'feet bs. Subsoil was appearing but the test was abandoned due to difficulty in removing soil safely from the bottom of the test. Zone 3 is believed to be related to the 1670s occupation of the Lords Proprietors plantation and Governor Joseph West.

Shovel Test #2 was dug in the southeast corner of the lot. Here, no overburden was seen. Rootmat was excavated from ground surface to 0.3'feet bs, followed by a very dark grayish brown sandy loam from 0.3'-0.9'feet bs. A soil color similar to Zone 3 was seen at 0.9'feet bs, and was excavated to 1.3'feet bs, when a light tan subsoil sand was encountered. No Zone 2 or Zone 3 soils were encountered in this test.

Shovel Test #3, in the northeast corner of the lot, was negative for artifacts. This area of the lot has been graded lightly; however, the soil deposits here are very different from the rest of the lot.

backfill was removed initially, and when we began to excavate this 4x4'foot hole further, we saw that the excavation had cut into the intact 19<sup>th</sup> century trash midden by only 0.2'feet. Zone 1, the overburden, was not sampled by us in this unit. Zone 2, the 19<sup>th</sup> century trash midden, went to 1.6'feet below surface. This deposit was seen running through the middle of the unit at 0.3'feet deeper than the base of Zone 2, showing the depositors of the trash may have dug an amorphous pit to bury trash. Zone 2, characterized by very heavy oyster shell and a very dark grayish brown sandy loam fill, gave way to a dark brown sandy loam with almost no artifacts in it. Zone 3, then, is being interpreted as the soil horizon representative of the Lords Proprietors Star Fort. This new soil horizon was excavated through two

levels. Zone 3 Level 1 was dug from 1.9-2.1'feet below surface. For more control

A dark brown sandy loam was excavated from 0-0.3' feet bs, followed by a slightly mottled brownish yellow sandy subsoil that we tested from 0.3'-0.7' feet bs. This subsoil has a large amount of naturally forming iron concretions.

Shovel Test #4, in the southwest corner, was excavated in two zones. From almost surface to 1.0' feet bs we dug through the 19<sup>th</sup> century midden. From 1.0'-1.3' feet bs we encountered soil similar to Zone 3 but it is mottled with a light tan subsoil sand. Subsoil was tested from 1.3'-1.6' feet bs.

Based on this minimal soil testing strategy, it appears that future excavations in the northwest corner of the lot should produce more artifacts related to the 17<sup>th</sup> century occupation present here. However, larger excavation units along the western side of the lot may uncover 17<sup>th</sup> century deposits. The site, even though it has been trenched for a new house foundation, is intact and the research potential outside of the house footprint is great.

### **Artifacts Recovered**

While the vast majority of the artifacts recovered both by Kline's attempts and those by ARC comprise mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century material, this report focuses primarily on those artifacts that are identifiable and diagnostic to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. All ceramics identification is based on Ivor Noel Hume's *A Guide to Artifacts in Colonial America* (1969), and *English Slip-decorated Earthenware at Williamsburg* (Grigsby 1993). For historical references consult the bibliography. When the British landing at Charles Towne was being planned in 1669, the Lords Proprietors, who funded and organized the settlement and founding of Carolina, desired their own private plantation. Several lots were cut and drawn out of the landscape on the west side of the Ashley River, and one, Lot L (Figure 1), was reserved specifically for Lord Ashley, Sir Peter Colleton, and Sir George Carteret. Colleton was a Barbadian planter, Carteret was in control of the Jersey colony in New England, and Ashley was a planter in England (although he did co-own a sugar plantation in Barbados from 1646-1654). The Proprietors Plantation was to be where the first exotic crops were to be experimented with, and where the essentials for the fledgling town were to be stored for colonists' access. The articles of war including guns, shot, and powder were to be stored there also. Joseph West, commander of the first fleet of ships to arrive at the Ashley River, and who was the shopkeeper and manager of the Proprietors interests at Lot L, erected a palisade wall, surrounding the buildings and gardens in a star-shaped pattern. This pattern provided crossfire in all directions, as this fort can be seen technically as four bastions placed against each other. The first drawing of this fortified settlement (Figure 2) does not differ much two years later except for the addition of a formal garden between the fort and the marsh of the Ashley River (Figure 3). There was a road leading into the settlement from the west, as well as a road/path leading to their private boat landing on Old Towne Creek. This plantation saw almost all of the first crops fail, and as the colonists failed to produce crops and other goods for the Lords, their debts to Joseph West by April 1677 were too great and Ashley, Colleton and Carteret gave their plantation and land to West for compensation. By this time, Ashley had already had his own personal fortified plantation up the Ashley River, and in September of 1677, Colleton had his agents settle Fairlawn Signiory, a 12,000 acre property similar to Lord Ashley's St. Giles Kussoe. West continued to be Governor of Carolina and live at the star fort settlement, but eventually left in 1685 for England. He returned shortly after and resided at the star fort settlement until his death in 1691.

Seventeenth century artifact assemblages are few and far between. In the last few years, we have been increasing our knowledge of said assemblages through recent discoveries of St. Giles Kussoe on the Ashley River (Agha et al. 2012) and through excavations at Charles Towne Landing. Because Charles Towne, the Lords Proprietors Plantation, and St. Giles Kussoe all had Lord Ashley heavily involved in the ventures there, the kinds of artifacts may be similar enough to recognize a pattern which would make identifying 17<sup>th</sup> century settlements in the future easier. Almost all of the time, we find that 17<sup>th</sup> century settlements are found underneath both 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century settlements, which disturbs the 17<sup>th</sup> century contexts. Also, the artifacts from all three centuries can become mixed through past historic site formation processes, or the ways people in the past created the sites we find today. Some of the ceramics created in the 1670s, for example, were in use until the 1740s, while others of the same era were in use until almost 1800. If a house built in 1745 needed trenches dug during new construction in 1760, and the trenches unearthed artifacts that entered the ground in the 1680s, the trash generated between 1745-1760 that was lying on or in the ground would have been mixed with the 1680s trash. When the trench was filled in, and we find it through archaeology today, we'd interpret the deposit as belonging only to the 1745-1760 period, because we know that ceramics from the 17<sup>th</sup> century were used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is why the area in Maryville believed to be the star fort is so exciting and important: there is only a 19<sup>th</sup> century occupation on top of the c.1670-1691 star fort. With an absolute absence of ceramic types invented from 1700-1770, we can attribute all 17<sup>th</sup> century ceramic types with the star fort occupation period.

As mentioned earlier, it is believed that Mr. Kline's exploratory excavation from inside of the new house construction encountered an intact 17<sup>th</sup> century feature, based on the very large sized ceramic sherds. Only the ceramics and other artifacts that are 17<sup>th</sup> century or being interpreted from that time period are discussed below.

The initial artifacts brought to Agha from Mr. Kline are one Tin-enamelled rim sherd with blue, green and yellow bold painted lines and purple/black fine lines. The vessel has mold lines on the exterior, and is also "lead-backed," which is seen only on tin-enamelled wares from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Besides this sherd, two sherds of Colonoware of different vessels were recovered. The presence of these Colonoware sherds, and that Colonoware was not found in context with the intact 19<sup>th</sup> century midden, helps to show that enslaved Africans were present and working at the Lords Proprietors plantation, either during their ownership or from that of Joseph West. Lastly, a small lead glazed redware sherd, similar to what is found at both the Lord Ashley Site and Charles Towne Landing, was identified.

Mr. Kline's small excavation recovered several other very large sherds. Four very large rim sherds from most likely the same vessel of a manganese/brown lead glazed redware creampot were collected, along with a lighter brown lead glazed redware basal sherd, and a similarly colored rim sherd. A large basal sherd with a footring for a Chinese Export blue on white handpainted Porcelain was found, as well as two Rhenish/Westerwald sherds that may be 17<sup>th</sup> century. A brown salt glazed stoneware sherd and a rare Wrotham/Staffordshire slip decorated sherd was also identified. This slip decorated sherd has a dark slip on both interior and exterior, with white slip trailing over it, so the lead glaze makes the vessel look like a redware. More

research is needed to source this sherd, but it appears to be 17<sup>th</sup> century given how rare this type is from other 17<sup>th</sup> century contexts and sites in the Lowcountry.

ARC's excavations uncovered several more ceramics and other artifacts directly related to the 17<sup>th</sup> century occupation. Work in the 4x4' foot test unit, near Kline's excavation, started by squaring up the edges and floor of the excavation as we found it; the soils screened were from different proveniences. From this soil, we collected one dark bodied redware with a lead glaze that gives it a maroon appearance. This pottery type is on display at Charles Towne Landing's museum, and there it is listed as being Barbadian in origin and manufacture. A thick lead glazed redware sherd, two Colonoware sherds, and a pipe stem with an 8/64" bore hole diameter were recovered as well. The Colonoware is very well made and one sherd has an almost ribbed-like exterior. The size of the bore hole on the pipe stem indicates an early 17<sup>th</sup> century manufacture, making it relative to the star fort occupation. The 19<sup>th</sup> century midden soil, called Zone 2, produced a 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century aqua glass medicine bottle neck and nearly intact lip. Glass of this kind was out of production by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it may be related to the star fort and entered Zone 2 through historic disturbance. Also, two wrought nails were identified in this midden. Wrought nails were replaced by cut nails starting in the 1780s, and then completely by 1800. Zone 3 Level 1, the top of the soil we believe is related to the star fort period, produced another very large body sherd for the same manganese/brown lead glazed redware creampot that Kline recovered. Besides this sherd, one lead glazed redware, two Colonoware residual sherds, and one Chinese Export blue on white hand painted Porcelain basal sherd was found. While we believe it is 17<sup>th</sup> century, this porcelain may also be Cantonese, which is post-1800 in the Charleston area. Also, a broken honey-colored gunflint fragment was found.

Shovel test #1 Level 1 produced a gray bodied stoneware, possibly brown salt glazed, which is likely 17<sup>th</sup> century, along with a Colonoware sherd. Also found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century midden are three wrought nails with rose heads; these are clearly pre-1800 and should be related to the star fort period. Level 2 of this test, below the 19<sup>th</sup> century midden, produced a Colonoware body sherd, a few nails that are possibly wrought, 24g of early Charleston "soft brick," and 287g of oyster shell. These findings are similar to those found in Zone 3 of Test Unit #1, and although no dateable sherds were found in Shovel test #1 Level 2, these artifacts in Zone 3 soil point to deposition by those inhabiting the star fort.

Shovel test #2, excavated in one level, produced one brown dotted slip decorated Staffordshire Slipware sherd and one leaded clear table glass fragment. These may be related to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but with a total lack of 1700-1770 invented ceramics, these probably belong to the star fort occupation.

Shovel test #4 Level 2 produced only a Colonoware residual sherd and a 6/64" diameter pipe stem, which suggests a late 17<sup>th</sup> century manufacture date.

## Conclusions

It is currently believed that the 17<sup>th</sup> century artifacts recovered from Gary Hardy's house lot at Main St. and Chickadee lane in Maryville represent the presence of the star fort that appears on the 1671 Culpepper plat (Figure 2). Figure 5 displays an overlay and author's interpretation of where the star fort and garden may have been on a modern aerial photo. Based on lot location,

we feel that we may be either in between the formal garden shown on the 1673 plat (Figure 3) and the fort, or just inside the walls of the fort. The large sized sherds point to possibly a dumping ground or debris field that may have existed between the fort walls and garden to the east. There may have been an opening in the fort wall that led into the garden, at which case refuse disposal between the fort and garden would have been likely. The deep sandy loam with few artifacts may indicate deeply tilled plantings from the past, like what might be present in the garden. Higher ground exists to the west of Hardy's house lot, which suggests that the bulk of the fort lies on the west side of Main St.

Future excavations of Hardy's lot should recover more of the same artifacts we have identified. Excavations in the West Ashley Bikeway should also be attempted, as it goes through possibly the star fort and garden. Discovery of these artifacts in the location on the landscape is extremely promising for our future understanding of one of the most important plantations ever in existence in Carolina, along with the only known drawing of a privately owned 17<sup>th</sup> century fort in Carolina. Not even the Culpepper plan of Charles Towne from 1671 shows defensive works—works we know existed based on Stan South's 1969 archeological discovery of the moat at Charles Towne Landing (South 2000). Identifying the star fort will contribute immensely to our understanding of 17<sup>th</sup> century Carolina and the greater Charleston area.

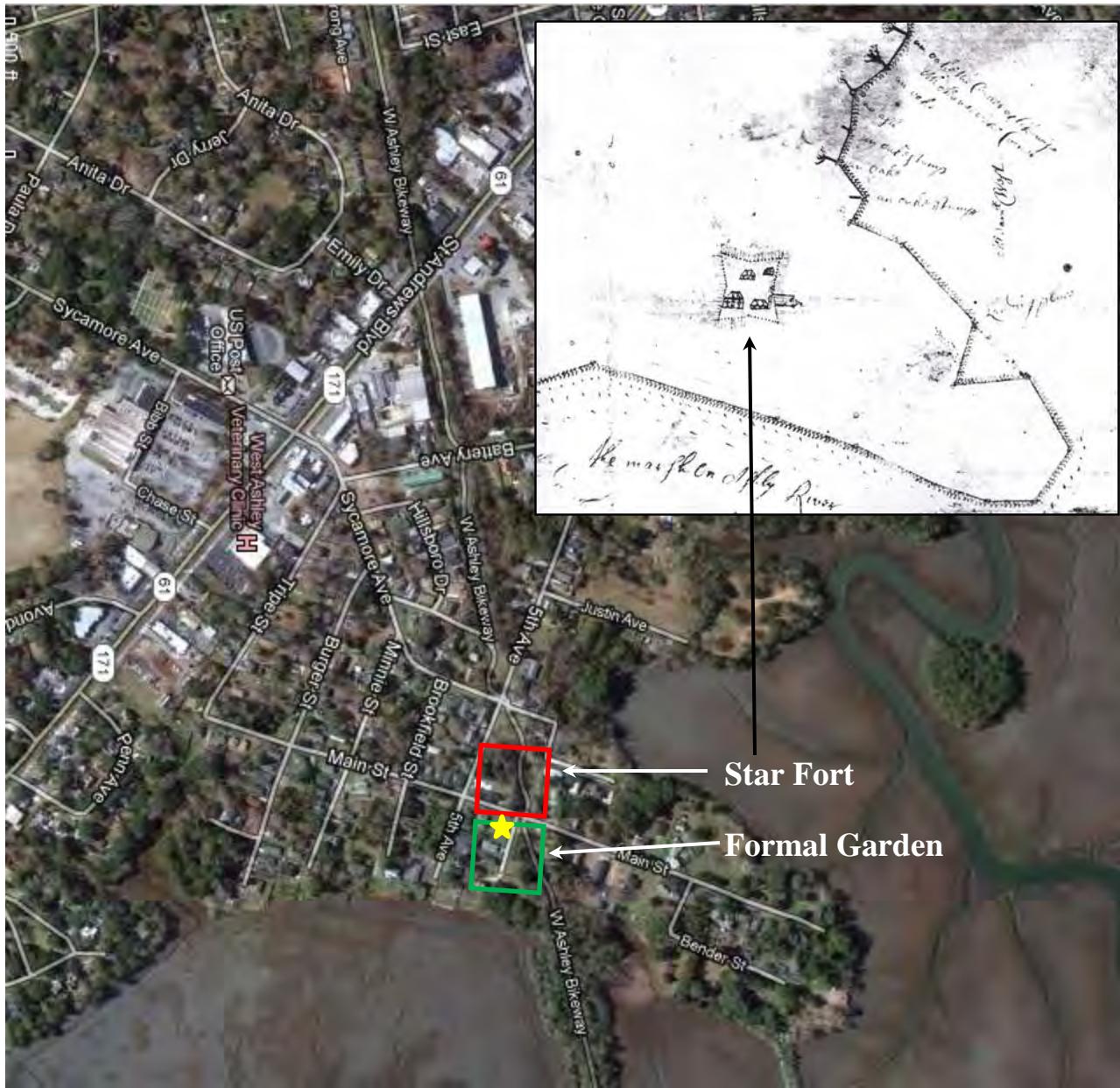


Figure 5. Google map image showing house lot (yellow star) and 1671/1673 structures superimposed (star fort in red, garden in green); the 1671 plat is shown here also.

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