

Cultural Resources Recorded in Preparation for Construction of New Intermodal Rail Terminal

Part I in a 3-Part Series from the CCX Project

Odom-Cooper-Flye Farm

The landowner's house and outbuildings on the farm as viewed to the west from Old Battleboro Road down Flye Path (Edgecombe County, North Carolina)

In 2016, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) began acquiring land for the construction of a new intermodal rail terminal along existing track in Battleboro, North Carolina, approximately seven miles north of Rocky Mount. They chose property containing several old farmhouses and outbuildings surviving from the late nineteenth century and learned that the farm had been recommended for the National Register of Historic Places in 1998. The rural and agrarian character of Odom-Cooper-Flye Farm (the farm), on the western border of Edgecombe County, had remained largely unchanged since the mid-nineteenth century.

Because the construction of the new Carolina Connector Intermodal Rail Terminal, or CCX project, would damage or destroy existing cultural resources within the farm (both archaeological sites and historic architecture), CSXT fulfilled certain federal requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act before beginning construction.

Ribbon cutting at the grand opening of the Carolina Connector Intermodal Rail Terminal, November 2021.



Excavations in progress at 31ED384, a former tenant farmer home

Between 2016 and 2021, cultural resources investigations conducted on behalf of the CCX project revealed the lifeways and practices of the farm's residents through archival research, archaeological excavations, and architectural survey and photo-documentation. These investigations provided glimpses into the lives of generations past; the lives of ordinary people for whom farming has been, and continues to be, central to their community and livelihood.

The work was funded by CSXT and the North Carolina Department of Transportation and was conducted in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Office of State Archaeology within the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. CSXT contracted Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. (Wood) to manage the project and Wood, R. S. Webb & Associates, and Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc. to provide consultation and to conduct cultural resources surveys and an archaeological data recovery of six sites (31ED384, 31ED385, 31ED386, 31ED387, 31ED388, and 31ED393) within the CCX project's footprint on the farm.



COMMONWEALTH
HERITAGE GROUP

R.S. Webb & Associates
Cultural Resource Management Consultants

wood.

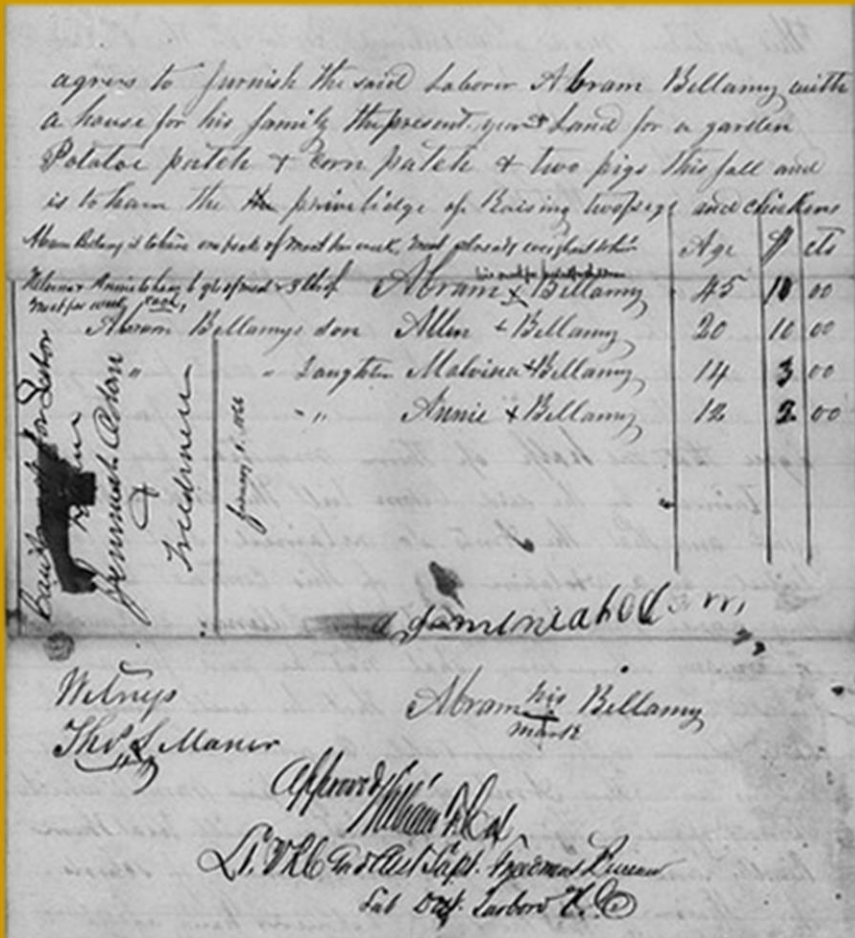
Revealing the Story of a Farm in Eastern North Carolina

Part 2 in a 3-Part Series from the CCX Project

Architectural historians conducting research for the CCX project named the farm after the three families who have owned it: the Odoms, Coopers, and Flyes. Two of these families were related by marriage (the Odoms and the Coopers), while the third (the Flyes) began buying pieces of the farm in the early twentieth century. The parcels comprising the approximately 850-acre farm were first consolidated by Jeremiah Odom (b. 1795, d. 1866) from lands purchased from Josiah Ellinor in 1848 and from William H. and Joab Price in 1859.



Looping tobacco in Granville County in 1930. Granville County is three counties northwest of the farm, north of Raleigh, North Carolina (North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)



Excerpt of original 1866 labor contract between Jeremiah Odom and members of the freed Bellamy family

The Odoms, and the laborers who worked for them, grew cotton, corn, tobacco, and peanuts, among other crops, using mules to pull plows and harrows to work the ground and horse- or mule-drawn wagons to transport goods.

After the Civil War, landowners struggled to adapt to labor shortages created by the emancipation of the enslaved work force and the exodus of freedmen who left rural areas in search of cities with better paying jobs. By the 1900s, three types of tenancy were recognized in the United States census data: sharecropper or cropper (the lowest form of tenancy, those with the least legal rights); share tenant or share renter (a step up from sharecropper with a legal status of 'laborer'); or cash tenant or cash renter (those with the most rights). The census records indicate both male and female farm laborers at the Odom-Cooper-Flye Farm. Female "farm laborers" may have worked on neighboring farms, or perhaps these women and girls performed household chores such as ironing, washing dishes, and cleaning. Post-Civil War farm residents and laborers were usually sharecroppers or tenant farmers while later workers, those employed during the mid-twentieth century, were more likely to be cash renters or hourly wage employees.



COMMONWEALTH
HERITAGE GROUP

R.S. Webb & Associates
Cultural Resource Management Consultants



Hog Roasting & Scalding at Odom-Cooper-Flye Farm

Part 3 in a 3-Part Series from the CCX Project



Whit Battle (seated) watches a barbecue pit. A tenant farmer by the same name worked for Henry E. Odom in 1873 (Rocky Mount Telegram 1942:August 29).

Archaeological evidence of the long-standing popularity of barbecue among the people of eastern North Carolina and the greater South was identified during the investigations conducted on behalf of the CCX project. Social and work-related gatherings were likely held at Odom-Cooper-Flye Farm (the farm) that revolved around a barbecue, a hog roast, or a hog scalding. Three sites contained features that may have originated for these activities.

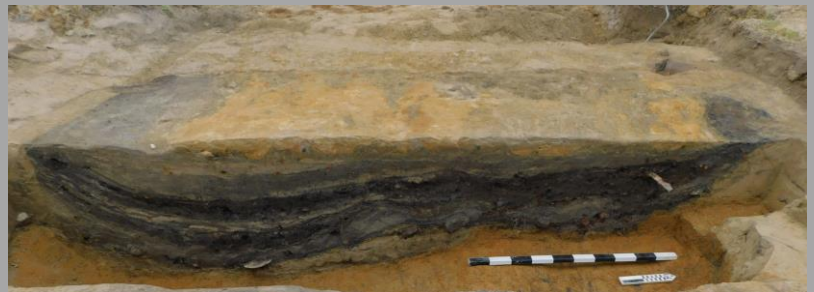


31ED386 Feature 18 may have been a remnant of the vat used to boil a hog. Hog scalding is a process in which the dead hog is boiled to soften its skin and to scrape away its hair in preparation for butchering.

31ED384 Feature 21, with a post hole at either end and a greasy soil zone at its base, may have been used for an above-ground hog roasting. The posts may have held the spit on which the hog, or other animal, was placed with a fire being built in, and the grease dripping into, Feature 21.



31ED393 Feature 25 may have initially been the site of an in-ground hog roast. Perhaps the pit was used for holiday gatherings or special events since the pit was large enough to hold an animal that could feed 300 people. Such a large gathering may have involved not just the owners and tenants of the farm but owners and workers from neighboring farms as well.



Randall Flye, son of one of the more recent owners of the farm, remembers his father giving each of the farm laborers cash and a pig at Christmas time as a bonus in the 1970s and 1980s, and then later, just cash as the younger generations did not relish the slaughtering. The Flyes would cut a ham and bacon from the smoked meat at Christmas time. Some of the first work Randall did on the farm was feeding and watering the pigs.