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Legacy

South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology

Drought Triggers Archaeology at Santee Cooper's Dry Lake Beds

By Jonathan Leader

The drought that has gripped South Carolina for many months has lowered the water level by about eight feet below normal in Lakes Marion and Moultrie. As the water recedes in the shallow reservoirs numerous archaeological and historic sites are being uncovered. This is providing what may well be a once in a lifetime opportunity to redress an unfortunate situation that has existed since 1939.

Lakes Marion and Moultrie were the brainchild of T. C. Williams. Williams, owner of the Columbia Railway and Navigation Co, saw the formation of the lakes, a hydroelectric generator plant/dam and the lock that connected the lakes as a means of advancing his business interests and the area. This was not the first time that he had engaged in this type of project. Williams was the spark plug behind the Lake Murray

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Fig. 1: Brick structure at Ferguson Mill in dry lake bed of Lake Marion. (Photo courtesy of Jim Welch)