



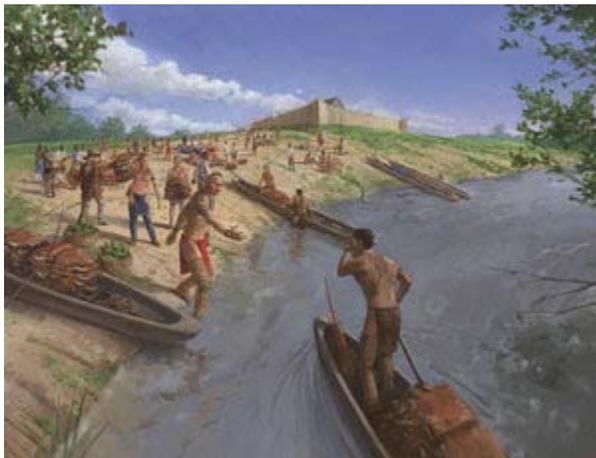
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## Cayce history park a step closer

By JEFF WILKINSON - [jwilkinson@thestate.com](mailto:jwilkinson@thestate.com)

National Park Service officials joined local and state historians, archeologists and designers this week to nail down details on a 12,000-year history park long proposed for Cayce. But a time line for building the park depends largely on funding.

So far, the area — which contains features from pre-historic Indian settlements through the Civil War — is not being tagged as a national monument or park.



Indians: After early settlement by Europeans, a stockade was built on the banks of Congaree Creek to trade with the Indians. This is what it might have looked like.

- Images courtesy The National Park

"I think it should be managed locally," said John Jameson of the Southeast Archeological Center, in Tallahassee, Fla., who attended the workshop held Tuesday and Wednesday. "It could happen (become a Park Service unit), but it's not part of the plan."

River Alliance executive director Mike Dawson said the park would include a visitors center, boardwalks and bridges similar to the Three Rivers Greenway, and many interpretive stations. He loosely estimated the cost at less than \$5 million. Dawson would anticipate combinations of federal, state and local grants, corporate sponsorships and private donations to some day build the park. "I'll take anyone's money," he said, laughing.

Jameson said the Park Service is interested in the area around Congaree Creek and old State Road on several different levels. "It's very unique," he said. "The scope of every major prehistoric and historic period in the state and the country is represented here. It's a crossroads." Consider: More than 12,000 years ago, mastodons and mammoths might have roamed the banks of the creek.

But for sure there were prehistoric Indian settlements — generations before Christopher Columbus discovered America — where Native Americans hunted and gathered among the bluffs and forests near where the creek meets the Congaree River.

To date, researchers already have discovered arrowheads and shattered pots used 11,000 to 12,000 years ago, when the last ice age was ending.

When the Europeans did arrive — first Spanish, then British — they built a stockade on the bank of the creek to trade with local tribes. Scientists have discovered artifacts from Indians who lived on the land near the river during the 1500s. These Indians were the first to meet the Spanish Conquistadors as they traveled from Europe to explore the New World for gold and other treasures.

During the Revolutionary War, Rebels and Loyalists fought there, treading the old State Road, which was the main route from Charleston to the Midlands and the Upstate. Researchers have discovered remains of Fort Congaree, which served as a bastion for the colonial settlers of South Carolina against Indian attack, then as an outpost for the British. And the creek was the scene of a clash between North and South during the Civil War as Gen. William T. Sherman marched to Columbia and left it in flames. Slaves constructed about three miles of earthworks — earthen fortifications — along the northern bank of the creek. They still exist today.

All this and more occurred in about a three mile loop around the intersection of the creek and the road. And historians and archeologists want to make the area not only into a park for the education of generations, but an ongoing archeological study in what has up to now been a relatively unstudied potential treasure trove.

“It’s undisturbed land,” said Don Wollenhaupt, chief of interpretation for the Park Service’s Southeast Region, based in Atlanta. Archeologists and other researchers “may come up with who-knows-what.”

Adding to the Park Service’s interest in the area is that is so close to a metropolitan area. “You don’t get much green space in cities anymore,” Wollenhaupt said. “So you can also use it for recreation. And it can be tied to the greenway.”

Read more: <http://www.thestate.com/2010/12/09/1597536/cayce-history-park-a-step-closer.html#ixzz180JYFGm0>