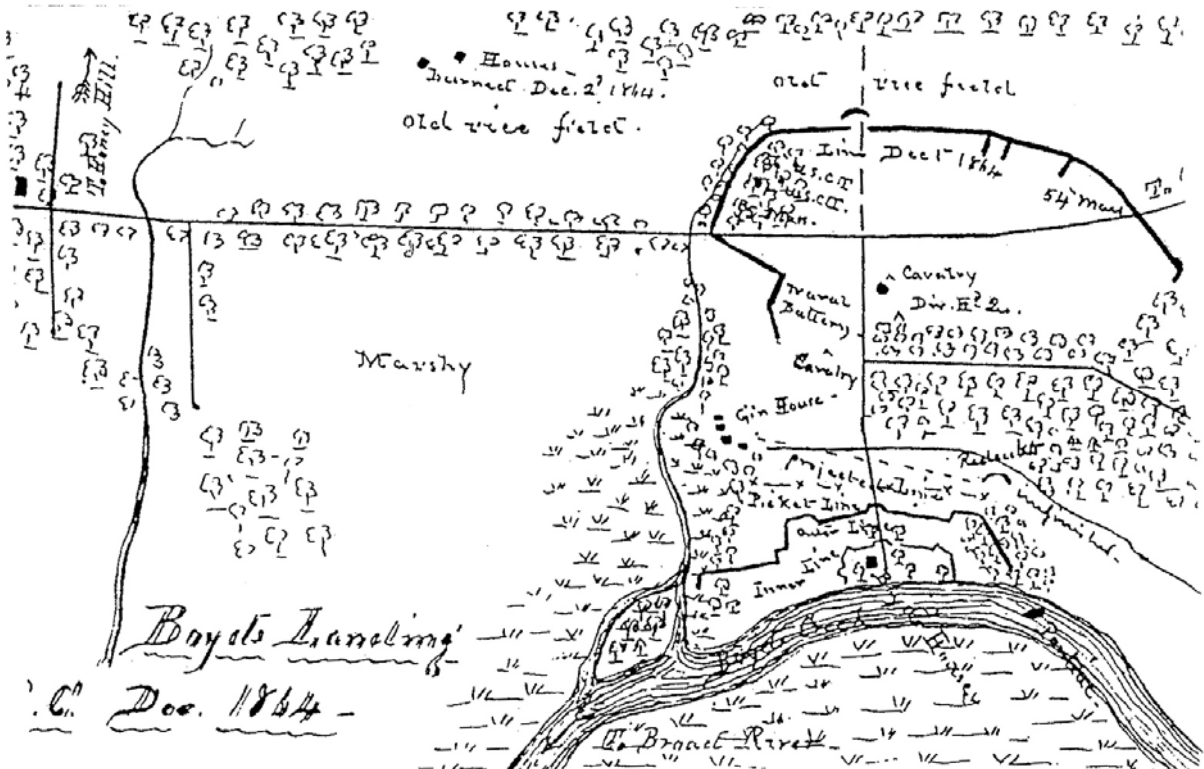


## CWFSG 2005 Boyd's Landing Earthworks Comments by D. Lowe

On November 29, 1864, nearly 5,000 soldiers of the United States Army under command of Brig. Gen. John P. Hatch landed at Boyd's Landing on Boyd's Creek, a tributary of Broad River, with the intention of dashing inland ten miles to cut the Savannah & Charleston Railroad. Events did not transpire for these Federals as anticipated. On November 30, these troops were decisively repulsed at the battle of Honey Hill, and they returned to Boyd's Landing by the following morning.

Over the next few days, these troops constructed several lines of earthworks to cover the approaches to the landing. A sketch map drawn at the time, presumably by a staff officer in Second Brigade, shows three distinct and one projected line of works. Closest to the creek, an "Inner Line" directly enclosed the landing and the Boyd House with both flanks resting on the creek. There are several modern houses here, and little or nothing of these works survives today.

Another few hundred yards to the north, an "Outer Line" circumscribed a larger perimeter. From the sketch, this line appears to have consisted of two demi-bastions connected by a parallel facing west and covering the main road to the landing with flanking works. This line was fronted by a tidal marsh. The left flank was anchored on a marshy creek, the right flank on Boyd's Creek and protected by a gunboat anchored there. From the right flank of the Outer Line, a causeway (a corduroyed road) was built leading across the tidal marsh about two hundred yards north to a "Projected Line." This causeway remains very visible where it enters and departs the tidal marsh. A mud-bespattered reconnaissance, led by a Vicksburg veteran, ascertained that much of the Outer Line is intact and in good shape. The Projected Line was to be anchored on its right by a "Redoubt" depicted on the sketch map. This redoubt is a large lunette open at the



gorge so as to be swept by fire from the Outer Line. The lunette appears to have been the only portion of this line that was actually constructed. The troops were soon withdrawn to continue their operations elsewhere. The front-ditched lunette survives in good condition with a relief of near seven feet. It has an effective grassy cover in an open pine forest with little understory.

The longest line depicted on the historic sketch map was erected about a mile and a half forward of the Projected Line and is referred to here as the “Advance Line” on Boyd’s Neck. Nearly 60 percent of this line, about half a mile, survives west of highway 462 fronting Euhaw Creek. Both brigades of the division entrenched here. The map notes the position of the 54th Massachusetts (of *Glory* fame) on the right. On the left were the 55th Massachusetts (colored) and two other USCT regiments (illegible on my copy). The First Brigade, consisting of New York and Ohio troops, evidently held the interval between the USCTs and 54th Mass. The Naval Battery occupied the far left (section was not explored).

The Advance Line is a Class Four earthwork, rear-ditched, above 3 feet relief, and of great uniformity. A Class Three battery is located toward the left of the line about a hundred yards south of the bisecting road (still extant) depicted on the sketch. The front-ditched battery is defined by two large traverses spaced far enough apart to accommodate three or four field guns. The parapet was lowered in front of the guns relative to the infantry parapet for delivery of canister across the rice fields at close range. Another sixty yards south, a single traverse provided protection from possible enfilading artillery. The right flank was not traversed.

The map notes that the Advance Line was fronted by old rice fields. The fields and the dikes separating these fields are still very much in evidence. In fact, soldiers working on the left flank beyond the bend deepened and widened a dike and incorporated this agricultural feature into their construction. A low dike one hundred yards in front of the line likely served as the division’s picket line as there is evidence of improvement. These would be considered Class Eight (ad hoc fortifications of convenience).

Although the trace of the line as depicted on the staff officer’s sketch map is relatively accurate, an interesting feature is the “dyslexic” portrayal of the three traverses. These traverses shown on the right actually occur on the left flank as described above and in mirror image. One can only speculate. Did the sketcher remember the traverses after he had completed his survey and add them after the fact, placing them in the wrong location? Was he truly dyslexic? The undeniable evidence of the ground provides a unique perspective upon this document.

The Advance Line at Boyd’s Neck (west of the highway) is one of the truly “pristine” sites that we saw during this year’s tour. The integrity of the agricultural landscape, the rice fields and dikes, adds powerful historic context. The earthworks are in excellent condition. Associations with the battle of Honey Hill and the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts (colored) might boost this site to national significance. The sketch map is not drawn to scale, but matching the shape of the fortification to the contours of the ground, the position of the 54<sup>th</sup> likely would be east of the highway in an area we did not explore. Does it survive?

