



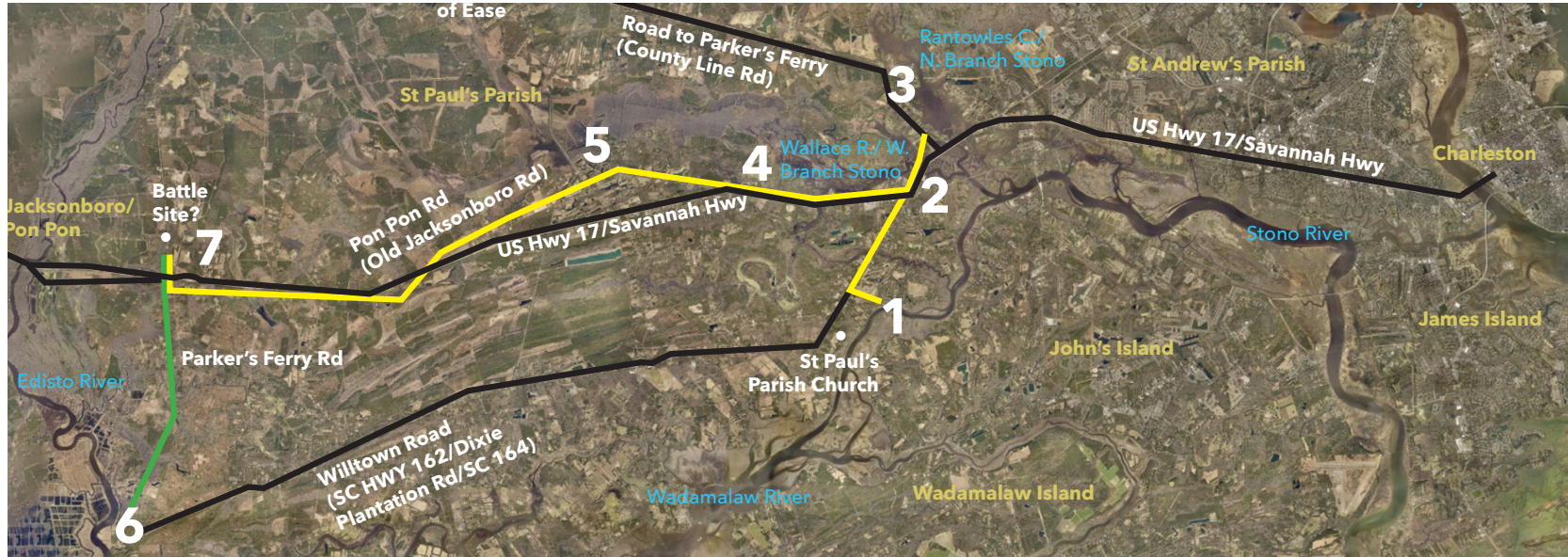
# The Stono Rebellion Trail

by Shawn Halifax

The story of the largest uprising of enslaved people in British North America has largely been submerged since it happened on September 9, 1739. This 20+ mile trail marks what historians believe was the Freedom Seeker's route to Florida, though there remain unknowns. The Rebellion has been described as unsuccessful because word of its failure was critical to alleviating white fear and continued Black oppression. However, evidence suggests that some might have found freedom in Florida. Measured individually, was any release from bondage, even death, success?



[www.slavedwellingproject.org](http://www.slavedwellingproject.org)



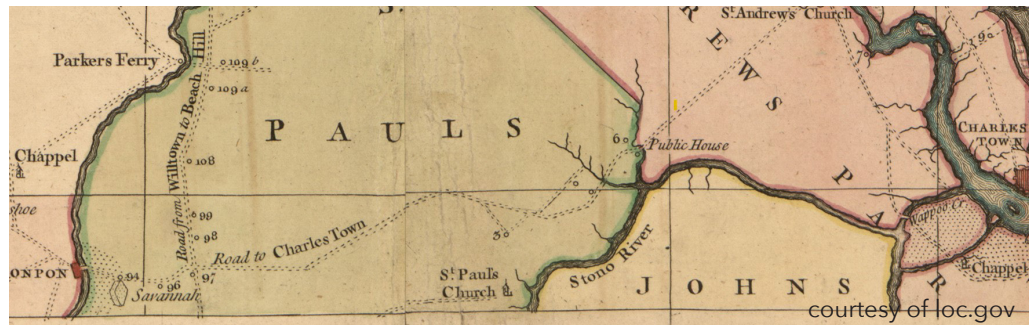
- Freedom Fighters
- Militia
- Modern Roads

**5 Old Jacksonboro Rd**  
**32.783629, -80.210234**  
*"Several Negroes joined them, they calling out Liberty, marched on with Colours displayed, and two Drums beating... Collonel [sic] Bull Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina, who was then riding along the Road, discovered them, was pursued and with much difficulty escaped & raised the Countrey [sic]."*

- From "Account of the Negroe Insurrection in South Carolina."
- Old Jacksonboro Road is the original Pon Pon Road and somewhere between Caw Caw County Park and Parker's Ferry Road is where Lt. Gov. Bull came upon the Freedom Fighters. Based on the timing of the day's events it is likely it happened closer to Caw Caw, maybe near SC 165 and Old Jacksonboro Road.

**6 Willtown Boat Landing**  
**32.6789888757656, -80.41611242876961**  
*"[Governor Bull] spread the alarm which soon reached the Presbyterian Church at Willtown...the militia, under the command of Captain Bee, marched in quest of the negroes...."*

- From "Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia."
- This is the site of Willtown and the Presbyterian church. From here a militia mobilized and made its way up present-day Parker's Ferry Road to intercept the Freedom Seekers traveling along Pon Pon Road (present day Old Jacksonboro Road).



**7 SCDOT Section Shed**  
**32.759119, -80.388684**  
*"They Burnt Colonel Hext's house and killed his Overseer and his Wife. Then they burnt Mr. Sprye's house, then Mr. Sacheverell's, and then Mr. Nash's house, all lying upon the Pons Pons [sic] Road, and they killed all the white People they found in them. Mr. Bullock got off, but they burnt his house."*

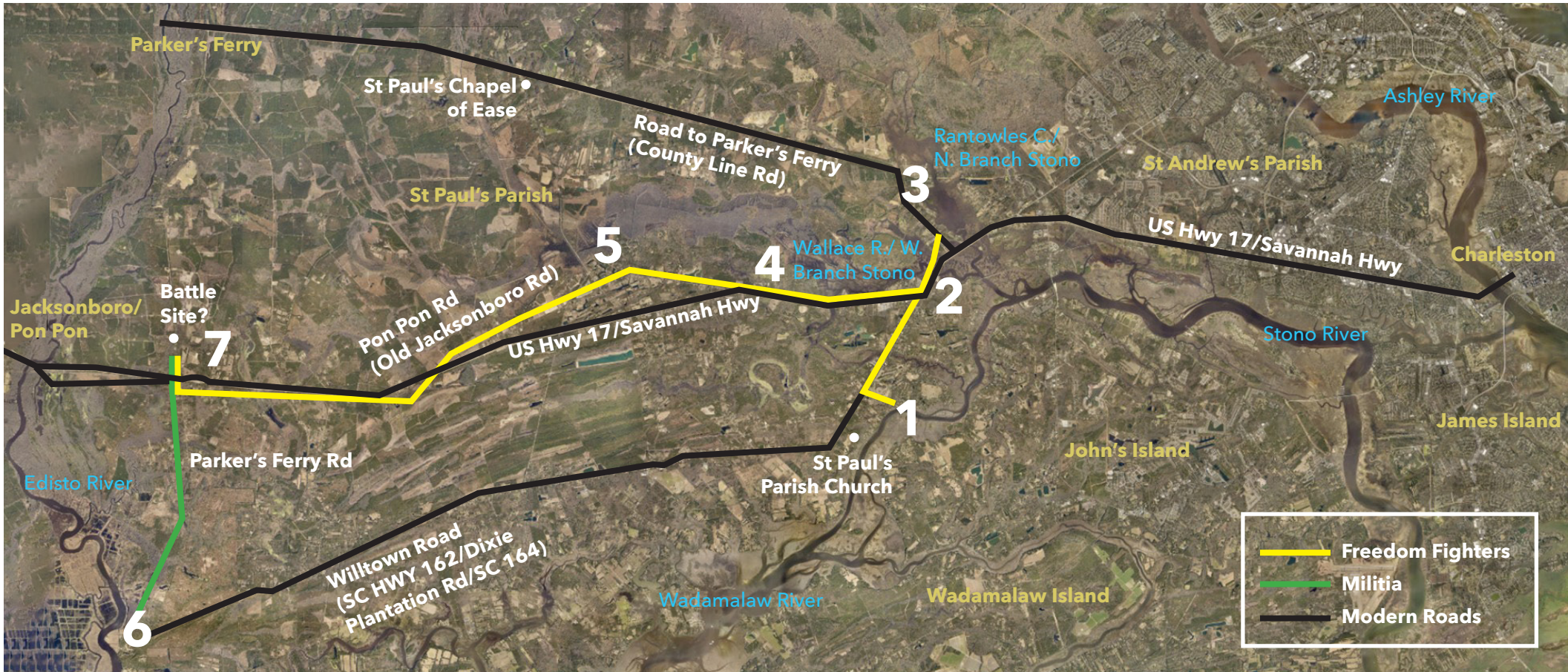
- From "Account of the Negroe Insurrection in South Carolina." From Lt. Gov. Sir William Bull to the Board of Trade, Charleston October 5, 1739.
- It is believed these plantations neighbored one another. The SCDOT section shed is located on what was likely the west side of Bullock's plantation. The Sprye, Sacheverell, and Nash properties neighbored Bullock's to the east. The Nash plantation was likely to the north of Bullock's. This appears to have been the largest assault of the day by the Freedom Seekers and happened early to mid-afternoon.

*"...found them in an open field where they were Dancing... One Negroe fellow who came up to his Master[,] his Master asked him if he wanted to kill him[,] the Negroe answered he did at the same time Snapping a Pistoll[sic] at him but it mist[sic] fire[,] and his master Shot him thro' the head[,] about fifty of these Villains attempted to go home but were taken by the Planters who Cutt[sic] off their heads and set them up at every Mile Post they came to."*

From "A Ranger's Report of Travel with General Oglethorpe, 1739-1742."  
*"... The Number was in a manner equal on both Sides and an Engagement ensued such as may be supposed in such a Case wherein one fought for Liberty and Life, the other for their Country and everything that was dear to them..."*

From "Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Causes of the Disappointment to Success in the Late Expedition against St. Augustine."

- Oral tradition states that the September 9 battle took place on today's Battlefield Plantation located along Parker's Ferry Road, about a hundred yards north of US Hwy 17.



**1 Stono Ferry Neighborhood**  
**32.7583023815497, -80.16683692690282**

*"A Negro came to the General and told him that what was said of the Negroes Rising in Carolina was True and that they had marched to Stono Bridge..."*

From "A Ranger's Report of Travel with General Oglethorpe, 1739-1742."

- In 1739 the Stono Bridge was in the approximate location of the later Stono Ferry, where a Revolutionary War battle was fought. Some records indicate the Rebellion started at the bridge which served as a gathering place. It is believed to have been near the 12th, 13th, and 14th holes of the Stono Links golf course between Marshwood Drive and Old York Course.
- The route along Willtown Road (present day SC162, Dixie Plantation Road, and SC 164) to the west was unavailable to the Freedom Seekers because the Stono Parish Church was situated on the route and would be occupied by armed whites. The road terminated at Willtown Presbyterian Church where another group of armed whites worshiped. Therefore the Freedom Seekers detoured north and east toward Pon Pon Road (US Hwy17 and Jacksonboro Road).

On the cover: Sunrise over a former rice field at Caw Caw County Park (photo by Shawn Halifax) with a 1711 map of Charleston, South Carolina overlaid.

**2 Sea Islands Farmer's Cooperative**  
**32.785130, -80.147401**

*"...they Murthered [sic] two Storekeepers. Cut their Heads off and Set them on the Stairs Robbed the stores of what they wanted..."*

From "A Ranger's Report of Travel with General Oglethorpe, 1739-1742."

- This is believed to be the site of Hutchenson's store, made a national Historic Landmark in 1974. In the mid-20th century it was the location of Ku Klux Klan gatherings and cross burnings.
- On a bluff looking across Wallace River, known then as Western Branch of Stono, a bank runs northwest through the marsh, this is possibly the original roadbed leading to unconfirmed locations for Godfrey's Plantation and Wallace's Tavern.

WPA narrative and family story

*"Commander Cato speak for de crowd...  
 'We don't lak slavery...we not whipped yet and we is not converted.'... He die, but he die for doin de right..."*

From George Cato's 1930s WPA Interview and story of his Great Great Grandfather during the Stono Rebellion

**3 Bulow Boat Landing**  
**32.818548342402416, -80.14864221342324**

*"Next they plundered and burnt Mr. Godfrey's house, and killed him, his Daughter and Son. They then turned back and marched Southward along Pons Pons [sic], which is the Road through Georgia to Augustine, they passed Mr. Wallace's Taxern [sic] towards day break, and said they would not hurt him..."*

From "Account of the Negroe Insurrection in South Carolina."

- Godfrey's residence and plantation was located nearby according to his descendant, John Godfrey. The creek here is Rantowles Creek, then called North Branch of Stono.
- A historic road, today's County Line Rd, connected Rantowles Bridge to the Parker's Ferry on the Edisto River. The Freedom Seekers likely intended to cross the Edisto at Parker's Ferry to avoid the town of Pon Pon (now Jacksonboro). However, about halfway to Parker's Ferry was the newly established St Paul's Parish Chapel of Ease, where armed white men would attend church, effectively blocking the northern route.
- The location of Wallace's Tavern is presently unknown. A 1780 map places a public house on the west bank of Rantowles Creek and south of Pon Pon Road.

**4 Caw Caw County Park**  
**32.78289643088389, -80.19377555270863**

*"...They marched on towards Mr. Rose's resolving to kill him; but he was saved by a Negroe, who having hid him went out and pacified the others."*

From "Account of the Negroe Insurrection in South Carolina."

- Present-day Caw Caw, historically located on Pon Pon Road, was owned by brothers-in-law Thomas Elliott and Thomas Rose in the 1730s. Here the only record of an enslaved woman involved in the day's events is documented. Unnamed, she and others received a suit of clothes for defending the lives of the Roses. This is possibly where July defended his enslaver and killed one of the Freedom Seekers. July was granted his freedom.
- Peter H. Wood, in *Black Majority*, suggests the shift from free range animal husbandry to rice cultivation contributed to the Stono Rebellion. Caw Caw County Park is the best place to gain an understanding of how difficult and dangerous rice agriculture was and the profound impacts of enslaved West Africans on the Low Country that are visible today in its landscape and in Gullah-Geechee culture.