

Archaeological dig begins on Battery 'C'

By BETTY ADAMS

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HELENA-WEST HELENA — Southern Bancorp Capital Partners received a grant of \$55,000 from the National Park Service American Battlefield Protection program to do earthworks restoration and preservation services at Civil War Batteries A and D and to do archaeological research at Batteries B and C.

Southern Bancorp contracted with Mudpuppy and Waterdog, McBride Preservation Services, LLC and Ecological Design Group, Inc. to complete the project during 2011.

Battery C is located off Robert and Audubon Drive on a hillside in Helena. The battery was heavily damaged when someone used a bulldozer on the site. However, a rifle pit used during the Civil War was left intact and at this time archeologists are searching for any evidence of the actual battery site.

Dr. Steve McBride with McBride Preservation Services said at this time both batteries A and D are in good shape but Battery C is not.

Last week some metal detecting was done at the "C" site and some square nails, a small lead ball and some broken glass were found. The archeological work on Battery C will help in determining where the revetment was located. A revetment is a wall or barricade. Plans are to rebuild the revetment at the site as a part of the total Civil War Helena Interpretive Plan.

McBride said the pattern of square nails helped them determine where to dig trenches and that the original battery would have a ditch in front of an earthen mound, which unfortunately was pushed down by the dozer. The workers dug trenches and found evidence of a ditch and will map that evidence and figure out how the ditch or footprints can help them determine the size of Battery C.

Battery B is located on Liberty and Summit streets. Archaeologists plan this week to see if anything is left and what was preserved at Battery B.

Working on the site with McBride are Jake Ramsey and Craig Schaefer. Workers from Mudpuppy and Waterdog are Joe and Maria Brent, and Martin Smith, who is in charge of ecological design. Local volunteers include Jeff Watts and Tyler Watts.

"We need to know what we've got and we need to know what to preserve," said McBride.