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ABSTRACT: In 2006 Preservation Tree Care, Inc. was contacted by Beaufort County Parks & Leisure Services in order to come up with a plan to literally uncover Fort Freemont. The fort had been neglected for many years, had been vandalized and was completely hidden under a thick veil of vines and volunteer trees. Preservation Tree Care employed the use of space-age technology by using a super-sonic air spade in order to dislodge all of the vine and trees without damaging the century old facade.

In 2006, I was still the owner of Preservation Tree Care. We were called on by John Holloway, Environmental Planner for Beaufort County at the time, to advise on and submit an estimate for the cost of clearing out the massive amounts of volunteer shrub, tree and vine growth that had literally covered up Fort Freemont. It was a project that everyone knew had to be done but no one quite knew where or how to begin. We visited the site with John and the County Archeologist Ian Hill and saw first-hand the enormity of the venture.

At first sight, to me as an arborist, it was clear that there were a significant number of trees that should be preserved. It was also quite clear what needed to be removed; but how to accomplish this and not damage the structure was the dilemma. The volunteer understory growth of vine, trees and shrubs that were away from the actual Fort structure could be efficiently removed to the ground and mulched up in one process using a machine called a hydro-track. This would be the most efficient way to accomplish that part of the project. We recommended another contractor with this equipment and he was brought onto the team. The growth on the Fort was still the challenge.

The field of arboriculture uses a pneumatic driven device called a supersonic airspade that is used to safely remove soil from root areas without damaging any fine root systems. Preservation Tree Care had recently purchased this tool and had used it successfully on a few projects. I proposed using this method to John & Ian. A demonstration was in order to prove the efficacy of the plan because it is hard to believe that a tool this powerful can accomplish this amount of debris removal without some collateral damage. We chose an obscure test area and set up the demonstration. It worked flawlessly. The airspade dislodged entire sections of vine and most of the surface tree roots from the Fort and it was peeled back and thrown over the side into an open area to be pulverized with the hydro-track machine.