

African-American Archaeology

Newsletter of the African-American Archaeology Network

Number 8

Thomas R. Wheaton, Editor
New South Associates, Inc.

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Editor's Notes

Letter From the Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Theresa Singleton for having the foresight, willingness and ability to launch the African-American Archaeology Network newsletter, appropriately called the African-American Archaeology Newsletter. I think that it is important to remember that what Theresa did was to formalize a network of people with whom she had been in contact over the years. As time went on, the newsletter took on a life of its own, and ultimately its success demanded too much time for a one-person office to cope with. I hope Theresa will stay involved by funneling us tidbits of information about the goings on in D.C., and by performing an evangelical role. Thanks, Theresa.

In the same spirit of expanding communication, but at the same time recognizing that a newsletter does not print or mail itself, I have requested that members of the network pay a nominal \$5.00 per year to help defray some of the costs. This should be low enough not to burden anyone. So far, the number of subscribers has topped 90, and a few people have sent in extra money to help pay for those who would not otherwise be able to receive the newsletter. I have decided to use this extra cash to send copies to network members in Africa. The hassles of international exchange and money orders just makes it easier to continue sending African members free copies, and I personally feel that the dialog across the Atlantic is critical to such a network and should be supported.

As any new editor starting out, I have a few ideas about the direction the newsletter should take. First, the nitty-gritty. I have acquired the desktop publishing program, Personal Press for my Macintosh system and will be printing on a Laserwriter. I would prefer that material over one page in length be submitted on diskette until I can afford a scanner to digitize printed text. Almost any Mac or IBM compatible word processing software will do, as long as it is submitted on 3.5 inch diskettes. I cannot promise to return diskettes,

however. Unless people can send me scanned images, virtually ready to go, we will not have illustrations for the foreseeable future. If you do decide to send a scanned image please make it in ESPF or PICT format.

My philosophy on what the newsletter should be and how I will approach my job as editor is that above all the newsletter should be timely. I see my job as editor as gathering current information submitted by the readers and disseminating it to the general readership. I do not see a newsletter as a scholarly journal, or as requiring a set number of pages or articles before it is sent out. For me, timeliness of the information transmitted in a newsletter is as important as the information itself. As a result, I will try to stick to a fairly rigid schedule and get out a newsletter with whatever I have at hand when the time comes. This means that some issues will be smaller than others, but hopefully not too many. Initially, I want to have two issues a year, one in early July and another in December just before the SHA conference. This may not seem like much, but I do not want to promise more than I can deliver. Once I have the bugs out of the system, I will try to increase it to three or four a year.

Another aspect of being editor is choosing what to put in and what to leave out. I expect to put in anything submitted, as long as it is not outright slander or anonymous. People submitting a copy of an article or a part thereof should get permission from the appropriate authority, before I can print it.

As far as the actual editing goes, I will catch (most) obvious errors, such as not hyphenating compound adjectives (African-American, eighteenth-century, etc.), typos, misspellings, subject verb agreement, etc.; but I will not edit for poor grammar and sentence construction; long, boring sentences; too much passive voice; faulty logic; or unsupported conclusions. The authors will have to take full responsibility for their writing styles. To keep on schedule, I do not think I will have the time for such editing, and besides, I do not feel entirely competent to do so. Of course, this may change once I get into the thick of things.

The biggest problem that I can foresee is gathering enough material every six months; not because there is nothing going on, but because no one wants to take the time to write it up. I hope that by assuring people their material will be published regularly, they will be inclined to submit it regularly.

Please submit your contributions to me or to one of the regional editors listed on the last page. I would especially like to receive comments on material printed in previous editions and to get some dialogs going. In the letters printed below, Ned Heite may have already planted the seeds of one such dialog.

Sincerely,
Thomas R. Wheaton
Editor

Letters to the Editor

Letter to the Editor:

I am enclosing a check for next year's subscription. But I am writing to ask you to consider placing the newsletter on-line. As papers pile on my desk, I am finding electronic mail to be more efficient for keeping information organized and accessible. The \$5.00 is clearly nominal. Uploading the newsletter from your hard drive or floppy to e-mail removes the need for even that nominal cost for duplication and postage. While you might need to send some members of the African-American Archaeology Network hard copies of the newsletter, I would suspect that there are others who would appreciate receiving the newsletter via e-mail.

If this is possible, my address is:
UZIB@ANTHRO.UMASS.EDU

Thank you and again, good luck on the editorship.

Sincerely,
Uzi Baram
U Mass
Amherst

(If anyone is interested in receiving the newsletter via e-mail, please let me know. If enough people are interested I will look into it. Ed.)

Letter to the Editor:

As a rule, no archaeologist should interpret remains of a craft without consulting the literature and living experts in the craft. If Mark Groover had taken this essential step, he would have been spared certain misconceptions. His

article on the Howell site would have profited significantly from exposure to the field of textile history.

Spindle whorls of the type described were not peculiar to West Africa during the period in question. Northern European and Navajo traditions, to cite just two examples, retain similar artifacts even today. In Iceland, whorls are still being made and used, in stone and wood; my informants there recognized Groover's drawings.

The presence of 90 fragments of silver ribbon and one fragment of silver foil is hardly consistent with textile manufacture on a "small frontier plantation." Such elegant embellishments might, instead, reflect an imported garment or rich notions.

The owner's probate inventory is garbled. A flax wheel is a spinning wheel, and the reference to a loom and "gears" probably refers to textile tools and not to a set of round machine parts. Moreover, the author presents no archaeological or documentary evidence to demonstrate that the Howell inventory refers to the contents of this house.

There is no justification to identify drop-spindle spinning as outside "the European tradition" that characterizes the rest of the assemblage. Hasty attributions do nothing to enhance the reputation of African-American archaeology; one ambiguous artifact of indeterminate affiliation hardly illustrates "syncretism of textile traditions within the multicultural setting"

In the most recent issue of the Archeological Society of Virginia Quarterly Bulletin, I explored the issue of cultural attribution in more detail. You might wish to consult that source.

Sincerely,
Edward F. Heite
Heite Consulting
Camden, Delaware

Current Research

Wessyngton Plantation (Submitted by Mark Groover)

Between March 25 and April 14, 1993, the Midwestern Archaeological Research Center (MARC), Illinois State University, conducted the second season of archaeological survey at Wessyngton Plantation in Robertson County, Tennessee. Research funding was provided by a survey and planning grant from the Tennessee Historical Commission. Archaeological resources related to African Americans at Wessyngton will

be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places using information from the 1991 and 1993 surveys.

Tobacco and hogs were raised at Wessyngton Plantation under a slave regime before the Civil War, and tobacco was produced at the plantation under a tenant/sharecropper regime after the war. The plantation was founded by Joseph Washington, second cousin to President George Washington, in 1796, and continued by his son, George Augustine Washington, through and after the Civil War.

The 1993 archaeological survey sought to identify the settlement patterns present at Wessyngton during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and define the site structure associated with African-American residences. These goals were explored by intensively surveying the plantation's central settlement and examining peripheral areas of the plantations. Peripheral survey areas were selected through reference to an 1869 and an early twentieth-century map of Wessyngton Plantation. In particular, the maps indicated that structures had been formerly located in the fields surrounding the main house. The structures sketched on the maps were assumed potentially to represent either antebellum slave quarters or postbellum tenant farmsteads. The site structure of African-American residences located during the survey was investigated through the systematic excavation of shovel test sampling grids.

The survey results suggest that a nucleated settlement pattern, as defined by Prunty, was present at the plantation for the duration of its existence. Negative archaeological evidence indicates that domestic residences were not sited in the fields surrounding the main complex. Recovered archaeological information demonstrates the slave quarters at the plantation, located down slope from the main house, were occupied between approximately 1830 and 1900. Three loci were examined in the quarters and designated Area A, Area B, Blocks 1 and 2. Area A consisted of a shovel test block that encompassed 895 square meters. Area A corresponds to the location portrayed in a Wessyngton Family Papers' photograph, entitled "Slave Cabins on Wessyngton," that depicts aligned cabins. Artifact frequency distributions obtained from the shovel tests in Area A revealed the presence of a substantial sheet midden that extended diagonally from the northwest to the southeast corners of the shovel test grid. The general location of the cabins depicted in the photograph of the quarters was determined during the survey due to the intensity

of occupation in Area A. In Area B, Block 1, a 40 x 40 meter shovel test sampling grid was established in the location containing Cabin III, a renovated structure that was initially investigated during the 1991 survey. The results of the shovel test survey indicate that Cabin III, occupied between approximately 1830 and 1920, contains two temporally discrete middens. An antebellum period deposit consisting of a relatively low concentration of material is located in the yard immediately west and southwest of the cabin, whereas a postbellum period midden is located east and north of the structure. Area B, Block 2, located 85 meters north of Cabin III, was examined through the excavation of a 35 x 35 meter shovel test sampling grid. The sampling grid was superimposed over the foundation remains of a domestic structure, designated Cabin IV, that was occupied between 1875 and 1920. The distribution of artifacts recovered from Cabin IV indicates that an intact sheet midden is present in the south half of the yard.

Processing and analysis of artifacts from the Wessyngton Plantation are currently being conducted at MARC toward the preparation of a final report on the project. Dr. Charles E. Orser, Jr., Director of the Midwestern Archaeological Research Center, is the Principal Investigator. The 1993 archaeological survey was conducted by David Babson, Mark Groover, and Melanie Clark.

Gibson Plantation, Florence, South Carolina

(Submitted by Natalie Adams)

During the winter of 1993, Chicora Foundation completed the excavation of a slave/tenant row located just east of Florence, South Carolina adjacent to the Pee Dee River. Occupied between the 1840s and the 1940s, the site had the potential to address research questions relating to changing African-American lifestyles from slavery to freedom.

The property was acquired by Gideon Gibson in the 1750s, along with several properties in the Pee Dee area. During this period the economy of the Pee Dee was oriented toward both mixed agricultural production, supplying the needs of the Georgetown rice plantations and also to the cash crop of indigo. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, plantation operations were oriented toward cotton production, as well as diversified production including livestock, wheat, rye, corn, oats, rice, peas and beans, potatoes, and sweet potatoes.

While no nineteenth-century plats were located, a 1914 soil map shows a double row of seven and eight structures. Several of these structures were investigated, including two postbellum period double pen central chimney houses and an earlier antebellum house with a gable end chimney. The double pen structures measured 14 by 20 feet and 12 by 24 feet with brick chimneys and piers. The single pen structure contained a brick chimney and brick piers. These piers, however, were shallowly placed and only one pier remnant was found. Based on its location, the house was eight feet wide. Several trash dumps were located in the site area. They were generally found along the peripheries of individual lots.

Artifact analysis is very preliminary. Ceramics are all low status (primarily undecorated whiteware and decalcomania) and there are large amounts of canning jars, South Carolina Dispensary bottles, and pharmaceutical bottles. It is anticipated that a final report will be published in the Fall of 1993.

Stoney-Baynard Plantation, Hilton Head, South Carolina (Submitted by Natalie Adams)

For the past three years, the Friends of Stoney-Baynard and the Hilton Head Museum have funded Chicora Foundation to perform archaeological and historical research at the late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century plantation. The site contains several above ground structures, and a tabby chimney base of yet another structure. While the plantation was owned by a number of individuals in the early to mid-eighteenth century, the property was not actually occupied until the late eighteenth century under the ownership of Captain John Stoney. By the early nineteenth century, the property was owned by either James Stoney outright, or as a tenant-in-common with his brother, John Stoney (sons of Captain John Stoney). In 1845, the property was purchased by William E. Baynard. Apparently, Baynard's Hilton Head plantation was adjunct to his plantation on Edisto Island, where he actually lived. During the military occupation of Hilton Head during the Civil War, the Stoney-Baynard plantation was used as an encampment area for Union troops. In the 1870s, the main house was gutted by fire. The main house was never rebuilt.

Previous research at Stoney-Baynard plantation consisted of a season of historical research. The following season focused on the archaeological testing of the various structural remains, not only to determine function, but also to date the construction and use of each building. This research indicated that the main house yard area contained

crushed shell walkways and was intensively occupied between the 1780s and about 1840. This 1840 date corresponds to Stoney's death in 1838 and Baynard's absentee ownership afterwards. The tabby foundation closest to the main house appeared to have functioned as house slave quarters, occupied intensively during the Stoney ownership. The second tabby foundation consisted of chunks of cut tabby brought in from another structure. The yard was almost devoid of artifacts. This suggested a short period of use and was perhaps a foundation for a raised tent platform used during the Civil War occupation. Based on the ceramic material from the tabby chimney, this structure appears to have been an overseer's house which continued to be occupied until the Civil War.

Our most recent fieldwork focused on the house slave quarters, where a very dense rear yard trash midden was encountered. The midden contained not only ceramics, glass, and other artifacts, but also large amounts of bone. Artifact analysis is currently underway and the ceramic assemblage is relatively high status. There appear to be a large number of flatwares, as well as a lot of transfer printed decorations. This may indicate that these slaves were eating many of the same foods as the plantation owners and either had access to or were given expensive ceramics. Unfortunately, the field slave quarters were destroyed during golf course construction prior to any archaeological field work. So no comparisons can be made between the assemblages of the house and field slaves.

In addition, several units were placed inside the tabby walls of the main house. These excavations revealed that after the structure burned down in the postbellum period, most of the architectural hardware had been stripped out.

It is anticipated that a report will be available on this third season of work in the Fall of 1993. The two previous reports are published as: Preliminary Historical Research on the Baynard Plantation, Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina. *Chicora Foundation Research Series 24*, Chicora Foundation, Inc. Columbia, S.C. (no charge); and Archaeological Testing at the Stoney/Baynard Plantation, Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County, South Carolina. *Chicora Foundation Research Series 28*, Chicora Foundation, Inc. Columbia, S.C. (no charge)

Willbrook, Oatland and Turkey Hill Plantations, Georgetown County, South Carolina

(Submitted by Natalie Adams)

The sites examined in this study represent various components of the Willbrook, Oatland, and Turkey Hill plantations. All are situated on the Waccamaw Neck, Georgetown County, and all are tied together, not only by proximity, but also by family ties. The sites span over 150 years and begin to tell the story of both whites and blacks of the Waccamaw Neck rice plantations.

Three of these sites are found on Willbrook Plantation and represent two late eighteenth-century slave settlements (38GE291 and 38GE340) and the main settlement (38GE292) during the nineteenth century. Site 38GE291 produced evidence of a possible eighteenth-century overseer's structure. In addition, 38GE340 revealed evidence of a postbellum structure.

Oatland Plantation consisted of one site (38GE294) which represents both the main house and a slave structure, possibly used by house servants. These structures date from the antebellum period.

At Turkey Hill Plantation, one of the two nineteenth-century slave settlements (38GE297) was examined. Excavations here concentrated on a structure believed to be associated with a slave driver.

The history of Willbrook Plantation may be traced back to its original purchase by John Allston, Sr., sometime prior to 1739. By 1747, it was integrated with the Oatland and Turkey Hill tracts. During this early period, it is unlikely that Willbrook was an indigo plantation, although rice was beginning to be more commonly planted by the late eighteenth century.

The collections from these three rice plantations provide a significant assemblage of eighteenth and nineteenth-century, high and low status sites. They document the disparity in the material possessions and housing of the individuals. The faunal analysis reveals that while wild species were quite common [on] the planter's table at Oatland, they contributed little to the overall biomass. Yet, at the overseer's house, and probably among the slaves, wild foods such as fish, deer, racoon, and others, were common and significant dietary supplements. Likewise, the bulk of the shellfish remains were found at the slave and overseer's house. The shellfish present at the main Willbrook and Oatland houses was more

commonly oyster than clam, suggesting some difference in either taste or social status.

While there is much still to learn about the lives of the planter and slaves on the Waccamaw Neck, the investigations at Willbrook, Oatland and Turkey Hill are beginning to amass critical data for comparative studies and an eventual synthesis. Periodically throughout this study, areas requiring additional attention have been noted and questions have been posed. Perhaps of greatest significance are efforts to explain the variety of artifact patterns in relationship to the economic life and death of low-country plantations.

This report is published as: *Archaeological and Historical Examinations of Three Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Rice Plantations on the Waccamaw Neck. Chicora Foundation Research Series 31*, Chicora Foundation, Inc. Columbia, S.C. (cost \$45.00).

Announcements

Position Available

The Georgia State University Department of Anthropology, invites applications for a tenure-track assistant professorship in archaeology beginning September, 1994. Topical specialty should be in complex societies, and areal specialty in the Southeast, Mesoamerica, and/or circum-Caribbean. Applicants must have a Ph.D. in anthropology and experience in teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in archaeological theory and methods. Previous teaching and research experience, including publications, required. Salary commensurate with qualifications and experience. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply. Deadline for application is November 1, 1993. Preliminary interviews will be conducted at the 1993 AAA meeting. Send letter of application, vita, and names of three references to Chair, Search Committee, Department of Anthropology, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3083 (404-651-1759). Georgia State University, a unit of the University System of Georgia, is an equal opportunity educational institution, and an EEO/AA employer.

Minority Historic Preservation Committee

The Minority Historic Preservation Committee (MHPC) was established in 1990 through the Georgia National Review Board, and is composed of representatives from neighborhood organizations and preservation groups throughout the

state. The MHPC was formed in response to the growing interest in preserving the cultural and ethnic diversity of Georgia's heritage. This heightened interest has translated into a number of efforts which emphasize greater recognition of minority culture and contributions to Georgia's history. The committee meets quarterly to plan and implement projects aimed at achieving these

goals. One of the first meetings of the committee was held at the recently renovated Noble Hill school museum. The school was built in 1923 as one of 4,977 schools built in the south for black students by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Person interested in setting up similar programs in other states should contact Janice White Sikes, Chair, Atlanta, 404-730-1700.

Conferences

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR ETHNOHISTORY - Nov 4-7, 1993, Annual Conference, Indiana University Memorial Union, Bloomington, Indiana. Program Chair, Raymond J. DeMallie, 812 855-4086.

PAN AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF PREHISTORY AND RELATED STUDIES - Sept. 1995, 10th Congress, University of Zimbabwe, History Department and the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. Send letter of interest or proposed conference topic to Gilbert Pwiti, History Department (PAA), University of Zimbabwe, P.O. Box MP167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe, before mid 1994.

For back issues of the newsletter (1-7), please contact: Dr. Theresa A. Singleton, Department of Anthropology, National Museum of Natural History, MRC 112, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. 20560

African-American Archaeology Regional Editors

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Northeast | Nancy Ladd Muller- Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003 |
| Mid-South- | Paul Farnsworth- Department of Geography and Anthropology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803 |
| Mid-Atlantic- | Dennis Pogue, Esther White- Archaeology Department, Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, Mount Vernon, VA 22121 |
| Southeast- | Joe Joseph- New South Associates, 4889 Lewis Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30083 |
| Midwest- | Charles E. Orser, Jr.- Midwestern Archaeological Research Center, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61761 |
| West- | Todd Guenther- South Pass City Historic Site, Route 62, Box 170, Lander, WY 82520 |
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