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Obscuring the Inequalities of Slavery: Identifying Differential Access to Ceramics at Monticello

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Abstract

From the 1770s to the 1790s Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, resided at Monticello. This paper will focus on the lives of the enslaved African Americans who worked and lived on his estate during that time. Historical documents and archaeological materials are used to investigate the relationship between spatial proximity of slave quarters to Jefferson's mansion. Building on Diana Crader's work on faunal remains from Mulberry Row and William Adams' and Sarah Boling's scholarship on ceramics owned by enslaved African Americans on antebellum Georgian plantations, this paper attempts to unravel the complex patterns of economic consumption within the slave society at Monticello. By utilizing the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS) database this analysis produces original research on how enslaved African Americans obtained expensive ceramic vessels and what this pattern of consumption meant from the perspectives of Jefferson and the enslaved individuals living at Monticello. An analysis of the value and variability between the ceramic assemblages from Mulberry Row, Sites 7 and 8, and the Elizabeth Hemings site reveal that these individuals had differential access to costly ceramic goods. This article asserts that differential access to high-priced ceramics was related to the proximity of the enslaved individuals to Jefferson's mansion, which is consistent with a model wherein Jefferson distributed expensive ceramics to the slaves closest to his mansion in order to obscure the brutal inequalities of slavery from his view and the view of his visitors.

Introduction

Monticello is famous because it was the residence of Thomas Jefferson, located in the central piedmont area of Virginia. The plantation was also home to free white laborers and over 100 enslaved African Americans. The 5,000-acre property near the Rivanna River was a major economic center in colonial Virginia due primarily to the labor provided by slaves. The immense estate was divided into farms with the main house at the center. Enslaved agricultural workers lived in these hinterland farmsteads under the watch of overseers in locations such as Sites 7 and 8 (Figure 1). On the mountaintop stood Jefferson's mansion with its principal access

road, Mulberry Row, approximately 100 feet southeast (Figure 2). The inhabitants of Mulberry Row were enslaved men and women who were skilled craftspersons and Jefferson's house servants. Archaeological excavations provide a window into how enslaved African Americans expressed and navigated social stratification through material culture. Artifacts patterns indicate social and economic differentiation at Monticello. This article builds upon Diana Crader's faunal observations that highlighted the existence of differential access to faunal foods within enslaved African-American society according to proximity to Jefferson's home and William Adams' and Sarah Boling's comparison of the ceramics owned by planters, slaves, and overseers on antebellum Georgian plantations.

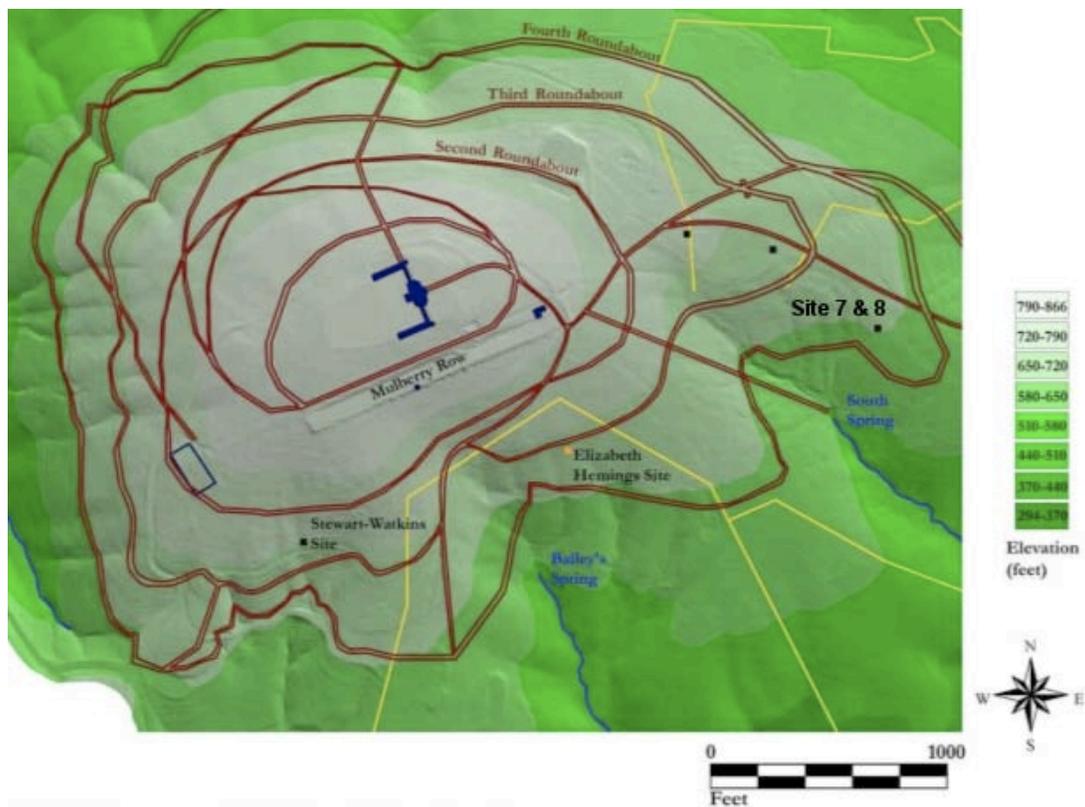


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Elizabeth Hemings Site, Site 7, and Site 8 (Neiman et al. 2000:3).

From the 1770s to the 1790s enslaved African Americans at Monticello had differential access to expensive ceramic goods. Historical documents and archaeological material excavated from different spatial contexts including Mulberry Row, farm quarter sites, and Elizabeth Hemings' site, should articulate this difference. This study analyzes the ceramic assemblages

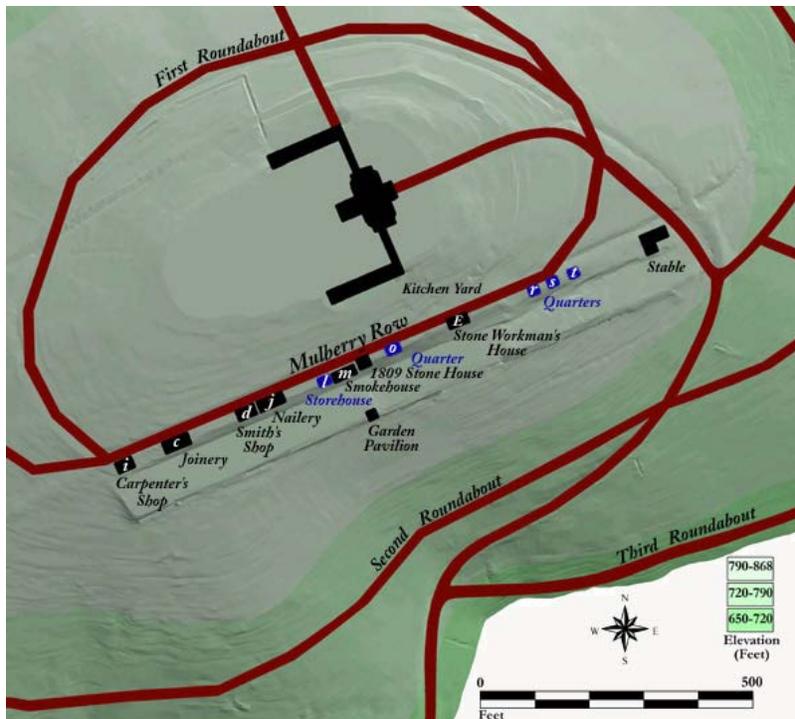


Figure 2. Map showing the location of the various buildings on Mulberry Row at Monticello (Scholnick et al. 2001: 2).

from multiple sites throughout the plantation, which should help unravel how enslaved African Americans obtained these goods and what it meant to possess ceramic vessels of certain styles, values, and ware types. The value and variability of ceramic assemblages that are either in close or far proximity to the mansion reveal modes of economic consumption that are consistent with a model wherein Jefferson gave the most expensive ceramic goods to enslaved African Americans that were closest to him. This pattern may be the result of Jefferson attempting to obscure the inequalities of slavery, particularly in Mulberry Row, which would have been visible from his mansion.

Jefferson as a Slaveholder: A Historical View of Monticello

Thomas Jefferson grew up with the institution of slavery. In fact, his earliest memory was being lifted up on a pillow by one of his father’s slaves. At the age of 31 Jefferson inherited 10,000 acres of land and 135 enslaved individuals from his father-in-law, John Wayles (Stanton 1996:84). This influx of wealth completely transformed Monticello from a simple tobacco plantation with 53 enslaved African Americans to an important economic center in 18th century Virginia. His ownership of land and people made him one of the richest men in the colony. His

records show that he legally possessed around 600 slaves during his lifetime; most were inherited, and only 20 purchased. In any given year after 1774 Monticello and its outlying farms were home to approximately 200 enslaved laborers (Gordon-Reed 2009; Stanton 2002:18).

Monticello slaves engaged in a range of activities that included cultivating crops, caring for livestock, driving wagons, weaving cloth, carpentry, metal working, and maintaining buildings and machinery for over Jefferson's 50-year tenure. The labor system at Monticello was typically a gang system in which farm workers were employed in groups of eight that were usually comprised of four men and four women (Kelso 1989:12). The skilled laborers at Mulberry Row may have been organized in a similar system that required individuals to meet daily quotas according to production expectations set by Jefferson. Jefferson's *Farm Book* allowed him to keep track of the yards of cloth as well as the weight of iron nails that were manufactured by his slaves (Betts 1987:260). During the winter enslaved African Americans worked nine-hour workdays, increased to fourteen hours in the summer (Kelso 1997:178). The farm and craft production allowed Monticello to achieve a high level of self-sufficiency. Weekly food rations for each adult consisted of a peck of cornmeal, four salted fish, and a half-pound of pork or pickled beef that would have been a standard. Historians have asserted that Jefferson's meat rations were seen as relatively small compared to other plantations (Betts 1987:55).

Monticello slaves supplemented the allocation of food, clothing, and furnishings in order to meet their daily needs. During their free times, such as Sundays or after their work hours, slaves were allowed to tend their personal gardens, animals, and crafts. In a letter to his friend, Benjamin Rush, Jefferson wrote that he believed in "the divine institution of the Sabbath, which I conceived to be a great blessing to the world, more especially to poor people and slaves" (Stanton 1996:30). Their Sundays were spent making furniture and clothing as well as performing tasks outside their normal regime that Jefferson paid for, such as producing coal, moving earth, or cleaning privies (Stanton 2002:179). For objects that could not be made, enslaved individuals needed money to purchase goods. Historic and archaeological evidence supports the existence of the flourishing domestic economy at Monticello. On Sundays, slaves would sell goods to the main house. Jefferson's eldest daughter, Martha Jefferson Randolph, kept a journal of the kitchen's purchases that included eggs, squirrel skins, garden surplus, brooms, and brushes produced by enslaved laborers. One entry recorded that a slave sold two chickens for a Spanish Bit -- the equivalent of 12.5 cents today (Stanton 1996:28).

Jefferson's management techniques included the use of financial and material rewards for good behavior and productivity. He wanted his slaves to be honest and industrious without having to impose heavy physical punishments that would create a network of fear (Stanton 1996:89). Duc de La Rochefoucauld Liancourt, a French nobleman, visited Monticello in 1796 and had a most favorable impression of Jefferson's approach to agriculture. He praised the incentive system through which Jefferson "animates [his slaves] by rewards and distinctions" in the form of special foods and clothing (97). Jefferson hoped that this system would prompt competition that promoted greater efficiency among the enslaved laborers.

From the 1770s to the 1790s Jefferson continued tobacco production as the plantation's primary cash crop and during this period the number of slaves increased from 50 to 125 individuals (Neiman et al. 2000:2). According to Adams and Boling, Jefferson would have fit into the category of a high status, larger-scale planter because he owned more than 50 slaves (Adams and Boling 1989:74). Some of the house slaves lived in the South Pavilion of Jefferson's mansion. Other skilled and house slaves as well as free workmen occupied log cabins close to Jefferson's house on the First Roundabout. Monticello's farm quarters, such as Site 7 and 8, were home to slaves that cultivated crops in remote agricultural fields and lived around the Third Roundabout under the watch of overseers. In 1794, the year Jefferson returned from France, Jefferson recognized that tobacco drained the nutrition out of the soil and required intensive yearlong labor, and he turned to diverse crop rotation techniques (Stanton 1996:54). The primary agricultural yield became wheat, which required less labor but more organization of slaves with specialized skills. In the later half of the 18th century Jefferson lived at Monticello and interacted closely with the enslaved African-American individuals under his control. The archeological materials from this period reveal Jefferson's management and social strategies at Monticello.

Mulberry Row: Archaeology and History

Mulberry Row was the name Jefferson used to refer to a 600-foot section of road between the First Roundabout and the vegetable gardens that were situated 100 feet southeast of his mansion (Kelso 1997:51). For five decades, from the initial construction of the main house to Jefferson's death, Mulberry Row functioned as the economic center of Monticello. This line of craft shops, yards, and slave dwellings would have provided living and working space for

enslaved families and individuals. Each of the log houses had yards that were used to raise small livestock and, according to historical accounts, were filled with trash that may have been used to fertilize gardens or create a boundary between slave and master (Heath 2001:77). They engaged in iron production, woodworking, and household services. Mulberry Row provided valuable services to the 5,000-acre plantation, such as grinding wheat as well as housing many of Jefferson's personal servants (Scholnick et al. 2001:9). The close proximity to Jefferson's abode presented socioeconomic opportunities to these enslaved African Americans, which would not have been available to the enslaved individuals that inhabited Sites 7 and 8. The expertise of these slaves gave them the power to negotiate with Jefferson to improve their livelihood. The appearance of Mulberry Row and its inhabitants would have been very important to Jefferson because it would have been visible to him and visitors on a daily basis. Jefferson provided better accommodations, foods, and goods to enslaved African Americans living in Mulberry Row, not only because of their skills as laborers, but as a way of covering up the entrenched inequalities of slavery.

Mulberry Row has been central to the study of slave life at Monticello between the last quarter of the 18th century and the first quarter to the 19th century, because of the availability of extensive historical documentation. In 1796 Jefferson compiled detailed maps and descriptions of Monticello for an insurance application with the Mutual Assurance Company of Richmond, Virginia (Kelso 1986:1). This document provides a snapshot of life at Monticello in the 1790s, during a major period of transition. The plan includes seventeen structures labeled "A" through "T" that included houses, manufacturing buildings, a smokehouse, dairy, washhouse, storehouse, and stable. Only two of these buildings dating to the later half of Monticello are still standing.

Archaeologist William Kelso analyzed the Mutual Assurance document to locate and excavate these long lost buildings (Kelso 1997:12). In 1982 the Thomas Jefferson Foundation Archaeology Department headed by Kelso excavated Building O on Mulberry Row. The space that was occupied by Building O was actually occupied by two slave log cabins over two different time periods (Figure 3). The first cabin that will be the subject of my study dates from approximately 1771 to 1800 during the Monticello I period. The Mutual Assurance Company document described the building as "a servant's house 20 ½ f. by 12 f. of wood, with a wooden chimney, & earth floor" (52). Kelso asserts that that Building O would have looked very similar to the still standing slave cabin at Bremo Recess at a plantation 30 miles south of Monticello.

The Bremo Recess slave cabin was constructed on a stone foundation with log walls and a single door that would leave a very similar archaeological footprint as Building O (54).

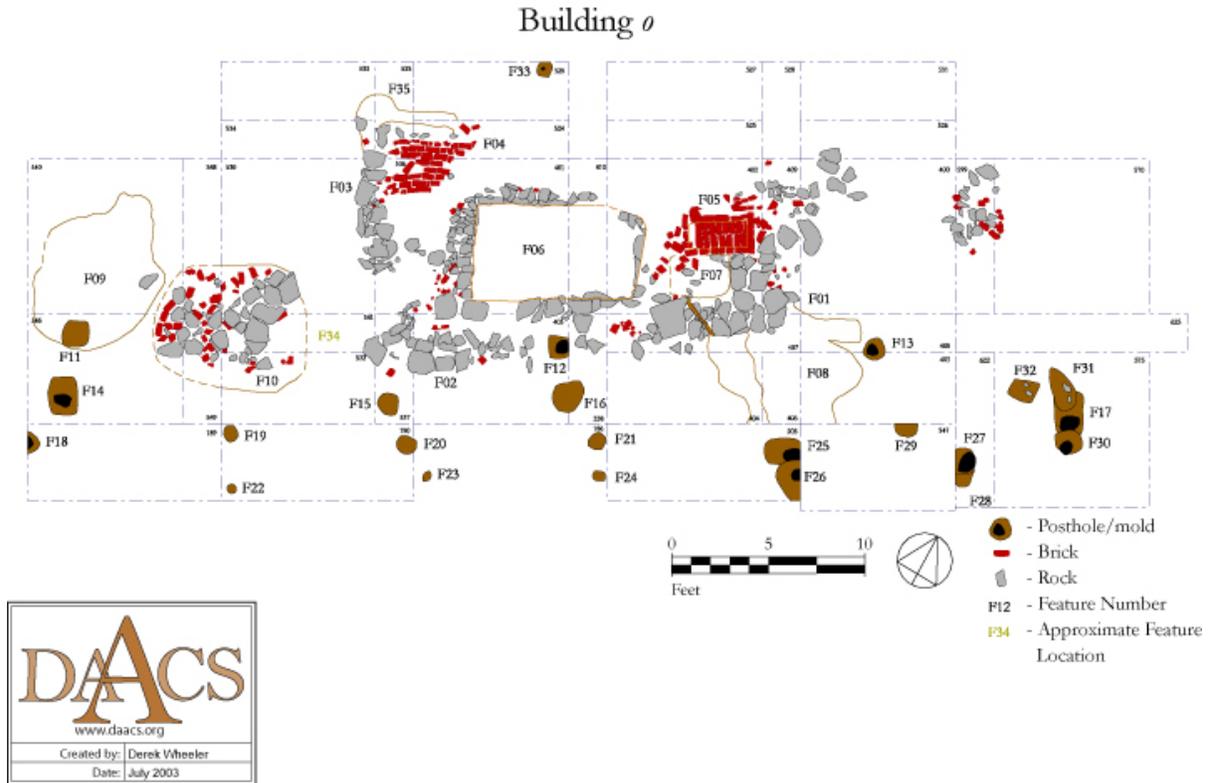


Figure 3. Site map of Building O, Monticello, Virginia. Created by Derek Wheeler for The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, July 2003 (http://www.daacs.org/resources/sites/BuildingO/Building-o-site_plan.pdf).

Kelso's excavations of Building O revealed the three dry laid greenstone foundations for the 20.5 by 12 foot single room log cabin. Within this structure was a concentration of stones at the east side of the structure that were associated with large amounts of charcoal as well as a concentration of nails on the exterior of the building, which indicated the location of the wooden wattle and daub chimney. A brick paved area in the northwest corner of the cabin shows the location of a doorway or a possible base of a staircase that could have led to a loft. Two brick lined storage pits were situated near the hearth with the smallest being 2 by 4 feet and the largest measuring 5 by 8 feet. Different families probably covered these pits with wooden planks analogous those used at to Bremo Recess to store personal belongings and the pits may represent periods of occupation (53). These subfloor pits contained thousands of artifacts including a large

amount of ceramics. The ceramic assemblage excavated in the 1980s indicated domestic occupation before the 19th century (Smith et al. 2006:6).

In 1796 Jefferson described Building L as “a house 16. by 10 1/2 feet, of wood, used as a storehouse for nailrod & other iron” (Kelso 1997:65). During its earliest period of occupation the building was a tinsmith shop under the supervision of the slave Isaac who was trained in metallurgy at Philadelphia (Betts 1952: pl. 50). In 1981 Kelso excavated 828 square feet that uncovered a brick floor (Feature three or F03) approximately 10.5 by 16 feet and (F02), a small mortar brick 3 by 4 feet box that would have been a foundation for a small forge (Figure 4). A series of postholes in the floor of Building L supported a series of anvils, making it far more diverse than stated in the historical record (66).

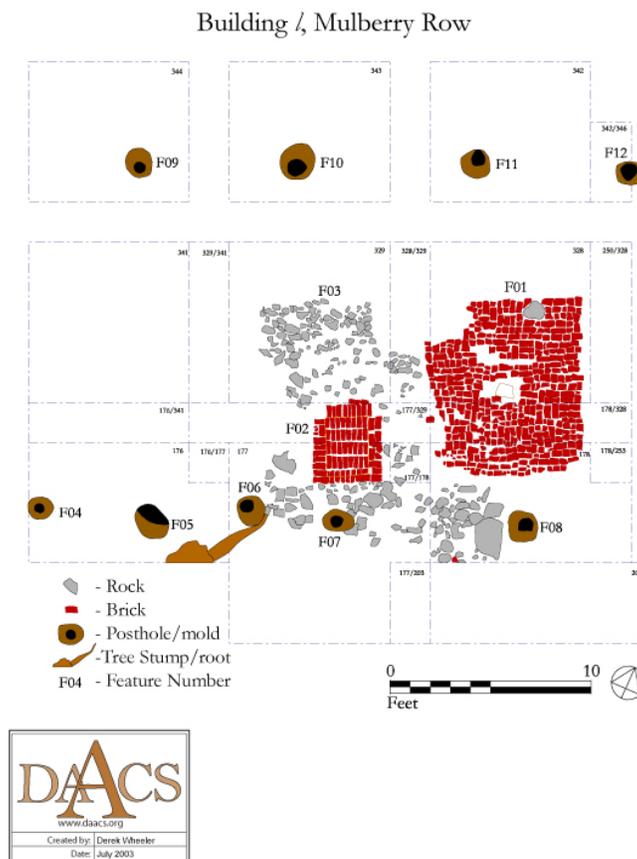


Figure 4. Site map of Building L, Monticello, Virginia. Created by Derek Wheeler for The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, July 2003 (http://www.daacs.org/resources/sites/BuildingL/building-l-site_plan.pdf).

Building L was not only a smith and storehouse as indicated by slag and nailrod but also concurrently functioned as a domestic space because of the presence of faunal remains and high quantity of ceramics. Kelso believes that Building L was briefly used as a storage for nailrods in the early 1790s, but soon after was transformed into a two room slave quarter, where one room was used for nail storage and the other was used to house the workers as indicated by brick lined subfloor pits (F02) located near the chimney on the west end of the building (67). Historical accounts indicate that 10 to 12 young boys over the age of nine occupied Building L. During the days the boys produced nails from iron rods in one half of the building while they consumed their meals and lived in the other half of the structure (Stanton 1996:25). An 1809 map does not show any buildings in the location of Building L, which suggests that the building did not exist after this period (Jefferson 1809).

In the mid 1790s Jefferson ordered the construction of three small log cabins, known as R, S, and T on Mulberry Row, which served as single-family dwellings. Documentary sources provide an extreme level of detail about the inhabitants of Building S that is rarely obtainable about quarter sites (Figure 5). In 1793 Jefferson ordered his steward Thomas Mann Randolph to construct five new log buildings that would provide quarters for the enslaved house servants that were living in the Workmen's House, Building E, one of whom included Critta Hemings. During the winter and spring three dwellings were built, rather than the five originally planned, according to archaeological evidence (Boyd 1950:413). A letter from Randolph indicated that Critta occupied one of these structures for a period. Her sibling Sally Hemings may have also inhabited the site. A French delft medicine jar was recovered from within the structure, which is significant because the siblings accompanied Jefferson to Paris where they learned to be servants for elite households. Historical documents record that after 1808 the sisters moved into the main house (Stanton 2000:112).

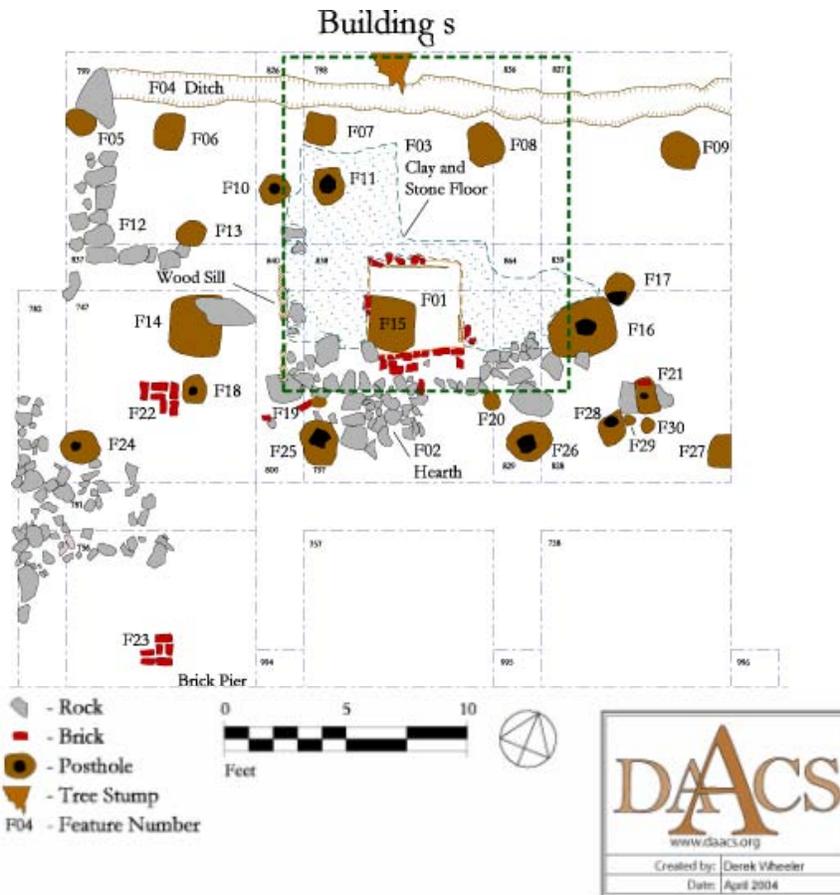


Figure 5. Site map of Building S, Monticello, Virginia. Created by Derek Wheeler for The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, August 2004 (http://www.daacs.org/resources/sites/BuildingS/building-s-site_plan.pdf).

On the Mutual Assurance Declaration document Jefferson described these three buildings as “servant houses of wood with wooden chimneys, & earth floors, 12. by 14. feet, each and 27 feet apart from one another” (Kelso 1997:72). Building S, the best preserved of the three buildings, was built with Southern Yellow Pine logs that were split in half and dovetailed to form walls that would be covered with a slab roof. The cabin had a wattle and daub chimney on the south end of the building and a single door that opened upon the First Roundabout (73). The structure features a stone platform that would have been the base of a chimney (F02), an earthen floor (F03), and a subfloor pit that was lined with wooden planks (F01). A single subfloor pit approximately 3.75 square feet contained a wooden lined box that was covered with a layer of bricks. The lack of additional pits indicates that there was less need for private storage space,

which supports the documentary evidence that this building was occupied by a single-family (74).

Building T was a single room log cabin. Most of the architectural evidence of this structure was destroyed by 20th century roadwork projects (Figure 6). Building T was built on top of the previously existing structure known as the “Negro Quarter,” which was destroyed during construction in the 1790s (Kelso 1986:8).

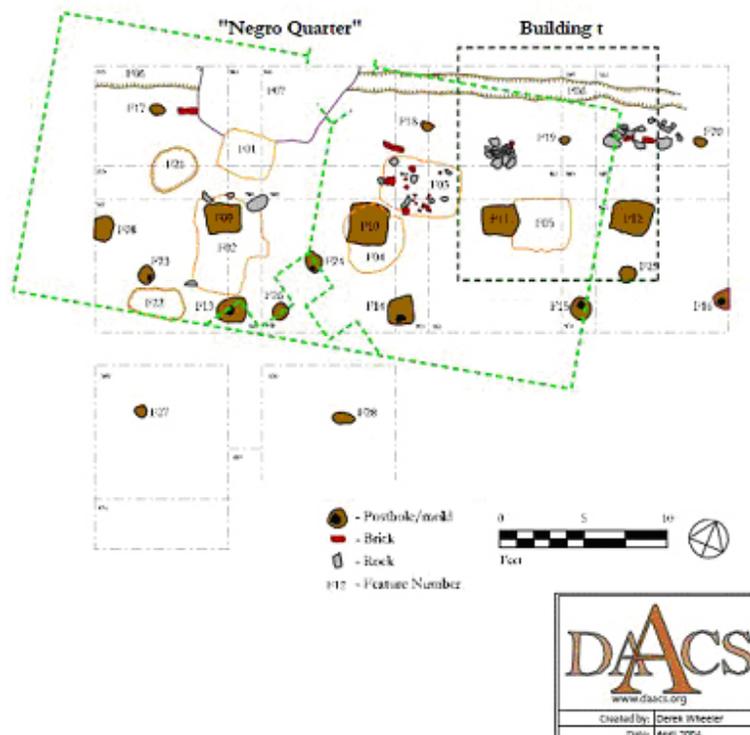


Figure 6. Site map of Building T, Monticello, Virginia. Created by Derek Wheeler for The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, August 2004 (http://www.daacs.org/resources/sites/BuildingT/building-t-site_plan.pdf).

Most of the information about the appearance of Building T is drawn from the better-preserved foundations of Building S. In 1984 Kelso excavated almost 1200 square feet of earth, which revealed the two periods of occupation. Four subfloor pits (F01-F04) were associated with a multifamily barrack style structure that housed enslaved workers from the 1770s to the 1790s. These subfloor pits contained 107 ceramic sherds; however three of these pits contained 55 American stoneware sherds that were derived from a single vessel (Kelso 1997:92). A fifth

subfloor pit corresponds to the single-family occupation of Building T from the mid-1790s to Jefferson's death in 1826 (93). Historical documents are unclear on which enslaved laborers inhabited either structure.

Building R was also built in the mid-1790s on the eastern side of Mulberry Row (Figure 7). The construction of this house represents a shift from barrack-style housing of the 1770s on Mulberry Row. The transition to single-family housing corresponds to the 1794 transition in

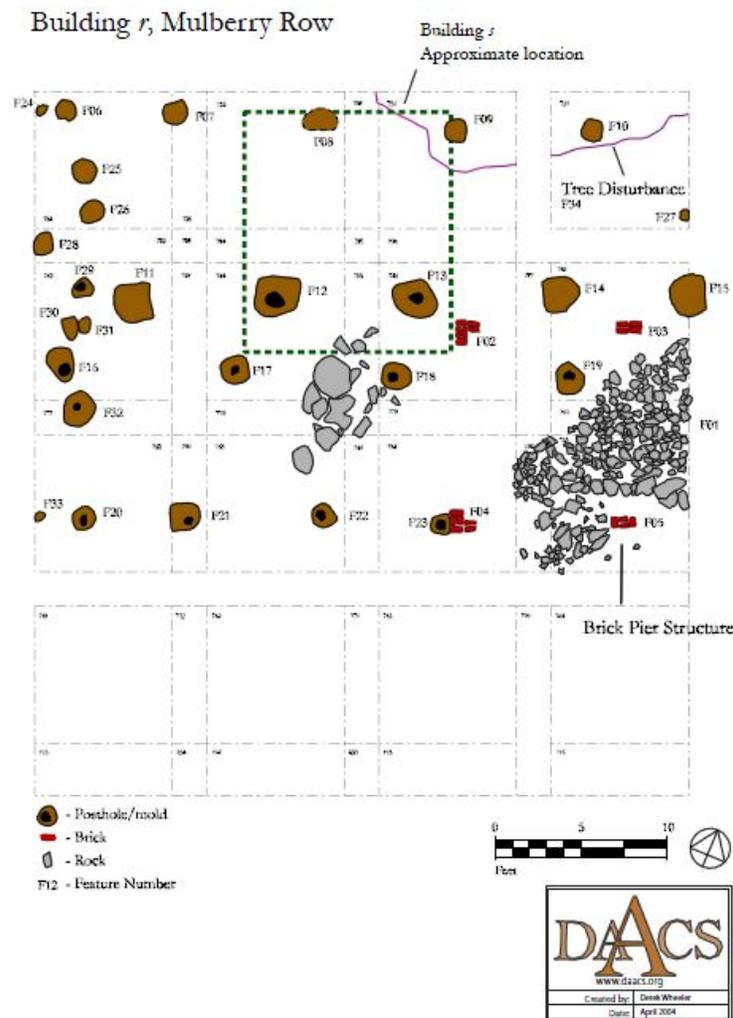


Figure 7. Site map of Building R, Monticello, Virginia. Created by Derek Wheeler for The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, August 2004 (http://www.daacs.org/resources/sites/BuildingR/building-r-site_plan.pdf).

cultivation from tobacco to wheat (Kelso 1986:9). This change altered the position of Monticello slaves from unskilled laborers to a diversified, skilled workforce that were supported

by strong family groups. Building R was one of the most damaged houses due to a modern road grading project, and the only archaeological remains discovered by Kelso consisted of a cluster of cobbles that represented the base of a chimney. This feature matches exactly with the Mutual Assurance Document. The excavations revealed that Building R did not have a subfloor pit, which may indicate that the building was more secure than the other Mulberry Row structures (10). The family that lived in the building could have had locks on the door, or perhaps they had access to secure furniture.

The documentary evidence indicates that John Hemings and his wife Priscilla occupied Building R. John was a skilled carpenter who made some of the furniture that was used in the big house. His wife was a nurse to Jefferson's grandchildren, a role that would have made her a valuable house servant (Hill 2002:71). The couple knew how to write, as indicated by letters from John Hemings that provide an inventory of Building R, which included a bedstead, a harness for a draft animal, a bag of seeds, prayer books, and a looking glass. Archaeological evidence also indicates that Building R was continually occupied up until 1831 when Monticello was sold (73).

Elizabeth Hemings Site: Archaeology and History

Jefferson's survey of Monticello in 1806 indicated a cabin along the Third Roundabout 350 feet southwest of Mulberry Row (Figure 8). He labeled the building as "B Hem," identifying the residence of the enslaved African American, Elizabeth Hemings, known as Betty (Jefferson 1809). The Elizabeth Hemings' Quarter was occupied from 1795 to 1807, when she died at the age of 72 (Neiman et al. 2000:8). Elizabeth was the matriarch of the prominent Hemings family who served as Jefferson's personal house servants and artisans.

William Boyer located the site in 1981 during an archeological survey that was followed up by excavations headed by Susan Kern and Fraser Neiman in 1995 and 1996. The log cabin structure was built around 1795, at the same time as the Third Roundabout (9). Kern excavated 10 by 10 foot quadrants that exposed a concentration of brick (F03) from the base of a wattle and daub chimney and an exterior posthole (F01) that might have been used for the chimney prop. A concentration of green cobblestones near the chimney represents the remains of a hearth (F02). The yard space outside the cabin contained domestic debris that could have been used as a garden (11-12); however much research is still to be done.

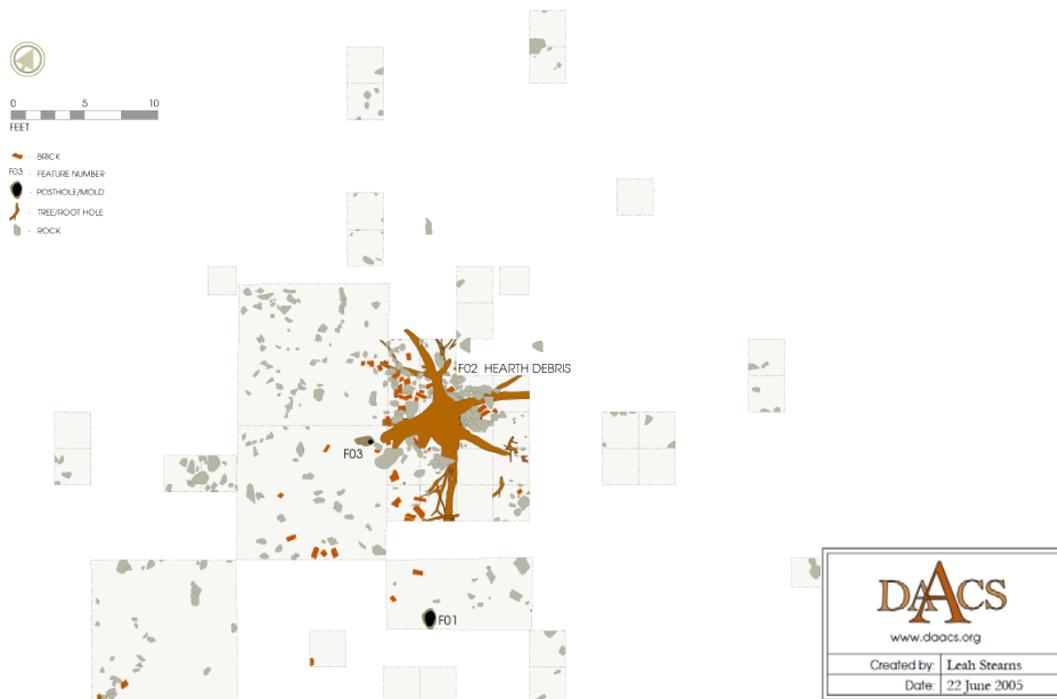


Figure 8. Site map of the Hemings' house, Monticello, Virginia. Created by Leah Stearns for The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, June 22, 2005 (<http://www.daacs.org/resources/sites/ElizabethHemingsSite/HemingsALL.pdf>).

Elizabeth Hemings was born into slavery; her mother was a slave and her father was an English sea captain. In 1774 she was brought to Monticello with her ten children and according to her grandson, Madison Hemings, six of these children (Crittta, Sally, Peter, James, Thenia, and Robert) were fathered by Jefferson's father-in-law, John Wayles. At Monticello she had two more children, named Lucy and John (Stanton 2009:84). By the 1790s, when Elizabeth moved into the cabin, she was approximately 60 years old and had likely assumed a less active role in plantation labor. She likely raised poultry, grew vegetables, and helped care for her numerous grandchildren (Betts and Bear 1989:231). More than 80 of her descendants lived and worked at Monticello (Gordon-Reed 2009).

The Hemings family was distinct from the other enslaved African Americans at Monticello. The mixed-ancestry Hemingses were important to the plantation and filled almost all the serving positions in the main house. During the 1780s Elizabeth and her older daughters were in charge of the affairs at the main house. These women were the only slaves at Monticello who were spared the task of harvesting, and her sons were the only laborers allowed

to hire themselves out to other masters in exchange for wages that they could keep (Stanton 2000:104). In the 1790s the Hemings house maids, Critta, Sally, and Betsy, were given muslin, Irish linens, calico print dresses, and sometimes the Jefferson family's cast off clothes, which would have marked them as separate from the other enslaved women who were given rations of course brown linens (105).

Peter Fossett, Elizabeth's grandson, recorded his thoughts on the separateness of his family at Monticello when he wrote that "Jefferson's house servants were all related to one another, and as a matter of fact we did not need to know we were slaves. As a boy [I] was not only brought up differently, but dressed unlike plantation boys" (Stanton 200:106). Another clue that Jefferson treated the Hemingses as a separate social group was that the only slaves freed by Jefferson during his lifetime were the children of Sally Hemings (Stanton 1996:22). Recent genetic testing confirms a newspaper article that appeared in 1802 by James T. Callender who claimed that Jefferson kept Sally Hemings as his personal concubine and that she had several children with him (Gordon-Reed 2009; Neiman et al. 2000:2).

Farm Quarters: Sites 7 & 8: Archaeology and History

The occupation history of the single house at the quarter farm of Site 7 was composed of three phases: the Shadwell Plantation from the 1750s to the 1770s, the Jefferson slave period from the 1770s to the 1780s, and the overseer occupation from the 1790s to 1805 that corresponds the shift in grain production (Bon-Harper et al. 2003:5). Site 7 and its sister farm quarter Site 8, 130 feet to the southeast, were the residences of the majority of enslaved African-American agricultural workers during the Jefferson period (Figure 9). Monticello archaeologist Sara Bon-Harper conducted surveys of the area in 1997. During the 1998, 1999, 2004, and 2006 seasons 135 five-foot square sample units were excavated. The process of locating the house was made more difficult because the area had been plowed since the early 19th century (5). Chemical samples from the excavated survey units were tested for phosphorus, calcium, and potassium, which correlate with areas of high artifact density that in turn indicate areas of occupation. The slave inhabitants of this quarter were most likely field laborers that produced tobacco in the area known as the "Ancient Field" in some of Jefferson's maps of his estate (7). An overseer most likely lived in close proximity to the slaves in order to monitor the gangs of

manual workers. Archaeological evidence, such as costly ceramics and many coins found just south of the East Road, indicate the probable location of an overseer's house.

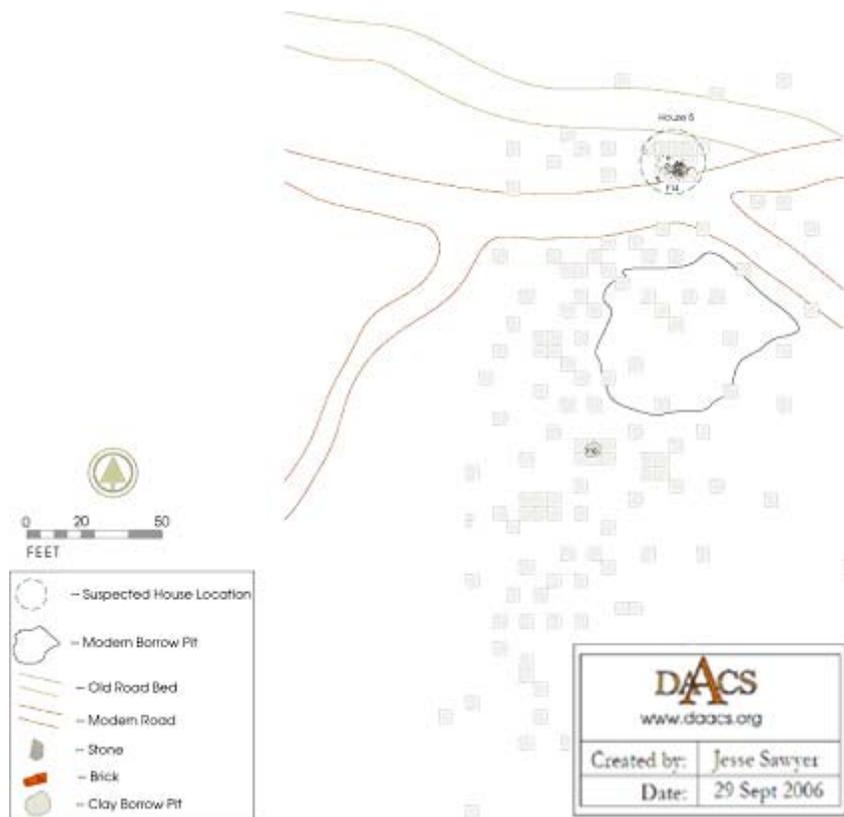


Figure 9. Site map of Site 7, Monticello, Virginia. Created by Jesse Sawyer for The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, September 29, 2006 (http://www.daacs.org/resources/sites/Site7/Site7_sitemap.pdf).

The historical evidence supports the existence of an overseer's house that Jefferson recorded in his 1778 *Garden Book* (Betts 1987:32). He wrote that the overseer's house was a half-mile from the main house that is the same, which reflects the distance of the archaeological Site 7 and Jefferson's residence (33).

Site 8 was an expansion of Site 7 and was occupied by enslaved African Americans farm workers from 1770 to 1800, in a period that coincided with Jefferson's ownership of Monticello. Since 2006 the Department of Archaeology excavated 170 five-foot square units in addition to employing similar sampling strategies as employed at Site 7 (Figure 10). In the early 19th century the site was plowed but chemical analysis indicates the domestic use of space (Bon-Harper and Wheeler 2005:8). This site most likely functioned with Site 7 as a single activity area during the last quarter of the 18th century. Although none of Jefferson's historical

documents reference the location of Site 8, archaeologists believe that Site 8 was the principle quarter for enslaved agricultural laborers (2). The slaves that lived at Site 8 were primarily engaged in tobacco production and the decline of Site 8 mirrors the rise in wheat production.

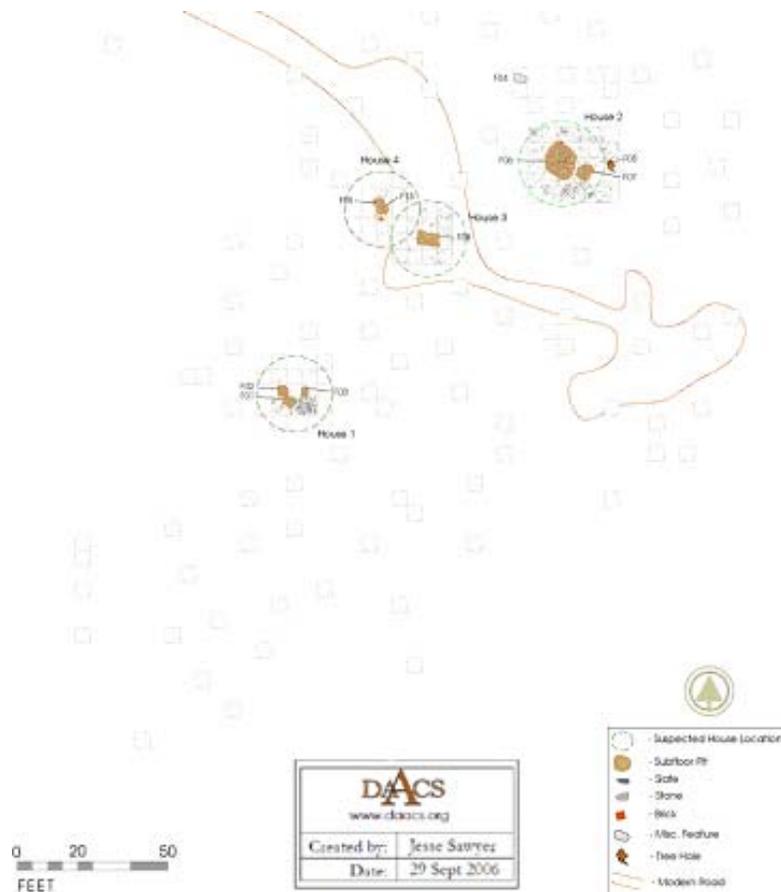


Figure 10. Site map of Site 7, Monticello, Virginia. Created by Jesse Sawyer for The Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery, September 29, 2006 (http://www.daacs.org/resources/sites/Site8/Site8_sitemap.pdf).

The Department for Archaeology at Monticello conducted a survey in 1997 that located four residences. Each house features multiple subfloor pits that contained ceramics that were stylistically similar to those found at Site 7, which suggest its contemporary existence. Pollen from the subfloor pits (F01, F02) in House 1 was tested for pollen and macrobotanical remains and the results suggested that the area around the farm quarters were cleared by the 1780s (9). Pollen analysis indicates that apple, persimmons, peaches, peas, grapes, corn, wheat, and edible grasses contributed to the diet of the inhabitants of the cabins (14). Some of these vegetables were grown in the gardens cultivated by enslaved African Americans in the yards surrounding the cabins (Heath 1999:74). The change in the settlement patterns may reflect a higher degree of

freedom because the slaves lived farther away from the overseer than at Site 7. Site 8 and 7 functioned as a centralized community for the enslaved African-American farm workers and that area was later abandoned around 1800 so the land could be used to grow wheat.

Methodology

This article analyzes patterns in the ceramic material within slave quarters at Monticello from the 1770s to the 1790s to reveal that slaves had differential access to expensive goods. The archaeological material recovered from different spatial contexts at Monticello should articulate this difference. This study examines the ceramic assemblages from multiple sites throughout the plantation, which should help unravel how enslaved African Americans obtained these goods and what it meant to possess ceramic vessels of certain styles, values, and ware types. By utilizing the DAACS database, this article will interpret how material remains from the houses of enslaved African Americans reveal differential access to expensive ceramics and the degree to which such access was dependent on the proximity of slave quarters to Jefferson's mansion.

DAACS is an online database that records archaeological evidence from multiple sites in North America and the Caribbean from the 16th to the 19th century. In addition to the ability to download data from specific sites, DAACS provides historical background information, summaries of excavations, and research conducted at sites in the Chesapeake, Carolinas, and Caribbean in order to unravel the dynamic nature of slavery in the New World. The efficient utilization of the information provided by DAACS requires the formation of a specific question before downloading information.

I began my analysis by conducting a search of the DAACS database. I selected an Artifact Query 5 search of DAACS. The first step of the process required selecting artifacts by type, which allowed me to separate ceramics from the rest of the assemblage. The second step involved artifact attributes that included stratigraphic context, phase, feature type, feature number, and context. Time phases were integral to my study because I could isolate ceramics that dated to the Monticello I period. The sites at Monticello had different chronologies, which made it difficult to choose phases that occurred during my time period of interest. The timeline of a site was derived from the mean ceramic dates from the assemblage. The successive groups of dates were analyzed with a Harris Matrix to determine level of occupation.

These layers were assigned phases, such that all the materials in a specific phase were generally contemporary. Each phase represents a deposition over many years and tends to overlap towards the beginning and end of preceding and successive phases. I chose phases with mean ceramic dates between 1774, when Jefferson inherited Monticello, and 1800. Each phase was associated with a specific assemblage of sherds; thus another requirement was that the phase had over 25 sherds. Phases one, two, and three were selected for Building O. Building L had the most phases from the Monticello I time period including phase one, two, three, four and five. Phases one and two from Building R were selected along with phase one from Building S and phase two from Building T. For Elizabeth Hemings' Site, Site 7, and Site 8, only phase one fit my requirements (Figure 11).

Project Name	Phase	Mean Ceramic Date	Count
Building O	P01	1777.18	144
Building O	P02	1784.81	2989
Building O	P03	1792.31	1342
Building L	P01	1784.78	54
Building L	P02	1790.33	84
Building L	P03	1795.00	84
Building L	P04	1797.18	982
Building L	P05	1796.92	155
Building R	P01	1797.41	461
Building R	P02	1797.59	610
Building S	P01	1797.92	3075
Building T	P02	1796.74	2234
Elizabeth Hemings Site	P01	1796.77	732
Site 7	P01	1780.81	2437
Site 8	P01	1790.84	3833

Figure 11. Phases used to determine the CC Index Value (DAACS 2009).

Step three of the search required the choice of a site. I conducted eight separate searches for Buildings R, T, S, O, L, Elizabeth Hemings House, Site 7, and Site 8. The next stage of the query asked what ceramic attributes I wanted to view. I chose ware type because it indicated the material and type of the object, for example American stoneware or English porcelain. Form was also selected to indicate how the original vessel would have been configured. Since the majority of the ceramics recovered archaeologically tend to be fragmented, archaeologists can only determine the function within general categories, such as 'unidentifiable: teaware.' The

third attribute to be examined was stylistic genre, because it indicated design elements and decorative motifs that were described and illustrated in stylistic element glossaries. This category included 39 different genres commonly found in the Atlantic region, such as “molded edge” and “transfer print.” The next characteristic that I analyzed was pattern that referenced named decorative motifs derived from a Pattern Reference Field established by DAACS researchers. Decoration was the last attribute I selected because it indicated interior and exterior decoration techniques. For example, a sherd could have “interior dark purple hand painted band.”

Step five allowed me to choose what specific wares I wanted to focus on. I selected porcelain, creamware, and pearlware because they were the most frequently occurring wares in all of the Monticello assemblages. These wares also are essential in the calculation of CC Index values. The economic value of ceramics can be determined by studying historical documents to ascertain the purchase cost of different types of vessels during the 18th century. The cost of the ceramics indicates patterns of economic consumption and differential access to these goods. The economic value of a ceramic assemblage can be assessed through the utilization of the Cream Colored-ware or CC Index. George Miller proposed this system of analysis as an effective means to investigate social rank (1989:1). Undecorated refined creamware vessels being the lowest price were given the index value of one. For example in 1781 locally made coarseware, such as redwares, would have an index value below one while expensive imported porcelain would had an value of four (15).

The price lists should be utilized from the dates when the ceramic vessels were presumably acquired. The inhabitants of Monticello purchased their dishes between 1770 and 1800; however it is impossible to know the exact year. The price lists utilized in this study were from the Monticello I period, but when these were not available the next closest year was employed (Figure 12). Ideally whole vessel estimates should be used in the calculation of CC Index values; however the DAACS database did not provide such information so the number of sherds was used instead. Unfortunately the utilization of sherds did bias the total value of the assemblage because of overrepresentation. Sherds do not equal the vessels and a single vessel can produce hundreds of fragments.

The mean of these annual CC Index values for pearlware and creamware were computed in order to produce more precise CC Index values for the Monticello assemblages (Figure 13).

Imported Chinese porcelain represents a significant proportion of the Monticello assemblages, but Miller (1989) did not provide indices for such items. In the article “Archaeological Investigation of the Elizabeth Hemings’ Site,” Fraser Neiman, Leslie McFaden, and Derek Wheeler offer an estimate of the cost of Chinese porcelain from the 1770s. Their examination of probate inventories and potter price registers revealed that porcelain tableware and teawares

	Teaware Price Index Lists By Year	Tableware Price Index Lists By Year
Undecorated	1796	Plate: 1796 Bowl: N/A
Transfer Prints	1795, 1796, 1799	Plate: 1796 Bowls: 1796
Slipware	1825	Plate: 1814 Bowls: 1787, 1795, 1796
Shell Edge	1796	Plate: 1796 Bowls: 1787, 1793, 1796
Overgrazed Polychrome	1814	Plate: 1809 Bowls: N/A
Molded Edge	1814	Plate: 1814 Bowls: N/A
Handpainted Blue	1796, 1787	Plate: 1787 Bowls: 1787, 1795, 1799

Figure 12. Price lists for CC Index Values from Miller (1989) that were used for the Monticello I period.

	Undecorated	Transfer Prints	Slipware	Shell Edge	Overgrazed Polychrome	Molded Edge	Handpainted Blue
Teaware	1.40	5.23	1.92	2.60	3.67	2.43	2.93
Tableware	1.00	4.68	1.72	1.62	3.32	2.55	2.47

Figure 13. Average CC Index Values for creamware and pearlware in the Monticello 1 period.

were six times more expensive than the creamwares available (Neiman et al. 2000:51). Since the specific indices for different decorative styles and vessel forms were not offered for porcelain, the CC Index values calculated for the pearlware and creamware were averaged with the general value of porcelain. This calculation was undertaken because according to historical documents, porcelain imported from England during this period had a lower relative cost than pearlware but higher than creamware. Table 4 provides the complete range of CC Index values for porcelain

teawares and tablewares (Figure 14). Each sherd was assigned an index value based on its form and style. The mean value of the total assemblage calculated the sum of all the indices divided by the total number of sherds.

The final stage of the query was an in-detail classification of form. In my analysis, utilitarian forms, such as storage jar, were not included because they do not express social differences. They were practical objects that are broken often. Non-utilitarian vessels such as platters, serving dishes, and teacups were not essential, thus they represent luxury items that possibly express choice (Adams and Boling 1989:77). The tableware forms that I selected included bowl, cup, mug, pitcher, plate, platter, tureen, serving dish, and vegetable dish. These were collapsed into the single category of tableware. The category of teawares included saucers, teabowls, teacups, and teapots.

	Undecorated	Transfer Prints	Slipware	Shell Edge	Overgrazed Polychrome	Molded Edge	Handpainted Blue
Teaware	3.70	5.62	3.96	4.30	4.84	4.22	4.46
Tableware	3.50	5.34	3.86	3.81	4.66	4.28	4.24

Figure 14. Average CC Index Values for Chinese porcelain in the Monticello 1 period.

After the data from each site was downloaded and converted into an Excel file, I created two additional columns. The first category created was style. This category condensed all decorative genres into six different groups base on frequency: Undecorated, Transfer Prints, Slipware, Shell Edge, Overgrazed Polychrome, Molded Edge, and Handpainted Blue. All colors of design were included under each of these categories except for Handpainted Blue. Less frequent decorative patterns were consolidated. Royal and Queen patterns were classified as molded edge, Nanking and Canton were incorporated under Handpainted Blue, Sponge was included as Overglazed Polychrome, while feather edge was grouped with shell edge (Adams and Boling 1989:71). The second column that I invented was a CC Index Value that was inspired by Adams and Boling article “Status and Ceramics for Planters and Slaves on Three Georgia Coastal Plantations” (1989:70).

Another aspect of this study investigated the possibility of slaves acquiring ceramic sets rather than piecemeal acquisition of individual items. In the archaeological record, sets would be

represented by low variability, and high variability would argue against sets in favor of piecemeal assemblages. In this study, an index of stylistic variability was calculated by dividing the total styles in a specific assemblage by the total number of sherds in an assemblage. For example, if Building R had a total of 9 styles and 670 sherds then the index variability of the site would be approximately 0.013. Variability in ware and form was also computed for each site at Monticello to determine if there were any differences between the sites that correspond to the spatial proximity of slave dwellings to Jefferson’s mansion.

Data Analysis: Ceramics in Slave Quarters

Kelso’s excavation of Building O and the immediate yard discovered a minimum of 289 fragmented vessels. The assemblage was predominantly English creamware, pearlware, and Chinese porcelain. Building O’s non-utilitarian assemblage of 1,212 sherds is roughly equal to the average assemblage size from five Mulberry Row sites of 1,271 sherds (Figure 15). The percentages of the assemblages based on style were calculated to decrease the bias of different sample sizes (Figure 16). This revealed that the Building O assemblage was unique among the

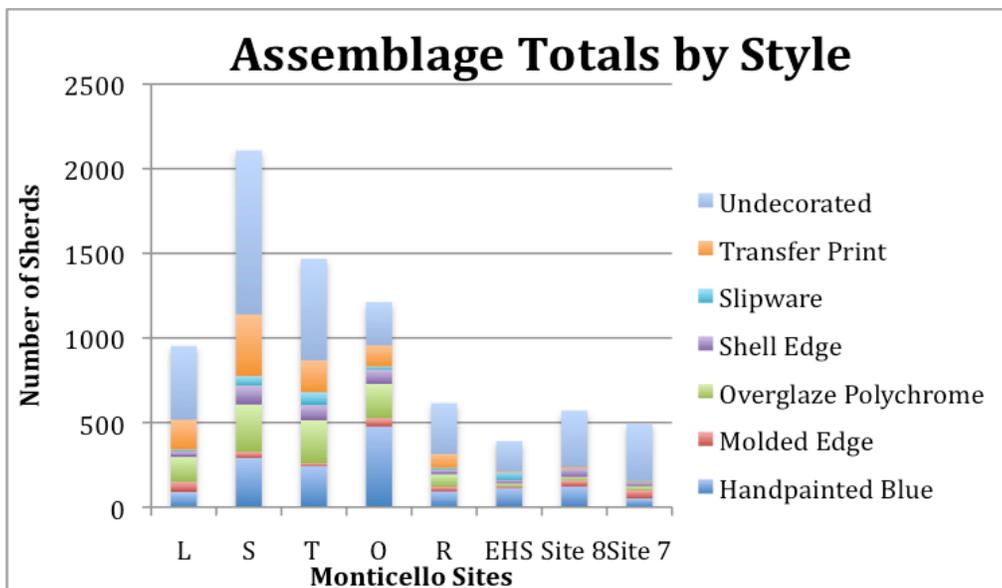


Figure 15. Total number of sherds for each assemblage by style.

Mulberry Row residences. Handpainted Blue creamware and pearlware decorated ceramics consisted of 40% of the assemblage. That was significantly higher than the mean of 14% for the rest of the Mulberry Row assemblages. The predominance of Handpainted Blue ceramics at

Building O could possibly indicate a pattern that would be consistent with the possession of a set of ceramics. Building O also stood out because Undecorated wares made up only 20% of the distribution in comparison with the average of 46% from Buildings L, S, T, and R. The total CC Index value for the entire assemblage of 3.35 for Building O was the highest of all the Monticello quarters (Figure 17).

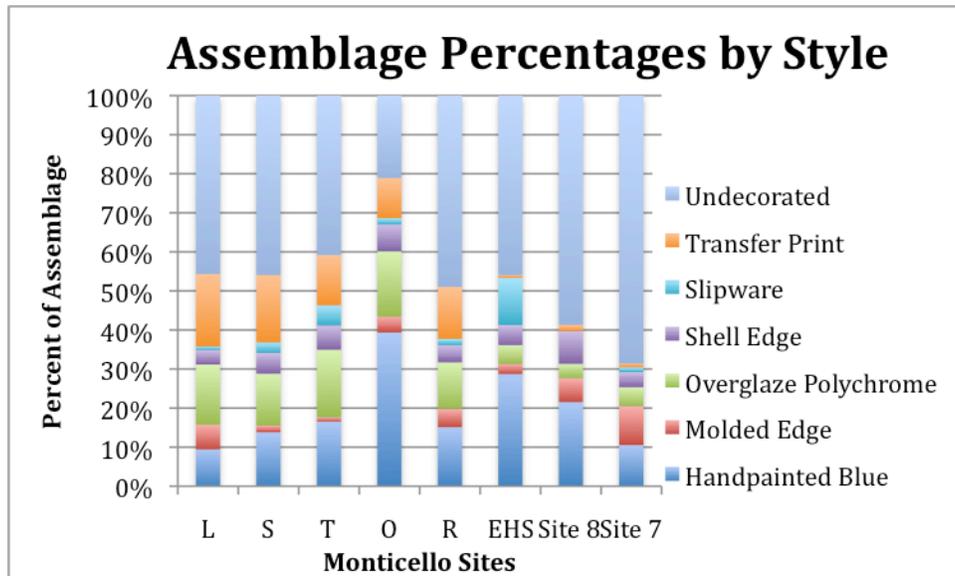


Figure 16. Percentages of each assemblage by stylistic decoration.

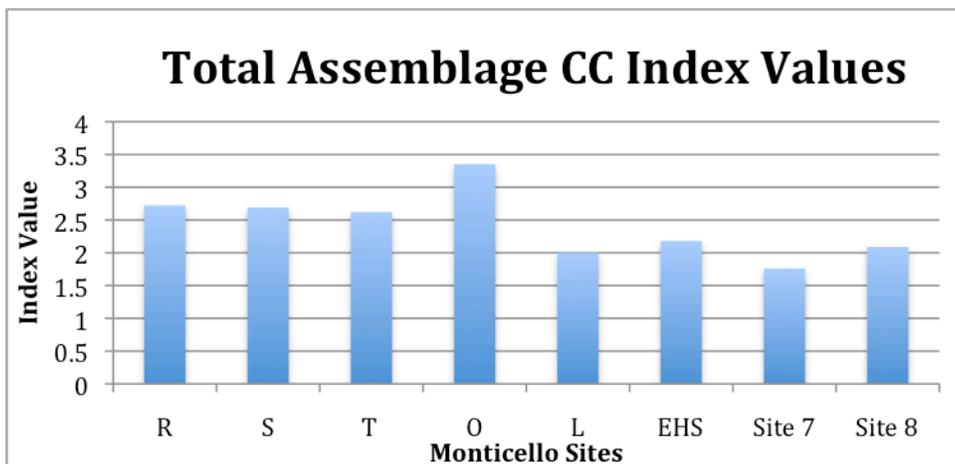


Figure 17. Total CC Index Value for each assemblage.

Building O was the closest slave quarter to the mansion and the large quantity and high quality of its ceramics suggest that the African-American individuals in this dwelling possessed

significantly more expensive goods than the other inhabitants of Mulberry Row. This deduction confirms Crader's faunal analysis that found that Building O had more access to higher quality cuts of meat than the occupants of Building L who consumed stews of low quality meat indicated by extremely pulverized bone fragments (Crader 1990:30). The residents of Building O were house servants in close proximity to Jefferson. They may have been compensated for their loyal service with unique sets of high prestige ceramics, such as the set of 15 porcelain plates that were excavated from Building O.

The assemblage from Building L reflects domestic activity of the slaves who worked in the same building producing nails. Kelso identified 181 ceramic vessels in 18 forms during excavation of Building L. The total number of sherds in the assemblage of the structure was 963 (Kelso 1997:89). That falls significantly below the mean count for Mulberry Row (Figure 15). The total value of all the ceramic fragments from Building L results in an index value of 2.0 the lowest on Mulberry Row (Figure 17). The low value may reflect the simultaneous domestic and industrial function of the site. Jefferson's documents indicate that a dozen teenage boys lived in the structure. That may explain the smaller size of the ceramic assemblage. The labor performed by the teenagers would not have been considered as high value as the work of craftspeople such as Issac or John Hemings (Stanton 1990:89). The young slaves also would have needed fewer vessels than the occupant of Buildings R, T, and S who supported large families (90). The assemblage from Building L parallels the pattern from Buildings S, T, and R (Figure 16). The means between these residences consisted of 46% percent Undecorated and 12% Handpainted Blue. Compared with Building O, the rest of Mulberry Row has more Undecorated sherds and less Handpainted Blue fragments; however all the structures in this area have similar patterns of other ornamentation, with 15% Transfer Prints, 4% Slipware, 5% Shell Edge, 10% Overglazed Polychrome, and 3 % Molded Edge style.

There were 2,107 sherds in the assemblage of Building S, which is almost equal to twice the mean count for the assemblage size on Mulberry Row (Figure 15). Building R was almost completely graded away by contemporary construction, which may help to explain why the assemblage has only 615 sherds, roughly half of the mean for all the residences in the vicinity (Kelso 1997:58). Building T was partially destroyed by road grading and had 1,468 ceramic fragments in its assemblages, slightly higher than the average of 1,271 for all the sites on Mulberry Row. The percentages of decorative techniques for these three assemblages was

almost exactly the same, with 45% Undecorated, 12% Transfer Print, 3% Slipware, 4% Shell Edge, 13% Overglazed Polychrome, 2% Molded Edge, and 15% Handpainted Blue (Figure 16). The CC Index value for the complete assemblages from these sites clustered around 2.7 (Figure 17). The inhabitants of these three sites not only had similar distribution of ceramic styles but also comparable amounts of wealth invested in their vessels. The pattern between these structures supports historical information that these were built at the same time and inhabited by single-family groups.

Kelso estimated that excavation of Buildings S and T revealed approximately 910 fragmented vessels (1997:97). The extremely large quantities of ceramic sherds found at the sites suggest that the enslaved African Americans who lived in these buildings might have received large amounts or sets of ceramics from Jefferson. John was allowed to hire himself out as a laborer so he might have had the purchasing power to buy popular vessels, which accounts for the greater rates of breakage of fashionable ceramics (Arendt et al. 2003:1).

The assemblage from the Elizabeth Hemings Site consisted of 390 ceramic fragments, which was the smallest population in all the sites at Monticello (Figure 15). The small size of the assemblage reflects the short occupation of the site by a single resident in the last decade on the 18th century (Stanton 2000:103). The assemblage is composed of 47% Undecorated, no Transfer Print, 10% Slipware, 4% Shell Edge, 5% Overglazed Polychrome, 2% Molded Edge, and 29% Handpainted Blue fragments (Figure 16). Undecorated and Shell Edge are very similar to the frequencies from Buildings L, S, T, and R. About 30% of the Hemings assemblage was decorated in relatively expensive Handpainted Blue, which was the second highest percentage at Monticello, following Building O. At 10% the Elizabeth Hemings Site had the highest percentage of Slipware anywhere on the plantation slave quarters. This style was most popular from the 1790s to the early 19th century, which confirms the occupation time produced by mean ceramic dating and historical documents (Miller 1991:6). Slipware has a relatively low index value, but the high frequency suggests her personal choice in decoration. The CC Index value for the entire assemblage was 2.18; this value was lower than the mean for Mulberry Row but similar to the values from Sites 7 and 8 (Figure 17).

The ceramic assemblages from Site 7 and 8 largely dated to the last quarter to the 18th century. Creamware and pearlware are the most frequent, however the sites did have expensive imported Chinese porcelains. Site 7 had a total of 571 sherds and Site 8 had 493 vessel

fragments (Figure 15). These totals are less than half the mean assemblage size of Mulberry Row. The small ceramic population from Sites 7 and 8 may be due to the fact that the area has been plowed since the 19th century, the possibility of less extensive excavations, or that the inhabitants of the sites could have owned fewer vessels (Bon-Harper and Wheeler 2005:1). The two assemblages have similar stylistic distributions, with 65% Undecorated, 1% Transfer Print, less than 1% Slipware, 7% Shell Edge, 4% Overglazed Polychrome, 9% Molded Edge, and 15% Handpainted Blue fragments (Figure 16). These two sites are distinguished by the pattern of large amounts of Undecorated vessel fragments and the absence of Transfer Prints and Slipwares. The lack of the latter two styles is significant because they have the highest index values, which contributed to the low total CC Index values of 2.09 for Site 7 and 1.76 for Site 8. The refined ceramics functioned on many levels to signal the position of the Mulberry Row residents as participating in economic consumption that involved different degrees of access to certain expensive ceramics (Galle 2006:47).

Discussion: Proximity Groups and Differential Access

The ceramic assemblages from the residences of enslaved African Americans at Monticello reveal distinct stylistic patterns associated with spatial proximity to the main house. The houses on Mulberry Row were grouped into the “close” category because the residences were near to Jefferson’s mansion. The Elizabeth Hemings Site and the two farm quarter buildings were classified as “far” because they were over a half-mile away from the main house. The stylistic distributions indicate distinct patterns between these two groups. The close assemblage consist of 40% Undecorated vessel fragments, while the far buildings had significantly more of these wares with 70% (Figure 18). Another stylistic difference between the close and far proximity groups was the close group had 15% Transfer Print compared to the 1% in the close group. Overglazed Polychrome was greater with 15% to the 5% from the far assemblage. The total CC Index value based on styles revealed a distinct difference between proximity groups. The close assemblage had an index value of 2.68 and the far group had index of 2.00 (Figure 19). The greater value of the close group is related to the greater frequency of Overglazed Polychrome and Transfer Print decorated vessels, because they have the two highest CC Index values. Matches between ceramics from the Jefferson’s house and the slave assemblages on Mulberry Row indicated that there was no time lag between depositions. This

small interval indicates that slave and planter had ownership of identical vessels at the same time. The ceramics were bought and used immediately, which downplays the likelihood of a hand-me-down model (Adams and Boling 1989:84).

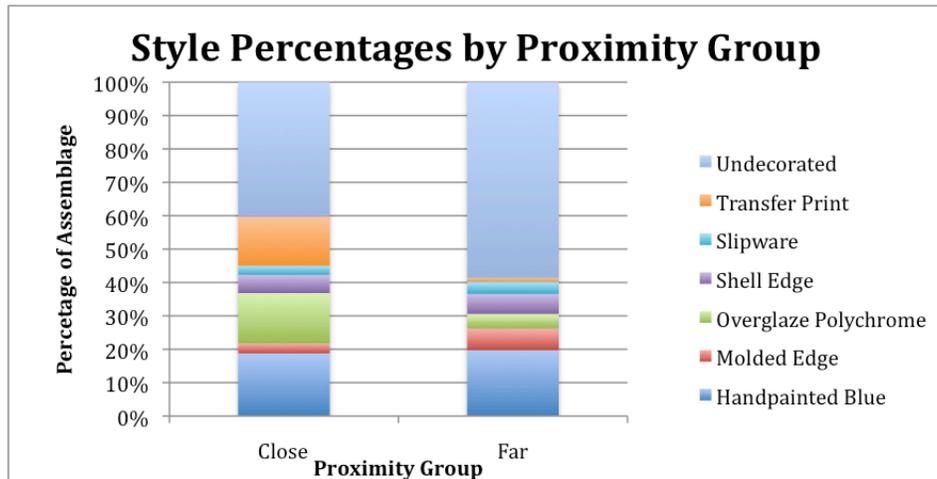


Figure 18. Percentages of proximity group assemblages by stylistic decoration.

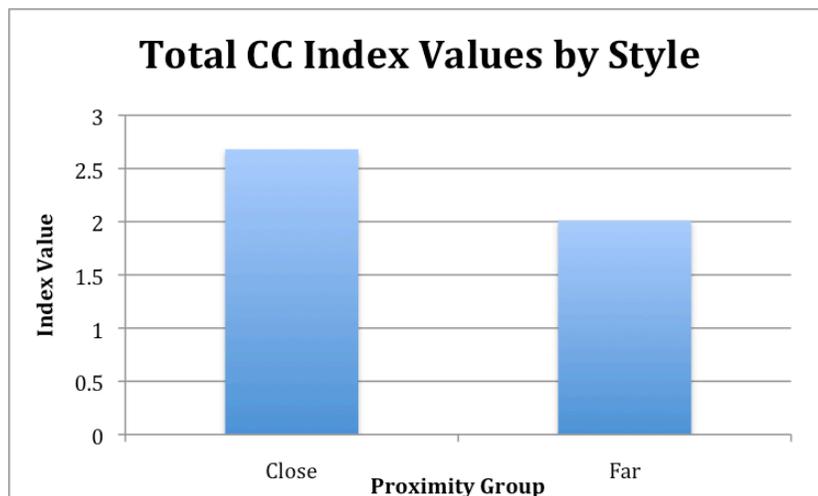


Figure 19. Total CC Index Value for each proximity group.

Teawares were the most valuable wares at Monticello. However, the combination of tablewares and teawares shows that enslaved African Americans engaged in European modes of food and drink consumption. By the 18th century tea drinking became a common practice in colonial Virginia (Kelso 1997:98). The slaves on Mulberry Row would have been familiar with

tea drinking practices and could have easily adopted tea consumption as means of indicating their proximity to the main house (Neiman et al. 2000:19). The agricultural workers and Elizabeth Hemings also owned teawares, but they possessed less valuable pieces. In the 18th century locally made coarsewares were available at low cost; however, at Monticello the ceramic assemblages of enslaved African Americans consisted almost entirely of refined earthenwares. Slaves may have attained ceramics in a provisioning system from Jefferson or they could have purchased them. The records of Virginia merchants record enslaved individuals buying tablewares in conjunction with items associated with tea consumption (Heath 1999:54). Differences in the index values of the vessel categories between close and far proximity groups confirm a pattern of more expensive wares in the close assemblage (Figure 20).

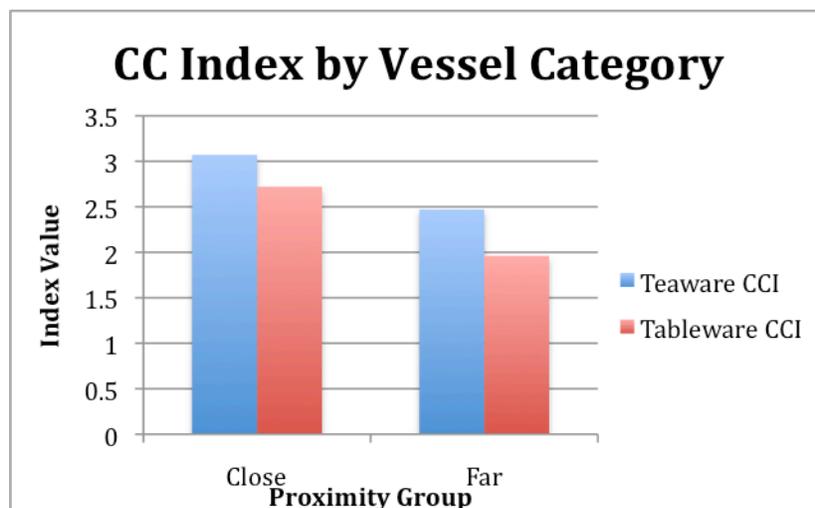


Figure 20. CC Index Value for each proximity group by vessel category.

The slave residences at Monticello have considerable amounts of pearlware and Chinese porcelains, the most expensive and fashionable ceramics in the last quarter of the 18th century (Figure 21). This pattern of luxury ceramics was very uncommon in ceramic assemblages of African-American quarters throughout the East Coast of North America (Adams and Boling 1989: 86). The elite ceramics at the Elizabeth Hemings site are also expected, because of her elevated position as a relative of Jefferson and mother of one of his most skilled craftsman and housemaids. However, the presence of Chinese porcelains at Site 7 and 8 would point towards the fact that Jefferson was no ordinary slave owner, but an important and wealthy political leader who treated his enslaved laborers in a humanitarian manner. He may have provisioned his slaves

with ceramics, which were considered luxury goods, as ways of compensating them for their service or inducing their loyalty in return for costly ceramics.

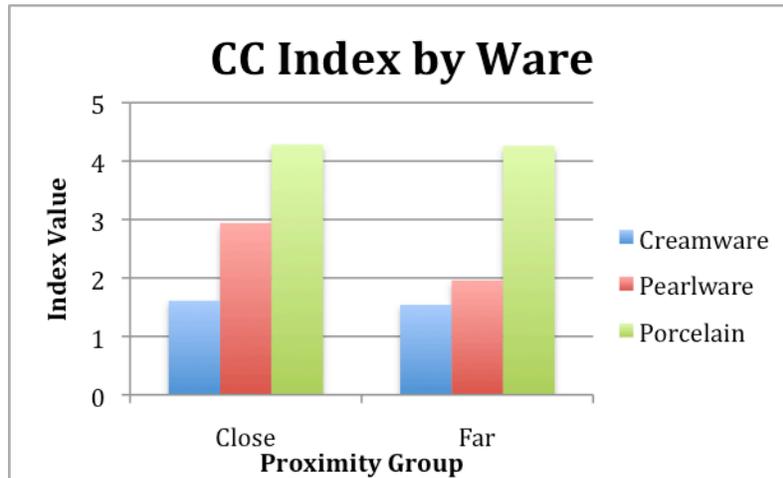


Figure 21. CC Index Value for each proximity group by ware.

After establishing the values of the ceramic assemblages, the stylistic variability was calculated for the proximity groups (Figure 22). High variability could indicate that there were relatively more decorative patterns that attest to the presence of variety of vessel. Low variability suggests that the assemblage might include whole ceramic sets. Stylistic variability was calculated by dividing the total styles for each assemblage by the total number of sherds in

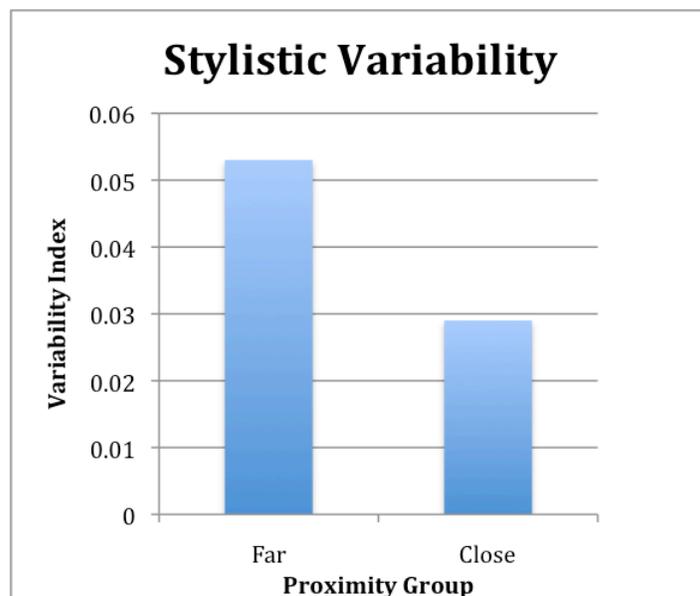


Figure 22. Stylistic variability for each proximity group.

an assemblage. These values were then added up and divided by the total number of sherds within the categories of the far and close proximity groups.

The index of stylistic variability of the far proximity group was 0.052 and 0.028 from the close assemblage. The residences of Mulberry Row had greater numbers of ceramic sherds with less variation in decoration. The farm quarter sites and Elizabeth Hemings' site had lower totals but relatively more styles. This corroborates the pattern of greater variability in ware of the far group with an index value of 0.017 and the close group with index 0.018 (Figure 23). The close group has less stylistic and ware variability than the far group, which may indicate the presence

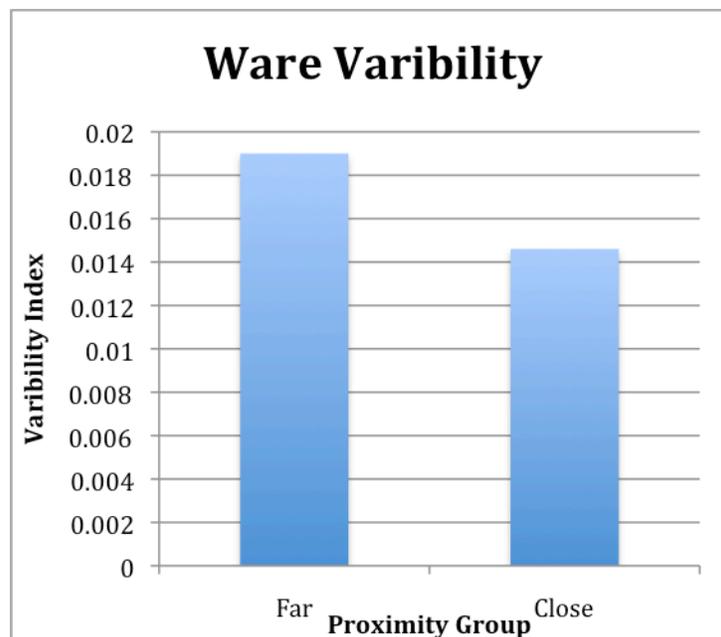


Figure 23. Ware variability for each proximity group.

of ceramic sets within the African-American residences in Mulberry Row because those slaves had many vessels with a small number of styles and ware. Low variability in these categories indicates differential access to ceramic sets rather than the piecemeal acquisition of vessels. Since the enslaved African Americans living in the close proximity group were more skilled and allowed to hire themselves out they may have purchased whole sets or Jefferson may have given them whole or nearly whole ceramic sets as a way to alleviate the inequities of slavery that were visible in his front yard. Either interpretation indicates a mode of economic consumption that is

consistent with a model wherein Jefferson provisioned the slaves closest to his mansion in order to disguise the harsh realities of slavery from himself and his visitors.

Conclusion

Comparison of the assemblages of the far and close proximity groups reveals a complex picture where enslaved individuals living on Mulberry Row and those in the agricultural hinterlands had differential access to luxury goods. The African-American men and women who lived near Jefferson's mansion were skilled craftspeople and house servants who had different access to ceramic goods than the majority of the slaves who worked in the fields. The ceramic assemblage from the close group indicates that they owned more valuable ceramics than the occupants of Site 7, 8, and the Elizabeth Hemings' Site. However the ceramic assemblages from the latter sites indicate a greater degree of variability than those from Mulberry Row. The enslaved African Americans close to Jefferson owned more complete sets while the more distant slaves owned piecemeal ceramic collections, which indicate that they had differential access to expensive ceramic goods.

From the 1770s to 1790s enslaved African Americans at Monticello navigated their socioeconomic position in creative and fluid ways through their property. Historical documents provide insight into how slaves procured ceramics. Jefferson's management technique involved a reward system in which loyal and valuable slaves were given high quality clothes and single-family houses. Ceramics easily fit into such a gift model. Another possibility is that enslaved individuals were purchasing ceramic vessels according to personal choice with money they earned from outside activities. However, both models are consistent with a pattern of economic consumption in which Jefferson gave enslaved individuals that lived closest to his mansion superior goods. This is consistent with the interpretation that he did so in order to obscure the harsh realities of slavery from himself, his family, and his guest.

Note

* Kari Lentz, University of California, Santa Cruz; this study was completed in April 2010 with Dr. Cameron Monroe as faculty advisor.

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