



# Monticello Archaeology Gets Boost from the Mellon Foundation

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, the private, nonprofit owner and operator of Monticello, has just earned a \$600,600 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create a digital archaeological archive of slave sites across the Chesapeake region. Developed by Foundation Director of Archaeology Fraser Neiman, the archive will include data and images from the archaeological collections of Mount Vernon, Poplar Forest and Williamsburg, among other sites. It

will provide an unprecedented opportunity for comparative archaeological research into the social and economic dynamics that shaped Chesapeake society and the African-American experience in the colonial and ante-bellum periods.

Says Neiman, "An enormous quantity of artifacts has been excavated from sites across the

region over the past couple of decades, but so far archaeologists have only been able to study them on a site-by-site basis. The archive will for the first time enable us to piece together the big picture, from the emergence of slavery in the late 17th century to its demise with the Civil War. The archive project is a way of placing the pieces of the puzzle on the same table, at the same time, despite the fact that they physically reside in archaeology labs across Virginia. It will allow us to see and begin to understand historical trends in enslaved people's everyday experience — for example, the character of residential groups, access to consumer goods, reliance on wild or domestic animals for food, the conservation of African cultural traditions, and the emergence of a



TJMF / Monticello

**The Mellon grant will allow thousands of artifacts to tell a wide-ranging story about life in the Chesapeake region.**

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# MONTICELLO



## Monticello Archaeology Mellon Grant

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common African-American social identity in the Chesapeake. We'll also be able to see how and why slave lifeways at particular places, Monticello for example, followed or departed from regional norms."



**This brass padlock and African cowrie shell were excavated from Monticello's Mulberry Row.**

Dan Jordan, president of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, says, "By taking the lead in the creation of an on-line digital archive of archaeological data, Monticello makes possible a new and improved level of cooperation among research and educational institutions. This project will be a prototype for the use of internet technologies to facilitate data sharing among archaeologists working on other times and places as well. We are gratified that the Mellon Foundation is willing to support the contributions of this kind of scholarship, and look forward to an increased knowledge of life at Monticello, and in the Chesapeake region."

Implementation of the grant will begin immediately. A workshop scheduled for May of 2000 will convene members of the Archive Steering Committee, including representatives from the involved sites, with project staff. Using input from the workshop, Project Manager Jillian Galle will devise a trial set of specifications for creation of the database, and construction will begin.

**COMMENTS? [newsletter@monticello.org](mailto:newsletter@monticello.org)**