

Site Characterization: The Definition of Archaeological Sites using Plowzone Excavation Data

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1. Monticello's Home Farm Quarter

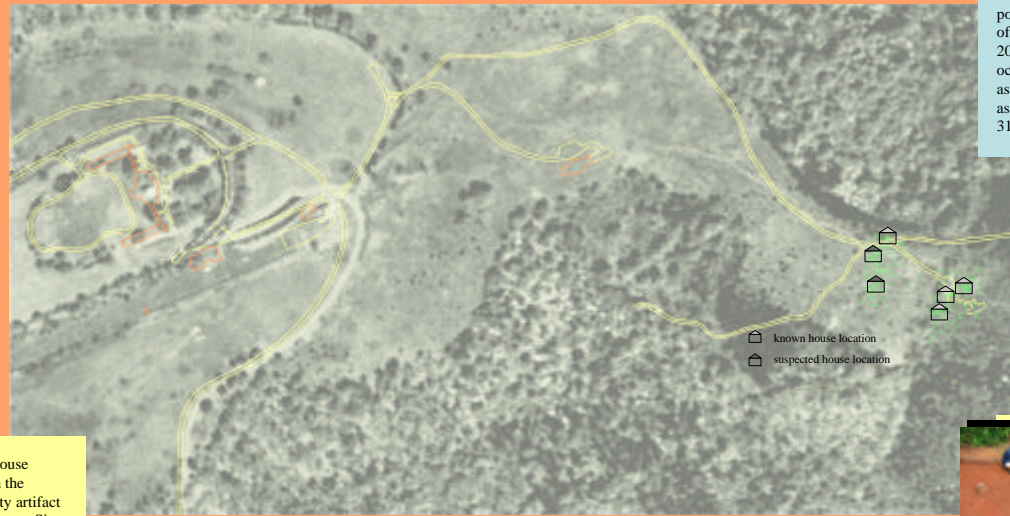


The Monticello Home Farm Quarter was the main domestic site for enslaved field hands during the early years of Thomas Jefferson's ownership of his Albemarle County, Virginia plantation. The Home Farm Quarter is comprised of two semi-discrete artifact scatters discovered during shovel test survey in the winter of 1997. These residential areas, Sites 7 & 8, are undocumented in Jefferson's copious historic papers, except for references to an overseer's house on Site 7.

The Home Farm Quarter is made up of a pair of domestic sites discovered by archaeological survey on Monticello's now-wooded hillslopes

Excavation revealed features associated with four houses. Three are from the main period of occupation, c. 1770-1800, and one belongs to an earlier phase, when Thomas Jefferson's father planted on Monticello Mountain from his adjacent home farm at Shadwell. All four of the discovered houses are assigned to slaves' occupation; the overseer's house and other postulated slaves' houses on the site, have not been located through archaeological features.

STPs adequately defined the site boundaries, but neither survey nor quadrat excavation identified features for all the suspected houses.



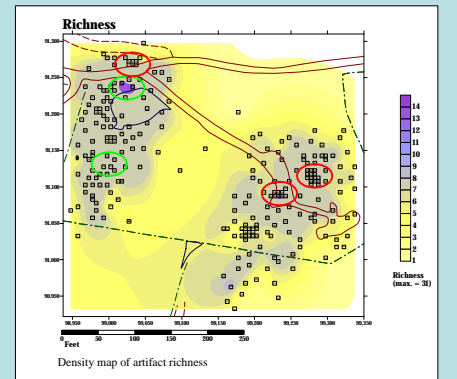
Middens elsewhere have been characterized as possessing greater artifact richness than locations of other trash discard behavior (Beck and Hill 2004:307-8). To further our understanding of the occupations on the Home Farm Quarter, we assessed the richness (R) of plowzone assemblages (presence/absence of a defined set of 31 artifact categories per excavated quadrat).

House 1 at Site 8 (R=8) has a richness value slightly lower than a potential midden area to the southeast of Houses 1 and 2 (R=9). Clearly, different refuse production and discard behaviors occurred at House 1 than at the other known houses at the Home Farm Quarter.

5. Defining houses and middens

We anticipated that the *known* house locations would have identifiable middens, and that the *suspected* house locations would be recognizable from their middens as well.

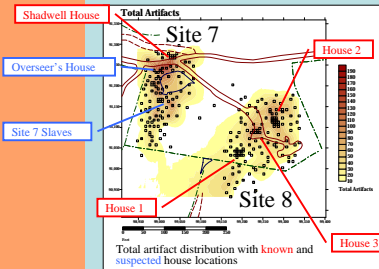
Three of the five areas of highest artifact richness are from the quadrats on top of known houses: the Shadwell house (R=12), and Houses 2 (R=11) and 3 (R=12) on Site 8. Two suspected house location areas, the overseer's house, and a high density artifact scatter attributable to the Monticello slaves' occupation at Site 7, also present high artifact richness (R=14, R=13, respectively).



Beck, M. E. and M. E. Hill Jr. (2004) "The Family Use of Middens." *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* (11) 3:297-333.

Does artifact richness from the known houses come from plowing artifacts out of sub-floor pits and other protected depositional environments?

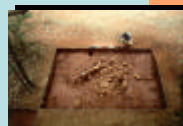
2. Site excavation and discovery of features



There are other yet undiscovered houses on these sites.

After STP coverage, the Home Farm Quarter was excavated in a stratified random sample of 5 x 5 foot quadrats within a 20-foot grid on the site. 250 quadrats have been excavated to date.

The Shadwell-period house on Site 7 was identified through the remains of a cobble and brick chimney base. Houses 1, 2, and 3 on Site 8 are known through the sub-floor pits encountered during the excavation of 5 x 5 foot quadrats.

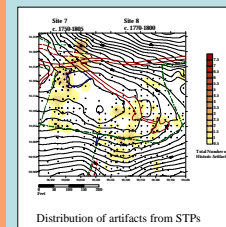


Shadwell-period hearth, Site 7.



Excavation of a sub-floor pit from House 1, Site 8.

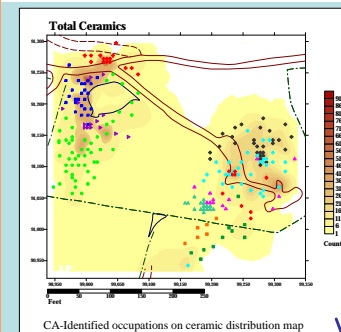
3. Interpretation of survey and excavation data



Initial interpretation of the STP data suggested two neighboring sites. However, since at least some of the two sites' components are contemporary, we have posed questions about whether they should more accurately be considered one site with a low-density artifact scatter in the center. In order to address these questions, we examine the components and consider them in relation to each other. Plowzone excavation data provide the basis of this study.

If *known* houses are identifiable components, perhaps *suspected* houses would have components we could spot, too.

4. The Home Farm Quarter's components



Correspondence analysis (CA) of the plowzone ceramic assemblages creates groupings that may be interpreted as occupations, some centered around known and suspected houses (see Neiman and Smith, this session).

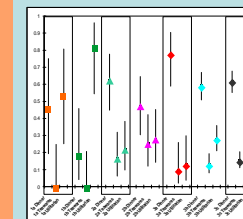
Site 7's results neatly isolated the Shadwell house, which is both earlier than the other occupations, and has a stylistically distinct ceramic assemblage. CA also suggests the overseer's house grouping, and two components probably relating to the Site 7 slaves' occupation.

On Site 8 the components are clearly not a simple spatial factor of house location or refuse dumps. Their distribution along a CA axis strongly linked to time indicates that there may be temporal factors that are separating households into multiple components.

The components for both sites have a strong temporal factor. Proportions of ceramic categories further our understanding of behavior at the site.

CA also underscores the stylistic and temporal differences between Sites 7 & 8, suggesting that it might be most accurate to consider them related but separate sites.

6. Domestic behavior and refuse patterns



Proportions of teawares, dinner wares, and utilitarian wares of CA groups from Site 8, plotted with their exact binomial confidence limits.

The proportions of teawares, dinner wares (other table-use vessels), and utilitarian wares reveal a pattern that is consistent in all CA groupings that partially overlie the known houses from Site 8 (Groups 2a, 2b, 3a-c). This configuration is highest in dinner wares, with utilitarian wares next in frequency, and with teawares least frequent. The remaining two CA groupings (1a and 1b) are not associated with known houses and present different patterns in ceramic wares. These CA groupings may represent middens, although it is possible that there are yet undiscovered houses associated with them.

The lack of high-richness middens and the quantity of diffuse artifact scatter on these sites may be indicative of refuse disposal practices that do not follow previously established models, such as the Arlo Guthrie trash-magnet effect (Wilk and Schiffer 1979:533).

Wilk, R. and M. B. Schiffer (1979) "The Archaeology of Vacant Lots in Tucson, Arizona." *American Antiquity* (33) 3:530-536.

7. Site definition

STPs provide sufficient data for an acceptable level of site definition that is refined by quadrat excavation. A lack of feature discovery, however, due in part to the nature of the archaeological record, hampers the ready view of the complete character of the site. A nuanced analysis of plowzone assemblages in part makes up for the information that remains missing in our sample and is able to pose questions of patterns of behavior at the site.

