

The following chapter is from:

The Archaeology of North Carolina: Three Archaeological Symposia

Charles R. Ewen – Co-Editor

Thomas R. Whyte – Co-Editor

R. P. Stephen Davis, Jr. – Co-Editor

North Carolina Archaeological Council Publication Number 30

2011

Available online at:

<http://www.rla.unc.edu/NCAC/Publications/NCAC30/index.html>

GIVING VOICE TO A SILENT PAST: AFRICAN AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY IN COASTAL NORTH CAROLINA

Patricia Samford

The beginning of the African American past in North Carolina is a compelling story shrouded in mystery. When Sir Francis Drake's fleet arrived at Roanoke Island in June of 1586, hundreds of South American Indians and Africans taken during Caribbean raids on the Spanish were aboard the ships (Mobley 2003:21; Crow et al. 1992:1). As promised, Drake granted them freedom, but from there, what little we know about them comes to an end. Doubtless some succumbed to disease or accidents, while the remainder dispersed, forming communities on their own or joining with the region's native cultures, over time vanishing into the larger Native American population. The culmination of this diasporic tale, like that of the Lost Colony, will doubtlessly remain tantalizingly obscure.

This sixteenth-century mystery was in many ways analogous to researching what archaeology has revealed about North Carolina's African American past. Africans and their descendants were vital players in the Atlantic world system that carved plantations and towns out of the pine forests and swamps of eastern North Carolina. Theirs were the hands hoeing the fields, swinging the axes that felled trees, hauling the seine nets filled with struggling shad or stirring the thick, hot tar—activities critical to the region's economy. Sites where African Americans lived and worked are scattered across what remains to this day a largely rural landscape, however fleeting or unrecognized these sites might be in the archaeological record. But, unlike the Africans released by Drake, whose fate will probably never be known, it is possible to learn about the African American through archaeology. Despite significant advances in the archaeological study of the African diaspora past in other states, North Carolina has only begun to tap this buried reserve of history. This essay will summarize the work that has occurred to date and make suggestions for future directions in research and analysis.

After a hiatus of almost a century, Africans reappeared in the wake of permanent settlement of the colony's eastern regions in the mid-seventeenth century (Watson 2005:xi). Numbers remained small throughout the seventeenth century, comprising only about four percent of the colony's population in 1700 (Watson 2005:xi). In the eighteenth century, North Carolina had the smallest proportion of Africans and African Americans of the American colonies, as well as one of the smallest slave populations overall (Kay and Cary 1995:2). Although never exceeding about 35% of the colony's population before the Revolutionary War, the coastal regions were home to the largest numbers of enslaved and free African Americans (Cecelski 2001:103). Governor Tryon remarked in 1765 that African Americans were "very numerous I suppose five to one White Person in the Maritime Counties" (Watson 2005:12). Forty thousand Africans and African Americans were enslaved in the colony by 1767, jumping to over 100,000 by the 1780s and over 330,000 by 1860 (Crow et al. 1992:3; 51, Cecelski 2001:103). While never approaching the size of the enslaved population, numbers of free blacks increased over time, particularly in urban areas like New Bern and Wilmington and in counties that bordered Virginia (Cecelski 2001:90).

African Americans worked in every endeavor that drove the eastern North Carolina economy: their skills and labor powered the agricultural economy, they were crucial in the naval stores and wood products industries, in maritime commerce and fishing, and in the building

trades. Understanding the formation and transformation of the black Atlantic world is crucial to comprehending the European colonial experience in North Carolina.

What has been learned archaeologically about eastern North Carolina's African American past? This paper concentrates on archaeological research done in the last twenty-five years on sites with African American components, with spatial parameters provided by Phelps' definition of Coastal Plain, encompassing 30 counties (Phelps 1983:3). Evidence was found of 41 sites, spread over 15 counties, with definite or likely African American components (Figure 11-1). Another 18 sites, from 8 counties, may contain African American components, unidentified as such in the reports. Sites fell within four primary categories: domestic (either slave quarters or late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tenant houses), freedman's communities, cemeteries and places of work. The scope of work at all these sites varied, ranging from limited identification-level surveys to intensive excavation and analysis. The limited number of sites recorded, the range of site types, and the varying degrees to which these sites have been explored did not allow for the emergence of any patterns.



Figure 11-1. Reconstructed slave quarter buildings at Somerset Plantation. In the right foreground is a small slave quarter; in the middle, with its gable end facing the photograph is a large quarter containing four rooms and designed to house four families. At the left side of the photograph is the reconstructed slave hospital. Photograph taken by author.

Loftfield and Stoner (1997) have proposed that the Lower Cape Fear, settled in the 1720s by planters and their enslaved labor force moving north from the South Carolina colony, should be considered an extension of that region. Following that line of reasoning, the northeastern region, settled from Virginia, should more closely resemble that colony in cultural and economic practices. Both British colonies with the same legal and religious structures, the Virginia Chesapeake and South Carolina low country were characterized by very different systems of staple agriculture, labor management practices, slave demographics and ecologies (Morgan 1998). How will these cultural and ecological differences manifest themselves archaeologically in North Carolina's coastal plain and what changes can be seen through time as the frontier develops into a mature society? Additionally, the coastal plain cannot be viewed as a mirror of

the Virginia and South Carolina colonies, since it followed different trajectories of colonization, with greater importance on naval stores production than rice and tobacco agriculture.

Research questions on sites with slave components have focused primarily on the material lives of the enslaved—their homes, their diet, and their material possessions. The most extensive archaeological investigations have taken place at Somerset Plantation (31WH14). Somerset, with one of the state's largest enslaved labor forces just prior to the Civil War, contained a core complex of slave support structures adjacent to the plantation house, including a chapel, kitchen, hospital, several two-story buildings housing four slave families each, and a row of one room cabins lining the shore of Lake Phelps. Archaeology aided in the reconstruction of quarters and a slave hospital. An archaeological overview of the plantation summarizes these projects as well as provides recommendations for future analysis and exploration (Penny 2003).

In the 1950s, archaeological trenching along the slave street under the direction of William S. Tarlton and J. C. Harrington revealed the foundations of the chapel, hospital, kitchen, meat house, furnace and overseer's house. Several of these structures were explored more fully in 1994 and 2001 in preparation for reconstruction and interpretation of the enslaved community (Steen 2003:35). Post-bellum use of the "Slave Street" structures as tenant housing and the 1950s archaeological trenching had destroyed much antebellum occupation data, but overall, results supported the historically documented interest of Josiah Collins in scientific plantation management. The kitchen, with its disproportionately large chimney and hearth, was capable of large-scale food preparation for the plantation's 300-plus slaves. Adjacent to the kitchen, a large furnace and cistern structure were suited for the processing of hogs and other livestock into fresh and cured meat products, as well as laundering linens and clothing. The physical and spiritual well-being of the enslaved, at least in Collins' mind, was provided for by the hospital and chapel.

The two excavated quarters did yield some insight into the daily lives of Somerset's enslaved labor force, although the scope of work prepared by North Carolina's State Historic Sites limiting excavation to the footprint of the two structures severely restricted the quality and quantity of data gathered. A large two-story quarter (20x40ft.) originally housing four extended families and one of the line of smaller lakefront quarters (18x18ft.) were excavated (Figure 11-1). The late eighteenth-century one-room structure, occupied through the end of the Civil War, was not as substantially constructed as the larger quarter, resting on shallow brick piers and containing a brick chimney. A deep ditch or drainage running along the rear of both structures had been backfilled with building destruction debris that also included late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century English refined earthenware, bottle glass, machine cut and wrought nails, buttons and other domestic debris.

Almost 90,000 artifacts¹ were recovered during the excavations of the chapel, kitchen, hospital and large and small quarters (Steen 2003:72). Categorizing these artifacts using Stanley South's Carolina Artifact pattern (South 1977) revealed that approximately 95% of the artifacts from each structure were either architectural or kitchen-related (Steen 2003:64). Steen attributes these proportions to the "inability of the occupants of the site to participate fully in a money-based consumer society" (Steen 2003:71).

Additional projects on the enslaved community buildings were conducted in 1981 and 1982 in the context of archaeological field schools. Analysis for these two projects—for which no reports have been completed—needs to be undertaken, particularly in conjunction with the results of the later excavations. cursory analysis at best has occurred on Somerset's archaeological assemblages and re-analysis of collections would provide excellent data, particularly when combined with the large extant documentary record of the plantation. As one

of the first plantations to subscribe to scientific principles of farm management, Somerset Plantation makes a great case study for comparison with nineteenth-century plantations in Virginia and South Carolina. While the plantation's home quarter has been studied archaeologically, the sizeable enslaved population at Somerset would have required a number of outlying quarters. The vast landholdings that once comprised Somerset Plantation remain rural and little changed from the antebellum period. Locating these outlying quarters should be a priority—examining them would provide data with which to address questions about the differential treatment and quality of life for enslaved laborers who worked far from the main plantation house and the attention of the slave owner.

While excavation at Somerset has been extensive, other investigations have located grouped quarters on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century plantations. Quarters were generally sited on marginal land at the borders of agricultural fields. At Clermont, the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century quarters (31CV350) lined the edge of a ravine that divided the main plantation complex from agricultural fields (Samford 2002). At the Neils Eddy tract in Columbus County, six discrete clusters of late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century domestic artifacts (31CB89-93, 31CB98) were located 800 feet from a contemporaneous plantation house overlooking the Cape Fear River (Lautzenheiser et al. 1997). Although plantation ownership could not be ascertained, the history of the Lower Cape Fear favors rice and naval stores as the economic products of this plantation. These sites were situated in a manner suggestive of two lines of buildings flanking a road. No subsurface structural remains were indicated by remote sensing or shovel testing, but the architectural artifacts point to wooden structures either seated on brick piers or built using earthfast construction. A final, larger artifact scatter (31CB88), believed to represent the former site of an overseer's house, was situated on a slight rise 200 feet east of the quarters and in direct visual line of the quarters.

The placement of the Neils Eddy artifact scatters is reminiscent of a description of mid-nineteenth-century slave housing at the Richlands Plantation in Onslow County (Avirett 1901:46, cited in Tibbetts et al. 2008). The cypress log dwellings, each with a small garden plot and pig pen, were aligned along a road and spaced fifty feet apart. This linear arrangement of quarters became more common on larger plantations in the nineteenth century and appears to be related to planters' desires for greater control and surveillance over their enslaved workforce, as part of adherence to scientific principles of plantation management. Often these quarters would line the main road leading to the plantation house; standing examples of this arrangement exist at Boone Hall Plantation in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, and are also depicted in Thomas Coram's painting of Mulberry Plantation, circa 1770. These linear dwelling arrangements stand in stark contrast to the more organic form quarters often took in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Virginia, where structures were arranged in groups around a yard that contained work areas and gardens (Fesler 2004).

While some structures were originally built as housing for the enslaved, other buildings were later repurposed as slave housing. At the Onslow County plantation of middling planter John Spicer Jr., also located in the southeastern coastal plain, the enslaved labor force was active in farming, naval stores production, and animal husbandry (Southerlin 2007; Tibbetts et al. 2008). Excavations at this plantation found the remains of a log structure that may have been an early planter's dwelling (31ON1582), later reused as a quarter. This repurposing approach was also employed at the Eden House site (31BR52), where a seventeenth-century earthfast structure contained an early eighteenth-century slave occupation (Lautzenheiser et al. 1998).

Comparing quarter assemblages with artifacts from associated plantation houses reveals that quarters have lower numbers of artifacts, smaller quantities of brick, mortar, window glass and other architectural debris, higher proportions of tobacco pipes, and ceramic wares remarkably similar to those of the main house. The more limited range and number of personal possessions echoes the findings at Somerset Plantation, with commonly recovered items including cast iron cooking pots, lead shot, net weights, and items relating to personal adornment, like buttons and beads. While the ceramic types recovered at the Neils Eddy plantation house were similar to overseer and quarter assemblages,² the range of vessel forms was disparate. With 16 vessel forms ranging from punchbowls, plates, drainers and castors, to butterpots and milkpans, the planter assemblage yielded over twice as many vessel forms as the quarter sites (Lautzenheiser et al. 1997). If slave owners were recycling outdated and no longer fashionable ceramics to their labor force, they perhaps felt no need to send specialized vessels for cooking and presentation to the quarter, rather sending plates and bowls that could be easily repurposed by the enslaved. For example, bowls originally produced for serving alcoholic punch were found in planter, overseer and slave assemblages; but were likely used differently by each group. The prevalence of hollow vessel forms, like small bowls and cups, on quarter sites, has been attributed in part to the preference for meat and vegetable stews, served with starchy sides and sauces (Yentsch 1994; Franklin 2001). Additionally, the enslaved may have rejected the more specialized vessel forms, finding little use for these items.

Second quality, re-used, and handmade items from quarter sites reinforce conclusions about the limited access to consumer goods and the marginal economic status of enslaved Africans during this period. A creamware plate whose underside was unglazed as the result of a manufacturing error was found at one of the Neils Eddy quarter sites (Lautzenheiser et al. 1997:99). This item—sold as a second—may have been obtained by the planter for use at the quarter or purchased by the enslaved because of its lowered cost. A number of reworked metal buttons were found at Somerset; after the loop fasteners had broken, holes had been punched through the metal button faces so they could be re-used (Steen 2003:160). Despite the minimal cost of earthenware tobacco pipes, the occurrence of handmade reed-stem pipes in the Somerset slave assemblage suggests that access to manufactured consumer goods may have been limited (Steen 2003:160). Ten percent of the tobacco pipes recovered from the late eighteenth-century Hobson-Stone House quarter were locally made (Madsen et al. 2002:43). More work is needed to determine how much the remote nature of these plantations and lack of access to merchants affected the range of consumer goods found on these quarters.

Other categories of material goods yield insight into the lives of enslaved African Americans. Despite laws against slave literacy, a stoneware ink bottle, slate pencils and slate tablets bearing traces of engraved letters and numbers found at the Somerset quarters speak of attempts by the enslaved to resist these restrictions (Steen 2003:160, 181).

Another type of artifact often associated with resistance is colonoware—low-fired, unglazed earthenware often found in association with eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century African American quarter sites on North Carolina's coastal plain. Carnes-McNaughton and Beaman's (2005) analysis of North Carolina colonowares revealed that this ceramic is also found in small quantities on urban sites in New Bern, Brunswick Town, Bath, Halifax, and Edenton.

North Carolina colonowares are generally undecorated hollow vessels like bowls or cooking pots, some with burnished interior or exterior surfaces. A very small percentage display rim decorations—scalloping, punctuations, incising or chevrons. A colonoware plate whose rim shape imitated the royal rim popular on Staffordshire creamware of the period was found at the

overseer's dwelling at Neils Eddy (Figure 11-2) and a similarly shaped plate was recovered from Brunswick Town (Lautzenheiser et al. 1997:89; Loftfield and Stoner 1997:8). As in Virginia, colonoware rarely forms more than 5% of a site's total ceramic assemblage (Carnes-McNaughton and Beaman 2005). One notable exception was the quarter at the Hobson-Stone House (31BR187), where colonoware comprised 54% of the structure's ceramic assemblage (Madsen et al. 2002:45). Its presence around the plantation kitchen indicated the use of colonoware by enslaved cooks in meal preparation for the Stone family. Because it was found in such sizeable quantities at this site, colonoware may have been produced there. Stanley South, first encountering colonoware at Brunswick Town, believed this ceramic was produced by Native Americans and traded to colonists (South 1977), while other scholars feel that it was produced by enslaved people of African descent. Colonowares embody the multicultural nature of North Carolina's plantations, where cultural traditions from West and Central Africa, Europe and the native peoples of the region interacted to create new societies based in shared cultural ideas.

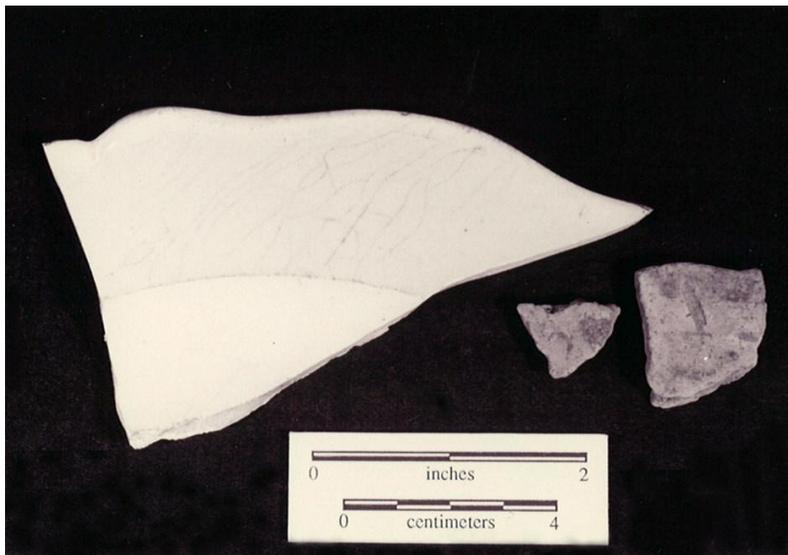


Figure 11-2. On the left is a royal rim creamware plate and to the right are two colonoware sherds showing the same royal rim shape. All three fragments are from the Neils Eddy site (31CB88) in Columbus County. Photo courtesy of Coastal Carolina Research, Tarboro.

Regardless of the manufacturers of these wares, studies should be undertaken to examine how this ceramic functioned within the context of coastal plantations and in urban areas. In addition to use in preparing and consuming food, did some of the colonowares appear to be serving spiritual or magical functions like those inferred by Leland Ferguson (1992) in South Carolina? Were the enslaved producing colonoware out of a remembered cultural tradition and preference, or did lack of access to manufactured goods force them to produce colonowares? Do we see colonoware production continuing later in the Lower Cape Fear, whose large plantations concentrated the enslaved and isolated them from frequent contact with whites?

Foodways is another interpretively rich area where analysis is needed. At Williamsburg's Rich Neck Plantation, Maria Franklin (2001) charted the development of an Afro-Virginian identity through changes in subsistence strategies during the eighteenth century. Were the enslaved in North Carolina following a similar track, adapting new plant and animal species encountered in the coastal plain with the remembered tastes of West and Central Africa

in the creation of a creolized cuisine? Natalie Adams' work at an outlying slave cabin (31CB110) at the Neils Eddy Plantation suggested that the naval stores workers living there relied heavily on fish and turtle, easily caught in the nearby river and creeks, and small mammals that were snared or trapped. The absence of deer and wild birds suggests that the workers had no access to firearms (Adams 2001). Similar results were noted at the Martindale-McGinnis Quarter in New Hanover County. The faunal remains included primarily wild species—turtle and wild turkey, as well as clams (Basedow 2001). It remains to future excavations to determine whether this reliance on non-domesticated meat sources, presumably acquired by the enslaved on their own time, is a pattern that holds across the coastal plain. Future excavations should incorporate sampling strategies and analysis of paleobotanical remains—seeds, pollen and phytoliths—to provide a more complete picture of food resources and preferences.

Architectural influences on African American sites in the coastal plain seem to encompass a spectrum of traditions that reflect the manner of settlement. Eighteenth-century quarters in the northeastern counties share similarities with sites in the Virginia tidewater—specifically in the traditions of impermanent earthfast housing and the use of subfloor pits—holes cut through the floors of quarters and used for the storage of food and personal possessions, as well as meeting spiritual needs as shrines. Subfloor pits have been found in Carteret County and on two sites in Bertie County—the Eden House Site and Bal Gra Plantation—in structures whose historical contexts suggest they were housing the enslaved (Jacobsen et al. 2008; Lautzenheiser et al. 1998). These sites, all located in northeastern counties, date to the first half of the eighteenth century, when this area was being settled by colonists from Tidewater Virginia, and appear to represent a continuation of building traditions brought into the coastal plain. Other regional architectural differences are apparent. The limited excavations at the Hobson-Stone House quarter suggested that it may have been a mud-walled structure (Madsen et al. 2002:46). Although more typical of South Carolina, mud-walled structures have been documented as far north as the Virginia Piedmont (Morgan 1998) and may be evidence of West Indian influences at this plantation. Other differences appear to be reflective of available building materials—at the Martindale-McGinnis Quarter in New Hanover County, the chimney base was constructed with a combination of ballast stone, coquina and local coral (Basedow 2001). Use of these materials is more typical in colonies further to the south, including Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, as well as the Caribbean.

A secondary research focus has been on the expression and transformation of African-based spiritual traditions, with the examination of possible spiritual caches recovered at the Bellamy Quarter and the Eden House quarter (David Jones, personal communication, 2005; Lautzenheiser et al. 1998). A young raccoon buried by the front door of the Martindale-McGinnis Quarter may have been placed there for ritual purposes (Basedow 2001). An early twentieth-century pierced Mexican centavo from a tenant farm (31CO137) almost certainly occupied by African Americans suggests the continuation of folk traditions of wearing charms for protection and healing (Russ and Seibel 2008; Davidson 2004).

Several Civil War-era freedman's communities have been located – Craven County's James City (31CV60) and Pocomoke (31NH500) in New Hanover County—with extensive archaeological work occurring at James City (Postlewaite and Seibel 2007; Wheaton 2002). The exact location of the freedman's community established on the northern end of Roanoke Island remains unknown, but was once home to over 3,500 residents in homes built on individual lots (Click 2001). A Phase I survey of a former plantation that became an African American community known as Hillfield in Jones County occurred in late 2008 (Joel Hardison, personal

communication, 2008). Also interesting are two free black communities—Craven Corner and Davis Ridge—founded in the late eighteenth century by African Americans who gained their freedom through military service during the Revolutionary War (Cecelski 2001). No archaeological investigation has taken place at these communities, but work there could shed light on the poorly understood early history of free blacks in the coastal plain.

After the Civil War, coastal North Carolina retained its agricultural economy with cotton and corn remaining the dominant crops until diversification occurred at the end of the century. Single owner plantations were often transformed into leased farms, heralding a system of tenant farming and sharecropping that lasted well in to the twentieth century. A number of survey projects have recorded tenant farms (Russ and Seibel 2008; Southerlin 2002; Fesler and Laird 2006); in some cases, with houses still standing in varying degrees of disrepair. Recent investigations at the Benbury family property at Sandy Point in Chowan County attempted to reconstruct the transformation of a large antebellum plantation to tenancy based on archaeological data and historical research (Russ and Seibel 2008). No additional archaeological work was recommended for the tenant and sharecropper domestic sites identified in these survey projects, despite studies (Stine 1989) that have shown that these sites can provide important information on social inequality, race and gender roles during Reconstruction and the early twentieth century.

The very nature of many domestic sites associated with individuals and families of reduced economic means—the enslaved, free blacks and post-bellum tenants both white and black, for example—have tended to preclude the recovery of data through archaeology. These sites often appear as low-density scatters of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artifacts. While recorded in archaeological identification and evaluation surveys, generally no additional archaeological work is recommended due to low feature densities and the effects of centuries of plowing. These sites should not be dismissed out of hand as ineligible for further investigation. Several sites from Maryland and North Carolina serve as examples of why low density sites deserve attention. A 1770s plat map documents the location of all plantation buildings, including the slave quarter, at the Smith's St. Leonard Plantation in Calvert County, Maryland (Grow 2006). Sixteen shovel tests placed systematically across the quarter site yielded only 86 artifacts—an average of five per shovel test. Excavation at the site over the last two summers has revealed structural postholes, possible subfloor pits, and a spread of domestic midden.

Closer to home, in Columbus County, Natalie Adams excavated a domestic site (31CB110) associated with naval stores laborers. Earlier survey work recovered 65 artifacts from surface collection and 224 from two test units. During data recovery, Adams located a 15 x 13.5' earthfast structure with an outdoor hearth and two exterior storage pits (Adams 2001). While the total number of artifacts recovered from this site was small, the assemblage did yield an interesting glimpse into the material life and diet of these isolated workers. It also allowed Adams to address larger questions about the relationships between the staple economy, slave demographics and slave lives, despite the small material footprint left behind at this site.

It is imperative that these low density sites not be dismissed out of hand. Large quantities of artifacts are not necessarily a prerequisite for site significance. Those portions of the population less well represented in the documentary record are the same individuals who are occupying these low artifact and feature density sites. Archaeology is one of the few ways to get at these undocumented histories. Archaeologists need to properly evaluate these low density sites at a Phase II level and recommend data recovery where it appears that subsurface features exist and where documents suggest that the African-American components are present. Because

many quarter and tenant sites were located in areas later subjected to plowing, it is also imperative not to strip sites with a backhoe—instead formulate research designs that include adequate plowzone sampling. Combining the lessened probability that low density sites will be recommended for further work with the lack of serious consideration plowzone sites are often accorded creates a death knell for many sites that could provide us with valuable data on African American past.

Even identifying sites of significance is no guarantee that they will be studied or preserved. A case in point was the work done in advance of the expansion of the New Bern-Craven County Public Library. Excavations uncovered the remains of a probably eighteenth- and nineteenth-century urban quarter in the town's National Register Historic District (Espenshade and Elliott 1990). Despite recommendations by project archaeologists and the North Carolina Division of Archives and History that data recovery occur, the timely completion of the library project was deemed more important and the site was destroyed without further investigation (North Carolina Historical Commission 1990; Brook 1990). In addition, the 1882 "Gray's New Map of New Berne" shows the current library site to the location of an African American school, which was apparently never explored archaeologically before the initial construction of the library in the 1960s (Gray 1882).

While there is a need to dig more domestic sites, archaeologists should also be encouraged to think beyond plantation quarters as places where we can learn about the African American past. The wide variety of occupations where African Americans—both free and enslaved—spent long hours laboring is another area of interest. Enslaved and free blacks were a large presence in coastal urban areas like Wilmington, Edenton and New Bern. Here, they labored not only as domestics, but were predominant in the markets and along the waterfronts in industrial endeavors including turpentine and rosin distilleries, shipbuilding, saw mills, grist mills and tanneries. Excavations along the Neuse River waterfront in New Bern revealed traces of an eighteenth-century tannery and a late nineteenth-century turpentine distillery (Garrow and Joseph 1985), both industries where African American labor was critical.

The heyday of black maritime activity along North Carolina's coast and inland waterways began around 1800 and lasted through Reconstruction (Cecelski 2001:xviii). As shown by David Cecelski in *The Waterman's Song* (2001), African Americans were not only on the water catching fish, but living and working onshore in commercial fisheries often employing over fifty men and women in a variety of tasks: fishing, mending nets, cutting fish, and making barrels (Figure 11-3). Commercial fisheries on the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds began to appear in the mid-eighteenth century and remained a thriving endeavor for over a century (Cecelski 2001:85, 102). African Americans were also employed in the production of salt, critical for preserving fish, as well as meats. Others worked in lumbering or wood-related occupations—with seasonal camps set up along the banks of the Dismal Swamp canal by laborers producing shingles from the dense cypress and juniper stands there.

Although one of the challenges will be locating sites associated with these occupations, they are out there. At the Sandy Point property in Chowan County, a site was discovered in the vicinity of the former Benbury family fishery (31CO133), a facility documented in oral history and census data (Russ and Seibel 2008:7.2). Recent work at the Sloop Point Site (31PD296) in Pender County recorded the remains of a salt pan and evidence of the pitch and turpentine work

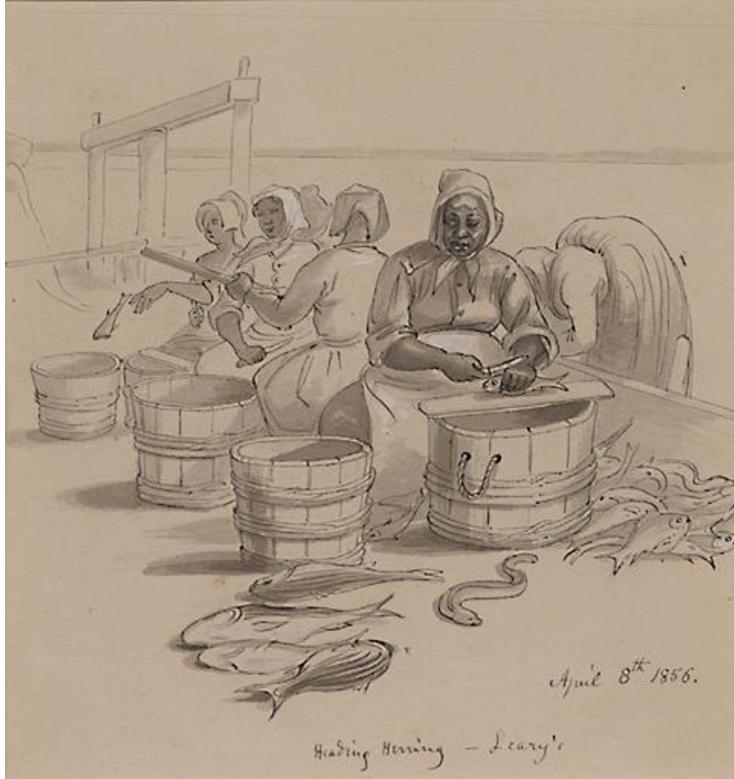


Figure 11-3. African American women removing the heads from herring at a North Carolina fishery. David Hunter Strother, April 8th, 1856. West Virginia Regional and History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

that occurred there (Di Gregorio and Seibel 2004). At the Clear Run Plantation (31SP300*1) in Sampson County, excavations have taken place on the farm's blacksmith and cooper shop; a turpentine distillery was known to exist on this 1700 acre property (Brady et al. 1998). A number of tar kilns have been recorded in the Croatan National Forest and near one of these kilns was a small scatter of late eighteenth-century artifacts (31CR342)—perhaps representing a housing site for workers (Snedeker et al. 2006; Hardison 2006). There appears to be movement from archaeologists in exploring these types of sites: one example is a recent proposal to create a predictive model for locating sites of runaway slaves and other African American settlements in the Dismal Swamp (McLean and Garland 2008). While these sites may be difficult to locate, documentary evidence suggests that there should be discernible archaeological footprints. In 1784, J. F. D. Smyth (1784:102) wrote that runaway slaves lived successfully in the Dismal Swamp, “for twelve, twenty or thirty years and upwards, subsisting... upon corn, hogs, and fowls” (Figure 11-4).

The analytical frameworks that have dominated research in the field of African American archaeology over the last several decades—those of cultural identity, class, race, cultural interaction and change, relations of power and domination, and the socio-politics of archaeological practice—have largely been ignored in North Carolina and deserve attention. In what ways do we see North Carolina's African Americans resisting oppression and racism? In addition to looking at African American/white relationships, we need to address the more hidden world of African American relationships, including those within communities and between kin, the informal economy of slaves and the more formal social and economic networks that developed after the Civil War (Penningroth 2003). Also of interest is the emergence of African



Figure 11-4. Artist David Hunter Strother drew this camp in Virginia's Dismal Swamp in 1856. It may provide an idea of the appearance of maroon settlements in the swamp. West Virginia Regional and History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

Americans as active participants in consumer society and the role of material culture in creating and maintaining individual and community identities (Mullins 1999).

Comparative studies are needed. In addition to the re-analysis of Somerset, there are collections from a number of North Carolina sites that contain as-yet unidentified African American components. Brunswick Town, Bath, New Bern, and Edenton were early North Carolina towns with sizeable enslaved and free black populations. Reanalysis of the field notes and artifacts, informed by more recent advances in African American archaeology, could reveal collections associated with urban slavery and the lives of free African Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is important that revisiting previously-excavated collections be done and that there be a streamlined, uncomplicated process to facilitate these studies.

The archaeological study of North Carolina's African American past holds great potential for understanding the history of the coastal plain and as archaeologists we have the capacity to further this research. Since African Americans did not exist in isolation, we should frame our "research in such a way as to illuminate the complex social relations that bound people together...in positive, negative, and ambivalent ways" we can begin to address questions of significance (Wilkie 2004:111). This research should include how African Americans, both free and enslaved, resisted racial subordination, how personal and cultural identities were created, maintained, and transformed through time, and how material culture was used in these processes. We also need to remain cognizant of the political nature of doing African American archaeology (Blakey 1997), issues of archaeological authorship, and how archaeological knowledge is

created. It is imperative that our research become culturally and politically inclusive, remaining sensitive to the needs of the public.

Acknowledgments. I would like to thank a number of people who were critical in helping me complete the first version of this paper, presented in Greenville at the Coastal Plains Conference in the fall of 2008, and then, later, the revised version for publication.. My thanks go out to Dolores Hall and Lynn Flora of the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Susan Bamann of Coastal Carolina Research, Victor Jones, Jr., Special Collections Librarian at the Kellenberger Room of the New Bern-Craven County Public Library, Ed Chaney at the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory, David Jones and Joel Hardison. An anonymous reviewer offered comments and suggestions which expanded the scope and made this a better article. Last, but not least, Dr. Charles Ewen deserves kudos for organizing the 2008 conference, heading up the editing of the volume and for keeping me up to date on all the North Carolina gossip.

REFERENCES CITED

Adams, Natalie

2001 Pattern of Living: A View of the African American Slave Experience in the Pine Forests of the Lower Cape Fear. In *Another's Country; Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on Cultural Interactions in the Southern Colonies*, edited by J. W. Joseph and Martha Zierden, pp 65-78. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Avirett, James Battle

1901 *The Old Plantation; How We Lived in Great House and Cabin Before the War*. F. Tennyson Neely Company, New York.

Basedow, Maureen

2001 The Martindale-McGinnis Excavation New Hanover County. Electronic document, www.uncwil.edu/people/basedow/mm/home.html, accessed January 12, 2005.

Blakey, Michael

1997 Past is Present: Comments on "In the Realm of Politics: Prospects for Public Participation in African-American Plantation Archaeology". *Historical Archaeology* 31(3):140-145.

Brady, Ellen Mayo, Victoria L. Saxe, Clay Swindell, Daniel P. Lynch, and Loretta Lautzenheiser

1998 Archaeological Data Recovery site 31SP300*1* Clear Run Blacksmith-Cooper Shop, Sampson County, North Carolina (TIP B-1381, Federal Aid Project BRSTP-411(1)). Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., Tarboro, North Carolina. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Raleigh.

Brook, David

1990 Letter from David Brook to John M. Peterson, dated June 14, 1990. Letter on file at the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Carnes-McNaughton, Linda F. and Thomas E. Beaman, Jr.

2005 Enigmatic Earthenwares: A Comparative Catalog of (North) Carolina Colonowares. Paper presented at the 2005 Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Columbia.

Cecelski, David S.

2001 *The Waterman's Song; Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Click, Patricia C.

2001 *Time Full of Trial; The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Crow, Jeffrey, Paul D. Escott, and Flora J. Hatley

1992 *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*. North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Davidson, James

2004 Rituals Captured in Context and Time: Charm Use in North Dallas Freedman's Town (1869-1907), Dallas, Texas. *Historical Archaeology* 38(2): 22-54.

Di Gregorio, Giampaolo and Scott Seibel

2004 *An Intensive Cultural Resource Investigation of the Proposed Sloop Point Development Pender County, North Carolina*. Environmental Services, Inc. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Espenshade, Christopher T. and Rita Folse Elliott

1990 *Archaeological Testing at the Present Site and the Proposed New Site of the Gabriel Rains House, New Bern, North Carolina*. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Ferguson, Leland

1992 *Uncommon Ground; Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Fesler, Garrett

2004 Living Arrangements Among Enslaved Women and Men at an Early-Eighteenth-Century Virginia Quarters Site. In *Engendering African American Archaeology; A Southern Perspective*, edited by Jillian E. Galle and Amy L. Young pp. 177-236. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Fesler, Garrett and Matthew R. Laird

2006 *A Phase II Archaeological Significance Evaluation of Site 31PQ137 at Harvey Point Defense Testing Facility, Perquimans County, North Carolina*. Manuscript on file, James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc., Williamsburg.

Franklin, Maria

2001 Archaeological and Symbolic Dimensions of Soul Food. In *Race and the Archaeology of Identity*, edited by Charles Orser, Jr., pp. 88-107. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City.

Garrow, Patrick H. and J. W. Joseph

1985 *Historical and Archaeological Investigations of the New Bern Motor Inn Site, New Bern, North Carolina*. Manuscript on file, Tryon Palace, New Bern.

Gray, O. W. and Son

1882 Gray's New Map of New Berne. O. W. Gray and Son, Philadelphia. Map on file, North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

Grow, Jessie

2006 *Excavations at the Smith's St. Leonard Site (18CV91)*. Manuscript on file, Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum, St. Leonard.

Hardison, Joel

2006 *Heritage Resources Survey for the Proposed Black Cherry Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Treatment Area Compartment 15, Croatan Ranger District, Croatan National Forest, Craven County, North Carolina*. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Jacobsen, Karisa, Clay Swindell, Charles Heath, Nicholas Lucchetti, Garrett Fesler, and Matt Laird

2008 *A Phase I and Phase II Cultural Resources Survey of Bal Gra, Bertie County, North Carolina (Volumes I and II)*. Manuscript on file, James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc., Williamsburg.

Kay, Marvin L. Michael and Lorin Lee Cary

1995 *Slavery in North Carolina 1748-1775*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Lautzenheiser, Loretta, Thomas Hargrove, Jane McManus Eastman, Patricia Samford, Jody Carter, and Mary Ann Holm

1997 Archaeological Testing Neils Eddy Tract International Paper Riegelwood Operations Reigelwood Columbus County, North Carolina. Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., Tarboro. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Lautzenheiser, Loretta E., Patricia Samford, Jaquelin Drane Nash, Mary Ann Holm, and Thomas Hargrove

1998 *"I Was Moved of the Lord to Go to Carolina": Data Recovery At Eden House, Site 31BR52, Bertie County, North Carolina*. Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., Tarboro, North Carolina. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Loftfield, Thomas C. and Michael Stoner

1997 Brunswick Town Colonowares Re-Examined. *North Carolina Archaeology* 46:6-15.

McLean, Wanda E. Hunt and Anne Garland

2008 *The Neuse River: Watersheds, Waterways and Wetlands*. Manuscript on file, Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory, St. Leonard.

Madsen, Andrew, Rebecca A. Madsen and Loretta Lautzenheiser

2002 *The Halifax Road and Hope Plantation: An Archaeological Investigation to Determine the Influence of Transportation on the Slave Community of the Antebellum South*. Manuscript on file, Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., Tarboro.

Mobley, Joe editor

2003 *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Morgan, Philip D.

1998 *Slave Counterpoint; Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Mullins, Paul

1999 Race and the Genteel Consumer: Class and African-American Consumption, 1850-1930. *Historical Archaeology* 33(1): 22-38.

North Carolina Historical Commission

1990 Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, North Carolina Historical Commission, Raleigh, North Carolina, April 5, 1990. On file at the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Penningroth, Dylan C.

2003 *The Claims of Kinfolk; African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Penny, Robert

2003 *A Historical and Archaeological Overview of Somerset Plantation*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of Anthropology East Carolina University, Greenville,.

Phelps, David

1983 Archaeology of the North Carolina Coast and Coastal Plain: Problems and Hypothesis. In *The Prehistory of North Carolina: An Archaeological Symposium*, edited by Mark A. Mathis and Jeffrey J. Crow, pp. 1-52. North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Postlewaite, Matt and Scott Seibel

2007 An Intensive Archaeological Investigation at the Sutton Steam Plant, New Hanover County, North Carolina. Environmental Services, Raleigh, North Carolina. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Russ, Terri and Scott Seibel

2008 *Archaeological Investigations at Sandy Point, Chowan County, North Carolina*. Environmental Services, Inc. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Samford, Patricia

2002 *Archaeological Testing at Clermont Plantation (31CV350), June 2002*. Manuscript on file at Tryon Palace New Bern.

Smyth, J. F. D.

1784 *A Tour in the United States of America*. Price, Monfrieffe.

Snedecker, Rodney, Lorie M. Hansen and Megan Best

2006 *Heritage Resources Survey for the Proposed Lime Timber Sale, Croatan National Forest, Craven and Carteret Counties, North Carolina*. National Forests in North Carolina, Asheville. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

South, Stanley

1977 *Method and Theory in Historical Archaeology*. Academic Press, New York.

Southerlin, Bobby

2002 *Intensive Archaeological Survey of the Duplin County Agricultural Business Center, Duplin County, North Carolina*. With contributions by Michael K. O'Neal, Sharon Penton, Joseph Sanders, Carrie Collins and David Jenkins. Brockington and Associates, Inc., Raleigh, North Carolina. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

2007 *Archaeological Evaluation of the 515 Acre Summerhouse Tract on Everett Bay Tract, Onslow County, North Carolina*. Archaeological Consultants of the Carolinas, Clayton, North Carolina. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Steen, Carl

2003 *Restoration Excavations at Somerset Place Plantation State Historic Site, 1994 and 2001*. North Carolina Archaeological Council Publication No. 28, Raleigh.

Stine, Linda France

1989 *Raised Up in Hard Times: Factors Affecting Material Culture on Upland Piedmont Farmsteads, circa 1900-1940s*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Tibbetts, Rachel, Bobby Southerlin, Dawn Reid, Kimberly Villemez, Michael K.O'Neal, Kimberly Schaeffer and C. Margaret Scarry

2008 *Data Recovery at 31ON1582: Early American Life on a Coastal Plantation Onslow County, North Carolina*. Archaeological Consultants of the Carolinas, Inc. Manuscript on file, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, Raleigh.

Watson, Alan D.

2005 *African Americas in Early North Carolina; a Documentary History*. Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh.

Wheaton, Thomas R.

2002 *Colonial African American Plantation Villages*. In *Another's Country; Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on Cultural Interactions in the Southern Colonies*, edited by J. W. Joseph and Martha Zierden, pp. 30-44. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Wilkie, Laurie

2004 Considering the Future of African American Archaeology. *Historical Archaeology*
38(1):109-123.

Yentsch, Anne

1994 *A Chesapeake Family and their Slaves; A Study in Historical Archaeology*. Cambridge
University Press, Cambridge.

NOTES

¹ This total does not include prehistoric artifacts, brick, mortar, shell, bone and charcoal.

² The planter assemblage contained 16 distinct ceramic types, while the overseer assemblage had 14 and the quarter site 12. From Lautzenheiser et. al 1997:106.