

ABSTRACT

FEKETTE, KIANA NICOLE. Beads, Buckles, Buttons, and Pipes: Embodiment of Identity at Somerset Place, NC. (Under the direction of Dr. Dru McGill).

Within the confines of slavery, nearly every aspect of an individual is controlled: their movement, their speech, their appearance. Expressing elements of identity through material culture was one form of rebellion practiced by enslaved people in the Americas, as messages of personal and communal identity can be conveyed on an overt and covert level. Although there are many ways in which enslaved people signaled identity through material goods, the most obtainable and visible ways was through items of adornment and personal use, such as buttons, beads, combs, tobacco pipes, and sewing notions. Drawing upon theories rooted in material culture studies, feminist archaeology, semiotics, and consumption, I analyze the artifacts of personal use and adornment recovered from two antebellum structures associated with enslaved life at Somerset Place, a large plantation in eastern North Carolina that was first established in the 1780s along the northern shore of Lake Phelps. The majority of such artifacts are plain and utilitarian in nature with little evidence for reuse or recycling, though differences in the quantity and type of artifacts recovered, as well as historical documentation, suggest that the enslaved occupants of one dwelling held higher status positions that afforded more opportunities to acquire and maintain material goods. Further study of personal use and adornment artifacts recovered from later excavations is recommended for additional insight into the presentation of identity among the enslaved Somerset Place population.

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Beads, Buckles, Buttons, and Pipes: Embodiment of Identity at Somerset Place, NC.

by
Kiana Nicole Fekette

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Dru McGill
Committee Chair

Dr. Julie Wesp

Dr. John Millhauser

BIOGRAPHY

For as long as she can remember, Kiana Fekette has been fascinated by early modern history and material culture. As a young kid, her dream job was to be a costumed interpreter at Colonial Williamsburg. She double majored in history and archaeology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in 2016. She spent her junior year abroad at University College Dublin in Ireland where she took courses on medieval archaeology and early modern European history. While at UNC, she worked as a student assistant in the special collections conservation laboratory and originally wished to pursue a career in book and paper conservation. After a few years during which she took a break from academia, she enrolled at North Carolina State University to earn a graduate degree in anthropology with a focus in archaeology. She hopes to continue working in the cultural heritage sector. Kiana currently lives in Raleigh, NC with her partner and their two rambunctious cats.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Anthropology of Adornment and Identity	3
Chapter 2: Historical Overview of Somerset Place	13
The African-American Community at Somerset Place	20
Chapter 3: Archaeological Exploration and Methods of Artifact Classification.....	27
Excavation Overview.....	28
Curation, Methods, and Preliminary Analysis.....	41
Description of Common Personal Artifact Type Categories	47
Buttons	47
Buckles.....	50
Beads.....	52
Tobacco Pipes	53
Chapter 4: Presentation of Personal Artifacts from Two Excavation Seasons.....	55
Somerset Place Structure 1 (1981).....	55
Somerset Place Structure 2 (1982).....	63
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions	74
References.....	83
Appendix.....	89

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	1981 Excavated Units and Features	32
Table 2	1982 Excavated Units, Test Pits, and Features	36
Table 3	Mean Ceramic Dates by Level (1981).....	38
Table 4	Mean Ceramic Dates for Features (19821)	38
Table 5	Mean Ceramic Dates by Level (1982).....	40
Table 6	Mean Ceramic Dates for Features (1982)	40
Table 7	Artifact Counts from 1981 and 1982 by Wilson and Hughes	42
Table 8	Total Artifact Counts by Classification Category	45
Table 9	One-piece Metal Button Material, Shank Type, and Date Ranges.....	49
Table 10.1	Structure 1 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, Level One.....	55
Table 10.2	Structure 1 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, Level Two	60
Table 10.3	Structure 1 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, Level Three	62
Table 10.4	Structure 1 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, Level Four	62
Table 11.1	Structure 2 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, Level One/Mixed	63
Table 11.2	Structure 2 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, Level Two	65
Table 11.3	Structure 2 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, Levels Three and Four	68

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Detail of James Wimble map (1738) of North Carolina showing the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula	14
Figure 2	View of the great barn at Somerset Place, circa August 1938	15
Figure 3	An approximation of the grounds and buildings at Somerset Place.....	17
Figure 4	Circa 1910 photograph showing the shore of Lake Phelps and portions of the 1830s cabins	19
Figure 5	Main buildings at Somerset Place after 1830, and the locations of the 1981 and 1982 excavations	30
Figure 6	An example of how one large operational unit is divided into 24 sub-operational units	31
Figure 7	Wider excavation grid from 1981/1982 showing each numbered operational unit.....	32
Figure 8	1981 excavation map of the 32' x 20' structure located approximately 150 feet northwest of the main canal.....	34
Figure 9	1982 excavation map of Structure 2, a two-story dwelling built for four enslaved family units	37
Figure 10	Two tombac spun-back buttons.....	57
Figure 11	Probable decorative head of a metal hat or hair pen	58
Figure 12	Two HeadLight brand buttons in different stages of preservation.....	59
Figure 13	Assemblage of clay tobacco pipe fragments from the 1981 field season.....	61
Figure 14	Close up of clay tobacco pipe fragments with an unidentified maker's mark stamped on the heel	61
Figure 15	A tarnished brass button that was once covered with a bright yellow gilt	65
Figure 16	Back of President Andrew Jackson brass button, 1829.....	67
Figure 17	Glass tube bead with red and blue stripes	68
Figure 18	Slightly concave copper alloy button with a poorly preserved surface.....	70

Figure 19 Assemblage of metal buttons from Structure 2	71
Figure 20 Assemblage of tobacco pipe fragments from Structure 2	72
Figure 21 Bone awl recovered from Feature 47	73

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological studies of African enslavement in the Americas are far from an obscure area of study, yet the potential of analyzing artifacts related to personal use and adornment of the body remains underutilized at sites associated with African-American communities. Items of personal use and adornment include jewelry, buttons, toothbrushes, musical instruments, beads, and sewing notions like thimbles and needles; even the most humble of these objects has the potential to reveal elements of cultural and personal identity through the acquisition, use, and manipulation of material culture. The cultural ideals of the enslaver is forced upon the enslaved, necessitating the modification and reinvention of customs, practices, and beliefs to maintain a sense of personal identity, forge familial relationships, and provide meaning to a difficult life.

This adaptation of culture and identity is seen on plantations across the southeast at sites like Somerset Place, one of the largest plantation complexes in the upper south. Established by a group of wealthy European-American men shortly after the states gained independence in the American Revolutionary War, Somerset Place in eastern North Carolina was home to hundreds of enslaved African and African-American workers over its 80 years of operation.

Archaeological excavations of various structures associated with enslaved life have yielded thousands of artifacts that provide insight into the ways that workers adapted and formed lasting cultural connections that blend European, Native American, and African influences.

Drawing upon anthropological and cultural material studies of consumerism, agency, identity, and social relationships, I analyze the artifacts recovered from the remains of two dwellings constructed for enslaved workers of Somerset Place. I also rely on primary historical documentation such as ledgers, letters, and estate deeds to provide unique contextual evidence for the people whose cultural and spiritual identities are embedded in these recovered items.

Most of the artifacts are from European or European-American origin, but the variety of adornment and personal use objects indicates an active engagement of material culture in fashioning personal and communal identity at Somerset Place. In addition, artifact patterns at Somerset Place are similar to those found at contemporaneous plantation sites throughout the United States, adding additional evidence of shared elements of identity among enslaved African-Americans.

In Chapter 1, I highlight some of the anthropological theories surrounding the analysis of cultural identity including semiotics and identity, feminist archaeology, critical medical anthropology theory, and material consumption. I also discuss the ways in which enslaved African and African-American communities in North America utilized material goods to ascribe meaning, maintain a sense of communal identity, and practice elements of both African and Euro-American culture. The general history of the plantation that became Somerset Place is laid out in Chapter 2. I briefly discuss the origins of the plantation and the legacy of opulence fueled through enslavement that Josiah Collins I and his heirs maintained until the Civil War. In a separate section, I explore the limitations and opportunities that the enslaved population at Somerset Place had to express various elements of their identity through the purchase or acquisition of material culture.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 contain an overview of the archaeological excavations that took place between the 1950s and the 1980s. I summarize the original artifact counts as well as the count produced by the re-cataloging that took place in 2020-2021. I discuss the artifact assemblages, units, and features that are related to two buildings associated with enslaved life, and draw conclusions about the embodiment of identity and the level of agency afforded to the enslaved workers of Somerset Place.

CHAPTER 1

The Anthropology of Adornment and Identity

Items used to clothe the human body have utilitarian function. Clothes can act as a barrier against the cold or blistering sun, protect the body from injury, and provide a sense of modesty and security. But beyond the simple, practical purpose of clothes lies embedded meanings ranging from gendered expressions to cultural affiliation. However, understanding the overt and covert meanings behind clothing and adornment relies upon cultural and historical context. The exploration of semiotic themes in material culture, particularly adornment, is an increasingly popular method of analysis in the archaeological world because it allows researchers to “understand site inhabitants as participants in daily life in a more active and realistic manner” and allows for the understanding of how an individual expressed themselves as a singularity and as a group member (White 2008, 18).

Items of clothing and personal adornment do not often appear in the archaeological record for a number of reasons. Such items may be missed during excavation because they are usually very small, like pins for clothing, and decay rather quickly; clothing rarely survives except under specific conditions. Others may fall within categories of keepsake or recycled objects, when people take great care of precious possessions like jewelry. From the simple metal pin to the hand-carved jet necklace, people use items of personal adornment each day to signal societal status, to express one’s religious affiliation, to make a political statement, and for many other reasons. They were worn close to or directly on the body and are a physical presentation of the self to the outside world. More utilitarian objects like pins and bobbins fastened clothing to the body, anchored hats to hair, or were used in clothing production. The methods in which

people ascribe meaning to their clothing and adornment, as well as the reasons why, vary depending upon social and cultural context.

Humans are cultural beings that use material objects to provide mental stability, structure, and meaning to our lives in different ways; every culture uses material culture to make meaning. Anthropologist Daniel Miller (1998, 10) argues that objects hold meaning (they “matter”) within certain cultural situations and can shift in meaning depending upon who uses the object to prescribe meaning and who interprets the meaning. Although communication through language is more efficient, people’s creation and consumption of material culture conveys complex cultural and social meanings in a highly visible, semi-permanent way. These items hold particular significance to an individual or a group, communicating different meanings to the observer depending upon cultural, societal, and historical context (Miller 1987, 108). It is through material culture that humans may express elements of their identity, even within complex and sometimes restrictive social and power structures. As identity “is not simply who someone is but who someone *chooses* to be,” individuals or groups have *agency*, or the “capacity for action,” to both ascribe meaning to and gain meaning from material objects (George, Kurchin, and Britt 2019, 4-5).

The *act* of consumption also serves as a means of identity expression. Consumers have agency to choose which items to purchase or pass by, and to ascribe meaning to one object over another. Consumption “revolves around the acquisition of things to confirm, display, accent, mask, and imagine who we are and who we wish to be” (Mullins 2011, 135). However, consumption, agency of the consumer, and symbolism are “significantly influenced by dominant structural processes” that can be directly observed in the historical and archaeological record (Miller 1987, 108). This influence of dominant power and structural processes is particularly

noticeable in the context of consumption of made, purchased, and otherwise obtained material culture on plantations where access to goods like commodities was severely restricted within the bounds of slavery.

The institution of slavery was “a process of social transformation” in which a human became a commodity themselves to be sold or traded, eventually morphing into “less of a commodity and more of a singular individual in the process of gradual incorporation into the host society” (Kopytoff 1987, 65). To force assimilation into the host society, Euro-American slaveholders attempted to erase African identities and cultural values by changing people’s names to ones of English or Latin origin, subvert traditional gender roles, impose Christianity, and limit (or prohibit) the music, language, and customs of their homeland. Yet, elements of their original culture were maintained or adapted; this retention can be easily observed even today in the language, food, dance, music, and customs of different populations of African descent in the United States. One of the many ways in which enslaved people maintained their original cultural identities was through the use of symbolism in material goods (Ferguson 1992; Heath 1999; Gall et al. 2020; Samford 1996).

Symbolic material culture offers “control over the processes of the mind” and keeps “psychic entropy at bay” (Csikszentmihalyi 1993, 28). In particular, objects may demonstrate power and “give a permanent shape to our views of ourselves” (23). In situations of enslavement, individuals are physically controlled by the slaveholder but maintain authority over their internal thoughts and feelings. A shared identity among enslaved African Americans allowed for the creation of “strong communities that offered solidarity, spiritual comfort, and alternative access to goods and services from those controlled by the white population” (Wilkie

2000, 4). Although there are many ways that enslaved people signaled identity through material goods, items of adornment and personal use are particularly fruitful targets for analysis.

Archaeological studies of personal artifacts are uncommon in comparison to other material culture classes. However, recent research places more emphasis on these artifacts as useful for analysis due, in part, to a rising interest in new methods of examining anthropological topics like economy, gender, ethnicity, race, class, and identity. In particular, anthropological analysis of the human body as a vehicle for the expression of personal and group identity is a relatively new area of scholarship (White and Beaudry 2009, 209-211). Taking inspiration from feminist theory and critical medical anthropology theory, the study of material culture and identity is closely intertwined with embodiment and body politics. Our physical bodies are used to socially represent symbols that refer to nature and culture but are, at the same time, regulated, surveilled, and controlled through the institutions and people in power. This is particularly evident in slave societies where the slaveholder controls the enslaved by “[institutionalizing] means for producing docile bodies and pliant minds in the service of some definition of collective stability, health, and social well-being” (Lock and Scheper-Huges 1990, 517). Implementing sumptuary laws, providing European-American clothing and food, separating and uniting families, and physically marking bodies by branding or whipping are just some of the ways in which a slaveholder actively controlled the enslaved body in order to maintain an economically and politically productive society for themselves.

A number of exemplary studies showcase the relatively recent interest in adornment and identity. For example, at the 18th century Sherburne Site in New Hampshire, Carolyn White (2008) explores the physical performance and symbolic representation of Euro-American identity through 38 artifacts of adornment and personal use. She examines a number of artifacts

traditionally regarded as personal adornment (buckles, beads, buttons, etc.) as well as a copper alloy cosmetic spoon, noting that “many of the artifacts...are multivalent; they were used to express affiliations with multiple lines of identity” such as feminine or masculine ideals, European ethnicity, elite social status, and age (Ibid, 33).

Staying within the realm of colonial New England, Diana DiPaolo Loren focuses on one specific type of clothing and adornment artifact, the use of stone button molds, to answer larger questions about how 17th century colonists used clothing and adornment as “an extension” of their bodies as they reacted to and interacted with the social world (2018, 211). Her classification of adornment and personal use includes the objects and tools used in the creation of an embodied identity: hair combs, wig curlers, thimbles, stone button molds, needles, and lead fabric seals. Loren draws upon the themes discussed in Locke and Scheper-Hughes (1990) to frame her work, saying that

When I consider colonialism, my personal history reminds me of the laws, strictures, and agency of the individual and their body in relation to the institution. Thus, I situate the body at the center of my research on dress in the colonial world. The body was the corporeal space in which identity was created, materialized, sexualized, and embodied in the early modern world; it marked where you fit within colonial empires and the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion specific to the landscape in which you lived. (2018, 211).

This is an elaboration of her earlier book, *The Archaeology of Clothing and Bodily Adornment in Colonial America* (2010), in which Loren presents select artifacts at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology to explain the complex and often inconspicuous ways in which power, identity, and status played out among Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans. Loren argues that the mixing of different cultures, languages, and religions can be directly observed in the “hybrid fashion” of North America, and that “the objects of clothing and adornment [people] wore became part of their bodies and were integral to how they constructed their identities for

themselves and for others” (2010, 89-90). She also advises that researchers must consider that the “context and meaning” of small finds (pins, coins, buttons, aglets, etc.) may extend beyond their utilitarian function and represent “complex issues of identity” for the owner (*Ibid*, 72). Failure to consider the various intersections, influences, and contexts of the lived experience excludes important nuances of identity.

Combining the study of personal artifacts with questions of African American identity, researchers since the 1960s have made connections between artifacts found at sites of enslavement to cultural traditions found in Africa. Examples of unglazed earthenware directly from West Africa and interviews with formerly enslaved individuals indicate that handmade vessels found at many plantation sites are direct contributions of African tradition to American pottery that illustrate “the integrity of colonial African American culture and the tension of cultural differences between African American and European American colonists” (Ferguson 1992, 3). Caches of seemingly random objects — chalk, animal bones, beads, bottles — found in dwellings associated with enslaved people are “virtually identical” to objects used in West African spiritual traditions, providing evidence for symbolic cultural affiliation and active attempts to use material culture to “enrich their lives with articles of deep spiritual and cultural significance” (Samford 1996, 87-89). Hundreds of subfloor pits across Virginia plantation sites containing such items are theorized to be ancestor shrines used to communicate with deceased ancestors and ask for spiritual guidance, a practice also used by Igbo-speaking groups in West Africa (Samford 1999). Glass beads of all shapes, sizes, and colors are incredibly common finds at dwelling sites on plantations and were frequently traded along the Gambia River, where they were worn to signal wealth and superior social status (Gijanto 2011; Lee 2011).

Acquisition of symbolic material culture depended upon the availability and accessibility of goods. Any basic necessities, including clothing, were chosen and allocated by the slaveholder; yet, as Lindsay Bloch and Anna Agbe-Davies explain, the provisioning of basic goods by slaveholders often does not account for the quantity and type of items found at plantation sites:

While some degree of provisioning was practiced on most Southern plantations, in which the planter provided regular rations of basic foodstuffs and yearly allotments of items such as clothing or blankets, provisioning does not account for the quantity and variety of manufactured goods found on domestic sites occupied by enslaved individuals. Instead, enslaved Africans and African Americans availed themselves of local markets. Legislation in Virginia and elsewhere sought to limit the ability of slaves to participate in the market, as buyers or sellers, but was largely ignored. Slaves purchased consumer goods with cash earned through paid labor or the sale of items they produced or collected. Labor and goods might also be exchanged for credit. (Bloch and Agbe-Davies 2017, 122).

Enslaved laborers using cash, credit, or trade made their own purchases to supplement rations and obtain items that were perhaps not necessary for survival but otherwise desired for their aesthetic, functionality, and social value. Money or goods could be earned through the sale of fruits and vegetables, taking on extra tasks or artisan work, or by giving musical performances (Heath 1999, 62).

Excavations of slave cabins at Poplar Forest in Virginia yielded artifacts of personal use and identity such as buttons, beads, and fasteners that Barbara Heath (1999) uses to explore the ways in which enslaved peoples formed personal and collective identities at Poplar Forest in Virginia. As Heath points out, artifacts durable and common enough to survive in the archaeological record “are often found in contexts that relate to patterns of discard rather than use, or to post-depositional disturbances to sites such as plowing” (1999, 51). In this instance, relying on archaeological context is not sufficient. Thus, an understanding of the historical context behind late eighteenth and early nineteenth century clothing typically worn by enslaved

individuals is needed in order to make inferences about the meaning behind the over 150 artifacts of adornment and personal use recovered from Poplar Forest. Heath used descriptions of clothing, adornment, and hairstyles in runaway slave advertisements to examine how and when objects may have been used, how the frequency of certain types of objects may indicate varying degrees of social and economic mobility, and discern any regional differences in clothing and adornment. Of particular interest is the assemblage of buttons, of which Heath argues that the diversity of button types points to “episodic purchase by individuals [rather] than of purchase in bulk by the overseer for the entire slave population” (*Ibid*, 62). Within the confines of slavery, individuals had markers of identity imposed upon them by the enslaver but found ways to embody various other identities through the purchase and acquisition of adornment items.

Enslaved individuals also modified and recycled items of monetary or personal value for not only frugality, but to actively participate in a shared identity and impart deeper individualistic meaning. Seemingly mundane items could be transformed “into supernatural objects” to be used in religious or spiritual contexts (Davidson 2014, 52). At Oakley Plantation in Louisiana, African Americans “turned to personal ornamentation through material items” such as beads, buttons, and buckles when slaveholders denied the physical body modifications traditionally found throughout Africa (Wilkie 1994, 1). Pierced coins are found at many sites and were worn to ward off sickness, help with child teething, bring good luck, and offer protection (Lee 2011, 113-114). Through the active choice of acquiring, using, and reusing specific objects, enslaved individuals asserted their autonomy and passed along important information about personal identity and group affiliation.

However, as Patricia Samford states, the goal of analyzing identity through material culture is not necessarily to “trace direct unaltered transference of traits from Africa but to

discover how African cultural traditions were modified by the slaves' experience of new environments, different social groups, and altered power relations" (1996, 102). The evidence for direct cultural connections between enslaved people and West African cultures is prevalent, but a murkier area of study is analyzing both the similarities and differences among enslaved populations across time and space. Not every plantation site has evidence of colonoware, blue beads, or pierced coins, and among the sites that share similar archaeological findings, the context and meaning of those artifacts may be different. For instance, nearly 200 glass beads were recovered from just one cabin site at Poplar Forest in Virginia, but white beads accounted for 65% of the assemblage while turquoise and aqua beads represented 12% and 10% respectively (Lee 2011, 109). If blue beads were ubiquitous in value and meaning across all populations of enslaved African Americans, this does not explain the overwhelming majority of non-blue beads found at Poplar Forest and other sites across the south. Furthermore, interviews with formerly enslaved men and women show that bead use and meaning differed across the south from merely aesthetic ornamentation to charms used for "protection and well-being" that were "overlooked by many masters who did not perceive their dual function" (110-111). Archaeologists must be cognizant that analysis of site-specific data may begin to connect "materially recognizable subcultures" to localized factors like regional economics and access to commodities, shedding light upon the ways in which enslaved individuals of diverse backgrounds came to share a specific African-American identity (Heath 1999, 48).

Studies on personal adornment, and material culture in general, are much needed in the research of historically underrepresented groups such as African Americans and Native Americans. Documentation of dress and identity within the historical record is heavily biased toward wealthy European men; the artifacts that survive in museums or private collections tend

to be family heirlooms from affluent white owners. For others, the daily struggle to survive on low wages or slave labor necessitated the constant reuse of clothing and other personal objects until they were unusable, irreparable, or lost. In addition, the institution of slavery was designed to eliminate a person's sense of power and self-identity through physical violence and erasure of their native culture. Enslaved people from various African societies interacted with white European-Americans, and even Native Americans, on a daily basis, facilitating an "exchange of ideas and customs, resulting in new or modified cultural practices...aimed at surviving life as captives, establishing a cultural identity, and maintaining a sense of personhood" (Gall et al 2020, 307).

Constant adaptation and modification of culture was a necessary component of building resilient social communities and kinship, establishing and maintaining a cultural identity, and practicing forms of resistance against enslavement. In particular, personal adornment was used by enslaved individuals to provide symbolic meaning, retain elements of their culture, and "encapsulate...personal power" (Csikszentmihalyi 1993, 23). By studying the physical evidence for clothing and adornment, archaeologists may enrich the existing knowledge of agency and identity in times of slavery and within the African diaspora. This physical evidence of personal and cultural power can be seen in the assemblage of artifacts at Somerset Place, a plantation established in the 1780s where, despite their remote location and low social status, the enslaved population had opportunities to engage in a localized economy through trade, barter, and gift-giving. They acquired items of personal use and adornment in a myriad of ways and used or modified them under the influence of European-American cultural norms to create a uniquely African-American identity along the shores of Lake Phelps.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Overview of Somerset Place

The vast holdings of land that once belonged to Somerset Place are situated along the northern shore of Lake Phelps, a 16,600 acre rain-fed lake nestled within the Pocosin wetlands on the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula in Washington County, North Carolina. Pocosin wetlands, found along the Atlantic coastal plain, have highly acidic peat soils and lack natural drainage but are home to a thriving ecosystem of flora and fauna (NOAA 2021; Pierce 2010, 9-10). Carolina Algonquian groups took advantage of these wetlands for thousands of years, as shown by hundreds of prehistoric artifacts recovered from Lake Phelps that include earthenware pots, stone projectile points, and dugout canoes. Earthenware types such as Colington, Croaker Landing, Deep Creek, and Mount Pleasant are found throughout the area, suggesting an Indigenous occupation from at least 1800 B.C. to A.D. 1600. This estimation is supported by radiocarbon dates of over 30 wooden dugout canoes preserved in the acidic sediments at the bottom of Lake Phelps. Radiocarbon dating on nineteen of these canoes shows a date range from 2430 B.C. to A.D. 1400 (Jordan 2017, 17-20). A marked decrease in artifacts indicates that Indigenous occupation of the Lake Phelps area dwindled from the Early Woodland (1000 B.C. - 300 B.C.) period to the Late Woodland period (A.D. 800-1650) before eventually ceasing sometime prior to the 18th century (Pierce 2010; Jordan 2017).

Although Edenton, the second capital city of North Carolina, lay just 21 miles north of Lake Phelps, European colonists were reluctant to trek through the dangerous, swampy lands south of the Albemarle Sound.

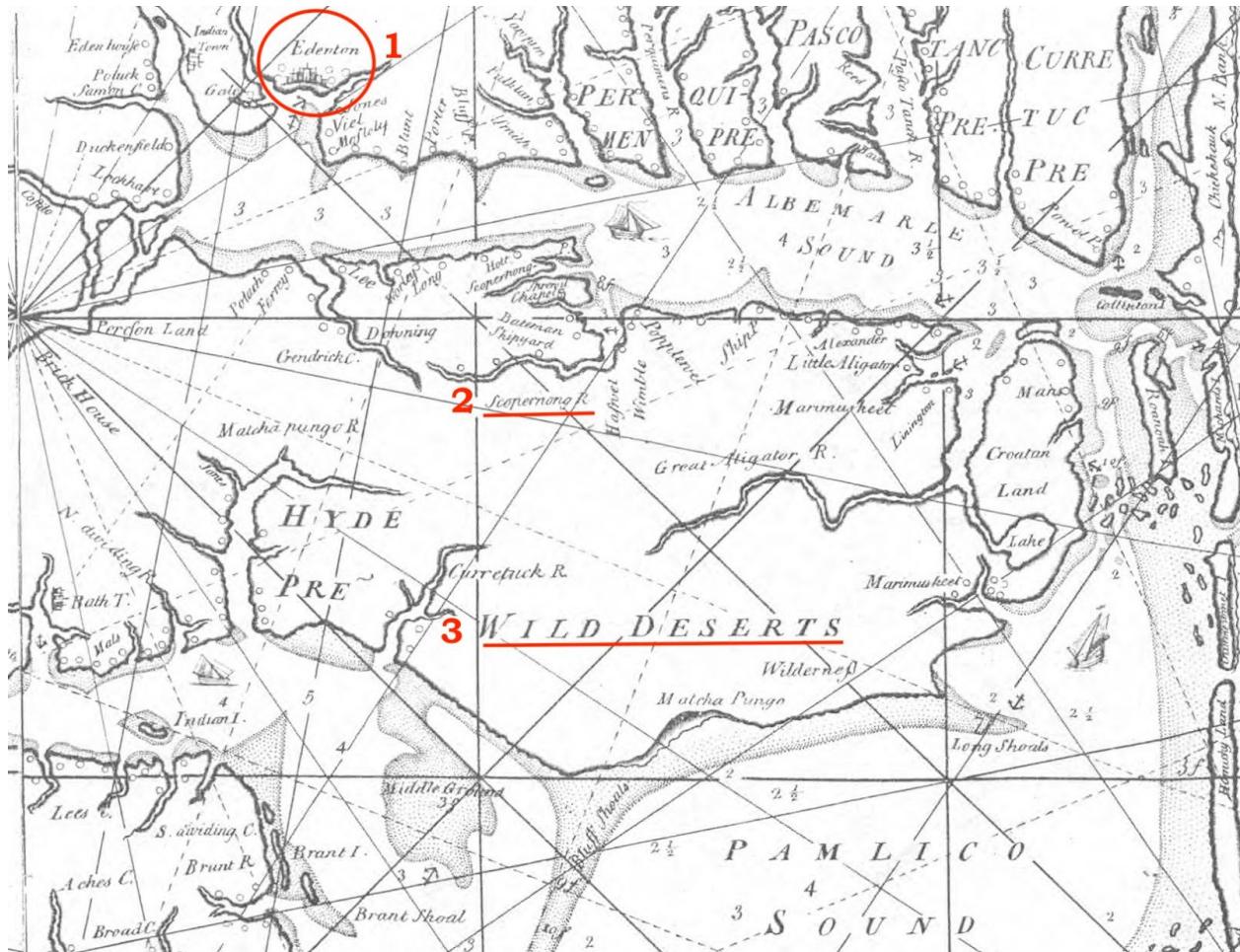


Figure 1: This section of a detailed map created in 1738 depicts many of the major towns, waterways, and coastlines in colonial North Carolina. The town of Edenton is indicated by an icon of buildings (1), and across the Albemarle Sound is the Scuppernong River (2). However, the pocosin wetland area where Lake Phelps and nearby Pungo Lake are located is labeled as the “Wild Deserts,” alluding to the seemingly impenetrable swamp that was still unexplored by colonists (3). Map created by James Wimble (“Map of North Carolina”), modified by author.

A group of Euro-American explorers braved the swamp in 1755, searching for any “unclaimed” fertile land (Wilson 1985, 55). They came across a large body of water and named it Lake Phelps after the first explorer to run into the water, describing the landscape as “untouched and pristine” with no visible traces of previous indigenous activity (Jordan 2017, 15).

Plans to develop the land stalled until the 1780s when a consortium of three businessmen from Edenton created the Lake Company. The founding members of the Lake Company – Josiah

Collins, Luther Dickinson, and Nathaniel Allen –were prominent members of Edenton society who devised plans to build a series of canals leading to the Scuppernong River which emptied into Albemarle Sound, creating easy water access to Edenton and the greater Carolina coast, while simultaneously draining the land to reclaim thousands of acres for agricultural pursuits (Pisney 1970). In June 1786, the men imported 80 enslaved people from Africa and used supplemental labor from local enslaved and paid workers to painstakingly dig miles of interconnected canals and ditches over the next several years. The first canal connecting Lake Phelps and the Scuppernong River was completed by the end of 1789 and by 1794, over 100,000 acres of land were drained and prepped for rice and wheat cultivation (Wilson 1985, 57). Multiple dwelling houses for the enslaved workers and the overseers were constructed in addition to a sawmill, a grist mill, and a large multistory barn (Tarlton 1954, 7-8).



Figure 2: View of the great barn at Somerset Place, circa August 1938. Photo courtesy of State Archives of North Carolina

Over time, Josiah Collins and his son Josiah II bought out the shares of the Lake Company from Dickinson and Allen to turn the agricultural conglomerate into a large private estate called Somerset Place by 1816. The Collins family managed the estate from Edenton, staying for only short periods of time at a small dwelling called the Colony House built sometime in the 1790s. Upon his death in 1819, Josiah Collins Sr. willed the land and over 140 African and American-born enslaved workers to his son Josiah II. The first member of the Collins family to live fulltime on the plantation was Josiah Collins III who moved into the Colony House with his new wife in 1829 while waiting for the completion of their on-site mansion in 1830 (Wilson 1985, 57).

By the 1840s, over 300 enslaved people, free workers, and Collins family members lived and worked on the plantation, which had become self-sufficient and economically profitable. Interactions with the neighboring Bonarva Plantation, held by the Pettigrew family, offered social and economic opportunities for both the free and enslaved populations; the Collinsses and the Pettigrews are often mentioned in each other's correspondence (Tarlton 1954, 77). A population list created in 1843 reveals the names of 279 enslaved individuals living in each of the cabins constructed in a straight row aligned parallel to the lakeshore (Josiah Collins Papers). By this time, the majority of the enslaved population had been born locally and most of the African-born workers had passed away. A handful of other structures served as centers of domestic activities for the enslaved population, including a kitchen, carpentry shop, loom house, hospital, and chapel. There was even a commissary on site where cash or credit could be traded for clothes, knives, food, and whatever other goods Collins allowed to be made available (Redford 2005, loc.1561-1566). An in-depth discussion of the enslaved population is covered in the next section of this thesis.

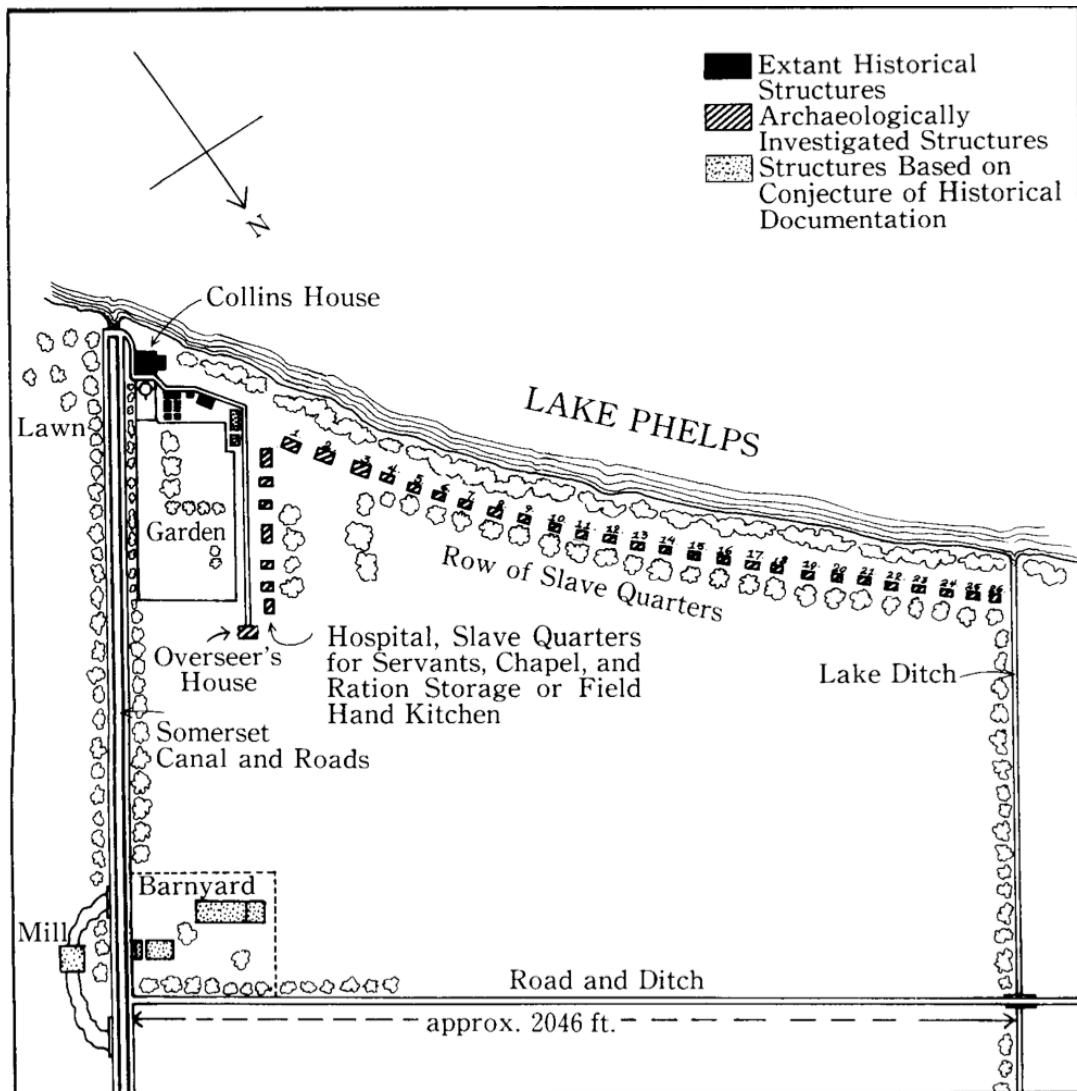


Figure 3: An approximation of the grounds and buildings at Somerset Place extrapolated from a map found in Dorothy Spruill Redford, *Somerset Homecoming: Recovering A Lost Heritage*. Image created by Tsutomu Numaoka (1996). The 1981 and 1982 excavations which are the topic of this thesis focus on a building not pictured but located to the right of the Collins House near the lake shore, and on the first dwelling in the row parallel to the lake. Other structures were investigated in later excavations.

Up until the Civil War, Somerset Place continued to be economically profitable for the Collins family despite its relatively remote location. However, as Union forces pushed south, the family fled Somerset Place in 1862 to settle at a secondary plantation in Hillsborough, taking with them 171 enslaved workers and leaving 65 individuals behind with an overseer. Josiah

Collins III died suddenly in June 1863, leaving his wife and children financially insecure
(Redford 2000, loc.1235)

When the war ended in 1865, Josiah Collins IV, the heir to the estate, returned to Somerset Place to find that nearly all of the formerly enslaved workers had left in pursuit of their own independence. Many formerly enslaved families such as the Bennetts, Dickinsons, and the Cabarruses settled in the nearby towns of Creswell, Columbia, and Roper to farm their own land or work as day laborers (Redford 2000). The few that did remain on the estate worked as unpaid sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Massive debts and economic hardship forced the Collins family to sell off the estate in 1870, which began a period of multiple exchanges of ownership over the next several decades (Tarlton 1954, 47-48).

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Somerset Place began a steady decline with multiple absentee landlords before being acquired by the federal Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1937. The FSA divided the land into tracts for tenant farmers and built numerous roads as part of the Scuppernong Farms resettlement project, breaking up the hundreds of acres that once belonged to the Collins and Pettigrew families (Tarlton 1954, 48). Although the site continued to be sparsely inhabited by white and black farmers through the 1940s, most of the structures associated with former enslaved people fell into disrepair and collapsed or burned down by the 1920s (Steen 1995). The last three cabins that once housed enslaved workers were finally torn down in 1929 and on the morning of March 14, 1949, the large barn accidentally caught fire and burned to the ground (North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation Records). Of the original buildings, only the Colony House, Collins Mansion, kitchen, laundry, icehouse, smokehouse, and dairy remained standing into the mid-20th century (Pisney 1970). Nearly all traces of daily

enslaved life had weathered away, and the once-grand Collins mansion was in desperate need of repair.



Figure 4: Taken circa 1910, this is one of two photos that show portions of the cabins once occupied by enslaved families. The cabins (dating from around 1830) are on the left and the lake shore is to the right (camera facing southeast). Photo courtesy of State Archives of North Carolina.

Efforts to revitalize the Lake Phelps area and restore the buildings and grounds of Somerset Place began with the establishment of Pettigrew State Park in 1939, which encompassed 203 acres of land and included the main buildings of the former plantation. In the 1950s, the North Carolina Division of State Parks hired historian William Tarlton to determine the locations and sizes of the original buildings and walkways with the intent of accurately reconstructing the plantation grounds (Tarlton 1954). The research and restoration efforts were

largely successful, and Somerset Place became a designated State Historic Site after the property was transferred to the State Division of Archives and History in 1967 (Wilson 1985, 61).

In the 1980s, the restoration focus shifted to understanding and interpreting enslaved life at Somerset Place. Archaeological excavations in 1981 and 1982 (discussed in depth later in this paper) explored the foundations of cabins and other outbuildings with the intent of accurately reconstructing the buildings. The former director of the site, Dorothy Spruill Redford, worked tirelessly to research and reconnect the scattered descendants of Somerset Place's enslaved workers; her efforts culminated in the 1986 Homecoming, a gathering of over 2,000 descendants of the enslaved and the Collins families to celebrate "the history, heritage, and cultural traditions of all of the plantation's former residents" (Redford 2005, loc. 738). A resounding success, Homecoming at Somerset Place became a cherished annual tradition for two decades.

Today, restoration of the grounds and historical interpretation of enslaved life continues to be a focus at Somerset Place. Although the Homecoming gatherings are no longer organized, the relationship among Somerset Place, its descendants, and the local population remains at the forefront of the site's mission to teach, acknowledge, and honor the hundreds of men and women that forcibly toiled on the land for decades.

The African-American Community at Somerset Place

When the last two remaining native Africans, called Old Alfred and Old Aunt Sally, passed away in 1850, they left behind an over 60-year legacy of defining the culture of the entire enslaved community by maintaining traditional African foodways, customs, and spiritual beliefs within an increasingly American-born, European-influenced population living on the plantation (North Carolina Historic Sites, n.d.). Although their exact origin is unknown, several of the 80 Africans who came to Somerset Place in 1786 are recorded as having anglicized versions of

Akan names, suggesting that many of them, if not all, shared a common culture and language from the western Gold Coast (Redford 2000, loc.1325). Even though no African names are recorded on later records kept by the Collinsees, the enslaved population retained elements of their original culture through other means.

One visitor to Somerset Place, a white doctor named Edward Warren, remarked upon performances of African dances and singing at Christmas during a celebration called “John Koonering.” The origins of this ritual likely came from west African Yam festivals in which costumed men acted as sorcerers (Redford 2000, loc.1596). In a highly detailed recollection, Dr. Warren described the celebration:

One of their customs was playing at what they called ‘John Koonering,’ though this was more of a *fantasia* than a religious demonstration; that it had, however, some connection with their religion is evident from the fact they only indulged in it on Christian festivals, notably on Christmas day. The *leading* character is the ‘ragman,’ whose ‘get-up’ consists in a costume of rags...two great ox horns, attached to the skin of a raccoon, which is drawn over the head and face, leaving apertures only for the eyes and mouth; sandals of the skin of some wild "varmint;" several cow or sheep bells or strings of dried goats' horns hanging about their shoulders, and so arranged as to jingle at every movement; and a short stick of seasoned wood, carried in his hands. The *second* [character]...wears no disguise, but is simply arrayed in what they call his "Sunday-go-to-meeting suit," and carries in his hand a small bowl or tin cup, while the other parts are appropriated by some half a dozen fellows, each arrayed fantastically in ribbons, rags, and feathers, and bearing between them several so-called musical instruments or "gumba boxes," which consist of wooden frames covered over with tanned sheepskins. These are usually followed by a motley crowd of all ages, dressed in their ordinary working clothes, which seemingly comes as a guard of honor to the performers. (Warren 1885, 200-201, original emphasis).

This yearly performance seemed to be a unique ritual among the enslaved population at Somerset Place, or at least was an unusual sight for most southern European-Americans. The well-traveled Dr. Warren remarked:

Except at the ‘Lake’ and in Edenton, where it originated with the Collins' negroes, I never witnessed this performance in America, and I was convinced from the first that it was of foreign origin, based on some festive ceremony which the negroes had inherited from their African ancestors.

This opinion was fully confirmed during my residence in Egypt, for I found that the blacks in that country amuse themselves at Byram - the principal feast of the Koran - with a performance absolutely identical with that which I had seen in Carolina, save in the words of their "Kooner" song. (*Ibid*, 203).

Spiritual practices observed at Somerset Place throughout the 19th century also point to a retention of African traditions and beliefs despite efforts to instill Christianity. Under the direction of Josiah Collins III, the Lake Chapel was built sometime around 1837 and held weekly Episcopalian services attended by both the slaveholders and the enslaved, as well as daily morning and evening prayers (Lewis 2016). Christianity was often used by the slaveholder to “create a more obedient slave community” through the preaching of obedience and salvation (*Ibid*, 40). However, many enslaved people adapted Christian beliefs and practices into their own traditional African spiritual to “create a stronger sense of group solidarity” and covertly resist and critique the institution of slavery (*Ibid*, 51). The enslaved parishioners at Somerset Place recited Bible passages from memory and participated in communion, but outside of the chapel they incorporated traditional African rituals like singing, dancing, and clapping, speaking in a combination of English and their original language to create their own form of spirituality:

Though rampant Christians...they still had faith in evil genii, charms, philters, metempsychosis, etc., and they habitually indulged in an infinitude of cabalistic rites and ceremonies, in which the gizzards of chickens, the livers of dogs, the heads of snakes and the tails of lizards played a mysterious but very conspicuous part. (Warren 1885, 200).

Taking Dr. Warren’s account at its word, these animals could be readily found at Somerset Place. Lizards and snakes could be caught in abundance, but the other animals likely came from hunting. The enslaved community had access to a fifty-five-acre plot of land set aside by Josiah Collins III for farming, fishing, and hunting, the gains of which they could use for themselves or exchange for credit to the plantation commissary which stocked items like clothing, mirrors, knives, and musical instruments (Numaoka 1996; Redford 2000, loc. 1549-1566). The surplus

from these fields could also be sold back to the Collinsses, just as an enslaved worker named Ben did in July 1848: for a large quantity of onions, Ben received \$1.00 (Numaoka 1996, 51). The ledger book kept by Josiah Collins III (Ledger A) details the sums workers were paid, as well as any extra expenses for goods purchased and money given on certain occasions. For example,

- 18 June 1839: “cloth for Negro children,” \$15.18
- 29 August 1846: “Melvin Jones for Extra Work,” \$1.25
- 16 February 1847: “Bateman & Gaylord for Flannel for Juba,” \$1.12
- 12 March 1847: “J. Ramsey & Co. for Shawl for Elsie,” \$1.90
- 16 September 1848: “Pd Juba for Extra Work,” \$1.00
- 28 December 1848: “Dick Blount for Christmas gift,” \$1.00
- 15 January 1850: “Violin for servants,” \$2.37 ½
- 8 April 1853: “Pd Chloe Drew for services to women,” \$3.00
- 21 September 1859: “sum given Alex and other Negroes on going to Edenton,” \$25

Although performance of extra or exemplary work did benefit the enslaved by allowing them some monetary freedom, payment of cash or credit and “gifts” of items like cloth ultimately served as means of control. Aside from the plantation commissary, the closest stores to Lake Phelps were across Albemarle Sound in Edenton or in Plymouth, a town about 20 miles to the west. This meant that the majority of the enslaved population had to rely on the basic clothing rations given out each year and the goods selected by Collins himself to be sold at the store on his plantation for a price that he determined.

In 1843, a list was created of the inhabitants of each of the 26 dwellings along the lake shore, offering a glimpse into the family structures at Somerset Place (a transcription of the list is included as Appendix A). The first three dwelling houses had four rooms, two on each story, with a family group living in each room. The other 23 dwellings were single story cabins with lofts. Over a dozen other buildings served as storage and workshops that allowed the plantation to function virtually free of any outside resources. Although no longer standing today, the buildings listed on a 1839 inventory list include:

- Loom house and manufactory (for cloth and clothing production)
- Carpenter's shop
- Nail room and blacksmith shop
- Cooper's shop
- Sawmill
- Grist mill
- Machine house
- Cotton gin house

Many of the enslaved workers, particularly those with specialized skills or artisans working in these shops, had access to cash or credit to spend on material goods via the plantation commissary. Joe Welcome, an enslaved artisan, was a highly skilled bricklayer and stonemason who constructed a number of structures at Somerset Place and Bonarva Plantation. He was frequently hired out to other nearby planters and to builders in Edenton for various projects such as the renovation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, for which he was paid 12 shillings a day (Bishir 2009). Other workers made the very items used to clothe the plantation population. Urious, Ishmael Harvey Jr., and Solomon were shoemakers at Somerset Place, while Charlotte Payne and Rebecca worked as weavers in the manufactory. They all produced goods to be distributed throughout the plantation population and to be sold at the plantation commissary to poor white farmers in the area (Somerset Place State Historic Site 2019a; 2019b; 2020a; 2020b). The historical documentation is unclear as regarding what portion, if any, hired out workers like Joe Welcome were permitted to keep.

A small few held positions within the Collins home, allowing for closer interaction with their European-American enslavers who closely observed their dress and behavior. Living in the third two-story dormitory was Wellington Roberts, an Edenton-born coachman who arrived at Somerset Place with Josiah Collins III around 1830. As an enslaved worker with a high-status position, he was known to wear high quality clothing and a "fancy hat" (Redford 2005, loc.607). He, his wife Maria, and their infant son were granted the relative luxury of being the only

residents in one of the downstairs rooms, and likely had other material goods that indicated their high status on the plantation (“List of Families 1843”). Wellington, Joe Welcome, and Charlotte Payne were among the 12 enslaved workers granted passes to visit their extended families in Edenton over Christmas in 1837 (“Negroes allowed to visit Edenton Christmas 1837”). These 12 American-born workers were trusted by the Collinsees and given privileges not afforded by the vast majority of the plantation, indicating that they potentially had access to a wider range of available material goods. It is entirely possible that they purchased or acquired goods while visiting Edenton either for themselves or for others on the plantation.

The historical record has very little evidence of the items that enslaved people wore and used on a daily basis. Runaway advertisements are incredibly useful for determining how enslavers culturally manipulated the appearance of the enslaved as many described physical attributes of the fugitive as well as any clothing, adornment, or other noticeable items they may have worn or taken. Beginning in the early 18th century, sumptuary laws and societal pressures restricted enslaved individuals to certain coarse, unfashionable clothing as a means of identification. Although the sumptuary laws depended on geographical location, the coarse quality of clothing supplied by enslavers was a widespread practice used to hold control over their workers (Haulman 2011, 25-28). However, through modification, purchase, trade, or theft, additional clothing and adornment choices made by the enslaved conveyed a sense of self-worth, helped to “distinguish day-to-day existence from special events,” and were used as “portable wealth and a fluid expression of societal status” (Heath 1999, 53). Unfortunately, very few runaway advertisements were placed by any of the Collinsees and those that were only give basic physical characteristics with no clothing or adornment descriptions. However, a few placed by nearby planters are a bit more descriptive. Ebenezer Pettigrew from neighboring Bonvara

Plantation placed an advertisement in the Edenton Gazette looking for a young man named Antony who “carried away with him some coarse homespun clothes” but likely “got others since” (Pettigrew 13 Apr. 1808, 3). A carpenter named Stephen is noted as usually keeping “his hair well combed and plaited” (Skinner 22 Jan. 1821, 3). Another man is described as having “an extensive supply of clothes for a servant,” likely due to his relatively high social position as a carriage driver and ostler (Holmes 8 May 1827, 1).

These advertisements give just a small glimpse of the clothes and hairstyles that enslaved people living near Somerset Place wore, though they are also limited in their scope by what the enslaver happened to notice or remember, leaving out elements specifically chosen by the enslaved individual for the purposes of self-expression. It is possible that some of the items were worn underneath clothes, close to the body and hidden from general view. The lack of in-depth descriptions is unusual and may be because of the rural nature of Lake Phelps and the surrounding counties; a smaller, more widespread population is more likely to recognize by face the identity of a person compared to a more urbanized, high-density area in which descriptions of a stranger’s appearance are necessary.

In the absence of direct historical documentation, evidence for clothing, adornment, and identity formation among the enslaved population of Somerset Place is most likely to be found within contextual and archaeological evidence. In multiple excavations beginning in the 1950s, a number of such artifacts have been found in relationship with dwellings, allowing for a deeper understanding of how the enslaved workers used material goods to express various aspects of their personal and collective identity.

CHAPTER THREE

Archaeological Exploration and Methods of Artifact Classification

Artifacts of personal use and adornment are among the least common types of artifacts found at archaeological sites, and the historical record offers very few clues about the use of adornment and personal items among enslaved populations. The 1981 and 1982 excavations at Somerset Place focused on two structures now believed to be dwellings for enslaved families, and the associated artifacts shed light on the otherwise unrecorded ways in which enslaved Africans utilized material objects to display cultural affiliation, participate in trade or economy, and maintain their sense of personal identity.

Prior to my analysis of these artifacts, a number of questions arose driven by major themes in the archaeology of enslaved peoples in the Southeast United States. In this extremely isolated community, how did enslaved individuals create and maintain a sense of identity through the use of personal items or adornment? What do these artifacts tell us about the opportunities available to individuals to create a personal identity through material culture within the context of slavery, and how do these opportunities compare with other contemporaneous plantation sites? Do these artifacts indicate a particular cultural affiliation, or are they uniquely associated with enslaved communities in North America? Is there a specific African or European influence among the artifacts that coincide with findings at other plantation sites in North America? Recycling of personal items is not uncommon throughout history. However, in the context of fashioning identity among enslaved populations, recycled items such as buttons and coins may hold greater significance than beyond simple frugality (Lee 2011). Is there evidence

of recycling items at Somerset Place, and if so what do these items indicate (e.g., frugality or personal meaning through use)?

Although other archaeological excavations have been conducted at Somerset Place (most notably in 1992, 1994, and 2009), the main focus of this thesis concerns the artifacts recovered from the 1981 and 1982 field school excavations. This choice was made because these artifacts have received minimal analysis despite their potential for gaining insight into the everyday lives of enslaved workers. Prior archival research conducted by the staff of Somerset Place and the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources indicates that the artifacts come from the remains of two dwellings built for the enslaved population. Time and research support were also limitations that affected my choice to limit my analysis to artifacts from the 1981 and 1982 excavations.

Excavation Overview

By the time plans to revitalize Somerset Place into a state historic landmark were underway in the 1940s, many of the original plantation buildings were either in severe disrepair or had since been torn or burned down. The North Carolina Division of State Parks appointed historian William Tarlton to identify the location of lost buildings and walkways related to the lives of both the enslaved population and the Collins family. From 1951 to 1954, Tarlton conducted excavations that uncovered the original garden layout, the boundaries of the old street, brick and gravel walkways, and the intact foundations of the overseer's house, the ration house/kitchen, the chapel, an unidentified "small square building," the hospital, the woodhouse, and a large building near the lake shore that appears on a 1821 map (Tarlton 1954, 49-61). Tarlton also remarked that there was an abnormally "long vacant segment" of soil between the hospital foundation and the ration house/kitchen, saying:

The space is so extensive as to require that some structure should have been there, and it was baffling that nothing at all was found. In all probability there was once a building here of which all traces have been obliterated. The soil in that area proved to have been more than usually disturbed. It showed signs of having been a deep muckhole, which was later filled to serve as a roadbed. (63).

Using the information gleaned from Tarlton's research, the Division of State Parks began the process of reconstructing the structures and grounds of Somerset Place to operate as a history museum. However, the excavations were largely destructive and not conducted with modern archaeological methods. Although a detailed excavation report written by Tarlton is still available, no record of recovered artifacts exists, and the artifacts are thought to be now lost (Steen 1995).

Archaeologists returned to the site in the summers of 1981 and 1982 with two field schools supervised by Tom Funk, a North Carolina State Historic Sites archaeologist. Unfortunately, there are few documents pertaining to the 1981 and 1982 excavations. No official excavation report was produced, but Jack H Wilson, Jr. of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History wrote two reports discussing the preliminary findings based on student papers (Wilson 1985; 1987). A somewhat clear understanding of the excavations can be pieced together from these two reports, various field notes, and miscellaneous correspondence found within the site records house at the Office of State Archaeology in Raleigh. I will refer to the structure excavated in 1981 as Structure 1 and the house excavated in 1982 as Structure 2 for clarity and continuity throughout the remainder of this thesis.

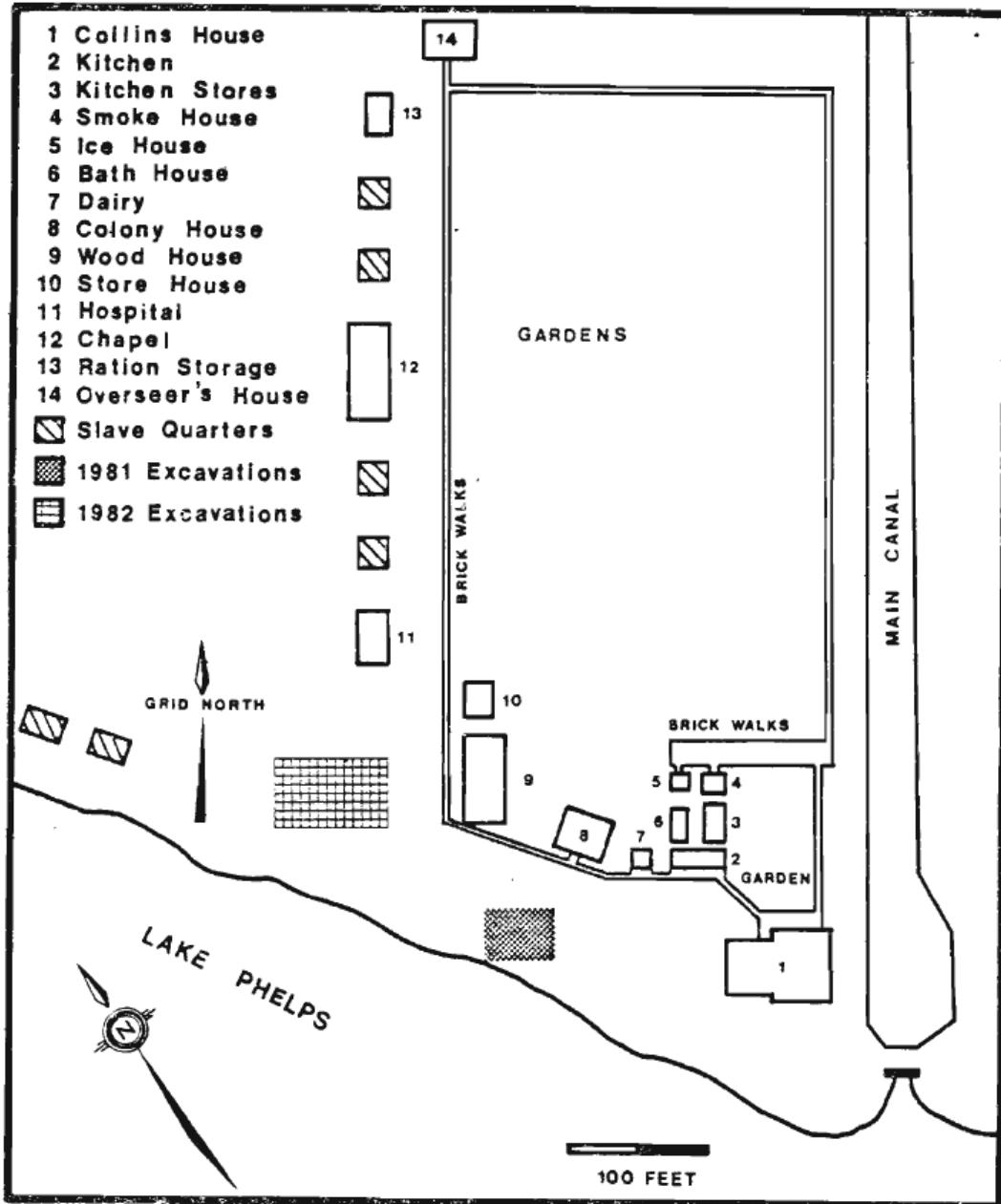


Figure 5: Main buildings at Somerset Place after 1830, and the locations of the 1981 and 1982 excavations (Wilson 1985, 59).

The main focus of the 1981 field school was to establish a formal archaeological grid and to explore the large unknown structure (Structure 1) close to the shore of Lake Phelps that Tarlton first mentioned in his report. According to historical evidence, researchers initially believed that Structure 1 was likely a commissary for the enslaved community and constructed

around 1796 with demolition around 1830 (Wilson 1985). Excavations commenced July 6th and ended August 14th under the supervision of Thomas Funk. The grid is laid out unconventionally with large operational units measuring 60' E-W and 40' N-S divided into smaller sub-operational units measuring 10' x 10' (Figures 6 and 7). The large operational units are represented by a number and the sub-operational units are represented by a letter (Funk 1981, 2).

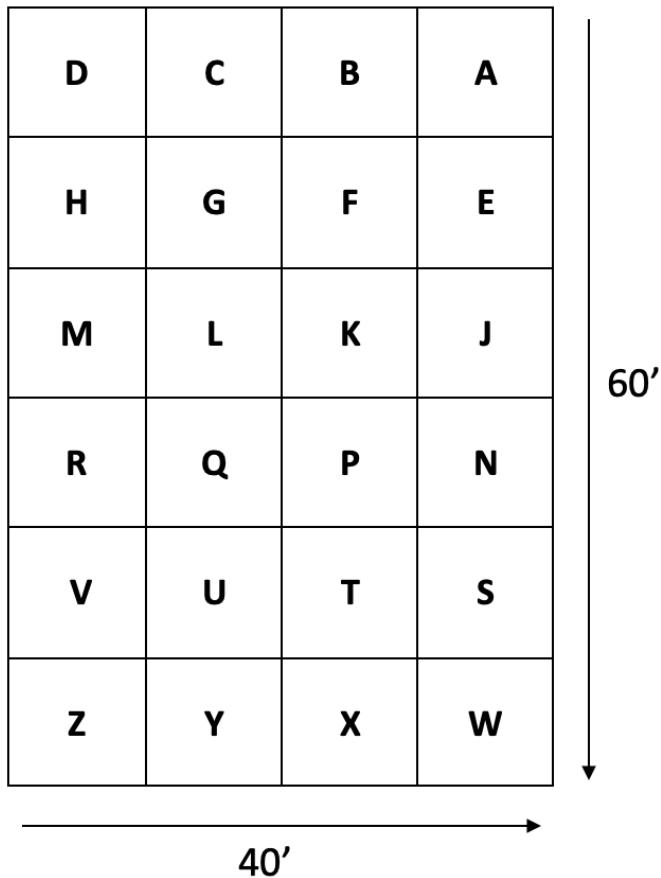


Figure 6: An example of how one large operational unit is divided into 24 sub-operational units.

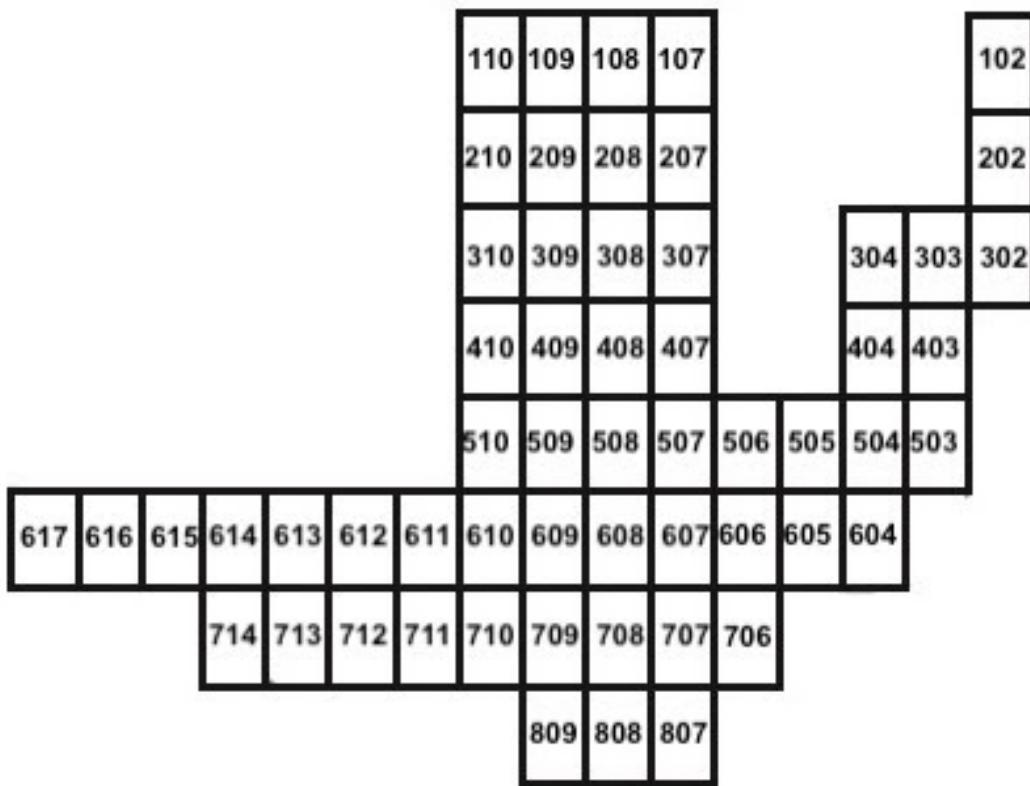


Figure 7: The wider excavation grid from 1981/1982. Each numbered operational unit represents one set of 24 sub-operational units.

It is uncertain how the excavators determined which units to excavate and which to leave unexcavated, but they were carefully dug using natural stratigraphic levels that consist of a sandy loam topsoil, mottled tan and white or grey sand underneath, and a subsoil of mottled grey clay at about 1.5 to 2 feet below the ground surface. The soil was sifted through $\frac{1}{4}$ " mesh screens and a bulkhead of one foot was left (Wilson 1985, 62). The full list of units excavated indicates a concentration on a 32' x 20' structure with a corbeled chimney at the northern end, as well as five exploratory units in operational units 608 and 611 to the northwest:

Table 1: 1981 Excavated Units and Features

Operational Unit	Sub-Operational Unit	Feature Number
403	Q, T, U, V, Y, Z, CDGH	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9

Table 1 (continued).

Operational Unit	Sub-Operational Unit	Feature Number
404	N, S	
503	C, D, E, Q	
504	A, E	10, 11, 50
608	A, C(TP3, TP 5), E(TP2), F(TP3)	
611	Lane 1/Test3	

Test probing of just one level occurred in units 403 CDGH and 608 A, C, and F. Unit 608 E, close to the northwest foundation of Structure 2, contained the only test pit (TP2, measuring 3'x8') with three distinct levels of somewhat reliable stratigraphy. The uppermost layer of TP2 had nineteenth and early twentieth century lamp glass, whiteware ceramics, and machine-made bottle glass. From level two came many more ceramic sherds including creamware, pearlware, and printed porcelain, as well as a fragment of an undated tobacco pipe bowl and a whole druggist Chamberlain's glass bottle from the 1920s. The third layer, based on the ceramic types found, seemed to date definitively from the early-to-mid-nineteenth century. Two buttons were also recovered from this layer and will be discussed further below in the analysis section related to Structure 2.

Test pits in 608 A, C, and F show a mixed topmost layer. Mid-nineteenth century ceramics, oyster shells, and machine-made container glass came from a shovel probe in the northeast corner of 608A. Testing in 608C included mostly machine-made glass, indeterminate ceramic types, and nail fragments, while 608 F TP3 (southeast corner) contained 77.6g of broken brick and seven artifacts that include a modern metal hinge or fastener with minimal rusting and an unglazed coarse earthenware sherd identified as plain type Croaker Landing (BC 1200-800).

Test areas in 611 (TP 20 and Lane 1, Test 3) also saw a fairly mixed assemblage with early nineteenth century ceramics and various twentieth century items like bright green bottle glass and a shotgun shell.

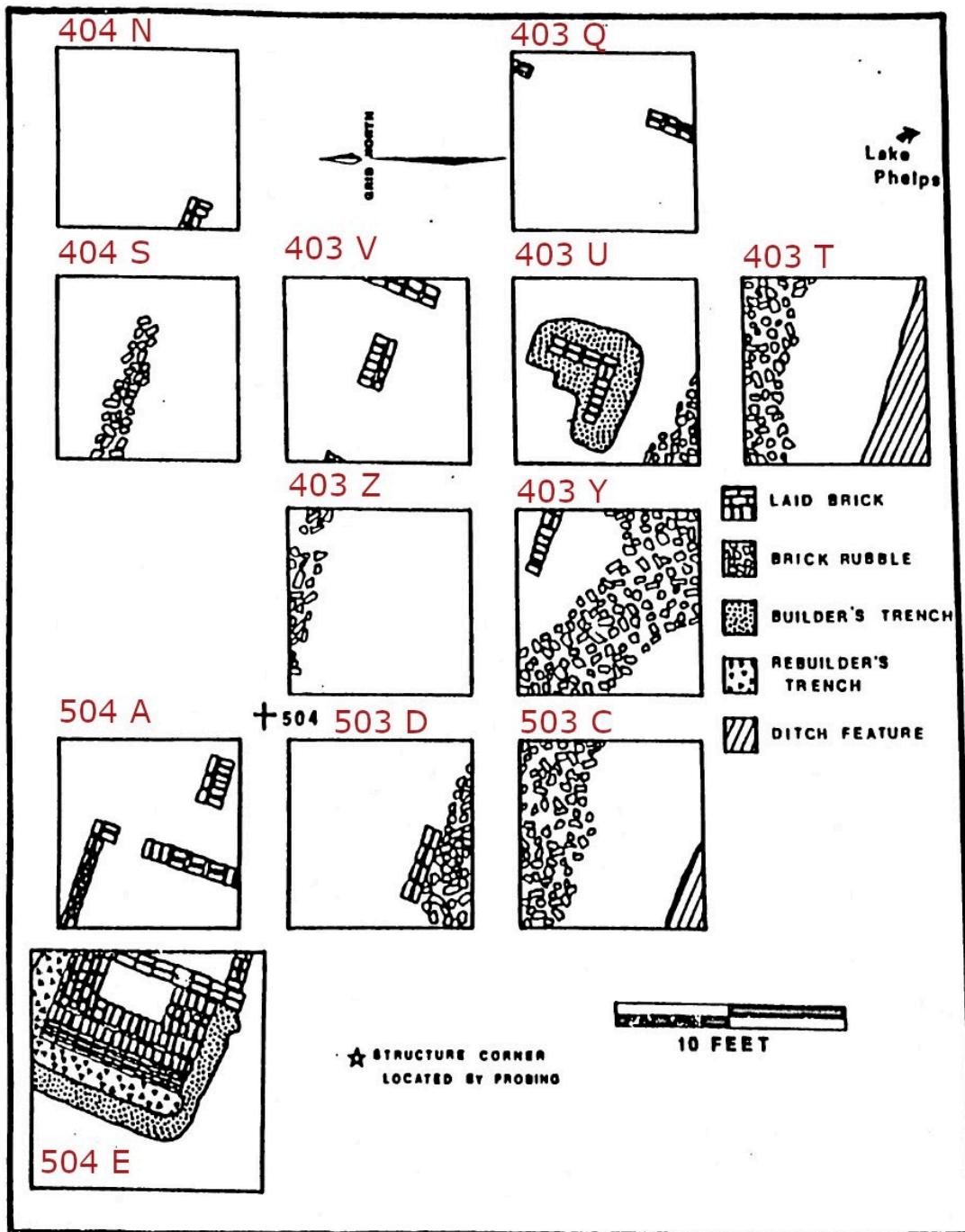


Figure 8: 1981 excavation map of the 32' x 20' structure located approximately 150 feet northwest of the main canal (adapted from Wilson 1985, 63).

All other sub-units in 403, 404, 503, and 504 are associated with Structure 1 (Figure 8). A total of four main levels are identified, with a fifth level only in units 403U and 403T, although the existing archival notes are unclear about what depth each of the levels are reached and how they were determined other than soil changes. The first level is modern sod and humus deposited since the mid-20th century, followed by a horizon of brown sandy loam that was the ground surface during the 18th and 19th centuries when the site was a working plantation. A subsoil of mottled gray clay is located about 1.5 to 2 feet below the surface of the ground (Wilson 1988; Wilson 1985, 62).

The 1982 excavations, which focused on a home (Structure 2) slightly northwest of the Structure 1, are somewhat less thorough than the previous season. Instead of fully excavating each 10'x10' unit to reveal the majority of the structure interior, only two squares were fully excavated at either end of the house with narrow trenches and smaller squares covering a small portion of the foundation, builder's trenches, drainage ditches, and other features. Operational units 607 and 707 are directly associated with the interior and immediate area surrounding Structure 2 (Figure 9). Nine different test pits and trenches were opened directly to the east of Structure 2 in Operational Units 808 and 1009 with the intent of discovering the locations of smaller homes visible in early 20th century photographs. Additional test probing revealed that the line of homes continued along the lake shore, though no further testing was completed due to time constraints (Erlandson 1982). Excavators also returned to Unit 504 E of Structure 1 to excavate the remainder of the west end chimney. The full list of units and features excavated is below:

Table 2: 1982 Excavated Units, Test Pits, and Features

Operational Unit	Sub-Operational Unit	Feature Number
1009	A, B, D, F, N, P, Q, T, U, V, W, X, Y	
504	E (1981 chimney)	50
507	N	
607	F, J, N, P, Q, S, T, X	3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 49, 52
707	A&B, H, L, M, R, V	7, 26, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 51
708	S	
808	K, P	30
Test Trench A	East of Canal	Feature 1

Structure 2 is the first of three 20'x40' I-shaped houses oriented to the northwest of the Collins Mansion. Excavators calculated the total living space of these two-story homes by measuring from the interior edge of each hearth and determined that Excavations and probing parallel to the lakeshore discovered an additional 23 one-story single-family dwellings measuring 18'x18' with about 20' of space between each home. These 26 dwellings make up the row of homes between the Collins Mansion and the westernmost irrigation canal on the property.

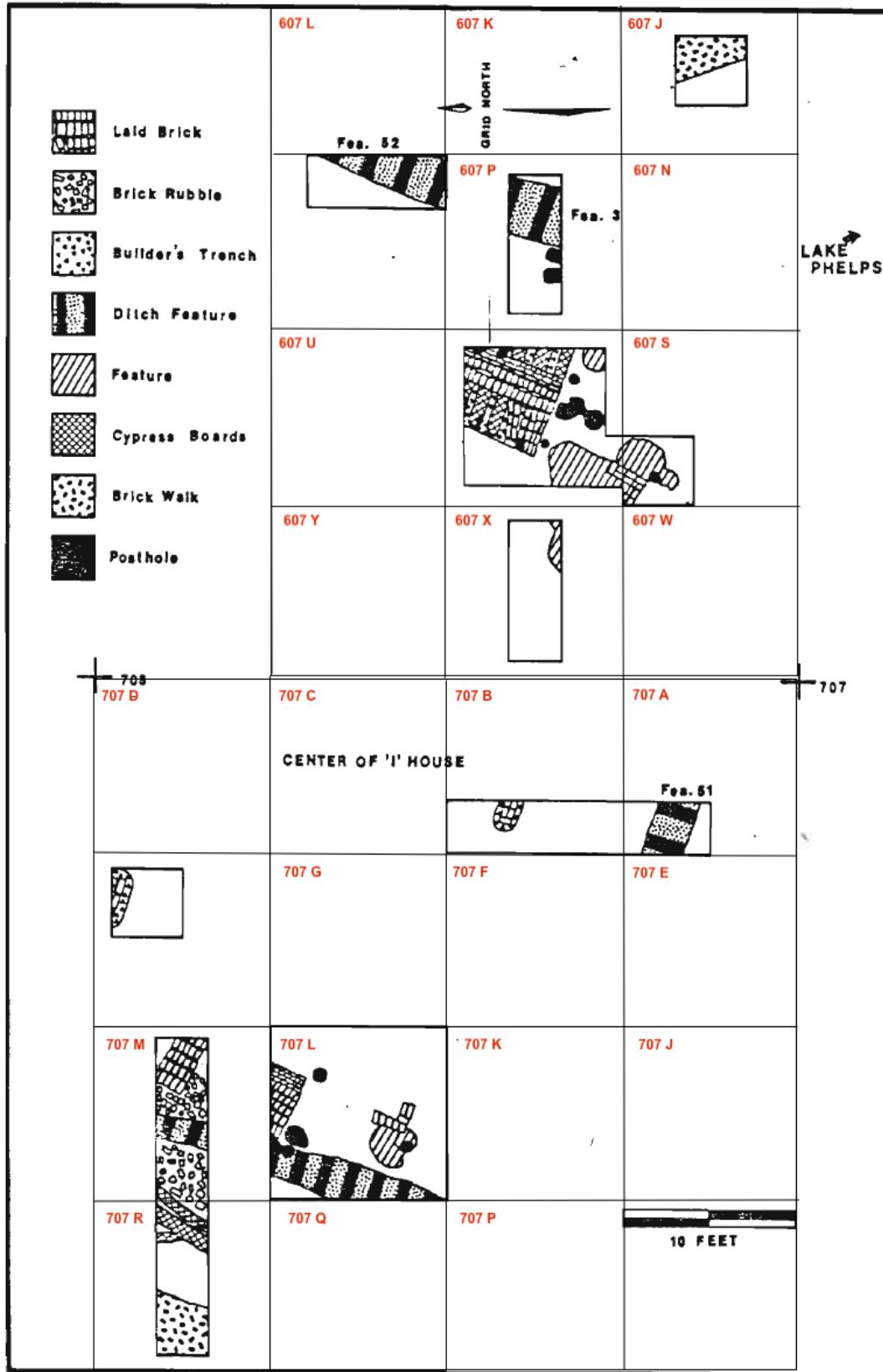


Figure 9: 1982 excavation map of Structure 2, a two-story dwelling built for four enslaved family units (adapted from Wilson 1985, 65).

Overall, the stratigraphy at the site is representative of continuous activity and includes multiple instances of building, demolition, digging of drainage ditch features, and later fill from the creation of roads. Despite some disturbances from later activity, the primary occupation periods of Structure 1 and Structure 2 can be inferred through analyses such as Mean Ceramic Dating. Using Stanley South's method, in 1992 Christopher Hughes calculated the Mean Ceramic Date for each level and feature associated with Structure 1 (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Mean Ceramic Dates by Level (1981)

Level 1	--	1823.95
Level 2	--	1818.77
Level 3	--	1809.12
Level 4	--	1800.53
Level 5	--	1801.5

Table 4: Mean Ceramic Dates for Features (1981)

Feature Number and Description	Mean Date	Artifact Comments
1: Builder's Trench, Corner Pier (403U2)	1805	Also two wire nails
2: Possible post hole (403U2)	N/A	No artifacts
3: Possible root hole (403CDGH)	N/A	1 cut nail
4: Post mold (403V4)	N/A	Dark green dip mold bottle glass; wood
5: Possible post hole (403U4)	N/A	No artifacts
8: Rubble bulkhead (503C3 and 403T3)	1797	4 plain creamware, 3 plain pearlware
9: Ditch (503C3 and 403T4)	1822	Cut/wrought nails and glass mason jar fragments

Table 4 (continued).

Feature Number and Description	Mean Date	Artifact Comments
10: Possible intrusion into chimney builder's trench (504E2)	1805	1 plain pearlware, 3 edged pearlware, cut and wrought nails
11: Interior chimney base fill (504E2)	1795	1 plain creamware, 1 plain pearlware, cut nails

It should be noted that only four datable ceramic sherds and 20 artifacts overall were recovered from level 5, resulting in a possibly skewed or inaccurate mean date. Hughes' analysis suggests that the ceramics deposited in contexts related to Structure 1 primarily date from between 1795 and 1824, and that deeper levels of excavation may be somewhat older than activities associated with upper levels. Based on Hughes' work and cursory analysis of artifacts recovered from Structure 1, it appears that levels 4 and 5 occurred at roughly the same time, probably dating to the construction of the building. A coin dating from 1786 from level 4 of the adjacent unit 403 Q (the southeast corner of the building) supports the claim that Structure 1 was likely built in the earliest days of the plantation. The nearby drainage ditches also likely date from this era, but the mixing of historic and more modern artifact types within the fill suggests that the drainage ditches were filled in using old refuse sometime in the late 19th or early 20th century.

Hughes (1992) also calculated the Mean Ceramic Date for each level and feature associated with Structure 2 (Tables 5 and 6). Aligning with historical documentation, Hughes' calculations reflect a structure built and occupied during the early 19th century, similar to Structure 1.

Table 5: Mean Ceramic Dates by Level (1982)

Level 1 --	1824.2
Level 2 --	1822.1
Level 3 --	1817.1

Table 6: Mean Ceramic Dates for Features (1982)

Feature Number and Description	Mean Date	Artifact Comments
3, 26, 51, 52: Irrigation/drainage ditches (607P, Q; 707A/B, L)	1819.6	33 wrought nails, 447 cut nails, 4 wire nails
5, 6: Scaffolding for eastern chimney? (607T)	1820+	Olive bottle glass, brown transfer print ceramic, tobacco pipe bowl
7: Builder's trench around brick pier (707H)	N/A	Nail fragments and a spun-back cast button
15, 22: Builder's trench for eastern chimney (607T)	N/A	Wood fragments, nail fragments, redware
43, 44, 47: Stepped post hole/post mold associated with western chimney scaffolding (707L4)	1820+	Whiteware, cut nails, dark green bottle glass, bone awl

Historical documentation suggests that Structure 2 was also constructed in the late 18th century; however, the mean date of the ceramics appears to cluster around the 1820s and does not have as wide of a date range as the ceramics found in Structure 1 contexts. I attribute this difference in ceramic mean dates to one main factor: the length of time each dwelling was occupied. Structure 1 was demolished sometime around 1830 when Josiah Collins III decided to reorient the main compound to the eastern canal rather than parallel to the lakeshore. Structure 2 remained standing and continued to be occupied through at least the end of the 19th century, resulting in a greater abundance of ceramics dating to the mid-to-late 19th century and thus

impacting the mean date. Although late 18th century ceramics do appear in contexts related to Structure 2, they are vastly outnumbered by later pearlwares, whitewares, yellowwares.

As with Structure 1, the irrigation and drainage ditches were in-filled in the late 19th to early 20th century using fill from an earlier period. This fill is most likely made up of refuse from the immediate area, accounting for the intermixing of early 19th century artifacts in irrigation and drainage ditch contexts.

Curation, Methods, and Preliminary Analysis

After each excavation season, all artifacts were washed, placed into non-archival plastic bags sorted by unit and level lots, and eventually housed at the Office of State Archaeology (OSA) in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina. Cataloging following the OSA guidelines took place in the mid-1980s, with the type of artifact, count, function, possible date range, and any additional comments written by hand (Table 7). Although no formal reports of the 1981 and 1982 excavations were created, two undergraduate students conducted independent study projects using some of the collected data. The first, written by Ann M. Smart in 1982, uses Stanley South's Mean Ceramic Dating Formula to determine the timeline of occupation for the unknown structure near the lake. Smart found a mean ceramic date of 1820, though later reexamination determined a mean ceramic date of 1809, both of which support the historic evidence that the structure is from the earlier period of the plantation, built sometime around 1796 and demolished around 1830 (Wilson 1985, 62; 1987, 4). The second was written in 1983 by Christopher Hughes, who also summarized the findings of both field seasons; Hughes later conducted the artifact analysis that is mentioned in the previous section.

Table 7: Artifact Counts from 1981 and 1982

Artifacts were initially categorized using Stanley South's functional classification system. Wilson combined colonoware ceramics with the kitchen group whereas Hughes kept a separate category of "aboriginal ceramics".

Classification	Original 1981 (Wilson 1987)	Original 1982 (Wilson 1987)	Recalculation 1981 (Hughes 1992)	Recalculation 1982 (Hughes 1992)
Kitchen Ceramics	786	844	1025	1063
Kitchen Glass	1299	601	1771	784
Ethnozoological (Bone/Shell)	867	534	1152	863
Architectural	2048	2417	3086	3316
Furniture	0	1	100	8
Arms	18	5	30	6
Clothing	5	28	23	32
Personal	1	7	11	7
Tobacco	14	11	16	14
Activities	423	485	222	198
Aboriginal (ceramics, lithics)	N/A	N/A	67	16
Total Count	5461	4933	7503	6307

Additional analysis was conducted in 1988 by Dr. David Phelps from East Carolina University who analyzed the unglazed coarse earthenware to identify prehistoric pottery types such as Colingtonware and Croaker Landing that were made by the Carolina Algonquian peoples living along the shorelines of Lake Phelps prior to the arrival of Europeans (Wilson 1988). Some of the earthenware, however, could not be linked to any known native pottery tradition, but is similar to other coarse earthenware found on contemporaneous plantation sites, suggesting that it

is colonoware likely made by the enslaved population at Somerset Place (Wilson 1987, 3).

Colonoware is unglazed pottery made from local clay, usually bowl forms or copies of European-style vessels, and has been associated with various plantation sites from Virginia to Florida (Chodoronek 2013, 60-61). It is likely the result of African pottery traditions blending with European vessel preferences (Ibid, 64).

The artifacts associated with the 1981 and 1982 field schools were loaned out from the Office of State Archaeology (OSA) to the Archaeology Lab at North Carolina State University in August 2020. After accession numbers were assigned for each collection, I began by organizing the bags of artifacts by field category number and, proceeding in numerical order, rehoused the artifacts in archival quality polyethylene bags. Following the OSA guidelines for cataloging archaeological collections, each unique lot of artifacts was given a provenience number preceded by one of the following artifact abbreviations:

- “a” for artifact; pipe stems and bowls, lead shot and musket balls, whole nails, whole artifacts, projectile points, beads, etc.
- “p” for pottery; historic ceramics or prehistoric pottery
- “m” for miscellaneous; nail fragments, brick, shell, tertiary flakes, glass fragments, animal droppings, lead sprue and casting refuse, sand concretions
- “eb” for ethno-botanical; seeds, nuts, charcoal, wood
- “w” for water-screened sample, sluiced sample, or flotation sample
- “s” for soil sample
- “b” for animal bone and teeth
- “hb” for human bone and teeth

Each lot of artifacts received its own bag and artifact card that records the site number, unit, level, date range, provenience number, weight, and accession number, as well as any additional remarks and descriptions (e.g., plain pearlware). The individual lots of each field category were then placed into one large bag labeled with the site name and number, field category number, excavation information, accession number, and range of provenience numbers.

All of the data was then entered into an electronic catalog sheet based on examples provided by the OSA and the City Archaeology Program in Boston, Massachusetts. I compiled the artifacts into ten main categories of classification: Ammunition, Bone, Ceramic, Clothing/Adornment, Ethno-Botanical, Glass, Lithic, Metal, Soil, and Miscellaneous. Ammunition includes shotgun shells and lead musket balls; bone designates animal bone and teeth; ceramics represents all earthenwares, porcelains, and clay artifacts such as tobacco pipes; clothing/adornment corresponds to fasteners, shoes, jewelry, and other items used to adorn the body; ethno-botanical includes seeds, nuts, charcoal, and wood fragments; glass is all window, container, and other miscellaneous glass items; lithic represents any manipulated stone, such as projectile points and flakes; metal includes whole and fragmented nails, architectural hardware, bottle caps, furniture parts, and other items; soil is reserved for soil samples taken by the original excavators; finally, miscellaneous encompasses all other artifacts that do not fit into the other broad categories. This includes, but is not limited to, oyster shells, brick, mortar, and synthetic items like plastic. In lieu of quantity, the weight in grams is given for nail fragments, charcoal, and marine shells due to their abundance and, often, their incredibly small size that makes accurate quantity counts extremely difficult. The final catalog for the 1981 and 1982 artifacts is available through the OSA.

Table 8: Total Artifact Counts by Classification Category

Classification	1981 (2021)	1982 (2021)
Ammunition	32	5
Bone	670	690
Classification	1981 (2021)	1982 (2021)
Ceramic	1274	1085
Clothing/Adornment	26	34
Ethno-Botanical	16	30
Glass	2931	924
Lithic	0	1
Metal	405	448
Miscellaneous	420	310
Total Count of Artifacts	5774	3527
Soil Sample	0g	36.9g
Charcoal	204.32g	29.75g
Nail Fragments	11534.3g	8336.2g
Oyster Shell	2559.5g	300.92g

The artifact counts from the initial cataloging and processing in the 1980s and a recalculation in 1992 by Christopher Hughes (Table 7) show stark differences from each other and from my own calculations. The method of classifying and identifying specific artifact types varies from person to person; for example, Hughes included lamp chimney glass in his furniture category while Wilson did not. I would expect to see different quantities in each category of artifact but the same grand total. This is not the case with the grand totals calculated by Wilson

and Hughes. I have not yet determined all of the causes of the extreme discrepancy in artifact counts between Wilson and Hughes, but the differences between my own counts and those of Wilson and Hughes can be partially attributed to my method of weighing all of the charcoal, nail fragments, and oyster shells. This would naturally result in a lower total artifact count which is the case when comparing the 1982 sums, but does not explain the reason for why my total 1981 artifact count is lower than Hughes' but higher than Wilson's.

Looking solely at the artifact counts that I compiled, there are a couple of noteworthy observations. The quantity of glass objects as well as charcoal, nail, and saltwater oyster shell weights is far greater in 1981 than in 1982. This could be attributed to a number of causes, including the fact that a greater portion of a single structure was excavated in 1981 while the 1982 excavations focused on a select few units, features, and shovel tests. This could also be explained by Structure 1 possibly having a dual function at some point during its occupation, a theory first proposed by Wilson (1985; 1987). Historical documentation led researchers to initially believe that Structure 1 was a commissary or kitchen for the enslaved population (Hughes 1992). A higher concentration of charcoal and oyster shell fragments, inclusion of several utilitarian forms of glazed earthenware that resemble baking and serving dishes, large quantities of glass, and parts of a cast iron stove suggest that Structure 1 had a separate function than Structure 2 at some point during the early 19th century. However, the size of the hearth in Structure 1 is similar to those from Structure 2, suggesting that the fireplace was not originally meant for large-scale cooking like a traditional kitchen. Without historical documentation, it is impossible to truly determine how exactly Structure 1 was used but the artifact assemblage does suggest a functional difference from Structure 2 which was strictly a domestic residence.

In my analysis of artifacts related to personal use and adornment, I only included artifacts that definitively date from the antebellum period of the plantation as Structures 1 and 2 were occupied during this era. There is great potential for further analysis on artifacts from later periods, and on other artifact classes like ceramics and faunal remains. Information relating to identification and dating of artifacts was drawn from a multitude of sources including, but not limited to, *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America* by Ivor Noël Hume, *American Artifacts of Personal Adornment, 1680-1820* by Carolyn White, the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery database, and various website resources endorsed by the OSA and the Society for Historical Archaeology.

Description of Common Personal Artifact Type Categories

Buttons

As one of the most common adornment artifacts to find on historical sites, buttons range from simple metal discs to highly ornate dazzling pieces of wearable art. Prior to the eighteenth century, buttons were a clear indicator of status as “only military men and wealthy colonists normally used buttons” on uniforms and coats (Loren 2010, 50). Even into the early nineteenth century, buttons were usually worn by men while alternative forms of fastening, like pins, hooks, and laces, were used for women’s clothing. Though some had utilitarian purposes, such as the buttons on shirts and breeches, the larger buttons found on men’s coats and waistcoats were used as outward signifiers of the wearer’s social status, wealth, and personality. They were easily seen due to their great size and predominant display on the exterior of the coat, and could be changed out for a newer, more fashionable set. Women also utilized decorative buttons to make statements of identity, particularly so during the mid-nineteenth century when the sewing

machine transformed dressmaking and tailoring into a household activity (Marcel 1994, 10).

Mismatched or missing buttons may indicate lower socio-economic status, or lack of accessibility to a wide range of button choices.

The composition of historical buttons is highly varied and depended upon price, availability, and function. Readily available were wood and bone buttons, which could be manufactured within the home or inexpensively purchased from local stores. Wood buttons are typically plain and utilitarian, though carved and painted versions gained some popularity in the 19th century (Marcel 1994, 8). Bone was used as a button material and as a mold for textile-covered and stamped metal buttons. Sew-through bone buttons were inexpensive and utilitarian and could have two to five holes; buttons with five holes were most often used by men on shirts and undergarments throughout the 1700s (White 2005, loc.2139-2151).

Beginning in the eighteenth century, button making became a major industry in England and France, sparking the rise in accessibility of more expensive and elaborate buttons. From the late eighteenth century until about 1820, copper alloy buttons (brass, tombac, yellow metal) were incredibly popular before gold-plated brass buttons, usually marked as “gilded,” took over the market (Marcel 1994, 6). Molded pewter buttons shared a similar range of popularity, with a revival in the 1850s (*Ibid*, 7). The decoration of metal buttons ranged from plain flat circles, to gold- and silver-plated, to intricate lathe-carved designs. The shank style and manufacturing technique of metal buttons is used as a relatively reliable dating tool (Table 9). For example, white metal or brass spun-back buttons are easily identified by the concentric circles and boss-cast wire or cone shank on their underside; they were most often used as fasteners rather than purely decorative and typically date from 1760 to about 1800 (Olsen 1963, 552; Aultman and Grillo 2012, 8)

Table 9: One-piece Metal Button Material, Shank Type, and Date Ranges
 From the DAACS button dating manual (Aultman and Grillo 2012, 8-9). Alternate date ranges in parentheses from White (2005, loc. 2001-2007).

Shank Type	Button Material	Date Range	Descriptions
Alpha	Copper alloy, iron	1770-1800	1-piece, flat disc button. The shank is shaped like the Greek letter Alpha with no “feet” at the base
Cast eye	Pewter	17th to mid-18th century (1700-1765)	1-piece, flat disc button with a visible mold seam on the shank and back of the button
Cone with wire eye	Tombac or copper alloy	18th to early 19th century (1760-1785)	1-piece, flat disc button. The cone shank has an embedded wire eye and is lathe finished
Drilled eye	Pewter, copper alloy, tombac	18th to mid-19th century (1760-1785)	1-piece, flat disc buttons. The shank is cast before a hole is drilled
Embedded wire	Pewter (“hard white”), copper alloy	1800-1830s	1 piece, flat disc button. A wire eye shank is embedded in a metal hump
Omega	Copper alloy	After 1800 (~1790s-1850)	1-piece button with a soldered shank shaped like the Greek letter Omega. Two “feet” extend outward from the shank base
Shank cast in boss	Pewter, copper alloy, tombac	1760-1800s	1-piece, flat disc button. Usually spun-back cast and the shank is set into a blob or cylinder of metal

Early ceramic buttons were incredibly expensive as they were usually made out of porcelain and elaborately decorated (Venovcevs 2013, 4). Mass manufacturing techniques pioneered in 1840 by Richard Prosser made ceramic buttons increasingly accessible to all classes. These small Prosser buttons, also known as agate buttons in historical records, act as a terrific *terminus post quem* for archaeological sites and range in decoration from plain opaque

white to transfer printed and gilded. Due to their glossy appearance, they are often misidentified as glass instead of ceramic (Sprague 2002, 111). Prosser buttons were inexpensive, used for all kinds of utilitarian clothing, and were widely available from the 1850s until the 1920s (Venovcevs 2013, 5).

The majority of glass buttons in North America date from the nineteenth century and are usually lead or flint glass with facets (White 2005, loc. 2213). Large glass buttons were often made to resemble jewels, adding sparkle and elegance to an ensemble. Molded glass buttons were first produced in the 1830s and came in a variety of colors, although black was particularly fashionable during the 1860s (Venovcevs 2013, 6). Elaborate lacy glass buttons were produced from 1825 to 1870, while plain sew-through milk glass buttons appeared in 1840 (Marcel 1994, 5). Additional types not found at Somerset Place include shell, enamel, horn, ivory, rubber from the 1850s on, and celluloid after 1869.

Buttons of all materials could be used on a variety of different garments for any length of time, making it difficult to accurately determine what garment a button may have belonged to. One general indicator of use is size. Button sizes can be simplified into three broad categories: small (<12mm), medium (12mm-18mm), and large (>18mm) (White 2005 1835). From the 1760s through the early 19th century, coat buttons were rather large in size, ranging from 18mm to over 30mm in diameter whereas waistcoat, breeches, and jacket buttons were smaller at 14.5mm to about 19.5mm (Ibid, loc. 1907-1919).

Buckles

A number of different buckle sizes, shapes, and styles were used by men and women as clothing fasteners or on harnesses. As clothing fasteners, they were used on shoes, breeches, stocks, hats, collars, girdles, gloves, belts, and spurs. Shoe buckles were used from the 17th

century and remained popular until the 1780s; they quickly became obsolete by the end of the 18th century with a shift in fashionable silhouettes and style (Hume 1969, 85-86). They came in every imaginable style and were made out of several types of metals depending on the wearer's social position. Highly decorative silver with gems or paste stones were by far the most expensive, while very plain pewter and iron were usually worn by the poor and enslaved (White 2005, loc.1218-1230). Harness buckles used for horses, mules, and other animals were brass or iron, very plain, and are undatable as their form and function did not change over the last few centuries (Hume 1969, 88).

There are two main parts of a buckle: the frame and the chape (Figure 10). The chape is made up of three other components called the pin, the roll, and the tongue, which are often found as separate pieces (White 2005, loc. 1243-1251). Assigning the purpose and date of manufacture for buckles other than those used to fasten shoes can be difficult, but their size and shape offer clues. For instance, stock buckles are usually flat and rectangular or oblong and spur buckles have narrow frames and are often embellished or pointed; both types were worn by men for functionality and as statement of gender identity, social status, and fashionability (White 2009).

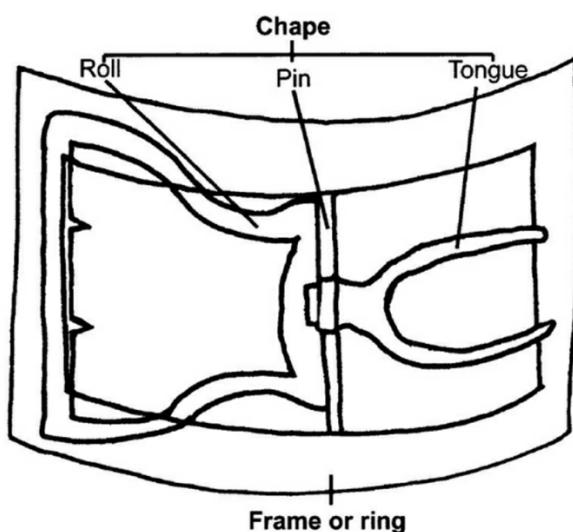


Figure 10: Parts of a buckle (White 2005, loc. 1251).

Beads

Beads, particularly those made of glass, are another frequent find on historic sites. They were widely traded throughout the Atlantic world, appearing in innumerable sizes, shapes, and colors, and used or worn in a myriad of ways: strung together as a necklace or bracelet, sewn onto a garment for a decorative element, tied around the waist in strands, or threaded through the hair. An extensive classification system devised in the 1970s by Kenneth and Martha Ann Kidd (2012) breaks down the types of glass beads into four main categories with a separate classification for wire-wound beads: I (simple tube), II (simple modified tube), III (compound tube), IV (modified compound tube). Aside from glass, other materials used as beads include gold, cut steel, stone, ceramic, shell, and bone. Coral bead necklaces were often given to children as coral was believed to prevent illness (White 2005, loc. 2591-2620).

For decades, archaeologists have remarked upon the prevalence of glass beads on slavery sites. In societies along the Gambia River, specific bead types were worn as a semi-permanent public display of wealth, social status, ethnic identity, and ability to participate in economic trade (Gijanto 2011). Infants and small children used glass beads as teething tools or were adorned with beads by their parents to protect against illness during a time of extremely high infant and child mortality (Lee 2011, 112). Beads may have been worn by enslaved women as a physical sign of communal strength, a signal social standing among the enslaved laborers, an act of passive resistance against the enslaver, and as a generational “bridge” that “simultaneously connects generations of black women through time and space” (Yentsch 1995, 48). White European-American enslavers overlooked the deeper spiritual meanings of beads which were said to offer protection from harm and influence the future, instead seeing them as harmless trinkets used to beautify their wearers (Lee 2011, 211-212; Loren 2010, 62). Beads would have

been carefully curated, only entering into the archaeological record when accidentally lost and could not be recovered, such as beneath floorboards or hidden in crevices.

Tobacco Pipes

As an inexpensive artifact of personal use, a clay tobacco pipe was used and reused by the same person over the course of a year or so before being broken and ultimately discarded in favor of a new pipe. Tobacco is placed into the bowl of the pipe which may have a heel, spur, or flat bottom and attaches to a stem through which the user smokes. Bowl types, stem length, stem hole diameter, and maker's marks can all be used to determine the date of manufacture. The white kaolin clay pipes on North American sites were imported from Europe, but a small pipe making industry began to take shape in Virginia and New England by the end of the 17th century (Hume 1969, 307-308).

Unlike most artifacts of adornment and personal use, tobacco pipes directly impact, and are impacted by, their user during an activity that both literally and symbolically imparts elements of identity. They are one of the most intimate of artifacts, meant to be placed between the lips of its user, often in a communal setting, as part of an activity or ritual. Some pipe stem fragments show indentations from being held between the teeth which also had a direct impact on the user's dental health; there are instances of skeletal remains presenting patterns of scooped-shaped wear on their front teeth from the use of clay pipes (Ubelaker 1996). Even more remarkable is a recent study in which the mitochondrial DNA of an individual was recovered from a pipe stem fragment found during an archaeological survey of a plantation cabin. Analysis of the DNA led researchers to conclude that the user was likely an enslaved woman of Sierra Leonean ancestry, expanding possible research avenues into identifying specific cultural

associations of the enslaved population at that site or exploring the experiences of an individual (Schablitsky et al 2019, 15-17).

CHAPTER FOUR

Presentation of Personal Artifacts from Two Excavation Seasons

Somerset Place Structure 1 (1981)

Across the whole of Structure 1, a total of 60 artifacts relating to personal use and adornment were recovered. Forty of these artifacts likely date to the hypothesized period of occupation of Structure 1, 1796-1830. The remaining 20 artifacts cannot be definitively dated or are from later time periods. Even though Structure 1 was demolished some time around 1830, the location of the site close to the main compound and to Lake Phelps meant that it received frequent traffic over the next century as Somerset Place transitioned from a plantation with enslaved laborers to a subdivided farm with tenants and sharecroppers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Table 10.1: Structure 1 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, 1796-1830

Level One

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit	Level
Buckle, harness	1		403 V	N/A
Marble, glass	1	1900+	504 A	1
Pocket knife	1		504 A	1
Folding ruler, hinge	1	1851+	503 C	1
Pencil lead	2		403 D	1
Slate pencil	1		403 Q	1
Decorative pin head	1	Late 19th c. to early 20th c.	403 V	1
Tobacco pipe, bowl	5		403 Q	1

Table 10.1 (continued).

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit	Level
Terracotta tobacco pipe, shank	1	1859-1880	403 V	1
Tobacco pipe, stem/bowl/heel with maker's mark	3		504 A	1
4-hole glass/Prosser button, 12mm	1	1840+	504 A	1
4-hole glass/Prosser button, 15mm	1	1840+	403 U	1
White metal spun-back button, 13mm	1	1760-1800s	404 N	1
Tombac spun-back button, 20-21mm	2	1760-1800s	403 Z, 504 A	1
Copper alloy embedded wire, 14mm	1	1800-1830s	403 CDGH	1
HeadLight brand metal button, 16mm	2	1879-1960	403 V, 403 U	1

Across level one are metal buttons, fragments of clay tobacco pipes, and one metal buckle. A nearly perfect spun-back cast tombac button with a diameter of 20mm was recovered from 504 A, while another with a portion of the disc broken off was found in 403 Z (Figure 10). A smaller spun-back button came from 404 N. As a copper alloy, tombac would have originally had a yellowish color but has now tarnished to a dull silver. A roughly square (36x38mm) iron buckle with a simple tongue is most likely from a harness for work animals and was found on the southern exterior of Structure 1 (403 T). The only tobacco pipe fragments with a maker's mark across both field seasons were recovered from 504 A. The heel, bowl, and stem fragments are from an imported white kaolin clay pipe; a maker's mark on the heel is somewhat difficult to make out but possibly says "GM" with a 3-pointed crown above the letters (Figure 14). It has yet to be linked with a specific manufacturer or location.



Figure 10: two tombac spun-back buttons (top: 504A1; bottom: 403Z1). Note the concentric circles that are made as a result of the manufacturing process.

Level one contains the most artifacts of adornment and personal use that are from the postbellum period or cannot be attributed to a specific date range. A circular metal 15mm diameter disc embossed with a vine and flower design over thin stripes was recovered from the

topmost level of unit 403 V; the backside has an attached looped metal wire with the ends broken off (Figure 11). The exact function and purpose of this artifact is uncertain, but a nearly identical artifact with an approximately 23mm long metal wire attached was located at a one-room African American school in Virginia that was in operation from 1883 to 1929 (Betti, Colleen. 2021. Personal communication with the author, March 29). These objects may be the decorative end of a woman's commercial hat or hair pin from the late 19th to early 20th century.



Figure 11: Probable decorative head of a metal hat or hair pin.

Another artifact found in the same context is a red clay #32 Pamplin tobacco pipe bowl with banded edges (Figure 13: second row, far right). The Pamplin Pipe Factory operated as a cottage industry in Appomattox County, Virginia from 1859 before being mechanized in 1880 and eventually shut down in the 1950s (Stewart 1999, 17-18). Pamplin began glazing their pipes

around 1890. The unglazed clay and thick bowl construction suggests that this pipe may date from the earlier handmade models from before 1880 (*Ibid*, 23-26).

Recovered from the topsoil layers of units 403 U and 403 V are two top portions of a metal button with the raised lettering “HEAD LIGHT” (Figure 12). Toward the end of the 19th century, clothing manufactured specifically for work became increasingly common and was made to endure the dirt, wear, and tear of hard labor; the brand HeadLight was created in Detroit in 1897 and ceased production in 1960. An identical style of HeadLight button was recovered from an early 20th century work camp in California and a 4-hole sew-through HeadLight button from Oakley Plantation in Louisiana, an indicator of the relatively new practice of widespread marketing and distribution through stores and catalogs (Psota 2002, 115-117; Wilkie 2000, 156).



Figure 12: Two HeadLight brand buttons in different stages of preservation. The raised “Head Light” logo on the right button can only be seen under slanted light.

Table 10.2: Structure 1 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, 1796-1830**Level Two**

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
Metal utensil handle	1		403 V
Metal toy car frame	1	1932+	404 S
Tobacco pipe, bowl	1		403 U, Ft. 1
Tobacco pipe, stem	1		503 D
Tobacco pipe, stem/bowl	2		504 E
Tobacco pipe, bowl	1		504 E, Ft. 10
Leather shoe fragments	8	20th century	503 C
White metal spun-back button, 20mm	1	1760-1800s	403 Z
Copper alloy stamped disc button, 18mm	1	1760-1850	404 S
White metal button, shank cast in boss, est. 18mm	1	1760-1800	404 S

In Level Two, a third large spun-back tombac button was recovered from unit 403 Z, along with two fragmented metal disc buttons in 404 S, a 16mm diameter 4-hole milk glass button in 504 E, and a 12mm 4-hole milk glass button in 504 A. Although the majority of pipes found at Somerset Place are imported white clay, a roughly made pipe bowl with incised lines in Feature 10 (the interior fill of a chimney base in 504 E) indicates that some level of pipe making was occurring at Somerset Place or nearby. A metal toy car frame was also recovered from the second level of unit 404 S; it measures 112x45mm and is from an interchangeable toy car and truck set that was patented in 1932 (Heisler and Fletcher 1932).



Figure 13: Assemblage of clay tobacco pipe fragments from the 1981 field season.



Figure 14: Close up of clay tobacco pipe fragments with an unidentified maker's mark stamped on the heel. In Figure 13, they are the cluster of three fragments in the bottom row.

Table 10.3: Structure 1 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, 1796-1830**Level Three**

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
Metal padlock (fragments)	10	19th century	504 E
Tobacco pipe, stem	1		504 E

The only artifacts of personal use recovered from the third level are a clay pipe stem and pieces of an iron padlock in association with the base of a corbelled chimney in unit 504 E. Fragments of a large cast iron vessel were also located in the same unit, suggesting that the padlock was likely used in conjunction with a cast iron stove used for heating and cooking in the early 19th century.

Table 10.4: Structure 1 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, 1796-1830**Level Four**

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
Metal disc button, alpha shank	1	1770-1800	403 Q
White metal spun-back button, est. 20mm	1	1760-1800s	403 T, Ft. 8
Copper alloy spun-back button, est. 16mm	1	1760-1800s	403 T, Ft. 9
Tobacco pipe, bowl	1		403 T
Tobacco pipe, bowl	1		403 U, Ft. 1
Tobacco pipe, bowl	1		403 T, Ft. 8

Artifacts from Level 4 in the southeastern corner of Structure 1 are in somewhat worse condition. Fragments of two medium-sized spun-back buttons, a burned pipe bowl fragment, and a pipe bowl fragment with a molded beard decoration were found in a secondary builder's trench

and ditch feature in 403 T. A flat copper alloy button with an alpha-style shank and a buff-colored tobacco bowl rim were recovered from 403 Q and Feature 1 of 403 U, respectively.

Somerset Place Structure 2 (1982)

The excavation units associated with a circa 1800 two-story dwelling show a wider range of artifacts that range in date from the turn of the 19th century into the early 20th century, which correlates with previous statements that the last of the slave dwellings continued to be used by tenant and sharecropping farmers until the late 1920s. Across the whole of Structure 2, a total of 48 artifacts related to adornment and personal use were recovered and 37 of those are likely from the antebellum period of occupation.

Table 11.1: Structure 2 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, circa 1800-1920

Level One / Mixed

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
4-hole Prosser button, 10mm	1	1840+	607 T
4-hole Prosser button, pie crust design, 13mm	1	1840+	607 S
4-hole glass button, 13mm	1	1840+	707 R
Brass gilt button, 18mm	1	1800-1850	707 A
Copper alloy disc button, heavily corroded; 25mm	1	1770-1850	707 A
4-hole Prosser button, 10mm	1	1840+	707 B
Brass gilt button, omega shank; 12mm	1	1800-1830	707 B
Metal disc button, probably spun-back; heavily corroded; 23mm	1	1760-1800	707 B
Black plastic comb fragments	2	20th c.	707 A&B Baulk

Table 11.1 (continued).

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
D-shaped iron bridle or saddle buckle	1		707 A&B Unknown
Double heart necklace pendant	1	20th c.	707 A&B Unknown
Brass disc button, missing alpha shank, 25mm	1	1770-1800	707 A&B West
Tobacco pipe bowl fragment, burned	1		707 A&B West
Copper alloy disc button, boss cast in shank	1	1760-1800	707 A&B Mixed
5-hole bone button fragments, est. 18mm	2		707 A&B Mixed

A large number of artifacts were recovered from all levels of the 3'x15' trench traversing units 707 A and B near the center of Structure 2. A medium-sized gilt disc button with a diameter of 18mm was found in 707 A and is stamped on the back with the words “DOUBLE GILT” amidst a concentric circle and star design (Figure 15). A smaller brass button partially back stamped with the word “COLOUR” was recovered from 707 B. Gilt copper alloy and brass buttons were very popular choices for fastening men’s coats between 1810 and 1830 and could easily be stamped or engraved with decorative elements (White 2005, loc. 2032). Double piece gilt buttons replaced single stamped discs sometime around 1830 and remained popular until the 1850s (Marcel 1994, 15). Only one tobacco pipe bowl fragment was found and has evidence of burning on the interior surface. A D-shaped iron buckle frame, likely from a saddle or throat latch on a bridle, and two fragments of a 5-hole bone button with an estimated diameter of 18mm were recovered from a mixed context in the 707 A and B trench.

Only three artifacts from Level 1 most likely date from the postbellum period. Two fragments of a black plastic comb were found in the bulk separating subunits A and B. Within

the A and B trench itself, a 12kt gold plated double heart necklace charm was recovered with a small length of chain still attached. The one milk glass and three Prosser-type buttons could date as late as the 1940s but were first manufactured and widely distributed in the 1840s



Figure 15: A tarnished brass button that was once covered with a bright yellow gilt.

Table 11.2: Structure 2 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, circa 1800-1920

Level Two

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
Glass tube bead	1	18th-19th c.	607 J
Copper alloy disc button, shank cast in boss, 17mm	1	1760-1800	607 Q
Tobacco pipe stem fragments, curved	2		607 Q

Table 11.2 (continued).

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
Wood and metal folding ruler hinge	1	19th-20th c.	607 Q
Metal upholstery or shoe tack	1		607 S
Slate pencil fragment	1		607 T
Leather shoe fragments w/ tacks	3	Probably 20th c.	607 X
5-hole bone button fragment, est. 18mm	1		707 A
Tobacco pipe stem	1		707 A
Copper alloy disc button, heavily corroded, 19mm	1	1760-1850	707 A&B, Feature 51
Tobacco pipe stem and bowl fragments	3		707 A&B, Feature 51
Tobacco pipe stem fragment	1		707 L
Metal and bone utensil handle	1	19th-20th c.	707 L
Brass “Andrew Jackson” button, 19mm	1	1829	707 L
Black plastic comb fragment	1		707 M&R Baulk

A total of 21 artifacts were recovered across Level 2. In 707 A, an additional piece of the 5-hole bone button was found and all three can mend together. In the same context was also one clay tobacco pipe stem. Three tobacco pipe stem and bowl fragments as well as a large, heavily corroded button were found in Feature 51, a ditch that cuts through the 707 A and B trench.

One of the most interesting artifacts comes from 707 L: a flat brass disc button with the backstamp “ANDREW JACKSON PRESIDENT 1829”. Once a bright yellow, the metal has tarnished to a dark grey and the shank is missing (Figure 16). Andrew Jackson, president from 1829 to 1837, issued these buttons as one of the first items of political campaign merchandise

upon winning the election. An identical button was recovered in 2019 from an unknown context in central Georgia (Moriarty 2020). Unfortunately, I have not located any additional information about the manufacturing or distribution process of the Andrew Jackson campaign buttons but they were likely for sale in city shops; this one may have been purchased in Edenton.



Figure 16: Back of President Andrew Jackson brass button, 1829.

Artifacts from 607 Q include a slightly corroded metal disc button with a shank cast in boss and fragments of a curved tobacco pipe stem and bowl. The only glass bead from Structure 2 was located in 607 J: a 10mm long drawn tube bead with red and blue stripes set against a background of opaque white. The inner core of the bead is an opaque grey. Based on its shape and style, it could be classified as a Kidd type IIIc with stripes (Figure 17).

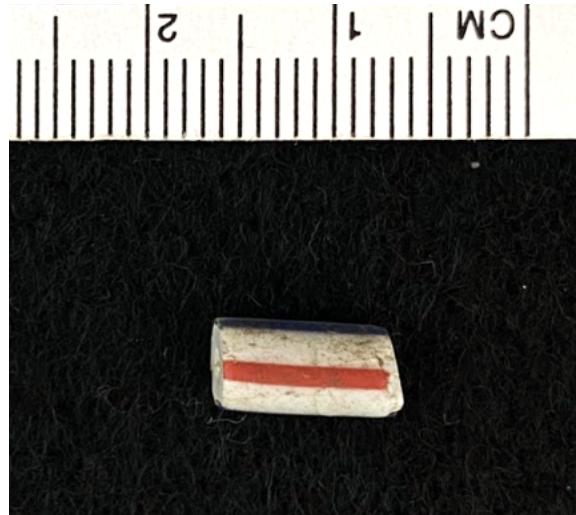


Figure 17: Glass tube bead with red and blue stripes.

The remainder of artifacts found in Level 2 likely date from the late 19th to early 20th centuries or cannot be accurately attributed to a specific time period. These include a small metal upholstery or shoe tack from 607 S, a fragment of a slate pencil from 607 T, three leather shoe fragments from 607 X, and the hinge portion of a wood and metal folding ruler from 607 Q. The handle portion of a black plastic comb, which can mend with the fragments found in the Level 1 baulk of 707 A and B, was recovered from the baulk between 707 M and R. Finally, an unidentified metal utensil with a bone handle was found in 707 L.

Table 11.3: Structure 2 Adornment and Personal Artifacts, circa 1800-1920

Levels Three and Four

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
Tombac spun-back button, 22mm	1	1760-1800	707 H, Feature 7 [Builder's Trench]
Tombac spun-back button, 13mm	1	1760-1800	707 L

Table 11.3 (continued).

Type	Count	Date Range	Unit
Lead fishing sinker, 12mm	1		607 P, Feature 3
Tobacco pipe stem fragments	2		607 Q, Feature 52
Tobacco pipe bowl fragments	2		607 Q, Feature 52
Copper alloy spun-back button, 21mm	1	1760-1800	607 Q, Feature 52
Copper alloy slightly domed button, partial backstamp, 19mm	1	1800-1830	607 Q, Feature 52
Square iron buckle	1		607 S
Bone awl	1		707 L, Level 4, Feature 47

The 11 artifacts of adornment and personal use coming from Level 3 and Level 4 were mostly recovered from features related to the construction of the building or from drainage ditches. A 22mm diameter spun-back button made from tombac was found in Feature 7, a builder's trench alongside one of the brick foundational piers of the building. A similar tombac button with a 13mm diameter was recovered from 707 L. A square iron buckle, likely from a harness, was recovered from 607 S.

Feature 3 in unit 607 P and Feature 52 in unit 607 Q are from the same drainage ditch running alongside Structure 2 that was filled in sometime during the early 19th century (Wilson 1985, 65). A lead sphere with a hole drilled through it came from the 607 P portion of this feature; this item is likely a repurposed musket ball used as a fishing net sinker. Recovered from the 607 Q portion of the ditch were four tobacco pipe fragments, a copper alloy spun-back button with a diameter of 21mm, and a slightly domed copper alloy button with a thick oval-shaped shank. The back stamp has mostly worn away, but two concentric circles and the letters "ELD"

can be seen (Figure 18). Based on the shank style and the presence of a backstamp, this button likely dates from the turn of the century.



Figure 18: Slightly concave copper alloy button with a poorly preserved surface. A portion of the backstamp can be seen to the lower left of the shank.



Figure 19: Assemblage of metal buttons from Structure 2.



Figure 20: Assemblage of tobacco pipe fragments from Structure 2.

The only artifact related to personal use and adornment recovered from the fourth level of stratigraphy was found in Feature 47, a posthole in unit 707 L that is theorized to be from scaffolding. A simple handmade bone awl measuring about 55mm long is also the only artifact recovered from Structures 1 or 2 related to sewing or clothing construction. The bone awl tapers to a blunt point and was possibly used for punching holes through leather, wood, or cloth (Figure 21).



Figure 21: Bone awl recovered from Feature 47.

In addition to the units specifically associated with Structure 2, artifacts were recovered from test units, trenches, and probing along the lake shore. Four test units to the west (808 P, 1009 N&P, 1009 V, and the 2'x20' 1009 trench) contain two gilt omega-style shank buttons, two 4-hole Prosser buttons, a round beige bead possibly made from glass, and a clay tobacco pipe stem.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

This thesis sought to explore the following questions about enslaved people at Somerset Place: How did they create and maintain a sense of identity? Do the items left behind indicate a particular cultural affiliation? What opportunities did these people have to acquire items of adornment and identity? How did their methods of cultivating identity through material culture as enslaved workers at Somerset Place compare with workers on other plantations? And, is there evidence of recycling items, and if so what do these items indicate about the people who used them? Some of these questions proved more difficult to answer than expected given the assemblage and context records. The assemblage of adornment and personal use artifacts from the two structures offers only a limited view of the ways in which the enslaved population at Somerset Place utilized material goods to overtly and covertly, consciously and unconsciously, display messages of cultural meaning, express their collective and unique identities, and participate in the local and global economy.

While we unfortunately do not know who lived or worked in Structure 1, the artifact assemblage and historical documentation indicates that it was likely one of the five dwelling houses erected for the enslaved population in the late 1780s and later possibly used as a secondary kitchen or commissary in the 19th century. The majority of these men and women could not speak English, were forced to dig canals through a treacherous swamp, and dozens died from disease, injury, malnutrition, and even suicide. Upwards of two dozen people were crammed into the one room cabin with a single fireplace that would later come to have a cast iron stove. Artifacts from Structure 1 have the potential to reveal material evidence of the daily activities and horrid conditions of the earliest enslaved peoples at Somerset Place. And, despite

such conditions, other historical and archaeological studies have repeatedly shown that enslaved people were active cultural agents who made and consumed material culture in varied ways that evoked through intentional or unintentional symbolic gestures their backgrounds, interests, and opportunities.

As a means of coping with their situation, the likely African-born tenants of Structure 1 attempted to embrace their homeland traditions, even under threat of violence and cruelty, through food, music, spiritual practices, and the making and consumption of cultural material goods. However, as newly enslaved laborers on an incredibly remote plantation, the opportunity and ability to purchase, trade, or otherwise acquire items was severely limited. The plain, unembellished assemblage of buttons found within the context of Structure 1 suggests that the occupants predominately wore cheap clothing supplied by their enslavers. Expense records from the Lake Company in 1787 show that 20 pounds, 14 shillings were paid for nearly 140 yards of Osnaburg, a rough cloth often purchased for enslaved workers, and 17 pounds, 15 shillings “paid for making 60 shirts, 43 shifts, 60 pr. Trousers & 33 coats” (as cited in Redford 2005, loc. 1387). The large copper alloy and tombac spun-back buttons may have come from one or several of these coats, lost under the floorboards or discarded when the shank broke off.

The trove of records kept by the Collins family throughout Somerset Place’s 80 years of operation allows for a unique glimpse into the daily lives and interpersonal relationships of the people that lived in each of the 26 dwellings along the lake shore. Many of the residents of Structure 2 were direct descendants of Sucky Davis, one of the earliest enslaved women brought to Somerset Place in 1786 who lived in one of the second-floor rooms. Just below her resided her daughter Polly’s extended family, including Luke Davis, her grandson, who worked as a butler in the Collins Mansion (List of Families 1843; Somerset Place State Historic Site, 2020a). Many

of Sukey's eight children became or were married to skilled workers, affording her family a heightened status on the plantation.

Living in such close proximity to the main compound of Somerset Place, along with Luke Davis and other family members working within the Collins Mansion, meant that the residents of Structure 2 were under more direct European-American influence, surveillance, and control. As a result, they "constantly negotiated between...the pressure of tradition, which tied them to a faraway ancestral home and to one another, and the pressures of cultural assimilation and subservience, as imposed by the planters and their families" (Wilkie 2000, 133). A glimpse at the balance of identity can be seen in the artifacts recovered from Structure 2 when they are compared to those from Structure 1. Imported gilt buttons stamped with "COLOUR" and "DOUBLE GILT," a colorful glass bead, and a brass button crafted for the presidential inauguration of Andrew Jackson suggest a greater concern for personal appearance that could be satisfied through purchases or gifts of higher quality items. As enslaved people could not vote in political elections, the Andrew Jackson button points to the political leanings of Josiah Collins III who may have procured the button as part of a set before passing them, or the garment to which they were attached, on to one of the tenants of Structure 2. In addition, the inclusion of Andrew Jackson's name and political campaign into the lives of the free and enslaved families of Somerset Place demonstrates a connection among enslavers and the political realm. Despite the fact that enslaved and free people of African descent could not vote, their lives and bodies were continuously politicized in local, regional and national contexts through restrictions of movement, dress, speech, appearance, education, and more (Camp 2002, 535-536). The button created for Andrew Jackson's presidential campaign found in the context of a slave dwelling is a further reminder of the difficulty enslaved individuals faced to free themselves mentally,

culturally, and physically while still under the control and influence of white European-American enslavers.

Large quantities of buttons found in proportion to other artifacts of personal use and adornment have been noted at other sites associated with slavery and African-American tenant farming. At the Oakley Plantation in Louisiana, Laurie Wilkie remarks upon the high number of personal adornment artifacts, particularly buttons (2000, 155). Similarly, at Poplar Forest in Virginia, the largest type of adornment artifact recovered was buttons, with a count of 122 (Heath 1999, 60). Even though Oakley Plantation shares a similar period of occupation with Somerset Place and Poplar Forest, the material of the buttons recovered do not match. The majority of buttons recovered from Somerset Place are made from tombac and other copper alloys dating from the late 18th to early 19th centuries; from Poplar Forest, an overwhelming 92% of the buttons were either white or yellow metal (*Ibid*, 60). This is different at Oakley Plantation, where the majority are plain and colored Prosser-type buttons with a lesser count of other material such as rubber, shell, glass, paste gemstone, gold-plated metal, vegetable ivory, bakelite, and bone (Wilkie 2000, 154-155). Perhaps the discrepancy in button material is due to regional differences in availability, or the fact Oakley had a larger number of tenant farmers and sharecroppers than Somerset Place in the late 19th to early 20th century.

The material of buttons is interesting to consider within the context of slavery. White metal is a term used to describe any button made of a white colored alloy, such as pewter and tombac, while yellow metal buttons are of copper alloy (Aultman and Grillo 2012, 11). Both types were incredibly common utilitarian fasteners in the 18th and early 19th century, with the level of decorative elements serving as a means to differentiate the wealthy from those of a lesser socioeconomic status. Gold-plated brass buttons became popular only after 1820 and were the

most common type until 1850 when milk glass was preferred (Marcel 1994, 6). Metal was made to withstand hard use and would be less likely to break than shell or bone, saving on the cost of buying replacement buttons. The large presence of completely plain copper alloy buttons at Somerset Place suggests that the enslaved population was probably clothed in relatively cheap, utilitarian clothing with unremarkable decorative elements. The lack of any gilt buttons from Structure 1 also corroborates with the timing of demolition of the structure and the start of Josiah Collins' permanent residence on the site.

The lack of variety in button material and decoration at Somerset Place likely stems from several factors. First, Somerset Place was managed from Edenton for the first several decades of operation; the act of passing on, or “gifting,” the Collins’ old or unwanted clothing and accessories was virtually nonexistent until about 1830 when Josiah Collins III and his wife began living onsite full time. With very little opportunity for interaction with the Collinses and the greater European-American population, the enslaved workers were unlikely to be paid wages, gifted items, or forced to present themselves in a certain dress due to the lack of higher status positions like butler, lady’s maid, or gardener. Second, the assemblage of buttons discussed in this thesis is only representative of a very small portion of the enslaved population at Somerset Place. It is entirely possible that other unexcavated dwellings have more to offer with a higher percentage of gilded or decorated buttons, beads, and other trinkets. A comparative study of the artifact assemblages of several dwellings may reveal key differences in button materials based on the known inhabitants and their jobs, or location in relation to the Collins Mansion and overseer’s house.

Several scholars (Wilkie 2000; Yentsch 1994; Klingelhofer 1987) have noted the quantity of buttons at African-American sites and offered a few explanations: “they may have

been used as counters, they may have accumulated as a result of scavenging and reusing old clothing...or they may have been components of religious caches" (Wilkie 2000, 156). An interesting detail to note is that nine of the total 19 metal buttons from Structures 1 and 2 still have the shank attached and are in fairly good condition. If clothing fasteners and other items of adornment were often carefully looked after until broken beyond use, what accounts for the intact condition of 47% of the buttons? In the absence of beads, perhaps the readily available and relatively inexpensive buttons were used to adorn the hair or strung as a necklace, or kept in caches for spiritual uses (*Ibid*, 157).

The use of clothing scraps, buttons, and other household objects as items of adornment is particularly noted in recollections of festivals and celebrations, such as the John Koonering dance. This festival is also called John Canoe, Jankunu, or Junkanoo, and has been observed not only at Somerset Place, but also in other parts of North Carolina, the Caribbean, and Central America (Bilby 2010). Historical accounts emphasize the blending of African and European-American cultural elements and although each performance was unique to its specific region, they all have highly elaborate costumes crafted from ribbons, shells, pieces of glass or mirrors, sashes, masks, animal horns, bells, and feathers (Wisdom 1985, 18-23). To craft their own John Koonering noisemakers and costumes, some of the enslaved people at Somerset Place may have used buttons and beads. It seems remarkable that the overseers or Josiah Collins, a devout Episcopalian who forced his religion upon his enslaved workers, would allow for such a loud, colorful display of African cultural heritage on Christmas Day; as much as Collins and his overseers may have found it distasteful, the celebration was allowed as a means of control through "periodic, approved release" of pleasure (Camp 2002, 546). While under supervision, the enslaved population was permitted to have a certain level of cultural and spiritual expression

that was otherwise forbidden or practiced away from surveilling eyes. This phenomenon was seen not just at John Koonering, but at other times of celebration and festivity throughout the Americas (Ibid, 547).

Identity-based crafting and repurposing of objects is also noted on sites of enslavement throughout the Americas. Dozens of sherds of locally made, unglazed earthenware pottery from Somerset Place reflect a broad cultural tradition of crafting ceramics, a “feature of everyday life in Carolina towns and plantations” (Ferguson 1992, 8). A total of 192 unglazed earthenware sherds that cannot be tied to a Native American pottery tradition were recovered during the 1981 and 1982 excavation seasons; they range from thick-walled cooking vessels to pots with decorated rims to smoothed hollowware fragments. It is likely that not all of these sherds are from vessels made by the enslaved workers at Somerset Place, but they do signify a retention of African and African-American pottery traditions even when the availability of glazed refined wares became ubiquitous (Chodoronek 2013, 68-69).

Similar to the crafting of ceramic vessels, the use of handmade clay tobacco pipes was extremely common among enslaved populations throughout the Americas. From Structures 1 and 2, a total of 29 tobacco pipes were recovered (19 of those from below Level 1). The quantity of clay tobacco pipe fragments points to a communal activity of smoking tobacco for personal or spiritual reasons. Even though tobacco is a plant from the Americas, it became widely used in West Africa sometime during the 16th century after being introduced to the Senegambia region by European traders (Gall et al. 2020, 324). Tobacco was used for ceremonial purposes, as a medicinal substance, as an appetite suppressant, and as a recreational activity (Ibid, 235; Agbe-Davies 2015, 25). Although some of the clay pipe fragments recovered from Somerset Place show signs of mold seams and maker’s marks, others are more roughly handmade from tan, red,

and grey colored clays with holes for reed stems. Although the exact manufacturers and users of these pipes is unknown, their presence indicates a broader social relationship among the enslaved population and the manner in which tobacco and tobacco paraphernalia are acquired.

Of the recovered artifacts from the 1981 and 1982 excavations, none show evidence of deliberate repurposing or recycling. This is rather surprising as many researchers have noted reuse and recycling at similar sites associated with African slavery throughout North America (Heath 1999; Lee 2011; Wilkie 2000). Due to the somewhat unthorough excavations, particularly during 1982, it is entirely possible that any items with obvious signs of repurposing or recycling were missed. It is also likely that some of the artifacts recovered *were* used in atypical ways, but that information has been lost with the user and would not be seen in the archaeological record.

The majority of the personal adornment items date from the antebellum period of the site. This would be expected for Structure 1, but is rather surprising for Structure 2 as it had a much longer period of occupation that may have lasted as late as the 1920s. As relatively durable objects, buttons can be used and reused multiple times for as long as they remain intact; buttons manufactured in the late 18th century could very well still be used on clothing in the mid-19th century. However, buttons with wire shanks, such as the spun-back copper alloy buttons found at both structures, are more fragile than the ceramic or glass sew-through buttons that became popular after the 1840s. New methods of attaching shanks also accounted for stronger metal buttons, making them less likely to be lost or broken.

Analysis of adornment and personal use artifacts recovered in later excavations would yield even more information about the individual and shared identities of the enslaved (and later free) workers living at Somerset Place. The structures explored in the 1992 and 1994 excavations date from the early 1800s and remained in use during the sharecropping and tenant farming

periods of the site in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Total counts of these artifacts indicated a sizable number related to personal use, clothing, and adornment: glass beads, sewing notions, watch components, musical instrument parts, straight razors, coins, and hundreds of buttons, some of which may show indications of reuse and recycling (Steen 1995, 68-72). If these buttons do show indications of reuse and recycling, this further supports my theory that the earlier excavations failed to recover all artifacts related to the structure.

Analysis of historical documentation and artifacts from Somerset Place indicate a strong localized community of enslaved Africans and African-Americans that share common cultural elements seen in other sites across the Americas; however, additional analysis of the personal use and adornment artifacts is much needed, particularly with regard to the change in consumption patterns from the antebellum to the postbellum periods. Later excavations in the 1990s and 2000s resulted in hundreds of such artifacts that have yet to be fully examined; their analysis will yield even more information about the ways in which material culture was used by enslaved workers at Somerset Place to express cultural identity, form a tight-knit community, and maintain a sense of independence through the acquisition and use of adornment items.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

List of Families taken 1843

1. Big Cabin [four rooms]

a. Below

- i. Polly
- ii. Lydia
- iii. Providence
- iv. Cyrus
- v. Armisted
- vi. Saphrona
- vii. Ary [Airey]
- viii. Luke Davis

b. Above

- i. Old Suck [Sucky Davis]
- ii. Sam Carson
- iii. Mary C
- iv. Prisse [Prissy]
- v. Patience
- vi. Daniel
- vii. Patsy

c. Below

- i. Welcome
- ii. Suck [Sucky]
- iii. Josephine
- iv. Martha
- v. Loviney [Louvenia]
- vi. Abraham

d. Above

- i. Nelson
- ii. Catharine
- iii. Dave Bartlet
- iv. Lavinia
- v. Manuel

2. Big Cabin [four rooms]

a. Below

- i. Aleck [Alex Millen]
- ii. Mary N [Mary Nubal]
- iii. Harriett
- iv. Jane
- v. Emeline
- vi. Corrinna

b. Above

- i. Solomon

Appendix A (continued).

- ii. Violet [Violet Nubal]
 - iii. Allen
 - iv. Mary N [Mary Newbern]
 - v. Charles
 - vi. Tildy
 - vii. Sampson
 - viii. Andrew
 - c. Below
 - i. Old Mack [Mack Treadwell]
 - ii. Penelopy [Penelope Treadwell]
 - iii. Hannah P [Hannah Paine]
 - d. Above
 - i. Eliza Jonson
 - ii. Dave Phelps
 - iii. Nancy P
 - iv. Leah
 - v. Venis
 - vi. Margaret
 - vii. Boston
 - viii. Jonson
 - ix. Mela
3. Big Cabin [four rooms]
- a. Below
 - i. Wellington [Wellington Roberts]
 - ii. Moriah [Maria Davis]
 - iii. Christopher
 - b. Above
 - i. Jube [Juba Martin]
 - ii. Sarah [Sarah Davis]
 - iii. Judy Ann
 - iv. Owens
 - v. Caroline [Caroline Bennett]
 - vi. Hamilton
 - vii. Whitaker
 - viii. Harrison
 - ix. Laurer
 - x. Malvina
 - c. Below
 - i. Delphy
 - ii. Joan [Joan Haughton]
 - iii. Trese [Teresa]
 - iv. Willis
 - v. Rosett [Rosette]

- vi. Shepherd
 - vii. Bill Blunt [William Blount]
 - viii. Rhody [Rhoda]
 - ix. Walter
 - x. Child [Whitmel]
- d. Above
 - i. Henry [Henry Cabarrus]
 - ii. Mazy [Mary Bennet Cabarrus]
 - iii. John I [John Iredell]
 - iv. Urious
 - v. Nelly
 - vi. Mahala
 - vii. Lemet [James Lemit]
 - viii. Coranne [Cora Ann]
4. Single Cabin #1
 - a. Lewis
 - b. Judy [Judy Collins]
 - c. Frank [Francis]
 - d. Violet H
 - e. Alfred
 - f. Jupiter
 - g. Hester
 - h. Donkey
 - i. Howard
 5. Single Cabin #2
 - a. Old Ishmael [Ishmael Harvey Sr.]
 - b. Nancy B [Nancy Buncombe]
 - c. John B [John Buncombe]
 - d. Davidson
 - e. Dick [Richard]
 - f. Tony
 - g. Harry B
 - h. Washington
 - i. Ishmael [Ishmael Harvey Jr.]
 - j. Angeline
 - k. Victory
 - l. Ransom
 6. Single Cabin #3
 - a. Joe Cabaras [Joseph Cabarrus]
 - b. Tilla [Matilda Collins]
 - c. Lovy
 - d. Henderson

- e. Chaney [Matilda Cabarrus Blount]
 - f. Fanny
 - g. Philip
7. Single Cabin #4
- a. Sarah Drew
 - b. Simon
 - c. Vinny
 - d. Serena
 - e. John Trotter
 - f. Melvin
 - g. Zilpha
8. Single Cabin #5
- a. Dick Blunt [Dick Blount]
 - b. Abigail [Abigail Cabarrus]
 - c. Madison
 - d. George Grey
 - e. Clarissa
 - f. Marinda
 - g. Ben
9. Single Cabin #6
- a. Peter King
 - b. Sally [Sally Collins]
 - c. Prince
 - d. George
 - e. Milford
 - f. Brian
10. Single Cabin #7
- a. Cloe Drew [Chloe Drew Bennett]
 - b. Bill Penny [William Penny]
 - c. Kitty
 - d. Virgil
 - e. Jacob
 - f. Jim Drew
 - g. Molly
 - h. Milly
 - i. Emily
 - j. Feeby [Phoebe]
 - k. Augustus
 - l. Penny
11. Single Cabin #8
- a. Old Fred

- b. Ben [Ben Davis]
- c. Jack [Jack Payne]
- d. Esther [Esther Payne]
- e. Charlotte [Charlotte Payne]
- f. Becky [Becky Parsons]
- g. Nancy [Nancy Payne]
- h. Charity [Charity Payne]
- i. Scotty
- j. Adaline
- k. Cloe Paine [Chloe]
- l. Shadrack
- m. Austin
- n. Wilson
- o. Cashus [Cassius]

12. Single Cabin #9

- a. Old Lydia [Lydia Gaskins]
- b. Cheshire [Cheshire Davis]
- c. Hannah
- d. Anny [Annie Cabarrus]
- e. Laffaett [Lafayette]
- f. Ladonia
- g. Morgianna
- h. Letha

13. Single Cabin #10

- a. Milton
- b. Lindy
- c. Tom M [Tom Mutton]
- d. Albert
- e. Edy
- f. Old Sally [Sally Collins]

14. Single Cabin #11

- a. Old Lettice [Lettice Blount]
- b. Charity
- c. Annis
- d. Thompson
- e. Rachael
- f. Scylla
- g. Britton
- h. Zacharias
- i. Flora

15. Single Cabin #12

- a. Will [Will Collins]

- b. Cate Drew [Catherine]
 - c. Lawrence [Lawrence Honeyblue]
 - d. Charlotte
 - e. York
 - f. Mourning
 - g. Joyce
16. Single Cabin #13
- a. Jack Baum [James Madison Baum]
 - b. Dinah [Dinah Bennett]
 - c. Isabel [Isabella]
 - d. Antone [Anthony]
 - e. Wallis [Wallace]
 - f. Josh [Joshua]
 - g. Emma
 - h. Elisabeth
 - i. Fred [Fred Littlejohn]
 - j. Naomi [Naomi Bennett]
 - k. Queen [Queen Ann]
17. Single Cabin #14
- a. Moses "Young"
 - b. Bet Jones [Elizabeth]
 - c. Melvin [Melvin Jones]
 - d. Edward [Edward Jones]
 - e. Lettes
 - f. Solomon
 - g. Clarky
 - h. Becky [Rebecca]
 - i. Edward
 - j. Squire
18. Single Cabin #15
- a. Sam
 - b. Tamar
 - c. Lank
 - d. Stephen
 - e. Ruth
 - f. Noah
 - g. Ashbury
 - h. Joanna
19. Single Cabin #16
- a. Peter Littlejohn
 - b. E Collins [Elsy Collins]
 - c. Peter E [Peter Elsy]

- d. George E [George Elsy]
 - e. Dave [John David]
 - f. Sam [Samuel]
 - g. Sucky
 - h. Seely [Cecelia]
 - i. Tennessee
 - j. Quarenteen
 - k. Pinkey
 - l. Josh
 - m. Bill
20. Single Cabin #17
- a. Jerry Fox
 - b. Annis
 - c. Patience
 - d. Moriah [Maria]
 - e. Charity
 - f. Mary
 - g. Sophy [Sophia]
 - h. Otis
21. Single Cabin #18
- a. M Treadwell [Mack Treadwell Jr.]
 - b. Amy [Amy Littlejohn]
 - c. Bet Brutes [Betty Brickhouse Horton]
 - d. Becky [Rebecca]
 - e. Ellen
 - f. Annette
 - g. Hobart
 - h. Eve
 - i. Louise
 - j. Aaron
 - k. Jane
 - l. Tiney
22. Single Cabin #19
- a. Jack Dickin [Jack Dickison]
 - b. Bet
 - c. Jack S
 - d. Matthias
 - e. Mary
 - f. Anderson
 - g. R[illegible]
23. Single Cabin #20
- a. Granville

- b. Susan
- c. Sal P
- d. Northam

24. Single Cabin #21

- a. Moses Phelps
- b. A[illegible]
- c. Stephen
- d. Grace [Grace Bennett]
- e. Roney
- f. Ruben
- g. Ba[illegible]
- h. Henrietta
- i. Virginia

25. Single Cabin #22

- a. Diana
- b. Mary
- c. Teleman
- d. Moses

26. Single Cabin #23

- a. Dick H
- b. Amy
- c. Wallis
- d. Michael
- e. Brutus
- f. Julia
- g. Amy
- h. Franklin

Joe Welcome, Bridget, Emily [listed apart from others; uncertain of where they lived]