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## A Plantation Transplanted: Archaeological Investigations of a Piedmont-Style Slave Quarter at Rose Hill, Geneva, New York

James A. Delle and Kristen R. Fellows

*Although a relatively short-lived phenomenon, plantation slavery was established in the Finger Lakes region of New York State by immigrant planters from Maryland and Virginia. Excavations at the Rose Hill site, Geneva, NY have located two quarter sites associated with these early 19th-century plantations, including the standing Jean Nicholas house on property once part of the White Springs Farm, the other a subsurface, though largely intact, stone foundation of a similar building at Rose Hill. Analysis of the refined earthenwares recovered from the plowzone at the Rose Hill quarter indicate that the structure was first occupied in the early 19th century, at the time that the original mansion house was built and Rose Hill cleared and prepared for large-scale agricultural production. The overall dimensions of the building, as well as evidence for the construction techniques, strongly suggest that the quarter was designed and built on piedmont quarter antecedents. Although much work still needs to be completed at the Rose Hill site, the evidence strongly suggests that a piedmont-style quarter was constructed when enslaved workers were forced to migrate to the Genesee Country in the opening decade of the 19th century. The evidence for slavery at Rose Hill suggests that mature, Virginia-style plantations were transplanted into upstate New York, opening a new avenue for the analysis of the material realities of slavery north of the Mason Dixon line.*

*Bien qu'ayant été un phénomène de courte durée, les plantations esclavagistes ont été établies dans la région des Finger Lakes de l'État de New York par des planters immigrés du Maryland et de la Virginie. Des fouilles sur le site de Rose Hill à Geneva, NY, ont permis de localiser deux sites d'habitations associés aux plantations du début du XIXe siècle, incluant la maison existante de Jean Nicholas située sur une propriété faisant autrefois partie de la ferme de White Springs, et les vestiges d'un bâtiment similaire formé de fondations en pierres enfouies, à Rose Hill. L'analyse des terres cuites fines retrouvées dans la couche de labours au site de Rose Hill indique que cette structure a été occupée au début du XIXe siècle, au moment où le manoir original a été construit et que Rose Hill a été défriché et préparé pour une production agricole à grande échelle. Les dimensions du bâtiment et les techniques de construction suggèrent que ce logement a été conçu et bâti en suivant des antécédents de construction de la région du Piedmont. Bien que beaucoup de travail reste à faire au site de Rose Hill, les données archéologiques démontrent que le logement de style piedmont a été construit lorsque des travailleurs esclaves ont été forcés de migrer vers le Genesee Country dans la première décennie du XIXe siècle. Les preuves de l'esclavagisme à Rose Hill suggèrent que des plantations inspirées de celles de Virginie ont été transplantées dans l'État de New York, ouvrant ainsi la voie aux analyses de la vie des esclaves au nord de la ligne de Mason Dixon.*

### Introduction

It is common knowledge that, in antebellum North America, African slavery was prevalent in the tobacco-, rice-, and sugar-cultivating colonies of the 18th-century Chesapeake Tidewater, Carolina Low Country, and Gulf Coast. It is also well known that by the early 19th century the system of captive labor was extended to cotton production throughout much of what is today known as the Deep South; historically, the literature on the archaeology of slavery has overemphasized such Southern plantations, e.g., Franklin and McKee (2004), Garman (1994), Joseph (2004), Leone et al. (2005), and Orser (1998). Although the political border between Pennsylvania and

Maryland, the famous Mason-Dixon line, has traditionally been the cognitive boundary between the so-called "slave" and "free" states, slavery existed in many states north of Maryland well into the 19th century. With the notable exceptions of Vermont and Massachusetts (at that time including Maine), which abolished slavery in 1777 and 1783, respectively, most of the northeastern states followed a system, known as gradual emancipation, which generally freed people born after a specified date, often only when a child born into slavery was well into adulthood. Under this system, people of African descent were legally enslaved in New York until 1827; Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania

into the 1840s; and slavery legally existed in New Jersey and New Hampshire until 1865, when the system of captive labor was abolished by federal statute (Miller and Smith 1997; Melish 1998; Rael 2005; Gellman 2006).

Archaeological work on the question of slavery in the Northeast has traditionally held that slavery existed on a limited scale and that enslaved people tended to work in the domestic households of elites, e.g., Fitts (1996) and Garman (1998), though recent work has begun to demonstrate that the scale and scope of Northern slavery was much greater than earlier assumed, e.g., Gellman (2006), Berlin and Harris (2005), Hoffer (2003), Harris (2003), LaRoche and Blakey (1997), Matthews (2013), and Moss (1993). Throughout the North, enslaved labor was commonly used for clearing forests for farmland, loading and unloading ships on the docks, and the difficult charge of making wood charcoal to fire iron furnaces (Wax 1967; Osborne 2005; Litwack 2009). While historians and archaeologists increasingly are recognizing the scale of Northern slavery, much of the narrative has remained focused on modes of labor that differed from the plantation societies of the U.S. South. Plantation slavery was not unknown in the North, however, and was not eliminated with American independence, see e.g., Hayes (2011), Hayes (2013), and Matthews (2013). In the opening decades of the 19th century, new slave-based plantations were established in upstate New York, not only on a Southern model but by Southern planters who had migrated to New York with scores of enslaved laborers. Several of these extended households were established in and around the village of Geneva, at the northern end of Seneca Lake, and in a number of townships in Seneca, Ontario, and Wayne counties. Among these planters was Robert Seldon Rose, who in 1809 established a slave-based plantation on the outskirts of Geneva, on an estate known to this day as Rose Hill.

Robert Rose was part of a larger party of Virginia emigrants who settled in Geneva, in what was then called the Genesee Country. Rose and his brother-in-law John Nicholas, with their extended families and enslaved field laborers and domestic servants, were part of a migration of Southern families, primarily from Virginia and Maryland, who

relocated to the Genesee Country around the beginning of the 19th century. Many of the Virginia settlers, like Rose and Nicholas, possessed interests in wheat farms in the Virginia Piedmont, a crop and region that had become a central part of Virginia's agricultural economy following the 18th-century decline of the Tidewater tobacco industry (Dunn 2007). Hoping to acquire vast holdings of undeveloped land and to put this land to cultivation for wheat, Nicholas and Rose, who were married to two sisters, acquired title to about 70 enslaved people in Virginia and transplanted them to provide labor for their new Genesee Country plantations (Grover 1994).

In 1809, after spending several years in the village of Geneva, a period during which the enslaved workers likely cleared the forests on the Rose and Nicholas properties, the two families settled on plantations overlooking Seneca Lake. John Nicholas and his family settled on a property that would become known as White Springs Farm on the lake's western shore in Ontario County. Robert Rose and his family settled on the property that is the focus of this study, known since Rose's day as Rose Hill, on the lake's eastern shore in Seneca County. The Rose Hill property was established with slave labor and on a Virginia Piedmont template but would eventually become one of New York State's most famous progressive farms, worked not with slaves but by Irish tenant farmers (Delle and Fellows [2014]). This study examines the material legacy of the early period of Rose Hill's history, from 1803 to 1836. During this time a Piedmont-style wheat plantation was constructed in upstate New York and worked in its earliest years by enslaved laborers transported from Virginia.

### **Genesee Fever**

The decades following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War were characterized by the western expansion of the United States into lands previously claimed by the British, French, and, of course, the numerous Native American nations that had occupied the continent. An early focus of this westward movement centered on western and central New York, an area that was known as the Genesee Country in the late 18th century (FIG. 1). As early as the

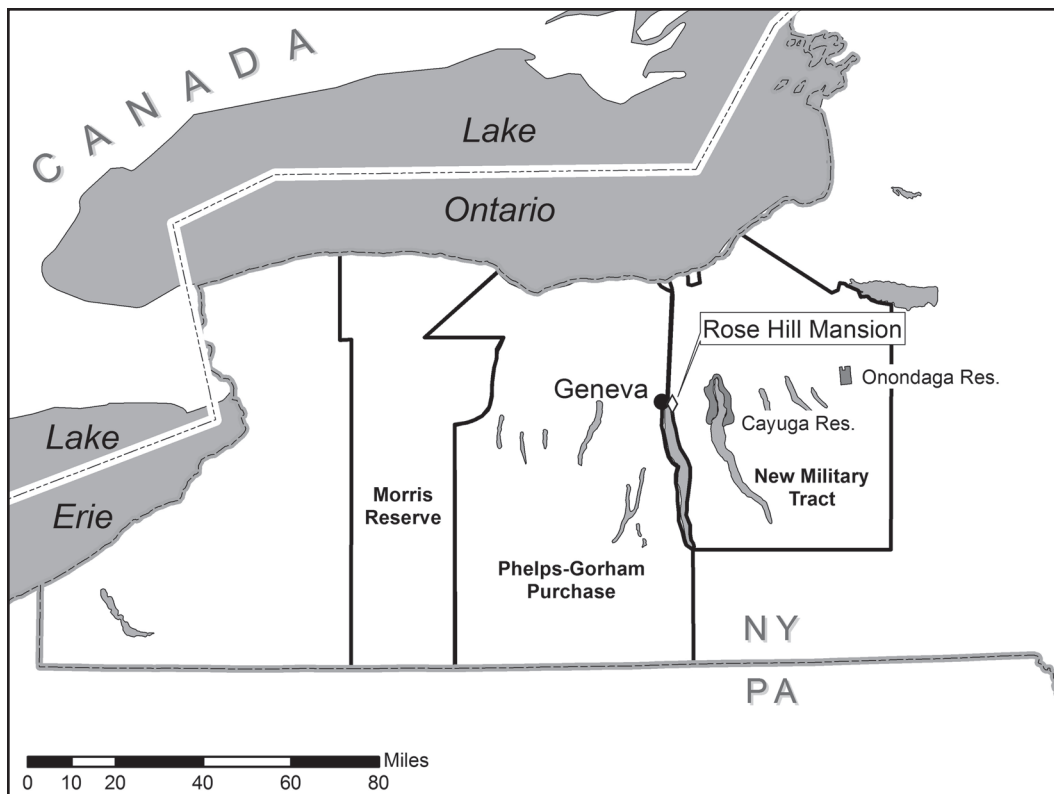


Figure 1. The Genesee Country of west-central New York, ca. 1790, showing the location of the Rose Hill site, the village of Geneva, and the boundaries of the land purchases and acquisitions that defined the Genesee Country. (Map by Richard Courtney, Department of Geography and GIS Lab, Kutztown University, 2013)

mid-1790s, slaveholding immigrants from the Hudson Valley began to settle on lands appropriated from native peoples at the conclusion of the war. Among these migrants was Rose Hill's first European occupant, Dr. Alexander Coventry, who, like many of his wealthy contemporaries, became involved in land speculation in territory lost by nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy at the conclusion of the war (Wirtz and Roenke 1984; Delle and Heaton 2003; Grover 1994). At the end of the Revolutionary War, New York State appropriated land from the Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga nations; surveyed and divided that land into 28 rectilinear townships; and allotted 600 ac. plots to Revolutionary War veterans in payment for their services to New York during the war. Most of these allotments were subsequently sold to land speculators, like Coventry, whose actions created a short-lived land boom. The eastern shore of Seneca

Lake was the western extent of this New Military Tract, as the lands west of Seneca Lake were in dispute between the states of New York and Massachusetts, not to mention the Native American nations still residing in this region (Delle and Heaton 2003).

The 1790s witnessed a rapid migration of settlers into the Genesee Country, particularly following the settlement of the land dispute between New York and Massachusetts over the territory west of Seneca Lake. The lands west of the lake were part of a territory that the earlier Massachusetts Bay Colony had claimed in the 17th century; although Massachusetts had ceded its right to sovereignty over that territory through the 1786 Treaty of Hartford, the agreement with New York granted Massachusetts the right to obtain title of the land from the Native American nations resident there and, subsequently, to profit from its sale. In the attempt to draw

revenue from this land, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts sold its rights to some 6 million acres to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham. By 1788 these two private speculators had negotiated the extinguishment of title to approximately 2.25 million acres between Seneca Lake and the Genesee River from the Haudenosaunee. By 1791, Massachusetts reacquired the rights to the some 2 million acres of the surplus land west of Seneca Lake that remained unsold by Phelps and Gorham. The commonwealth subsequently sold this land to Robert Morris, who already had purchased over a million acres from Phelps and Gorham (Siles 1990; Brooks 1996: 14). Morris quickly sold this latter acreage to a group of Scottish investors led by Sir William Pulteney and referred to as the Pulteney Associates. The Associates in turn hired land agents to recruit purchasers and settlers for their lands in the Genesee Country. One of these agents, Charles Williamson, targeted wealthy investors from Maryland and Virginia, a group that included the Rose and Nicholas families.

In 1792, Alexander Coventry, accompanied by his wife Elizabeth and two enslaved people named Cuff and Betty, departed the Hudson Valley to settle on one of the Military Tract allotments along Seneca Lake's eastern shore. Coventry built a residence called Fairhill in the marshy coastal margins of the lake, an insect-infested situation that may have led to the ultimate failure of Fairhill. Coventry reported in his journal that Betty died of disease in June of 1793, possibly the "Genesee Fever," a contemporary descriptor of malarial infections that were rampant in western New York at the turn of the 19th century (Siles 1990). In 1796, the Coventrys, apparently disillusioned about their prospects on Seneca Lake, removed 100 mi. to the east, settling in the Mohawk River town of Utica, where they would spend the rest of their lives (Wirtz and Roenke 1984). It is unclear whether Cuff remained in the Genesee Country or moved to Utica with Coventry.

In 1802 John Nicholas and Robert Rose purchased Fairhill and soon settled in a community of slaveholding farmers. In 1803 the Rose and Nicholas parties took up residence in the village of Geneva, quite possibly in a house previously occupied by Peregrine Fitzhugh, a transplanted Maryland planter, former aide-de-camp to George Washington,

and a cousin of Robert Rose. Fitzhugh moved to Geneva in 1799, and, through the agency of some 30 enslaved workers, cleared land some 30 mi. north of Geneva, around Lake Ontario's Sodus Bay to which he moved in 1803 (Green 1947). Among his slaveholding contemporaries were Thomas and William Helms, who also settled around Sodus Bay; Daniel Dorsey, who built a plantation house complete with slave quarters near the town of Lyons; and Benjamin Hance, who settled in Farmington, Ontario County, with a group of enslaved people (Cowles 1895; Milliken 1911). From their temporary headquarters in the village of Geneva, Rose and Nicholas took to the business of improving their properties, with Rose taking up residence on the bluffs overlooking the eastern shore of Seneca Lake on Coventry's old property at Fairhill, which he renamed Rose Hill, and Nicholas settling at White Springs on the western shore.

Rose's brother-in-law, John Nicholas, was confident that the family could make a great fortune. He opined to his brother that investment might need to be quick, as "the opportunity for increasing wealth is very attracting. How long this will last," however, he could not say, "as there are many visitors from [Virginia] and Maryland" undoubtedly looking to make similar fortunes in the "Genessee and the military country [tract] adjoining" (Nicholas 1801). His plan for creating wealth centered on shipping wheat flour down the Susquehanna River to the Chesapeake Tidewater, hoping to make a great profit as the "expense of a barrel [of flour] from the Genesee settlements is said to be about one and one quarter dollars. ... It has hitherto cost two and a half dollars for flour" (Nicholas 1801).

John Nicholas and Robert Rose were descended of eminent Virginia families. Nicholas was a great-grandson of Robert "King" Carter; his father, Robert Carter Nicholas, served in the Virginia House of Burgesses, as treasurer of the colony of Virginia and, following independence, served on the Virginia Court of Appeals, the state's highest court. Counted among his brothers was his correspondent William Cary Nicholas, whose distinguished political career included service in the U.S. Senate, the House of Representatives, and as governor of Virginia. Another of his brothers, George Nicholas,

served briefly as the attorney general of Kentucky; George's son (and thus John's nephew) Robert Carter Nicholas (II) was a U.S. senator from Louisiana. John's sister Elizabeth was married to Edmund Randolph, who was also a governor of Virginia and had served in George Washington's administration, first as attorney general and subsequently as secretary of state (Rose 1985).

Robert Selden Rose was likewise descended of the "First Families" of Virginia. Although his family was not as prominent in Virginia politics as the Nicholas family, Robert Rose could count among his ancestors the Reverend Robert Rose, his grandfather and namesake, who held patents for more than 20,000 ac. of land in what are now Amherst and Nelson counties, Virginia, and who was a prominent Anglican minister in the mid-18th century. Robert S. Rose was also descended from the Cary, Armistead, and Fitzhugh families. Rose married his first cousin, Jane Lawson. Rose's mother-in-law Susannah Rose Lawson (who was also his father's sister, making her

simultaneously his aunt and mother-in-law) was the subject of a famous portrait now in the collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; the portrait has been used to document women's clothing on the eve of the American Revolution, and Mrs. Lawson has been rendered as a collectable doll wearing the dress featured in the portrait. Rose and Nicholas each married one of Susannah's daughters by Gavin Lawson, Rose marrying Jane Rose Lawson (to become Jane Rose Lawson Rose), and Nicholas marrying her sister Ann Rose Lawson (Rose 1985).

In 1803, the family group set out for Geneva by way of Albany. The group reportedly included grandparents Gavin Lawson and Susannah Rose Lawson, their daughters Jane and Ann with their children (Jane's three sons and Ann's four sons and two daughters), Susannah's spinster sister Margaret Rose, George Norton (the son of one of John Nicholas's sisters), and, of course, John Nicholas and Robert S. Rose. Traveling in two stagecoaches and two smaller vehicles, the



Figure 2. The original house at Rose Hill, constructed for Robert Rose in 1809. This building was moved off its original foundation during the renovation of the estate in the late 1830s, when it was converted into a carriage house. It is missing an attached kitchen that remains part of the second house. (Photo by James A. Delle, 1998.)



Figure 3. The second house built at Rose Hill for William Kerley Strong and known to this day as the Rose Hill Mansion. (Photo by James A. Delle, 1998.)

party was accompanied by several enslaved domestic servants (Phillis Kenny Douglas, Susannah Dunkinson, and Alice Bowman) as well as five drivers and four postilions who may also have been enslaved (Grover 1994: 17). Some 70 enslaved members of the Rose/Lawson households traveled by a more westerly route through Pennsylvania under the direction of Robert Rose's cousin, John Fitzhugh.

Sometime around 1809, the Rose family moved from the village of Geneva to their newly built house at Rose Hill (FIG. 2). Of the approximately 70 enslaved people who migrated from Virginia with the Roses and Lawsons, about half, 37, were listed as part of the Rose household in the 1810 U.S. census (U.S. Census Bureau 1810). By 1820 that number had declined to nine, with an additional eight free people of color living in the Henry Douglas household, who likely remained in the employ of Rose; Henry Douglas was known to have once been enslaved by Rose (U.S. Census Bureau 1810, 1820). Grover argues that Rose manumitted the Douglas family and the remainder of the previously enslaved community

and suggests that many may have moved from Rose Hill into the village of Geneva, where a segregated black community formed in the early 19th century (Grover 1994). Although it is still somewhat speculative, it seems plausible that the enslaved members of the Rose household had been transported to New York to do the heavy work involved in clearing land and preparing it for cultivation, after which time the bulk of the population was manumitted. The majority of the enslaved people who cleared the land at Sodus Bay for Rose's cousin Peregrine Fitzhugh were similarly manumitted soon after the Fitzhughs took up residence on their newly established farm (Cowles 1895: 204). Thomas Helms reportedly maintained an enslaved population, with whom he cleared at least 100 ac. of old growth forest in Huron Township, to the east of Sodus Bay, until his death in the 1820s (Cowles 1895: 55, 421).

The New York Legislature first enacted a gradual emancipation law in 1799, revising it in 1817. The revised law dictated that all enslaved people were to be freed by 4 July 1827, though those born between 1817 and

1827 would remain indentured servants until the age of 21. Not surprisingly, the 1830 census recorded no enslaved people at Rose Hill but did note that the Henry Douglas family, still resident at Rose Hill, was composed of two people of color older than 36, four between the ages of 10 and 24, and six children younger than 10 (U.S. Census Bureau 1830). In that same year the Rose household included only three people of color, likely domestic servants. In 1835, while attending the circuit court in the town of Waterloo, Robert Rose was stricken and died. In the ensuing years, Rose's sons moved farther west into the former Phelps-Gorham Purchase; his widow, Jane Lawson Rose, lived the remainder of her days in the village of Geneva (Grover 1994; Rose 1985).

In 1837, William Kerley Strong, a New York City wool merchant, purchased Rose Hill from Robert Rose's estate. By 1839, Strong had

completed the construction of the large Greek Revival house that is currently known as the Rose Hill Mansion; the earlier house constructed by Rose was moved off its foundations and repurposed as a carriage house, although the original kitchen was incorporated into the new house (FIG. 3). Although Strong owned Rose Hill until he sold the estate in 1850, he was a short-term resident of Geneva, living at Rose Hill for only six years. Upon the untimely death of his wife in 1843, Strong returned to New York City, eventually selling the property to another wealthy New York City family, the Swans, who operated a working farm on the property until the early 20th century. After falling into ruin, the Greek Revival house was restored by the Geneva Historical Society in the late 1960s and currently operates as a house museum. Decorated in Second Empire style, the

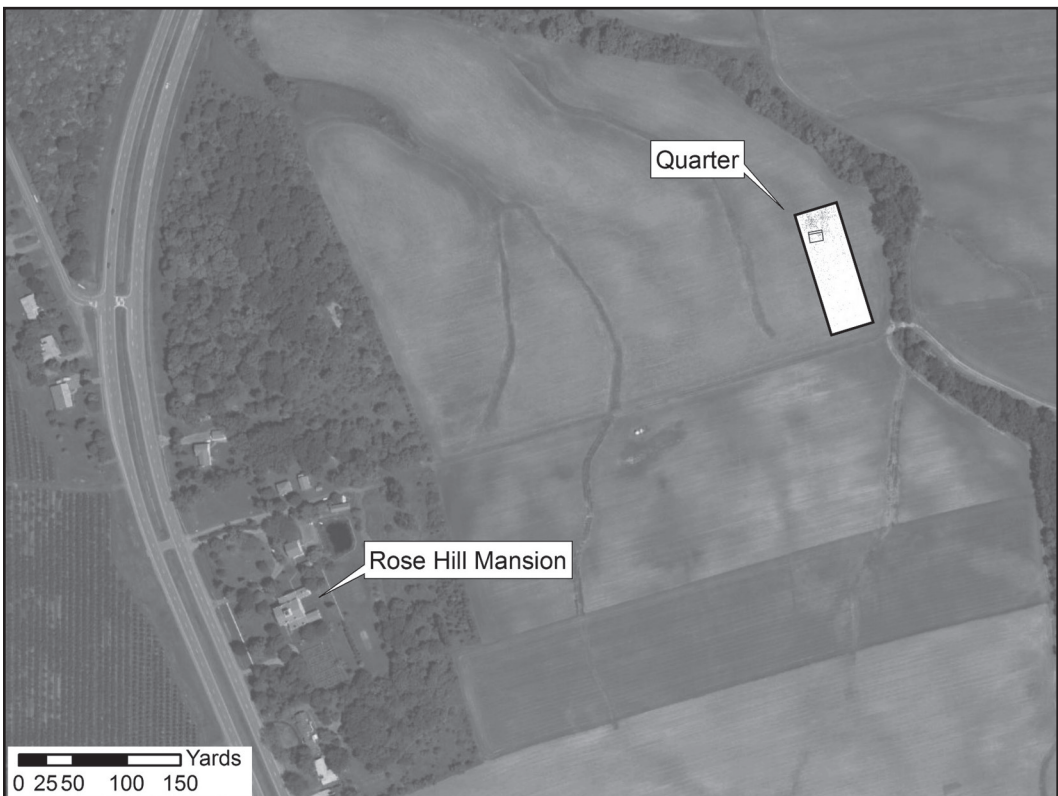


Figure 4. Rose Hill site, showing location of quarters in relation to the mansion. The white rectangle represents the area that was surface collected in 1999 and 2007. (Map from Esri, DigitalGlobal, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community; Map by Richard Courtney, Department of Geography and GIS Lab, Kutztown University, 2013.)



museum interpretation of the Rose Hill Mansion is focused on the Swan occupation of the house. Although some objects attributed to the Rose family are on display, notably portraits of Robert and Jane Lawson Rose, traditionally little has been said about the presence of enslaved African Americans at the site (Dwight 1871: 1,426; Miller 1896; Anstice 1911: 444–445; Herringshaw 1914; Wirtz and Roenke 1984: 23; Warner 1992: 484; Jones 2011); for a more complete discussion of the post-Rose occupation of Rose Hill, see Delle and Fellows ([2014]).

### Archaeology at Rose Hill

In 1999, the curator of the Rose Hill Mansion Museum approached James Delle with a request to determine whether any archaeological evidence of the enslaved people who had once worked at Rose Hill could be recovered. In 1999, Delle and a group of students from Franklin and Marshall College conducted a controlled surface collection of a scatter of artifacts located in a cultivated field approximately 600 yd. to the northeast of the mansion. At the time of this initial survey, late October of 1999, the field was planted in corn. Students used the spaces between corn rows as transects, bagging each artifact encountered. A survey team followed behind, piece plotting and collecting each bagged artifact. Additional work was completed in 2007 (FIG. 4).

### Surface Collection

The results of the preliminary survey indicated that the scatter might be associated with a quarter site built to house the enslaved

agricultural workers of Rose Hill. Notable finds included two U.S. one-cent coins, one dated 1803 and the other 1835, neatly bracketing Robert Rose's ownership of Rose Hill and suggesting that the assemblage dated to the first third of the 19th century. Although the use of mean ceramic dates (MCD) to pinpoint the occupation history of any site can be problematic, e.g., Adams (2003), Orser (1988), Teed (2008), and Turnbaugh and Turnbaugh (1977), the use of this method does give some general sense of the age of an assemblage, and it is still a useful technique to establish relative dates of features within a site. Preliminary analysis of the ceramic assemblage recovered from the 1999 investigation, which included 766 datable sherds of refined earthenware, indicated an MCD of 1838 (Wille 2000). The distribution of these ceramics is represented in Table 1 (TAB. 1).

The project resumed in 2007, at which time Kristen Fellows participated in the project, first as associate field director and then as part of a University of Pennsylvania independent study project conducted at Delle's laboratory at Kutztown University. In 2007 the field was plowed and not planted, allowing for greater visibility of the surface scatter. A more extensive surface collection was conducted, followed by subsurface testing to determine whether any Rose-period features could be identified below the plowzone (FIG. 5). Using the same methodology employed in 1999, analysis of the 1,128 datable sherds of refined earthenware recovered in 2007 returned an MCD of 1842.

Table 1. Number of datable refined earthenware sherds recovered during surface collections of 1999 and 2007, showing percentage of overall total. (Table by James A. Delle, 2013.)

	Surface collection of 1999		Surface collection of 2007		Combined surface collections	
	N	% of Total	N	% of Total	N	% of Total
Creamware	47	6%	47	4%	94	5%
Pearlware	196	26%	254	23%	450	24%
Whiteware	517	68%	787	69%	1,304	69%
Ironstone	2	<1%	35	3%	37	2%
Mocha	4	1%	5	<1%	9	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,128</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,894</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Artifacts from the Plowzone

The majority of artifacts recovered during both the 1999 and 2007 projects at Rose Hill was related to domestic activities and was recovered from the surface of the plowzone in a cultivated field. For decades, historical archaeologists have pondered the relevance of data recovered from sheet middens located in such contexts. In 1969 Stanley South published an article describing the characteristics of a well-rounded, well-trained historical archaeologist. It is no surprise that he dedicated an entire section, titled "Plow Zone," to the issues and questions involved in how practitioners should approach cultivated sites (South 1969). South felt this topic was worthy of discussion as he, and most archaeologists, recognized that a huge percentage of potentially significant sites had been cultivated following depositional activities (Ammerman and Feldman 1978; Lewarch and O'Brien 1981; Odell and Cowan 1987; Dunnell and Simek 1995). Prior to South's article, and with the exception of initial site identification, plowzones were viewed as being thoroughly disturbed and thus unusable in archaeological investigations; the primary method for dealing with this stratum was to strip it from the site, exposing the underlying subsoil (Roper 1976; Dunnell and Simek 1995). (Interestingly, John Steinberg [1996] indicated that the same had been true in Denmark, especially in contract archaeology, through the 1990s.) Although South condoned the removal of the plowzone, he did question whether archaeologists should quickly remove it with heavy machinery and/or through careful "schnitting" (South's [1969] word for shovel scraping) to expose any subsoil features quickly, or if it were worth the time and effort to excavate, and possibly even screen, disturbed strata containing significant amounts of material culture. The main purpose of South's article was not to deal with questions of the plowzone, but it did presage a much larger discussion that began in earnest in the 1970s concerning the validity of plowzone materials. The shift towards processual archaeology pushed practitioners to consider both cultural and natural site-formation processes and to move beyond notions of sites with Pompeii-like, in situ conditions, an intellectual context that allowed for the consideration of the plowzone as a potentially important source of

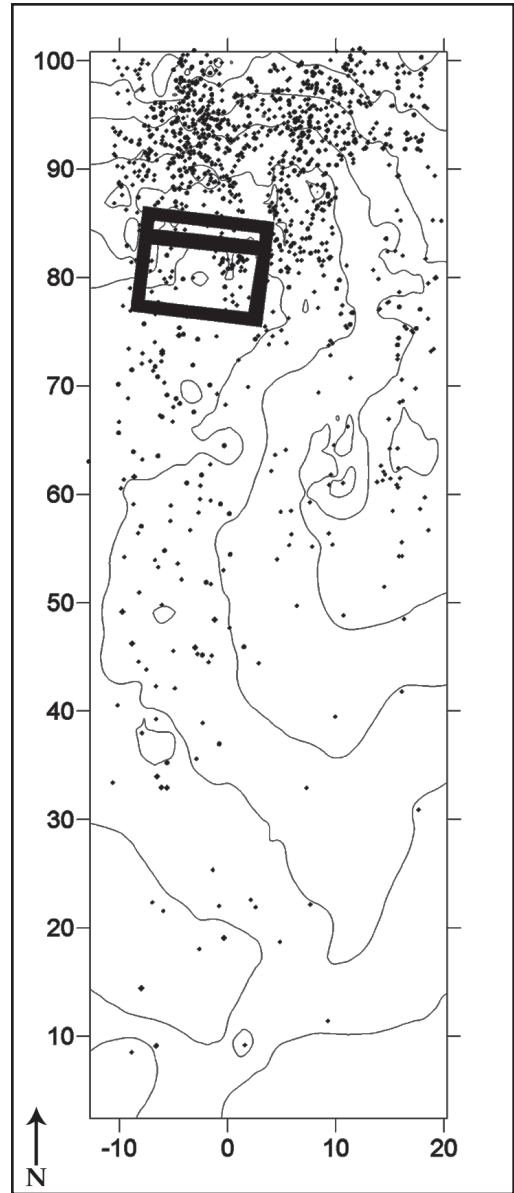


Figure 5. Distribution of refined earthenware recovered during the 2007 surface collection. The dark polygon represents the extrapolated extent of the quarter and ell extension; the units along the x and y axes are in meters. (Figure by James A. Delle, 2013.)

data (Roper 1976; Lewarch and O'Brien 1981; Dunnell and Simek 1995).

Overlooking the repeated site disturbances and the biases associated with surface assemblages, scholars have increasingly recognized the validity of the plowzone and surface collections from

cultivated sites (Lewarch and O'Brien 1981; Riordan 1988; Dunnell and Simek 1995; Steinberg 1996). Surface collections often offer a time- and cost-effective approach, and so archaeologists have argued for methods that would increase the statistical validity and interpretive potential of such assemblages. The surface of a plowed site may be viewed as a sample that is continuously recreated, causing many scholars to argue now for repeated surface collections from the same site to obtain a more representative and statistically relevant sample size (Ammerman and Feldman 1978; Lewarch and O'Brien 1981; Dunnell and Simek 1995; Shott 1995). Knowing that spatial relationships may still be present, if slightly blurred by lateral movement, archaeologists also are calling for the systematic collection of more precise provenience data during surface collections (Lewarch and O'Brien 1981; Lennox 1986; Riordan 1988; Dunnell and Simek 1995). Furthermore, when time and money are more abundant, the need to excavate within the plowzone is becoming apparent (Lennox 1986; Steinberg 1996). For more detailed overviews of this literature see Dunnell and Simek (1995), Frink (1984), Lewarch and O'Brien (1981), and Riordan (1988).

It can be argued that one of the most important uses of plowzone archaeology is the study of the African diaspora in North America, as many slave-quarter sites have been abandoned, plowed over, and cultivated. Barbara Heath and Amber Bennett put it succinctly when they state: "In short, ignoring the plowzone on African-American sites may mean throwing away most or all of the information concerning occupation of that site" (Heath and Bennett 2000: 46). Their statement is pertinent even for sites with standing structures, as demonstrated through their explication of the importance of yard spaces in African American life. At Sites 7 and 8 at Monticello, Surfer maps and statistical functions, such as correspondence analysis, have helped to make the argument for the importance and cultural significance, to the slaves working the nearby fields, of swept yard spaces (Wheeler and Bon-Harper 2005; Bon-Harper 2009, 2010). Despite the disturbance caused by cultivation, both of these studies show the retention of spatial information within the plowzone and the potential of using this data to further understandings of cultural patterns within the African diaspora.

As we mentioned earlier, the initial analysis of 766 datable sherds recovered from the plowzone in 1999 provided an MCD of 1838 (based on a raw sherd count of refined earthenwares; for the purposes of this analysis redwares and stonewares were not considered). This early 19th-century date was corroborated by the recovery of the 1803 and 1835 one-cent coins; anecdotally speaking, the assemblage seemed to be characterized by the presence of two temporal clusters of artifacts, one characterized by hand-painted pearlwares and the other by blue transfer-printed whitewares. In 2007, an additional 1,128 datable ceramic sherds were recovered, which produced a comparable though somewhat more recent MCD of 1842. Not surprisingly, the assemblage consisted primarily of whiteware and secondarily of pearlware, with nominal amounts of both creamware and ironstone nicely bracketing the early/mid-19th-century assemblage. The ceramic data do indicate that the sheet midden observable on the surface of the plowzone was consistent with a 19th-century domestic occupation.

To determine whether any spatially discrete concentrations of artifacts could be associated with specific occupations or discrete deposits of domestic artifacts, each artifact was piece plotted using a total station. The resulting distribution maps indicate a concentration of artifacts to the north of the house, but no evidence suggestive of discrete occupations emerged (FIG. 5). This holds true both for the individual datable types (e.g., pearlware and whiteware), as well as the assemblage as a whole. The ceramic distribution indicates a single sheet midden that was reused by successive households, with the majority of the assemblage located to the northeast of the house.

Finally, the MCD data were quantified by decade, and then the number of artifacts falling within each ten-year period was plotted against time. This analysis produced a bimodal curve, with the first curve, dominated by the early hand-painted pearlwares, peaking around 1800, and the second around 1860; a third intermediate curve is likely a product of the methodology, as some artifacts that could not be confidently identified as either pearlware or whiteware were cataloged as "transitional," with a MCD of 1825. Bearing this in mind, the results indicate that there were likely two

discrete deposition episodes of the sheet midden, which likely correlate with the occupation of the site by two successive households (FIG. 6).

Documentary research has identified three households of tenant farmers that may have lived and worked at Rose Hill: the Douglas family, identified in the 1830 census; the Johnson family, identified in the 1850 census (both African American families); and the Conroy family, identified in the 1860 census (an immigrant Irish family) (U.S. Census Bureau 1830, 1850, 1860). It follows that the two apparent episodes of deposition of the sheet midden are associated with two of these three families, likely the Douglas and Conroy households. Evidence suggests that the quarter was first inhabited near the turn of the 19th century and thus was most likely constructed during the initial Rose occupation of the site, a time when some 37 enslaved people lived and worked at Rose Hill—for more on these three households see Delle and Fellows ([2014]).

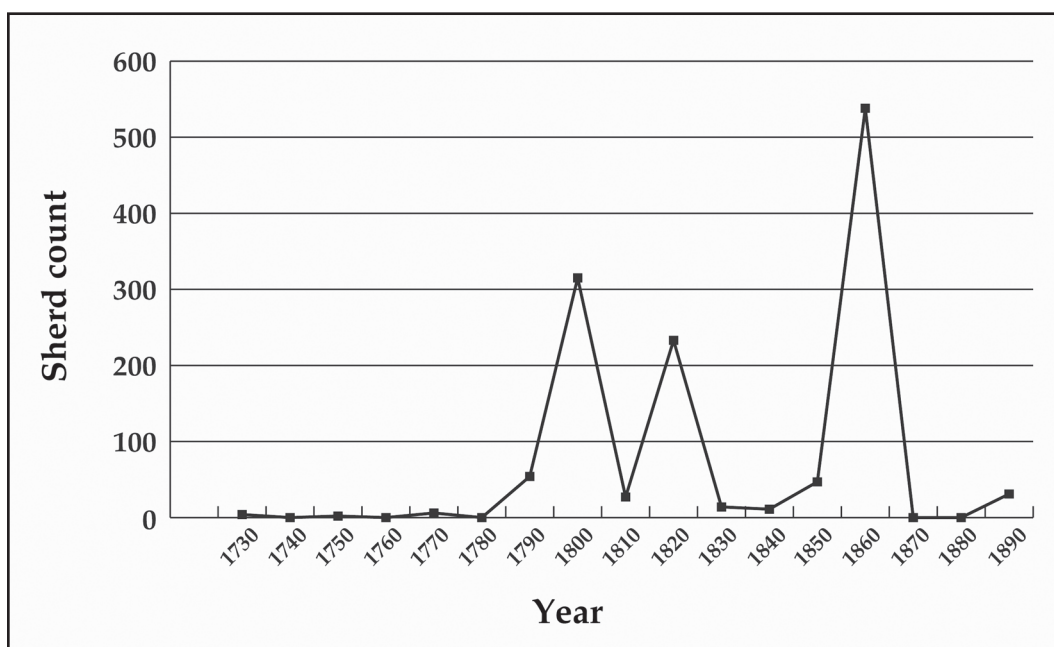
#### Excavation of the Quarters

In addition to expanding on the surface-collection analysis of 1999, the 2007 investigation sought to locate any surviving archaeological

remains of a structure associated with the surface scatter and to determine whether any such structure was consistent with a slave quarter. The excavation exposed segments of what we have interpreted to be the foundation of the original slave quarters at Rose Hill. The archaeological evidence suggests that there were two periods of domestic occupation at these quarters: the enslaved (and later tenant) African American occupation, dating to the Rose occupation of the site, and an Irish tenant occupation dating to the Swan occupation of Rose Hill (Delle and Fellows [2014]). In its last stage of use, most likely in the later 19th century, it appears that the house was converted into a blacksmith shop. Sometime around the turn of the 20th century the house was demolished, the cellar hole filled with heavy demolition debris, and the site was plowed over. The matrix surrounding the cellar indicates that shortly after the house was demolished, the surrounding yard was deep plowed, creating a plowzone some 12–18 in. thick. Beyond the house foundation, no other features were uncovered.

Having confidently dated the initial occupation of the site to the early 19th century and associating that occupation with the enslaved population

Figure 6: Temporal distribution of mean ceramic dates (MCD) by decade, based on the raw sherd count. (Figure by James A. Delle, 2013.)



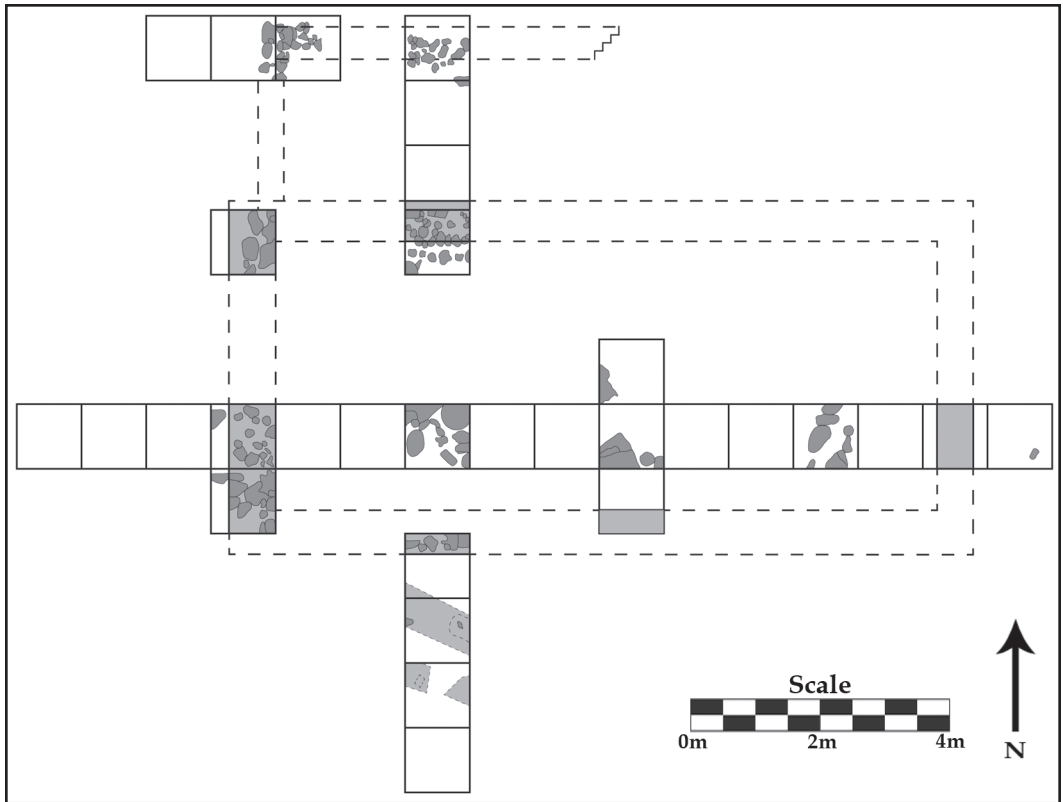


Figure 7. Units excavated to reveal the foundations of the quarters. Dotted lines represent an extrapolation of the dimensions of the house. (Figure by Nick Stover, 2013.)

carried to Geneva by the Rose and Nicholas party, the question turns to the analysis of the house's architecture. If in fact the structure was built to house enslaved workers from Virginia as we propose, it follows that the house should resemble antecedents in Virginia. Test excavations were conducted in 2007 to determine whether any architectural evidence of a structure remained intact, and, if so, whether it could be confidently identified as a Piedmont-style slave quarter. In total 28,  $1 \times 1$  m units were excavated, and positive evidence for the presence of the house foundation was uncovered. Although the scope of the project precluded a complete excavation of the house site, the excavations did reveal enough segments of the foundation to allow for the extrapolation of the size of the structure and to draw solid conclusions about the construction of the house (FIG. 7).

The house was a rectangular structure, 10.9 m (approximately 36 ft.) long and 5.45 m (18 ft.)

wide. The foundation was a massively built, mortared fieldstone wall approximately 0.45 m (18 in.) wide and was sunk at least 1.2 m (4 ft.) below the modern surface level. Given the amount of fieldstone thrown into the cellar hole at the time of the house's demolition, and the extent of nonnative fieldstone scattered on the surface surrounding the site, it is likely that the top of the original foundation stood some distance above modern grade. Carbonized wooden beams and a number of handmade bricks recovered from the excavations suggest the walls of the house were constructed of timber framing, with brick nogging infill, a construction technique not common in central New York. A lighter dry-laid stone foundation to the north of the main structure suggests that a 9 ft. wide addition, perhaps an ell or shed, abutted the north elevation of the building. The concentration of domestic debris recovered from the plowzone behind this feature suggests that this secondary feature was used as a



Figure 8. Exposed segment of the foundation of the Rose Hill slave quarter. Debris from the demolition of the house can be seen to the *right* of the foundation wall. (Photo by James A. Delle, 2007.)

kitchen. The picture that emerges from the recovery of building materials suggests that the slave quarter at Rose Hill was a substantial frame building, 36 × 18 ft. in extent, built on a massive stone foundation with a cellar that was at least 4 ft. deep and with walls that were made from brick nogging (FIGS. 8–11).

### The Piedmont Comes to New York

Most of what is known archaeologically about Virginia slave quarters comes from the Tidewater region of eastern Virginia. Although the Nicholas family was initially from Williamsburg and owned land on the Upper Potomac in Stafford County near Fredericksburg, Robert S. Rose grew up in the Piedmont, at his father's estate in Amherst (later Nelson) County (Rose 1985: 58–65). Rose's father Patrick was a considerable property owner in the Piedmont, having been taxed as an owner of 56 slaves in 1783, 45 slaves in 1800, and 32 in 1820 (Rose 1985: 59, 61). Family historian Christine Rose recorded that Patrick Rose sold in excess of 5,200 ac. in the Piedmont

between 1778 and 1810, while maintaining an estate in Amherst County (Rose 1985: 59, 61). While still an infant, Robert was granted a moiety of one of his father's Amherst County estates called Rose Mount; the other moiety was granted to Robert's uncle Hugh and was to pass to Robert at the time of his uncle's death (Rose 1985: 59–60). Prior to his move to New York, Rose disposed of over 1,500 ac. of land in Amherst County (Rose 1985: 116–117).

Plantation archaeology has long been a dominant thread within the literature on historical archaeology, and Virginia has been home to some of the most extensive investigations into the antebellum plantation complex. For a thorough review of the literature see Orser (1988, 1998), Orser and Funari (2001), and Singleton (1990, 1995); for a review of Virginia plantation archaeology see Heath (2010). And yet, the majority of the work done in this particular state has largely focused on sites in the Tidewater region. Examples of such work include Deetz's study of Flowerdew Hundred (Deetz 2001), Neiman's study of Clifts Plantation (Neiman 1986), and Samford's



Figure 9: Segments of the dry-laid foundation of the kitchen extension, including the northwest corner (*bottom* of image). (Photo by James A. Delle, 2007.)

(1999, 2007) explorations of subfloor pits. As tobacco was the primary crop in this region, early 17th-century, small-scale farmsteads and plantations allowed for the accrual of wealth that would enable the rise of the Virginian planting class. Unfortunately, Virginia's Piedmont seems to be relatively underrepresented in the plantation archaeology of the state.

Stemming from the study of sites in Virginia's Tidewater, a few trends have been identified and, thus far, have been put forth as statewide phenomena. One such trend involves the evolution of living arrangements. Studies of early 17th-century farmsteads and plantations have shown that planters and servants (mostly indentured servants from Europe) cohabitated in the same structure; these houses grew over time and with the accumulation of wealth. Beginning in the 1660s to the 1670s, however, domestic arrangements shifted to the separation of living spaces, as independent structures were built for servants

(Neiman 1986; Upton 1982; Deetz 2001; Epperson 2001; Heath 2010). Clifts Plantation illustrates this trend, as evidence for the construction of separate quarters for the servants between 1667 and 1668 has been found (Neiman 1986). Moreover, Deetz (2001) found a correlation between the presence of colonoware (a locally produced ceramic type often used by servants and slaves) and the new division of living spaces. Based on the dating of the material record, he reasoned that the removal of the servants from the planter's domicile would create a sudden need for household goods, such as ceramic vessels, in the dwellings not occupied by the planter. Obviously this trend of separate quarters established the living arrangements for the larger plantations to come, following the influx of African slaves beginning in the 1680s; larger plantations with a greater separation between the enslaved population and the planter and his family became the norm (Neiman 1986; Deetz 2001; Heath 2010).



Figure 10: Segments of the main foundation wall (*foreground*) and kitchen addition (*background*). (Photo by James A. Delle, 2007.)

Historians concerned with vernacular architecture have identified a type of structure typical to Virginia beginning in the 17th century. The “Virginia House” was a small cabin made up of two rooms on the first floor with a loft space above. The first floor was divided into public and private spaces in its “hall and chamber” layout; the hall allowed the family to entertain visitors, but the chamber was for family members only. This type of house was largely used by white, middling planters, but it was also adapted by the more elite members of the plantocracy for the housing of their slaves (Ellis 2010). The most common adaptation of the “Virginia House” is the formation of a duplex with the hall and chamber taking on equal proportions with an external door leading into each side. Examples of these structures have been seen throughout the Piedmont’s slave quarter sites. At James Madison’s home, Montpelier, a series of duplex structures were built in the South Yard to house slaves working in and near the big house (Reeves and Greer 2012). It seems likely that Upton also encountered similar structures,

as he describes slave quarters at Tuckahoe in Goochland County: “All are one-story frame buildings with two rooms, each with an exterior door, and separated by a central chimney” (Upton 2010: 123). James Bruce, an elite Virginia planter, built a series of slave quarters on three different plantations in Halifax and Charlotte counties between 1853 and 1855. “Of the twenty slave houses Bruce built at these three plantations, seventeen were ‘duplex’ and can be contrasted with Virginia’s traditional understanding of ‘family based’ space: the hall and chamber” (Ellis 2010: 151). Of course, more work needs to be done on plantations in the Piedmont. As Heath (2010) points out, single-room cabins built for kin groups also increased as plantations grew in size.

The dimensions of slave quarters seem to have a rather limited range. Upton explains that “slave houses might be as little as twelve by eight feet in size. Dwellings larger than sixteen by twenty feet were divided, as the Tuckahoe houses were, into two units” (Upton 2010: 123). One of the structures from Bruce’s



Figure 11. In situ remnants of the building materials of the quarter, including a burned timber, part of the field-stone foundation, and bricks from the nogging. (Photo by James A. Delle, 2007.)



Berry Hill was measured to be 18 × 28 ft. (and then subdivided internally) with stone walls 1.5 ft. thick (Ellis 2010). Although not in the Piedmont, Neiman (1986) recorded quarters in the Chesapeake that were 19 × 36 ft. and divided into two cells. One study has shown a decrease in quarter size over the course of the 18th century; average structure size went from 18 × 24 ft. to 12 × 16 ft. by the early 19th century (Fesler 2004; Heath 2010). However, Heath (2010) discusses the geographical biases of this study, as most of, if not all, the sites were in the Tidewater, and calls for more work to be done throughout the Piedmont.

Materials for slave quarters often were dependent upon local resources, although the most common material seems to be wood (Ellis 2010; Upton 2010; Reeves and Greer 2012). In fact, log cabins are widely accepted to be the most common form of domicile for slaves (Ellis 2010; Heath 2010; Upton 2010). Some structures were built out of stone and brick, and planters were not consistent in building materials for slave quarters. Upton (2010) has explained that planters were more concerned with the external, and thus aesthetic, component of the quarters only when they were in view of the big house and guests touring the public spaces of the plantation. Based on examples from Montpelier (Reeves and Greer 2012) and the various Bruce holdings in the Piedmont (Ellis 2010), which display differences between the visible and hidden quarters (i.e., framed wooden and masonry structures vs. log and brick buildings respectively), it seems that the building material was a large component in Upton's observations of the masters' concerns with the quarters in their lines of sight.

One of the most promising components of the archaeology of slave quarters to be done in the Virginia Piedmont is the analysis of yard spaces. As Upton (2010: 127) has written: "The quarter extended beyond its walls. The space around the building was as important as the building itself." Slaves lived much of their lives beyond the walls of their cramped cabins. Despite the obstruction of previous plowing events, archaeological investigations have discovered the presence of swept yard spaces through the spatial patterning of artifacts in relation to the position of the quarters, as well as through soil-chemical testing (Heath 2010).

Sites such as Poplar Forest (Heath and Bennett 2001) and Monticello (Bon-Harper 2010) in the Piedmont, and Utopia (Fesler 2010) in the Tidewater have explored this as a marker of African American ethnicity; evidence for swept yards has not been discovered on sites associated with European Americans. Some have argued that the swept yards represent a cultural form of resistance to the institution of slavery, though others focus on the functionality of such spaces (Fesler 2010).

Although Reeves and Greer's (2012) comparison of the stable and South Yard quarters at Montpelier largely focuses on the differences in the structures and the similarities of the material assemblages, it does make note of the differences in yard space between the two sites. The South Yard, with the better appointed structures aligned to and within view of the big house, features a yard space that is not ideal for use by the slaves. On the other hand, the stable quarter, invisible to Madison and his guests, was arranged to make better use of the topography and various craft production and work areas associated with the stables. Further investigations of yard spaces associated with slave quarters need to be done in the Virginia Piedmont, as well as throughout the rest of the state.

Having established the size of the house's footprint and details of the construction materials through archaeological analysis, the question turns to whether any similar buildings are known to have been used as slave quarters in 19th-century Piedmont Virginia. Several houses recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) as 19th-century slave quarters in Piedmont and "Middle Virginia" are similar in form to the Rose Hill quarter and were still standing and photographed by HABS in the 20th century. Two houses attributed to the 19th-century occupation of Poplar Forest, in Bedford County, are two-story brick structures with end chimneys; one of the two houses was nearly identical in footprint to the quarters at Rose Hill, with a foundation measuring 36 × 16 ft. Like the quarter at Rose Hill, this house features an addition off the rear left corner (FIG. 12). A one-and-a-half story slave quarter at Berry Hill in Halifax County has a similar footprint, though it is constructed of stone, not brick (FIG. 13). Story-and-a-half slave quarters were also recorded at Westend Plantation (FIG. 14) and



Figure 12. Nineteenth-century slave quarter at Poplar Forest, Bedford County, Virginia, photographed by the Historic American Buildings Survey. This structure demonstrates a Piedmont manifestation of a brick duplex slave quarter. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, digital archive of HABS, HABS VA,10-BED.V,1C-3, 1986, accessed April 15, 2013.)



Figure 13. Nineteenth-century slave quarter at Berry Hill Plantation, Halifax County, Virginia. Note that this structure is also a story-and-a-half duplex, though rendered in stone. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, digital archive of HABS, HABS VA,42-BOSTS.V,1-17, accessed April 15, 2013.)



Figure 14. Nineteenth-century slave quarter, Westend Plantation, Louisa County, Virginia, another story-and-a-half brick duplex. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, digital archive of HABS, HABS VA,55-TREV.V,14C—2, accessed April 15, 2013.)



Figure 15. Bracketts Farm slave quarter, Louisa County, Virginia. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, digital archive of HABS, HABS VA,55-TREV.V,1A-3, accessed April 15, 2013.)



Figure 16. Second slave quarter at Bracketts Farm, with later kitchen addition. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, digital archive of HABS, HABS VA,55-TREV.V,1A-4, accessed April 15, 2013.)

Bracketts Farm (FIG. 15), both located in Louisa County. One of the Bracketts Farm quarters and the quarter at Westend feature central rather than end chimneys. One Bracketts Farm quarter, like the quarters at Poplar Forest and Rose Hill, features an addition at the rear left section of the house (FIG. 16).

Finally, in 2006 we had the opportunity to visit briefly with Mrs. Jean Nicholas, the widow of one of the last of the Nicholas family members remaining in the Geneva area. In 2006, Mrs. Nicholas was living in a small house on a parcel of land that was once part of the estate founded by John Nicholas, her late husband's ancestor. Local tradition holds that her house was once the original slave quarter of White Springs Farm; this local history is corroborated by the presence in her yard of displaced gravestones from an early 19th-century African American cemetery, which she stated had come from an abandoned graveyard on her property. Although currently clad in shingles, the house is, in fact, a timber-framed house with nogging and provides a likely cognate for the quarter at Rose Hill (FIGS. 17 and 18). The overall size, form, and construction of the house closely resemble the brick slave quarters recorded by HABS in the Piedmont.

## Conclusion

Although a relatively short-lived phenomenon, plantation slavery was established in the

Finger Lakes region of New York State by immigrant planters from Maryland and Virginia. This project has, to date, located two quarter sites associated with these early 19th-century plantations, including the standing Jean Nicholas House on property once part of the White Springs Farm and a subsurface, though largely intact, stone foundation of a similar building at Rose Hill. Analysis of the refined earthenwares recovered from the plowzone at the Rose Hill quarter indicates that the structure was first occupied in the early 19th century at the time that the original mansion house was built and Rose Hill cleared and prepared for large-scale agricultural production. The overall dimensions of the building, as well as evidence of the construction techniques, strongly suggest that the quarter was designed and built following Piedmont-quarter antecedents.

Documenting a structure such as this and, by extension, remembering the people who built and lived in it, is interesting in and of itself. The quarters at Rose Hill and White Springs Farm provide material reminders that enslaved labor was widely used in New York State in the opening decades of the 19th century, and that plantation-style slavery existed in the state as late as the 1820s. It comes as no surprise that scions of some of Virginia's wealthiest and most powerful families—and



Figure 17. The Jean Nicholas House, Geneva, New York. The house is built on a fieldstone foundation and features an attached shed addition on the northwest side, barely visible in the *left* of this image. (Photo by James A. Delle, 2007.)



Figure 18. Interior wall of the Jean Nicholas House, featuring hewn timbers and roughly made brick masonry. (Photo by James A. Delle, 2007.)

the people they enslaved—would bring with them a “grammar” or “mental template” of how to construct a plantation, including the layout of the farm and the form and materials of its constituent elements, like the quarter.

The relative location of the field quarter, some 600 yd. behind the big house, and its apparent construction and orientation, all seem to be based on Virginia precursors.

It is more interesting, perhaps, to consider what the presence of this structure in this place says about the negotiation of social relations in the early republic. While the movement to end slavery as a social relationship and emancipate enslaved people (or at least their children) was gaining momentum throughout the Northeast, it was not at all clear in 1802 how the western frontiers would be shaped, what the boundaries of slavery would be, and where the great ports of the United States would develop. The Virginians who came to the Genesee Country, if John Nicholas is a reasonable example, hoped to create a society focused on the Tidewater. The never-completed Susquehanna Navigation would have linked the Finger Lakes to Chesapeake Bay via the Susquehanna River, making Baltimore a primary port of entry into the interior of the United States. Had this, rather than the Erie Canal, become

the waterway linking the Great Lakes to the Atlantic, the path of slavery might have been very different indeed. While it may seem that the abolition of slavery throughout the Northeast was inevitable by the early 19th century, had the Nicholases, Roses, and Fitzhughs actually transformed the Genesee Country into the breadbasket of the Tidewater, this outcome may not have been so clear.

Because excavations were limited to a single field season, there is much yet to learn about the slave quarter at Rose Hill. It is not yet known whether the structure was a duplex, or whether the house featured end chimneys or a central chimney. Because the house included a substantial subsurface cellar, it may be difficult to determine archaeologically whether the building had one or two bays, as any interior division of space may have been established through wooden framing. Future excavations around the exterior of the foundation may indicate the location of one or more doorways, which might suggest whether or not the house was a duplex. It is possible that the house featured a central chimney, as no discreet chimney falls were indicated in the deposition of brick on either end of the house. A large boulder that may have been part of a chimney foundation was uncovered in the center of the house. However, both archival evidence and depositional evidence, in the form of a thick lens of dark black soil surrounding this feature, suggest that in its last stage of occupation the house may have been converted into a blacksmith shop. The large stone may have been part of a forge constructed at a later date.

Although much work still needs to be completed at the Rose Hill site, the evidence strongly suggests that a Piedmont-style quarter was constructed when enslaved workers were forced to migrate to the Genesee Country in the opening decade of the 19th century. The evidence for slavery at Rose Hill suggests that mature, Virginia-style plantations were transplanted into upstate New York, opening a new avenue for the analysis of the material realities of slavery north of the Mason-Dixon line.

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