

# African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter

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Volume 4

Issue 2 December 1997

Article 13

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12-1-1997

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### Recommended Citation

Neiman, Fraser and McFaden, Leslie (1997) "Current Research at Monticello," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol4/iss2/13>

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## Current Research at Monticello

*Fraser Neiman and Leslie McFaden, Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation*

In January 1997, the Monticello Department of Archaeology initiated a systematic survey of the 2,000 acres currently owned by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation. This tract comprises the core of Thomas Jefferson's 5,000-acre plantation. Documents suggest that the tract contains the four principal quarter farms (the Monticello Home Farm Quarter, Tufton, Lego and Shadwell) that were the economic backbone of Jefferson's plantation from 1769-1826. The 1997 archaeological survey resulted in the identification of fifteen previously unknown sites. The significant finds associated with Jefferson's operation of Monticello Plantation include linear rock alignments that represent agricultural field boundaries; road traces; a check dam and water collection device; a cluster of rock piles that we hypothesize represents clearance of individual garden plots by slaves; an overseer's house; and five domestic sites where enslaved farm workers once lived. The domestic sites are all associated with the Monticello Home Farm Quarter and are adjacent to what Jefferson called "the Antient Field," an area that documents hint may have been under cultivation before Jefferson began active development of Monticello in 1769. Two periods of settlement are represented by the five slave sites. One (Site 7) dates to c. 1760-1790, three date to c. 1790-1800, and a fifth was certainly occupied in the 1790s and may have been occupied earlier as well. Site locational data suggest a major settlement pattern shift c. 1790, as sites were moved off prime arable land and settlement became less clustered. Both these changes are probably related to Jefferson's abandonment of tobacco in favor of wheat cultivation. Tracing the causal linkages to conflicting strategies pursued by Jefferson and his enslaved workers is a major focus of future research.

The earliest of the slave sites was the focus of the 1997 Monticello/U.Va. Summer Field School. Excavation of a spatially stratified random sample of test units in the north half of the site and close study of the horizontal artifact pattern revealed by them suggests that a small portion of the site was occupied before c. 1770, as an outlying quarter for Shadwell Plantation, Jefferson's birthplace. The spatial extent of occupation greatly increased when the site became the Home Farm Quarter in the 1770s and 1780s. Test squares revealed several postholes, and the recovery of architectural remains is high on the agenda for next summer's fieldwork at this site. This is the first farm quarter site to have been investigated archaeologically at Monticello.

The Plantation Survey is a multi-year project that allows us for the first time to describe and understand the historical dynamics of plantation spatial organization and

land use. A second season of survey fieldwork will run from January-April 1998, during which the Department hopes to discover a third phase of home-farm slave settlement dating to the first quarter of the 19th century. To further enhance the historical value of these archaeological discoveries, the Department is working closely with Monticello historians to construct the Monticello Demographic Database, a uniquely comprehensive record of the life histories of the nearly 600 enslaved individuals who worked at Monticello during Jefferson's lifetime.

The Department of Archaeology is also completing a report on the work conducted in 1995 and 1996 on the home of Elizabeth (Betty) Hemings (c. 1735-1807) which is identified on a survey plat Jefferson completed in 1809. Hemings, her children and grandchildren were enslaved domestics and artisans at Monticello. The Hemings site offers a rare opportunity to explore the archaeological traces left by a single, enslaved individual whom we can identify. Despite the ephemeral nature of material remains, chemical distributions, geoarchaeological data, and site locational characteristics helped us to explore the unique social niche Elizabeth Hemings occupied at Monticello at the turn of the 19th century.