

PLAYING IN A PAINFUL PAST: INTERPRETING SLAVERY IN LEISURE LANDSCAPES
AT PLANTATION MUSEUMS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Mary T. Biggs

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Approved by:

Banu Gökarıksel

Christian Lentz

Elizabeth Olson

Elizabeth Havice

Derek Alderman

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ABSTRACT

Mary T. Biggs: *Playing in a Painful Past: Interpreting Slavery in Leisure Landscapes at Plantation Museums in North Carolina*
(Under the direction of Banu Gökariksel and Christian Lentz)

As more plantation museums across the US work to incorporate slavery into their historic interpretation, the position of plantation museums within landscapes of leisure and tourism is increasingly problematized. Heritage scholarship identifies numerous challenges to placing full and complex narratives of enslavement alongside and within the spaces of outdoor recreation and leisure that intersect with plantation museums, but few studies thus far directly address such spatial tensions. This study draws on archival research, interviews with staff and visitors, participant observation, and a novel application of emotion mapping founded in feminist geography and participatory counter-cartographies to examine historical, embodied, and landscape-level relationships between outdoor recreation and interpretations of slavery at three public plantation museums in North Carolina. After tracing the historic conditions of the relationship between plantation museums and outdoor leisure to the segregated post-WWII tourism boom, the study focuses on the present day by bringing visitor and staff perspectives together to examine how these two diverse groups experience and manage leisure and landscape in the context of racially-just public history. Findings reveal that outdoor recreation and leisure can both undermine and support ongoing public history interpretations of enslavement, depending on the positionality of the visitor, the site's relationship to outdoor recreational

facilities, and the flexibility of site interpretive materials. The study further aims to crack open the concept of leisure, positioning both recreation and reparative memory work as vital co-creators of plantation museum spaces and offering the concept of *reparative leisure* to think through the transformative possibilities of place-based history education.

For all those who love public historic sites enough to keep making them better.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Dissertation Background and Goals

The trees are often some of the first things visitors notice at Somerset Place State Historic Site, a former plantation about six miles south of Creswell, North Carolina. A long line of huge sycamores, they spread their branches over the preserved and reconstructed structures on the edge of Lake Phelps, providing habitat for birds and squirrels and shade for historic site visitors. Today, a visitor can follow this line of sycamore trees all the way through the historic site, from the refurbished main house where three generations of the white Collins family stayed or lived, to the reconstructed slave dwellings at the edge of the property where a fraction of the hundreds of Black people enslaved by the white Collins family between 1785 and 1865 were forced to live. The sycamores do not stop at the historic site's present-day property line, though. They continue onto property managed today as Pettigrew State Park by North Carolina State Parks, nearly disappearing among younger trees and bushes along one of the park's walking trails but still undeniably there. One stands, a gaping hole at its center, at the edge of the Pettigrew campground. More stand a few hundred feet away, continuing in an unbroken line all the way to the park's visitor center.

The sycamore trees do more than ornament the landscape. Planted along the boundary lines of fields, their counterparts in other areas of the former plantation intentionally marked Collins property. At the heart of the Collins estate, they marked human property. The line of slave cabins was far longer than the three reconstructed cabins of today's historic site. In the

early 1800s, the slave cabins would have paralleled the line of sycamore trees all the way to the present-day state park visitor center. Now a space of outdoor leisure and recreation for park visitors, the Pettigrew campground sits today on the site of these former slave dwellings.

The sycamore trees mark what might otherwise be forgotten: relationships of ownership and dwelling that continue to inform and shape present time and space. The land that is today Pettigrew State Park was once part of the Collins plantation, and when the Pettigrew campsite was built on land that once held the homes of enslaved people, one landscape was buried beneath another. In a conversation with me under one of those sycamore trees during the summer of 2022, Somerset Place board member Mitchell Patrick described the historic site and the surrounding park as “conjoined twins.”

Rooted in our conversation under the sycamores, conjoinment has become a central analytic for this project. I set out to examine relationships between spaces of public history and spaces of outdoor recreation and leisure. The conjoinment of landscapes, the conjoinment of activities, and the histories of that conjoinment raise questions. What does this conjoinment do? How are its effects felt, and by whom? If conjoinment means the ongoing result of putting two different things together for a common purpose, what, then, is that common purpose? And how do these two things – public history and outdoor recreation – come to be put together in the first place? What are the conditions for, and of, conjoinment?

Conjoinment at Somerset Place underlines a tension, here written in the landscape, between the interpretation of enslavement and outdoor recreation and leisure. This is not the tension, necessarily, of conflicting ideas or strained relationships. In fact, according to Somerset staff, Somerset Place and Pettigrew State Park work well together today, sharing resources for events and pointing visitors with an interest in outdoor recreation or historic preservation to the

appropriate neighboring site. The tension is not interpersonal, or even bureaucratic. Rather, it is tension in the sense of the transitive verb: the application of a force upon something in a way that stretches – and changes – something else (“Tension, n.,” 2023)

The tension of conjoinment comes from the collision of multiple uses of space. It carries over, echo-like, from a history of anxiety on the part of white historic preservation professionals in North Carolina, and in the US more broadly, about what history was, how to define it, and how to appropriately safeguard and manage it. Rooted in specific sociopolitical and temporal contexts, the tension emerges today as more and more historic sites, including plantation museums, bring formerly marginalized – formerly buried – voices into their narratives (Eldar & Jansson, 2021).

Throughout this dissertation, I name vivid and intentional interpretations of enslavement by staff at plantation museums as *excavative history work*. This term builds on the concept of “symbolic excavation” as defined by memory scholars Derek Alderman and Rachel Campbell (2008). Symbolic excavation highlights the need for intentional and active reconstruction of long-suppressed historical narratives, specifically narratives of enslavement at plantation museums. Further, symbolic excavation emphasizes the importance of the material culture of enslavement in such reconstructions, using the word “excavation” both literally and figuratively to describe dual processes of unearthing narratives and physical artifacts of enslavement. Building on this important scholarship, excavative history work in this dissertation refers to the ongoing and active work of public historians to unearth narratives that have been buried or occluded in mainstream public history (including multi-faceted narratives of enslaved life, Black contributions to Southern socio-political spheres over time, and an attention to how Black people resisted oppression in numerous ways) and to interpret those narratives effectively for the public.

I see excavative history work as intimately bound up with – indeed, as a condition for – reparative memory work, which refers to the ways in which heritage preservation can contribute to healing ongoing historical legacies of oppression in the present, instead of only escalating or hiding these legacies (Allen & Brasher, 2019; Hanna et al., 2022). Excavative history work as a term spotlights the ongoing efforts of public historians at plantation museums to uncover previously-hidden narratives of enslavement and present them to the public.

Excavative history work is encouraging but often challenging. The practice deals with difficult themes, especially at plantation museums where generations of Black people were enslaved. Furthermore, excavative history work can appear to be at odds with the recreational leisure frameworks that support and inform historic sites (P. Carter et al., 2014; P. L. Carter, 2016; Potter et al., 2020). As plantation museums try to attract and retain visitors, a commitment to telling complete and complex histories is often lacking (P. Carter et al., 2014; P. L. Carter, 2016; Modlin et al., 2018). Tourist attractions like the tram tours and haunted mazes described by a team of researchers who coined the phrase “Plantation Edutainment Complex” necessarily occlude more difficult aspects of these spaces, foregoing excavative history work in favor of tourist pleasure (Potter et al., 2020). “At plantation museums, amusement makes conveying stories of enslaved people difficult, because there is nothing amusing about forced labor, rape, and torture,” the researchers write (Potter et al., 2020, p. 21). Reconciling a pleasurable or entertaining site with excavative history work, and with the historical and racial reckoning necessary in our society can appear difficult, if not impossible (P. Carter et al., 2014; Potter et al., 2020).

This dissertation explores the tensions inherent in placing full and complex narratives of enslavement and white supremacy alongside and within spaces of outdoor recreation and leisure.

In the following chapters I argue that examining public history and leisure recreation as conjoined opens new avenues of encounter, embodiment, and engagement. Conjoinment generates tension in terms of activities, histories, and landscapes. Here, I approach these tensions as transformative in that they act upon visitors and staff of historic plantation sites alike. What has been created out of this conjoinment of landscapes meant for outdoor recreational leisure and landscapes trying to excavate previously buried histories of enslavement? What *can* be created?

Study Area

My research is grounded in three state historic sites in North Carolina: Somerset Place, Vance Birthplace, and Stagville (Figure 1). As former plantations, all three work to interpret the histories of the enslaved Black people who were forced to work on these lands during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as the white owning families who made their fortunes from chattel slavery. The three historic sites represent the three main geographic regions of North Carolina: the western mountains, the piedmont, and the coastal plain. They sit alongside designated spaces of public outdoor recreation, as well as incorporating key features of outdoor recreational landscapes within their boundaries, such as walking trails and picnic tables.

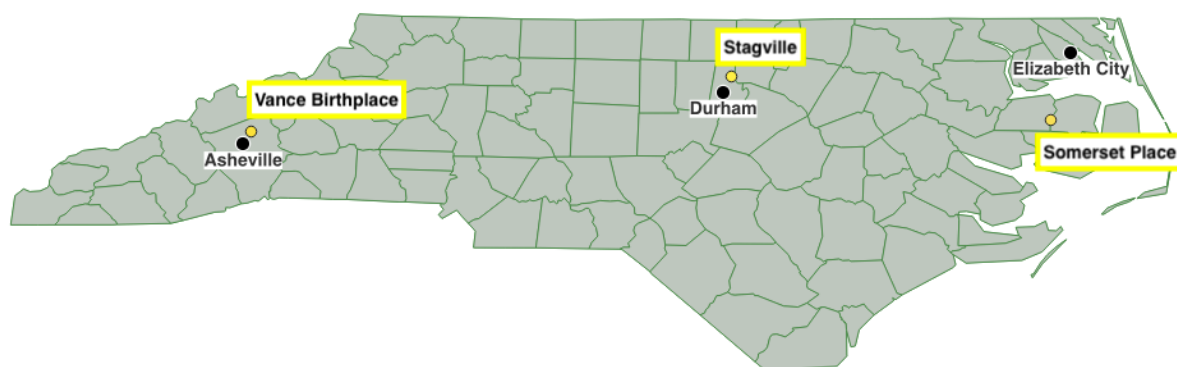


Figure 1: My three research sites (outlined in yellow) and their closest major cities in North Carolina. Map by the author.

Located a few miles north of the City of Durham, Stagville, is a flagship historic site for its intentional and sustained centering of the people who were enslaved there, as well as its vibrant work with local descendent communities. In 1860, the white Cameron family owned 30,000 acres and enslaved nearly 1,000 Black people. Today's historic site occupies a small fraction of the plantation's original land but aims to interpret the lives and experiences of the enslaved individuals whose forced labor made Paul Cameron one of the state's richest men (Anderson, 1985). Stagville today incorporates some of the only surviving original slave dwellings in the South (Lounsbury & McDaniel, 1980), making it a powerful place for interpretations of enslavement. Guided tours focus explicitly on the experiences and relationships of enslaved people, naming wherever possible the individuals who were forced to live and work on the Cameron plantation. Many tour guides also interpret Emancipation, sharecropping, and the foundational role of free Black people in making Durham what it is today. One tour guide, whom I accompanied during my MA research in 2019, explicitly connected twenty-first century police brutality against Black and brown communities with the eighteenth-century structures of slavery that made Stagville so profitable for the white Cameron family. An active network of people descended from families enslaved at Stagville supports the site through genealogy research, family reunions, and volunteering. The site sponsors a summer internship program for students of HBCUs to gain experience with public history and conduct their own research.

(Figure 2)



Figure 2: Bennehan-Cameron house (left) and Horton Grove houses (right). Photos by author.

In eastern North Carolina, Somerset Place has been working for decades to interpret a more complete history of the US South. In 1860, Somerset Place was the largest plantation in North Carolina and one of the largest in the entire upper South at nearly 110,000 acres. The white Collins family enslaved 861 Black people between 1785-1865. Sitting on roughly 8 acres of the original plantation, the historic site today includes the Collins house, a few original outbuildings, and several modern reconstructions of buildings in their original places, including the three slave cabins shaded by sycamore trees in what used to be a long line along the shore of Lake Phelps. Somerset Place as a plantation was first owned by a group of prominent white businessmen from the nearby town of Edenton, North Carolina, but was later fully acquired by one of the original owners. Today, thanks in large part to efforts by a woman named Dorothy Spruill Redford in the early 1990s – herself a descendent of people who were enslaved at Somerset Place – the site bills itself as offering a “comprehensive and realistic view of 19th-century life on a large North Carolina plantation” (*Historic Sites: Somerset Place*, n.d.). This comprehensive view includes the role and experiences of enslaved Black people, as well as the white people who owned the plantation. (Figure 3)



Figure 3: Somerset Place owner's compound (left) and one of the reconstructed slave dwellings (right). Photos by author.

In western North Carolina north of the City of Asheville, Vance Birthplace (Figure 4) is reshaping conceptions of both mountain historic sites and plantation museums. The site is where Zebulon B. Vance, North Carolina's governor during the Civil War and a US senator for North Carolina during Reconstruction, was born and lived during the first three years of his life. Initially conceived and constructed as an homage to the only North Carolina governor from the western part of the state, Vance Birthplace has, within the last decade, begun to expand beyond solely interpreting Vance's life and the lives of white farmers like his grandparents. Under the direction of the current site manager, Vance Birthplace is now called a "mountain plantation," instead of a "mountain farmstead," to emphasize that the Vance family's fortune was thanks in large part to the people they enslaved on that land and in nearby towns. To counter a pervasive myth that white Appalachians did not own slaves (Inscoc, 1996), the site's new interpretive direction emphasizes the presence and influence of enslaved and free Black people in the western North Carolina mountains. A sign visible from the road listing all the known names of the people enslaved by the Vance family stands as a visual testament to the site's expanded goals (Figure 5).

Site materials emphasize that, although slavery may have looked different for people living in the mountains, it was still just that: slavery.

As plantation museums working diligently to excavate and incorporate histories of enslavement into their interpretation, Stagville, Somerset Place, and Vance Birthplace are not unique. However, they *are* noteworthy. If there is a spectrum of plantation museums, with one end being museums that do not address slavery at all and the other being museums like the Whitney Plantation in Louisiana that explicitly *center* the histories of enslaved people (Skipper & Thomas, 2020), then my research sites sit somewhere in the middle, although much closer to the Whitney than many other sites do. In a state with ongoing pro-Republican gerrymandering (Bajpai, 2023) that continues to skew conservative in state and federal elections (“Election Results,” 2023), this dedication to reparative memory work is no small feat. It has also not gone completely uncontested by some members of the public. In our interviews, staff at all three sites related stories of white visitors who were angered by the sites’ attention to slavery and Black contributions to US history. Some of my own interactions with visitors revealed similar themes, as with a white man at Stagville who called Stagville’s self-guided tour language “inflammatory.” Although these people were a small minority of site visitors during my fieldwork, their presence demonstrates that excavative history work is still contested in our country today. My dissertation research is interested specifically in what we can learn by examining conjoinments between excavative history work and outdoor recreation. For this reason, I do not go into further detail on the contention of excavative history work happening at and around these sites. However, this too is part of the landscape of plantation museums today, and must not be discounted.



Figure 4: Views of Vance Birthplace log buildings. Photos by author.



Figure 5: Blue sign with known names of enslaved people by the main Vance house, erected in 2020 and visible from the street. Photo by author.

In sum, staff at all three sites are working to interpret full and complete narratives of the US South. The sites diverge from the model of plantation museums as spaces of pure entertainment or amusement for white visitors and work to trouble the dominant plantation mythology of a simpler time that occludes racial violence (Forbes Bright & Carter 2018) – at times, resulting in pushback from visitors. Additionally, all three plantation museums that I study work in numerous ways to connect past slavery with present and ongoing white supremacy, avoiding two simplistic misrepresentations of slavery: either as a discreet, completed event that no longer impacts our world today (Eldar and Jansson 2021) or as one end of a linear progression

that tends from racialized violence toward a present-day, color-blind, race-neutral society (McKittrick 2013).

In the last several years, the excavative work of these sites has been supported in large part by the current director of the Historic Sites Program, Michelle Lanier. Herself descended from people who were enslaved at Stagville, Lanier is the first person of color to direct the North Carolina Historic Sites Program. A passionate advocate for comprehensive, diverse, and reparative historic interpretation, she sees historic sites as places with transformative potential. “We’re talking about the history of a place that’s not detached from living community,” Lanier told me in an interview in August 2022. “Everything that I do is about healing and wholeness. Everything that I do is about working an alchemy of creating gathering spaces and places for people of disparate backgrounds, but also people of communities that have been traditionally marginalized, whose stories and narratives have been eclipsed or [made] invisible.” For Lanier, the place of historic sites in a community is inherently transformative, or can be. These “ecosystems of memory,” in her words, have the potential to nurture relationships between people, between the past and the present, and between the present and a truly inclusive future.

Despite Lanier’s leadership and the excavative history work being done at the sites, all three still exist within tourism infrastructures. Moreover, they exist directly alongside or adjacent to places where many people engage in outdoor recreation. Vance is five miles from the Blue Ridge Parkway, an easy drive from miles of scenic views and hiking trails. Stagville is directly adjacent to a network of walking trails run by a nonprofit called the Triangle Land Conservancy, some of which begin from historic site land (Figure 6). Somerset Place is completely surrounded by Pettigrew State Park, cut through with park walking trails, and roughly on the way to the Outer Banks (Figure 7). All three also have elements of recreational and leisure infrastructure on

their grounds: picnic tables at Vance and Stagville, trails at Stagville and Somerset Place, and beautiful green areas to sit and picnic or contemplate the natural surroundings gracing all three. In my view, then, the sites exemplify landscape-level conjoinment between spaces of excavative history work and outdoor recreation and leisure. They thus ground the tensions flowing from proximities between excavative history work and outdoor leisure in place.



Figure 6: A TLC trail leaves from directly behind one of the Horton Grove houses. Photo by author.



Figure 7: (Left) A sign for the “carriage trail” at the Pettigrew State Park campground, which is a modern walking trail that follows an old carriage road. (Right) View of the Collins House from the Pettigrew hiking trail. Photos by author.

The plantation museums also sit on stolen indigenous land: Cherokee land at Vance Birthplace; Eno, Shakori, and Saponi land at Stagville; and Lumbee land at Somerset Place. All three sites acknowledge indigenous dispossession in their online and in-person materials. Because their explicit focus on enslaved Africans and Black Americans, however, that is where my dissertation focuses as well. Notably, recent scholarship argues that histories of Native and African American oppression at the hands of white Americans are far more entwined than is represented in dominant educational systems and conventional understandings (King, 2019; Lowery, 2018). Although not the explicit focus of my dissertation, by examining outdoor recreation discourses created through indigenous erasure (Cronon, 1996; Spence, 2000) in relationship to public history, I highlight yet another way in which these systems of oppression interlock and perpetuate each other.

Conceptual Foundations

I situate my dissertation within four areas of literature: the critical examination of tourist infrastructures; the place of leisure in everyday life; the co-production of landscape and memory; and the place of plantation museums, understood as a subset of public historic spaces, in the US today. Race, embodiment, and experiential economies of emotion (Ahmed, 2014) are an undercurrent through all three areas of literature. Feminist geography informs my work throughout as I examine the intimacies of embodied engagement with historic space, with an overarching commitment to racial equity and reparative memory work in myriad forms.

Tourism Infrastructures

Historic sites, including those I study, sit within tourism infrastructures. Alongside and within everything else that they are, Vance Birthplace, Somerset Place, and Stagville are tourist destinations. Beginning from this fact, I examine how these sites serve members of the public.

Public service is one of the many contexts in which staff and volunteers make management choices. Drawing on critical tourism studies (CTS) allows me to break open one-dimensional narratives of tourist production or attraction to examine the ways in which historic sites engage a diverse and multi-faceted public. Attending to the many different parties interested in these sites, and the contexts in which they arrive at these sites, brings depth and nuance to an important aspect of historic preservation.

The CTS literature asserts that tourism, like any other industry or discourse, is situated within, and acts upon, networks of power and politics. Tourism has material impacts, from resource management to the physical design of tourist centers and infrastructures of the “experience economy” (Gibson, 2021, p. 669). At the same time, CTS scholars attend to the intimate and embodied aspects of tourism, addressing racial, gendered, and classed differences as both producers of tourism and, at times, produced through tourism. Recent studies on the Black Travel Movement (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021) and Black Travel Tribes – “organizations, communities and businesses that cater to Black travelers” (Dillette, 2021, p. 4) – explicitly situate Black travel and tourism tendencies within longer historical legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and ongoing violence toward Black and brown people by white Americans.

Thus, CTS provides a window into the racialized dynamics of leisure production and access that shape mainstream tourist infrastructures in the US, and within which North Carolina’s historic sites and outdoor recreation spaces also function. I draw on CTS literature to theorize connections between national structures through time and the intimate, embodied practices of leisure tourism at the individual and family level. In doing so, I highlight the historical and racial contexts of tourism infrastructure. Jim Crow segregation was not only about political disenfranchisement, notes anthropologist Antoinette Jackson (2020), but also the

separation of Black and white leisure spaces. The active and ongoing dispossession of indigenous land by the US government to create these leisure tourism spaces, specifically national parks and forests, further emphasizes that the mainstream outdoor leisure and tourism industry within the US has always been by and for white people (Brasher et al., forthcoming; Jackson, 2020; Merchant, 2003; Spence, 2000; Vasudevan, 2019). The resulting majority-white outdoor recreation population is now the focus of substantial anxiety on the part of preservation professionals (Weber & Sultana, 2013).

I use CTS insights to unsettle and problematize seemingly neutral and natural connections between historic preservation and leisure that might otherwise go unnoticed. Heritage preservation in the West has been constructed alongside and within concepts of leisure and recreational tourism to such an extent that some scholars, even within memory and heritage studies, seem to take it as a given. For example, historian Jay Winter (2014) writes: “Dwelling on memory is a matter of both disposable income and leisure time” (p. 38-39). His is a situated statement, accurately reflecting the requirements for a certain kind of memory practice within a Western capitalist society. Indeed, “dwelling on memory” in this context often does require going to a certain place, whether a monument, a memorial, or a museum, which, in turn, requires the disposable income and leisure time to go to that place for however long one wants to engage in memory practice. Read as broad and objective fact, however, the statement implicitly takes economic and social connections between heritage spaces and leisure tourism as a given quality, rather than a product of tourism infrastructures rooted in race and other structures of power. What of people who, through systems of capitalistic racial oppression and generational poverty, lack disposable income and/or leisure time? Are they, then, *unable* to dwell on memory? I follow Antoinette Jackson (2020) in saying that those systems of leisure, memory-keeping, and historic

preservation that happen outside mainstream memory discourse are no less legitimate than the state-funded systems that may require disposable income and enough time to travel to a museum, monument, or historic site. I argue that interrogating the making of this relationship between leisure and memory, as well as who is conventionally excluded from an analysis of it, opens a productive inquiry into the relationship between memory and leisure.

Leisure Frameworks

In the field of leisure studies, frameworks of leisure as political and leisure as resistance sit uneasily alongside frameworks of leisure as freedom, autonomous, and “innocent” (Shaw, 2001). Since the early 2000s, leisure scholars have largely coalesced around the understanding that leisure is one social process among many. Like all social processes, leisure activities are inextricably bound up with realities of power, privilege, and place. Nonetheless, theoretical relationships between the concepts of “leisure” and “work” remain murky. Understandings of leisure as the antithesis or the absence of work are largely based on the paradigms of a capitalist society (Snape et al., 2017). Indeed, the time after or between working, the time to recuperate in order to work more, or the time that one has as a member of the “leisure (non-working) class” is not at all unrelated to work itself, complicating a popular simplistic partition between work as difficult and draining and leisure as simple and enjoyable (Stebbins, 2004). Another strand in the leisure studies literature suggests that the reorganization of work in a post-modern society calls also for re-thinking leisure, and well-being in particular, in conjunction with fairer models of work in general (Snape et al., 2017).

Such calls for rethinking work and leisure have only grown in a post-pandemic world. Working from home dissolved divisions between work and non-work time and space for many people. The ongoing restructuring of some kinds of work, however, is inflected by class. The

“unskilled laborers” who became “essential workers” during the early days of the pandemic never had the option of mixing their work and leisure time or space in this way. However, it seems clear that the time is ripe for re-articulations of leisure based on conceptions of well-being that go beyond individual contentment or ease. Instead, re-articulations of leisure must consider well-being as a social goal bound up with racial, economic, and social justice, following indigenous and non-capitalist worldviews from across the world (Kothari et al., 2014).

Mainstream heritage tourism in the US links leisure and history education in a way that often privileges hegemonic narratives. Leisure time, and attendant linked desires for enjoyment and education, are some of the main reasons why visitors go to heritage sites today (Kempiak et al., 2017; Poria et al., 2006). However, enjoyment can seem to be at odds with the kind of traumatic or challenging history being excavated at plantation museums. As I will discuss further in Chapter 2, heritage sites proliferated alongside the growth of domestic tourism and the interstate highway system in the US. Their focus was on patriotic and whitewashed narratives that could sit easily alongside enjoyable leisure time in nature.

Today, leisure and enjoyment remain central reasons for many visitors to historic sites, but little scholarship goes beyond leisure as catalyst for learning at historic sites and instead examines how leisure and recreational pursuits inform visitor meaning-making in heritage spaces (Zhang & Liu, 2021). Furthermore, specifically outdoor-based leisure, including activities like hiking, camping, and picnicking, are seldom addressed specifically, despite the propensity for historic sites to be situated within or alongside designated spaces of outdoor recreation. In the following sections, I use the phrase “outdoor recreation” to refer to those leisure activities which take place outside, including admiring scenic landscape views.

However, pleasure can move, too (brown, 2019). Rest is a portal, as poet, performance artist, theologian and daydreamer Tricia Hersey tells us (Hersey, 2022). Joy can transform.

Landscape & Memory

Landscapes offer an avenue into ongoing relationships between excavative history and visitor experiences that is vital to my research. Following feminist geographer Doreen Massey (2005), I understand landscapes, not as stagnant or static visual frames but as collections of trajectories in progress, always in the process of formation. Landscapes are inherently embodied and sensory (Berberich et al., 2013; Burlingame, 2019). They shape, and are shaped by, human action (Lewis, 1979; Sauer, 1963). Additionally, they subsume the labor of their creation and, in doing so, make said labor and the social relations that produce that labor, appear natural (Mitchell, 1996). As such, landscapes are not simply backgrounds for the relationships and experiences in which I am interested. Rather, the landscapes of my three research sites encompass, enable, and constitute these relationships and experiences. Landscapes are not containers; in very real ways, landscapes *are* the relationships.

At historic sites, a landscape-level language of ongoing trajectories is a potent tool for analysis. Historic events emerge, not as singular and past, but as ongoing experiences that shape and are shaped by visitors, spaces, and management practices (Wagner-Pacifici, 2017). Furthermore landscapes – particularly memorial landscapes – give the past “a tangibility and familiarity – making the history they commemorate appear to be part of the natural and taken-for-granted order of things” (Alderman et al. 2020, p. 40). Historic site landscapes must be examined alongside interpretive elements, such as waysides and guided tours, to understand what histories are being represented or overlooked (Alderman et al., 2020).

Landscape-level analysis reveals connections between historic sites themselves and the spaces, infrastructures, and activities that surround them or are proximate to them in different ways. None of the historic sites I study exists in a vacuum; rather, they are all connected with other spaces at various scales and embedded within various infrastructures. Plantation museums are assemblages, composed not only of the site's intended experience but also of what memory scholars term "elements" and "influences of intention," including signage and landscape, variation among guided tours, and the geographic, political, and cultural spheres of visitors (Potter et al., 2022).

Through the analytic of landscape, I examine relationships between spaces and activity, especially activities associated with leisure. Approaching landscapes as inherently embodied offers insight into the ways in which parts of a landscape facilitate or discourage different kinds of activities. Swimming in Lake Phelps, walking along wooded hiking trails, driving scenic highways like the Blue Ridge Parkway, and viewing old trees are all moments when landscapes are experienced and defined through embodied activity. So, too, are walking slowly from wayside to wayside, following the stops of an audio tour, and having a picnic under a perfectly-placed shelter at a historic site. The ways in which these activities impact each other, as well as the ways in which these spaces overlap, is one of my key areas of focus.

Inquiring into the relationships between landscape and activity opens questions of embodiment and emotional experience at historic sites. Scholars have drawn important connections between emotion and environment, illuminating the potent exchanges of stimuli that shape our experiences of and within landscape (Cronon, 1996; Dove, 2004; Rose, 1993; M. Smith, 2012). Recent scholarship in heritage and memory studies has identified the experiential and embodied as key areas of further inquiry, as these can exceed built environments of

memorial spaces to create “commemorative atmospheres” that are in excess of written or more formal memorial components (Sumartojo, 2020). Additionally, the landscapes of historic sites themselves substantially impact visitor experiences of historic sites, from the distribution and visual aesthetic of informational signs (Ryan et al., 2016) to broader ways in which landscape design and landscape features shape where and how we remember (Alderman & Inwood, 2013; DeLyser, 1999; King, 2016; Leebrick & Maples, 2015; McKittrick, 2013). Studies have shown that historic site landscapes are key components of visitor conceptions of authenticity at historic sites, even – at times, *especially* – when those landscapes do not align with historical records of land use, reflecting instead management decisions made with multiple contexts in mind (Biggs, 2022; DeLyser, 1999; Gable & Handler, 1993). Geographers have further highlighted how landscapes of public history produce feelings of personal discovery of broader histories, tying the personal to the regional in deep, embodied ways (Shaffer, 2001). Recent work on memorial geographies and actor-network theory emphasizes the many mobilities of memory work on the ground, urging us toward memorial futures that are dynamic, participatory, and regenerative (Sheehan, 2020; Sheehan et al., 2021).

My dissertation incorporates a study of emotion and embodiment at sites to open new avenues of inquiry into the ways in which we are preserving, learning, and experiencing historic space. I draw on recent work in heritage and museum studies that attends to emotion and embodiment to examine how historic space is shaped by, and shapes, feeling bodies (L. Smith & Campbell, 2015; Tolia-Kelly et al., 2016; Waterton, 2018; Waterton & Watson, 2014). Bringing together feminist geography with scholarship in heritage and memory studies, Chapters 3 and 4 examine the intimate and embodied aspects of historic sites as they interact with spaces of recreation and leisure.

Plantation Museums in the US South

Antebellum slave plantations still impact our country and world today in numerous ways. Along with other scholars of Black geographies and place-making, geographer Katherine McKittrick (2011) has written extensively on the central role of the antebellum Southern plantation in spatializing conceptions of urban life and racial surveillance. “The plantation anticipates – and empirically maps – the logic that some live, and some die, because this is what nature intended” (956). Modern-day articulations of race, policing, city planning, deservingness, among many others, can all be traced back to the antebellum plantation. The study of plantation museums is one way of many to examine how plantation spaces and logics are remembered and constructed in our lives today.

In addition to the ongoing impacts of plantations themselves, plantation museums are key sites to study spatial and affective relationships between modern landscapes of outdoor leisure and excavative memory work. The history of plantation museums in the US is not politically neutral. A rich vein of scholarship on plantations and plantation museums in the US South identifies such sites as both problematic monuments to an idealized, racialized past of white superiority, and as vital opportunities for members of the public to reckon with slavery and its ongoing impacts (Alderman & Inwood, 2013; P. Carter et al., 2014; Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Potter et al., 2020; Small, 2013; Walcott-Wilson, 2017). Historically, plantation museums have been strongly connected with white leisure tourism at the expense of topics like slavery, and with constructing the myth of the Lost Cause in the face of Reconstruction and expanding Black freedom (Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Hoelscher, 2006; Small, 2013). The construction of this “white-pillared past” (Hoelscher, 2006) was largely the work of elite white women whose preservation efforts materially connected tourism, myth-making, and white supremacy in the

space of Southern plantation museums. Not coincidentally, this women's work came during the same period in the late nineteenth century when white male politicians were passing Jim Crow laws and engaging in white supremacist terror campaigns to undermine the multi-racial, Black-led advancements of Reconstruction (Cox, 2012). The legacy of these memory groups meant that, for much of the past several decades, one could visit a plantation heritage site without hearing anything about enslaved people at all (Alderman & Modlin, 2008; P. L. Carter, 2016; Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Modlin et al., 2011; Shields, 2017; Stone et al., 2016).

In the present moment, plantation museums and the histories they interpret are more relevant than ever. Since the 1960s, numerous scholars have attended to how slavery has been preserved and interpreted (or not, as the case may be) at public historic sites (Alderman & Modlin, 2008; P. Carter et al., 2014; Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Horton, James Oliver, 2009; Modlin, 2008; Small, 2013). Since 2020, pushed by Black and other activists of color leading the largest protests in the country's history, plantation weddings have come under new scrutiny, with scholars and activists alike noting that hosting weddings at former sites of chattel slavery is deeply harmful within historical and contemporary contexts of Black oppression (Hosken, 2020; Luongo, 2020).

At the time of this writing in early 2023, ongoing progressive movements for racial and socioeconomic justice (including the Movement for Black Lives, prison abolition, and anti-police demonstrations) are fighting against re-entrenchments of white supremacy on multiple fronts, including voter suppression ("The Impact of Voter Suppression on Communities of Color," 2022) and hate crimes. Of particular relevance to this dissertation: a conservative and white-led movement against teaching school children about race and racism in the US (under the umbrella term "critical race theory") that gained widespread social traction in 2021 is continuing

to push through legislation in states across the country that dictate or limit what can be taught in classrooms regarding histories of slavery and race. By 2022, 19 states had laws or rules that aimed to regulate how racism is discussed in public schools (Waxman, 2022). Schools can be in danger of losing their accreditation, and teachers are in danger of losing their jobs, if students or parents report the teaching of “divisive concepts” that include racism and sexism (Schwartz, 2023). Excavative history work and holistic historic interpretation at plantation museums takes on even more importance in a context where the very histories of Black presence, struggle, and resilience in US history are continually undermined.

Many (although still not all) plantation museums today are working to rectify the racially-oppressive constructions that have shaped plantation museums in the past. Staff at my research sites are not alone in examining their own history of interpretation and making the decision to incorporate more comprehensive historical narratives. However, recent scholarship reveals tensions between the goals of many public historians at plantation museums and the need to facilitate pleasurable experiences for a visitor population that is often majority white (Eldar & Jansson, 2021; Modlin et al., 2018; Potter et al., 2020). These scholars rightly ask: do museums that were built to support a Lost Cause mythology have the necessary resources or commitment to appropriately engage members of the public around themes of chattel slavery, Black identity, and ongoing white supremacy? (Eldar & Jansson, 2021; Modlin et al., 2018) Moreover, given that they exist within larger networks of leisure tourism and recreation and contend with other tourist destinations in attracting visitors, can these museums afford to incorporate excavative history into their programs? (Potter et al., 2020) In other words, how do these seemingly oppositional but nonetheless conjoined goals – the excavative and the recreational – relate to one another in practice and effect? Must one always undermine or exclude the other?

Dissertation Methodology

This dissertation draws on a mixed-method, multi-sited approach to examine the historical, spatial, and embodied relationships between conjoined areas of excavative memory work and outdoor leisure. I collected two key forms of qualitative data: archival and ethnographic. Chapter 2 relies on data gathered from physical and digital archive repositories. I visited the State Archives of North Carolina, in Raleigh, to access archives from the State Parks and the Archives & History collections. Both collections helped to flesh out the everyday details of historic site designation and management in the years between 1940-1970, particularly regarding the relationship between Somerset State Historic Site and Pettigrew State Park. I also drew on the digitized collections of the State Archives, as well as on two online repositories of digitized archival newspapers, both of which offered broader understanding of mid-twentieth century public discourse touching on all three of my research sites.

Drawing on ethnographic data collected between January 2022 and September 2022, Chapters 3 and 4 feature findings derived from semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and a novel application of emotion mapping developed for this project. A total of ten semi-structured interviews with site staff, volunteers, and program leadership were conducted at all three research sites, both in person and via Zoom. In addition, I conducted shorter semi-structured interviews as part of the emotion mapping method with visitors at all three sites during five site visits between March 2022 and June 2022, resulting in 106 maps that I describe further in Chapter 3. The resulting maps and 142 interviews form the bulk of my ethnographic data. I did not collect formal demographic data. However, many people self-identified as Black or white in the course of their interviews. I have included that information, as available, when quoting or

describing visitor interactions in the following chapters. If racial information is not available, I have noted that as well.

I was accompanied during my fieldwork trips in March-June 2022 by three invaluable undergraduate research assistants, whose contributions I describe in more detail in Chapter 3 as well. Analysis of the resulting interview, participant observation, and spatial data included interview and map transcription and inductive coding (Friese, 2012). For coding, I utilized the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) ATLAS.ti, which assisted me in examining relationships between codes and their occurrences across sites, as well as identifying connections that would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Conducting such extensive research with staff, leadership, and visitors at historic sites requires relationship-building. I connected with the site manager of Stagville, Vera Cecelski, in 2018 through one of my advisors and built a rapport with her and her staff through formal interviews, informal conversations, and participant observation for my MA thesis. After my MA research was complete, I stayed in touch with Stagville, even volunteering as a tour guide for Stagville's Homeschool Day in fall 2019. I also applied for, and received, a grant to work with Stagville staff further during the summer of 2020, during which I researched and wrote a site-wide landscape plan that continues to be used for site development and grant applications.

When I began defining my PhD research, Cecelski connected me with Kimberly Floyd, then-site manager of Vance Birthplace. As at Stagville, I began with more informal conversations before conducting our formal semi-structured interview, allowing me to build relationships with Vance staff outside of a formal research relationship. My relationship with Somerset Place grew from a shared UNC connection with Noah Janis, a tour guide. UNC also helped me connect with Michelle Lanier, Director of the Historic Sites Program who is pursuing

a doctorate in geography at UNC as well. However, even those individuals with whom I did not share an alma mater or a common acquaintance were exceptionally warm and welcoming to me as a student researcher at the sites.

While designing visitor interviews, I asked all three site managers if there was any information they would like to gather from visitors and incorporated site-specific questions into my IRB application and visitor interviews. I presented these data, along with the data I collected at all three sites, in formal site reports that I shared with site staff in spring 2023. These reciprocal practices allowed me to contribute in meaningful ways to work happening at my research sites, even as staff at the sites themselves were contributing to my own research.

A Note on Positionality

I follow feminist geographers and scholars who assert that one's own positionality inevitably impacts and shapes one's research (Longhurst et al., 2008; Militz et al., 2019; Rose, 1993). I am a queer, white, cisgender woman who was born and raised in the US South by highly educated parents from the mid-Atlantic. My position as a member of a university during this dissertation project facilitated smooth introductions to site leadership throughout the course of my work, and my status as a student provided a clear and understandable reason for me to be asking questions of members of the public, enabling invaluable connections. My whiteness precludes me from a full understanding of the experiences of people who were enslaved by white families on the plantations which I study, as well as from an embodied understanding of racialized oppression and the continuing trauma inflicted by chattel slavery. However, I firmly believe that my whiteness does *not* preclude me from connection to these histories. As a white woman, I benefit in countless ways from the systems and institutions of white supremacy that continue to harm communities of color, and I engage in a lifelong process of dismantling my

own internalized white supremacy, as well as the white supremacist systems of our world. This project works in emphatic and humble symphony with the Movement for Black Lives, the 1619 Project, and all the educators, scholars, and activists who are working to ensure that formerly-buried histories are buried no longer.

Outline of Chapters

My research coalesces around three central themes: the conjoinment of spaces of recreation and spaces of public history; the embodied and emotional experiences of being in conjoined spaces of recreation and public history; and the opportunities and challenges that arise from incorporation of landscape and recreation with excavative history work. I argue that the conjoinment of recreation and excavative history work generates tensions that are historically produced, and create tensions for visitors, but that these tensions are not unsolvable for managers and, in fact, may attract visitors to engage in transformative educational work, if utilized intentionally and effectively by site staff.

In Chapter 2, I trace the historical conditions for conjoinment between recreation and historic interpretation at public plantation sites today, and the racialization of spaces that discursively enabled this conjoinment at Somerset Place. Using archival sources, I situate Somerset Place itself, as well as the broader historic sites boom of the 1950s and 60s, in the historical context of the Civil Rights Movement, illuminating hidden connections between the creation of historic designation criteria and white pushback against a movement for racial justice that was causing immense social upheaval.

In Chapter 3, I draw on interviews with visitors at Somerset Place, Vance Birthplace, and Stagville to examine how the impacts of conjoinment between recreation and historic interpretation are felt by visitors today. Using a novel application of emotion mapping, I examine

how visitors experience all three sites in immersive, intimate, and embodied ways. Supported by feminist geographies of the everyday and the emotional, as well as scholarship in counter-cartographies and participatory emotion mapping, I craft a new kind of cartography for these public historic sites that explicitly and visually connects landscape and embodiment.

In Chapter 4, I ask: what can conjoinment between spaces of recreation and public history teach us about the possibilities of transformative experiences in place that have the potential to create the conditions for a more just world? Using interviews with site staff and visitors, I examine the place of plantation museums in anti-racist justice work and propose a spacious framework of reparative leisure that connects leisure, landscape, and excavative histories.

Chapter 5 provides summaries of the research findings as they relate to the overarching objectives of this dissertation. I emphasize the transformative potential of conjoinments between outdoor leisure and excavative history work for both site staff and site visitors, and argue that site staff must be intentional about incorporating landscape and leisure into interpretive experiences. I conclude with the hope that scholars of memory and heritage continue to examine landscape-level conjoinments between recreation and excavative history at plantation museums, allowing for a more cohesive picture of visitor experiences and staff challenges as plantation museums continue to excavate previously-buried histories and work toward a more racially-just future.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL CONDITIONS OF CONJOINMENT AND RACIALIZED HIERARCHIES OF SPACE AT SOMERSET PLACE

Introduction

Historic sites are not untouched relics of a pristine and preserved past. Nor are they set completely apart from the modern world in which we live. Rather, historic sites are living spaces that are produced and reproduced through processes embedded in time and place (Alderman & Inwood, 2013; Biggs, 2022; Fuentes, 2017; Massey, 1994). With this in mind, this chapter investigates the historical conditions under which a particular kind of conjoinment between historic preservation and leisure recreation was constructed. While this process spills out beyond the twentieth-century US South, this chapter attends specifically to the US South in the decades between 1940 and 1970, with particular focus on the years between 1950 and 1965, to demonstrate how new modes of tourism, leisure recreation, and historic preservation were defined in uneasy proximity to one another. Culturally, this was a deeply unequal time, divided along lines of race and gender that continue to influence our present. Using Somerset Place as a case study, I examine this contingent and highly stratified historical moment, breaking open naturalized connections to show the uneasy and unequal proximities that led to present-day conjoinments.

Somerset Place is a key site at which to examine uneasy proximities between excavative history work, beautiful landscapes, and outdoor recreation. Today, the state historic site sits within Pettigrew State Park: 8 acres of historic preservation in the middle of nearly 6,000 acres of hiking, camping, and boating on Lake Phelps (Figure 8). A hiking path cuts directly through

Somerset Place, following the old Collins carriage trail. The Pettigrew campground and picnic shelter are a short walk from the historic site. Historic and recreational spaces intersect and overlap. Somerset Place today is a living example of the conjoinment between spaces of historic preservation, excavative history, and recreation. However, the processes through which it came to be this way between 1930-1970 provide a window onto an even larger story of construction and conjoinment, illuminating encounters and collisions between a segregated domestic tourism boom, the Civil Rights Movement, and an expanding historic preservation industry that was on the cusp of becoming professionalized.

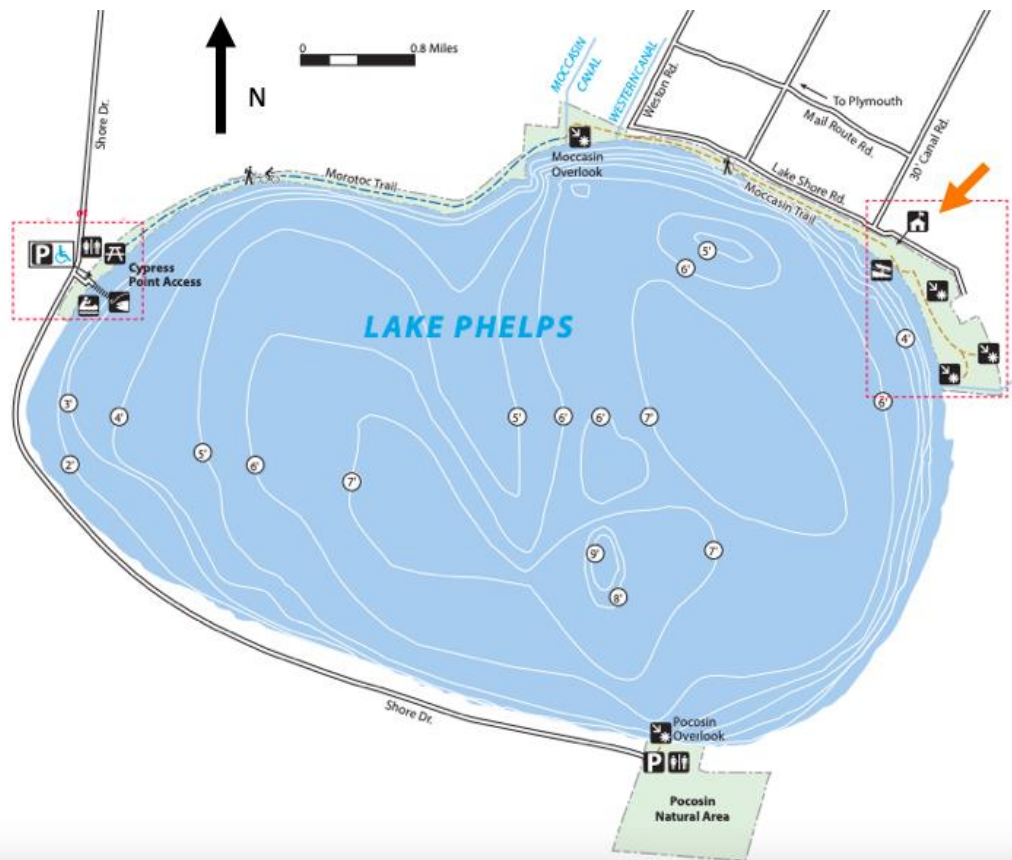


Figure 8: Map of Pettigrew State Park surrounding Lake Phelps. Somerset Place is marked with an orange arrow. Park map retrieved from <https://www.ncparks.gov/media/636/open>

My aims in this chapter are twofold. First, I trace the historic conjoinment of recreation and preservation at Somerset Place to the 1950s and '60s when state- and national-level entities differentiated it from the surrounding institution of Pettigrew State Park, even as those same entities worked to make it an accessible tourist attraction by keeping it connected to the recreational space of the state park. Second, I examine the ways in which the historic preservation spaces of Somerset Place were constructed in relationship to leisure tourism and recreation. An examination of archival documents from multiple departments of the North Carolina state government reveals a distinct hierarchy of uses, with historic preservation at the top and leisure recreation below it, that nonetheless must come together in space in order to create a tourist-accessible and economically-viable historic site. I trace how this uneasy conjoinment is made possible through the devaluation of certain spaces coded as Black within Somerset Place, specifically the slave cabins. In doing so, I suggest a broader framework for examining the creation of historic sites across the US and offer important historical grounding for present conjoinments of recreation and preservation in place.

History or Recreation? The Perplexing Problem of Somerset Place

State Park Beginnings

Somerset Place was not always embedded as a historic site within Pettigrew State Park. In its beginnings as a state-owned property dating to 1939, it was *part* of Pettigrew State Park. Somerset Place as it exists today began in the early twentieth century as a project by eastern North Carolina politicians, government workers, and tourism boosters aiming to shore up a flagging agricultural economy with tourist dollars by creating a tourist destination in the image of an imagined antebellum past (Harrison, 2012). Long before its naming as a state property in the years following the Civil War, however, the former plantation home of the Collins family

and the people they enslaved was by turns a sharecropping farm, a private hunting and fishing resort, and home to a New Deal agricultural program called Scuppernong Farms, which was run by the Farm Service Agency as a rent-to-own model for majority white farmers (Knight, 2022).

The state of North Carolina purchased the land and remaining buildings in 1939 as historical and natural tourism began to rise in popularity, but its romantic association with the “Old South” began far earlier. Local white people regularly picnicked and held events at the old Collins mansion, explicitly drawing on an imagined past of grace and luxury which they connected to their own lives (Harrison, 2012; Knight, 2022). Tourism boosters and politicians capitalized on this vision of the former plantation when they began to construct the site as an homage to a beautiful, and completely fabricated, antebellum history (Harrison, 2012). Somerset’s beginnings privileged white owning narratives while occluding mentions of enslavement. Pettigrew State Park’s founding as a state-protected area, incorporating both the preservation of the historic plantation structures and the ecosystems that surrounded them, explicitly connected this whitewashed history with white pleasure in an imagined past.

These early aims to create a pleasing space of simultaneous leisure and historic preservation at the site of the former plantation are made clear in archival documents dating back to the time 1939. A press release from 1939 explicitly connects enjoyable time in nature and access to an illusory Old South through the soon-to-be-established park. An unattributed document simply labeled “press release,” the document nonetheless creates a strong foundation for a site that combines natural beauty and the “luxurious life” of the “great plantations,” which was “stilled forever by the Civil War.” “The great old trees, which have seen the rise and decline of the great plantations, form an attractive setting for the plantation houses,” the press release reads, discursively linking the site’s landscape with a whitewashed version of the site’s history

and packaging it neatly for tourist pleasure. However, this illustrative document also foreshadows much of the tension between recreation and historic preservation at Somerset Place that was to come. The press release says clearly that the primary purpose of the state park will be to “preserve and display portions of the great plantation life of ante-bellum days [sic];” that the development of some recreational facilities, including picnic areas, campsites, and a swimming area, will be constructed pending funding; and that “all such recreational facilities must...be so designed and so built as not to encroach on or detract from the historical features” (*Pettigrew State Park*, 1939). Here, we see a perceived opposition between the “recreational facilities” and the “historical features.” Importantly, the historical features are presented as endangered by the recreational facilities, in need of protection through intentional design and building.

However, a symbiotic relationship between historic preservation and outdoor recreation is very apparent in the first management plan for Pettigrew State Park. Again archived without listing an author, the management plan lists both “Historical” and “Recreational” features to be preserved (*Proposed Treatment Pettigrew State Park*, 1938). The main Collins house, an original structure from the late 1820s, is listed under both “Historical” and “Recreation,” reflecting plans to make the Collins House a guest lodge where visitors could stay during their recreational visits to Pettigrew State Park (Harrison, 2012; *Proposed Treatment Pettigrew State Park*, 1938). Guest lodge plans had to be scrapped a few years later in 1949, when the North Carolina General Assembly passed a law prohibiting the operation of inns at state parks (Harrison, 2012). Still, it is clear from this management plan that preserving the old Collins buildings was a central reason for the site’s designation as a state park, along with the recreational possibilities of the lake and the surrounding forests. Early site managers did not view the two uses of space as incompatible, but rather as two vital aspects of a state park site.

The 1939 press release and 1938 management plan set the tone for many conversations that would circulate around Pettigrew State Park, and the historic buildings within it, over the next several decades. Visiting a historic site is represented as a purely enjoyable leisure activity, during which visitors were encouraged to use historic structures to essentially role-play as plantation owners (Harrison, 2012). “Magnificent signs of better days,” gushes one article by a staff writer for the *Durham Sun* in July 1959 when referring to the Collins house and outbuildings set among bald cypress trees on the edge of the lake (Williams, 1959). “Much lore is attached to this place and if you shut your eyes, you could almost imagine yourself being a part of this history,” reads an op-ed in the *Edenton Chowan Herald* (1966). For many tourists and locals, Somerset Place was a perfect combination of historical setting and outdoor leisure. “A glimpse into the ‘gracious living’ of the early days of this country’s history” (“Pettigrew Park Ready for Influx of Visitors on July Fourth,” 1955), in the estimation of another local interest piece, combined favorably with a beautiful and enjoyable day on the lake.

These early overlaps between historic and natural preservation were due in large part to the fact that, in 1939, North Carolina did not have a comprehensive historic sites program. A historical commission had been formed in 1903, but their primary purpose was collecting and preserving archival documents from around the state. In the following decades, they also became responsible for highway markers (Peele et al., 1904). Still, the Department of Conservation & Development, and the Division of State Parks nested within it, was the primary management unit for pieces of *land* designated as historic. The first superintendent of the Division of State Parks, Thomas W. Morse, wrote in 1954 that preserving and interpreting physical aspects of a state’s history was “one of the very important functions of a State park system” (Morse, 1954, p. 62).

However, an undercurrent of anxiety at the conjoinment between historic preservation and recreational leisure was still present, and would continue to bubble up in park documents over the following decades. Recall the 1939 press release and its mandate that “all...recreational facilities must...be so designed and so built as not to encroach on or detract from the historical features” (*Pettigrew State Park*, 1939). A little over a decade later, a 1950 report by an independent researcher that included suggestions on how to develop Pettigrew as a public space urged the state to buy a sizeable area of the fields around the Collins house in order to “preserve sufficient space around the park. If not,” the author warned, “these fields within eyesight of the house will soon be let off to touts and concessionaires who would try to fleece the tourists. This would be a shame,” he concluded, “and would completely spoil the efforts to preserve the plantation” (Crane, 1950). Similarly, in a 1954 report, historian William S. Tarlton advised that picnic tables should be placed adjacent, but not directly next to, the old Collins buildings at Pettigrew. Historical and recreational areas would thus be fairly close together, he concluded, and so save on maintenance and managing, but “the concentration would not seem to mix the historical and the recreational aspects to an objectionable degree” (Tarlton, 1954). Tarlton was a history instructor with training from Duke and Wake Forest Universities (Harrison, 2012). He would go on to become the first superintendent of the North Carolina Historic Sites Program from 1955 to 1969, and was awarded the Cannon Cup, North Carolina’s highest honor in historic preservation, in 1959 (“W Samuel Tarlton,” 2009). Tarlton’s worry that the historical and the recreational might be mixed to an objectionable degree was informed by significant formal training and informed, in turn, the historic sites program through his leadership of the division.

The anxiety represented here seems to crystallize around recreational or touristic features somehow detracting – either visually or thematically – from the project of historic preservation.

As evidenced by the press release and reports, park management acknowledged the need to support the tourists that they hope would visit Pettigrew State Park and the Somerset buildings, whether through concessions or picnic tables. However, there is also a strong sense that action must be taken to avoid “spoiling” the historic area with the necessary materials by purchasing specific fields for viewshed protection or by placing the picnic tables so that they do not mix with the historic buildings to an “objectionable” degree. Interestingly, the worry that tourist facilities might dilute historical space echoes the worry of present-day scholars who warn that catering to tourists will dilute excavative history narratives (P. L. Carter, 2016; Potter et al., 2020). An important difference, however, is the ultimate goal: excavative history that unearths histories of enslavement, versus a pristine historic space solely for white pleasure and comfort.

The suggestion that recreational facilities have the potential to contaminate an otherwise pristine historic space foreshadows the central question that would soon appear at the heart of conversations circulating around the site: was Pettigrew State Park, with its old buildings, miles of lakefront property, and picnic tables, more historic? Or more recreational?

Separating History and Recreation: The 1955 Reorganization of Government

For decades, the Division of State Parks within the North Carolina Department of Conservation & Development had been responsible for the state’s historic sites. State Parks personnel coordinated with the Department of Archives & History to ensure appropriate management of historic buildings, and there were several other state-sponsored commissions that had been set up in the years between 1920 and 1950 to manage small memorials not connected with a state park, including the Vance Birthplace Commission (Esser, 1954). Nevertheless, the Division of State Parks functioned as the de facto management home of nearly every area in the

state that had been designated as historically valuable, as well as of multiple state parks that were managed for nature preservation, ecological education, and outdoor recreation (Esser, 1954).

Given that State Parks managed areas of both natural and historic value, the governmental structure of historic site management meant that, by and large, state sites of natural and cultural resource preservation were – at least legislatively – interchangeable. However, the state also spread responsibility for historic site management over no less than thirteen different departmental entities, including State Parks, several divisions within Archives & History, and the aforementioned commissions (Esser, 1954). This abundance of state bodies involved in historic site designation and management was one of the main reasons for a 1955 reorganization of state government in which cultural resources were one of several areas to come under legislative scrutiny and bureaucratic reform. A report authored by George Esser, assistant director of the non-partisan Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, warned that such a large number of entities would breed not only confusion but conflict when it came to defining future historic sites. The report suggested centralizing all historic site preservation and designation responsibilities under a single agency and put forward two possibilities: the existing Division of State Parks; or a new division to be created under the Department of Archives & History that would be solely responsible for historic sites (Esser, 1954).

The question about bureaucratic homes begs a larger question that strikes at the core of this dissertation: was the function of sites like Somerset Place concerned more with historic preservation or recreation? Ironically, the question only arises because of the state's efforts to streamline historic preservation work in 1955. Up until this point, as described above, the two functions had been largely synonymous with each other. However, the 1954 report lays out pros and cons of the two possible ways forward. Management by a historical agency like Archives &

History, the report says, would allow new historic sites to be selected in relation to a historic program. Alternatively, continued management by the Division of State Parks under the Department of Conservation & Development would allow acquisition and development of all public land areas – of both historical and natural importance – to be vested in one place (Esser, 1954). Ultimately, the state chose the first option, creating the Division of Historic Sites under the Department of Archives & History in 1955 and formally separating the project of historic preservation from the project of natural resource preservation and outdoor recreation (An Act to Rewrite and Revise, 1955). The two projects had gone from being synonymous to being run by completely separate departments: the Department of Conservation and Development, and the Department of Archives & History.

Interestingly, Somerset Place was one of two historic areas *not* transferred to Archives & History at this time. Along with Fort Macon – a pre-Civil War fort located in Fort Macon State Park – Pettigrew State Park as a whole was determined to be more recreational than historical (Harrison, 2012). Although I have not been able to locate any document that lays out the reasons for this decision, other contemporaneous sources indicate that the decision was not clear-cut. An article in the *Raleigh News & Observer* from November 1955 notes the continued tension, reporting that the Department of Conservation & Development “is still a little perplexed” over how to handle Pettigrew State Park and Fort Macon, with their historic structures embedded within natural and recreational areas. “The problem,” the article further explains, “is whether to separate the sites from the parks to try to work out a joint agreement for managing them” (“Repairs Slated for Ft. Macon,” 1955). It would take another 10 years of pressure from Archives & History, as well as involvement from an eastern North Carolina political representative, before Somerset Place was turned over to Archives & History as a state historic site (as of early 2023,

Fort Macon is still a state park). In 1965, the State Parks Division agreed to split Somerset Place from the rest of Pettigrew State Park (Tarlton, 1965b). The division was made explicitly along the lines of historic versus recreational function, with the land on the north shore of Lake Phelps (present-day Somerset Place) being “principally of historic interest,” while the 500 acres of Pettigrew on the south shore of Lake Phelps “are primarily of scenic and recreational interest” (1965).

It is important to remember that the apparent tension at Pettigrew State Park between historic preservation and outdoor recreation creates a false dichotomy. Lake, forest, canals, and formerly agricultural fields were deemed more recreational than historic, and so fell outside of the designated historic area, which included only the remaining buildings of the Collins complex. Yet, as historian Alicia Harrison (2012) reminds us, these “purportedly nonhistorical landscapes at Pettigrew State Park were in fact of immense significance to the people who used Somerset Place over the years” (p. 120). The swamps used by enslaved people seeking their freedom; the forests that provided enslaved people with much-needed breaks from white surveillance; and the canals dug by enslaved people: all are part of the plantation’s history (Harrison, 2012). In creating this dichotomy, public historians and government workers of 1965 drew a clear line between spaces of history and spaces of recreation that effectively buried a much broader history rooted in the larger landscape. Yet, as Harrison reminds us: “Whatever categories developers and bureaucrats may have invented to divide up land at the site, the recreational and historical areas in fact continued to overlap because each was inherent in the other” (p. 121).

As of 1965, Somerset Place was now a historic site carved out of the apparently nonhistorical recreational space of Pettigrew State Park. However, Rep. Carl Bailey – a key advocate for the 1965 transfer – had to clear something up for himself before fully committing to

this project. Addressed to Rep. Bailey by the director of the Department of Archives & History, Yale-educated Dr. Christopher Crittenden, a memo dated April 6, 1965 (one month before Somerset's transfer) assures Bailey that picnicking *would* still be allowed at Somerset Place if the site was turned over to the Department of Archives & History (Crittenden, 1965b). The outline of Crittenden's answer reveals Bailey's question, itself lost to the archive but still clear: before putting his support behind something that he saw as good for the nascent tourism business in eastern North Carolina (Harrison, 2012), Bailey needed to assure himself that, were Somerset Place officially to become a historic site, necessary tourist and recreational infrastructure would still be present there.

The legislator's question – would picnicking still be allowed at Somerset Place if it were managed by the Department of Archives & History instead of the Department of Conservation & Development? – reveals a lingering uncertainty as to where, exactly, the lines between historic preservation and outdoor recreation were being drawn. Crittenden tells Bailey that picnicking *will* still be allowed at Somerset Place; however, the next year, he writes in a letter to the director of the Department of Conservation & Development that Somerset Place did *not* plan to include any recreational facilities in their budget appropriations request (Crittenden, 1966). Since these recreational facilities – presumably the boathouse, swimming dock, and public campground at Pettigrew State Park – are not required to restore or to operate the historic site, Crittenden suggests a joint agreement for the property's management. Even as the two sites were being explicitly divided and differentiated – historic preservation at Somerset Place, outdoor recreation at Pettigrew State Park – they were also becoming conjoined in new ways in the interest of recreational tourist infrastructure.

Oddly, based on continued mentions in archival documents, recreation does not disappear from historic preservation in North Carolina altogether, even after the 1955 reorganization. In a 1965 report on North Carolina's state recreation program – prepared to apply for Federal recreation grant money – Historic Sites Superintendent William Tarlton wrote that a “well-developed Historic Sites Program is an important ingredient of the overall recreational development in North Carolina” (Tarlton, 1965a). He finished by saying that historic sites and museums should be part of the long-term recreation plan in North Carolina, “in proper relationship to the whole.” This last phrase appears like a haunting caveat: what *is* this proper relationship between historic preservation and recreation? How to ensure that your historic sites program is, in fact, in proper relationship to the whole of a state-wide recreation and tourism infrastructure that is both deeply connected to, but intentionally separate from, those historic sites?

The question of where to place historic sites within a state government – and, consequently, where Somerset Place would fit in the resulting governance structure – may at first appear specific to North Carolina. However, the themes at play in this one state – the tension between history and recreation; the continual appearance and immediate devaluation of recreational facilities – are themselves taking place in a much broader socio-political context. I turn now to that historic context in order to locate Somerset Place's development in time and to draw out connections between national culture and historic site designation more broadly.

Historic Preservation in the Post-War US

Tourism and the Gendered Roots of Preservation Criteria

The 1940s and '50s were decades of unprecedented movement in the United States. World War II was over and GIs were returning to the US to buy homes, start families, and –

most importantly for this dissertation – go on vacation in their new family cars (Bay, 2021). The automobile revolution, which had begun in the 1920s with the mass production of the Model T Ford, coupled with the postwar economic boom, allowed more and more middle- and lower-class families to own, or at least access, cars, which meant more and more people were on the road (Bay, 2021). Furthermore, the interstate highway system meant that those roads were better quality than ever before, which made seeing and experiencing the American landscape possible for many people in a whole new way (Kaszynski, 2000).

Increased car ownership and the growing highway system had a profound impact on domestic tourism. Historian Margaret Shaffer, in her book *See American First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*, traces how American tourism shifted with each form of mass transportation (Shaffer, 2001). Rail travel in the late nineteenth century, for example, created a tourism landscape oriented around standardized, train-accessible sightseeing, mostly on the East Coast and performed in large groups of fellow train travelers. By contrast, traveling in one's own car was far more flexible, at least for white families. No longer bound by rail lines and surrounded by large crowds, white motorists could escape the “restraints of urban industrial society” and travel back in time, vicariously reenacting a “sanitized pioneer past, and seeing America firsthand” (Shaffer, 2001, p. 153). Popular literature and tourism pamphlets connected the newly-accessible American landscape with an idealized white American past, mapping a version of American history that revolved around a series of conquests and European-American victories onto the landscape and holding both up as vital for white Americans to see and experience for themselves (Shaffer, 2001). Rapidly-growing numbers of motels and roadside restaurants (Kaszynski, 2000) ensured that white Americans could experience this American landscape of history and recreation in comfort.

Ironically, the same highways that were bringing more and more visitors to growing numbers of historic sites were often cited by preservationists as enemies of historic America, and as catalyst for an urgent historic preservation project before all the old buildings were torn down (Rains & Henderson, 1999). As the national network of roads began to take shape – and with it, car-based family vacations – so, too, did a movement that had been growing in the U.S. for the last fifty years or so but was quickly becoming far more organized, standardized, and professionalized: historic preservation. Local groups of people – particularly white women – had been engaged in formal collective preservation work since at least the late 19th century, often revolving around the homes of former presidents and drawing on a language of domesticity (caring for the nation’s homes) and childcare (protecting the past for the children’s future) to locate historic preservation projects within domestic, feminized arenas (Cox, 2019; Lea, 2003). Williamsburg, opened in 1934 by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., was a huge step towards what we now recognize as historic site development for tourism (Lea, 2003). However, as the automobile vacation became more and more accessible to more and more people, heritage preservation took on a new form that both responded to and pushed against the tourism boom: government-owned public historic sites.

The National Park Service (NPS) played a central role in the production of a cohesive national story grounded in place and managed by government entities. Even more importantly, they did so in specific places, in national parks, which had grown in number since the early days of the NPS and which were actively and discursively produced as pristine remnants of a natural wilderness: traces of the American past, extant in the American present, available for American tourist experiences (Cronon, 1996; Deloria, 1998; Louter, 2006). These productions were blatant fabrications, burying bloody histories of colonial genocide and ongoing dispossession of Native

people under a place-based mythology of naturalized westward white pioneer expansion and conveniently-disappeared Indians (Cronon, 1996; Deloria, 1998; Spence, 2000). Importantly for my project, national parks and their related tourist experiences explicitly blended recreational and historical uses of space. “Playing Indian” as described and analyzed by historian Philip J. Deloria (1998) is a useful phrase here: a complex articulation of European-American belonging performed through personal recreation in a constructed, mythic, Native American past. Here, we see outdoor recreation and leisure tourism being produced alongside a very specific kind of historic preservation focused on the myth of white pioneering settlers and a nation whose glorious past was both cause for celebration, and a space of personal and civic development.

Enabled, if not still threatened, by the development of highways and the growth of domestic tourism, the number of historic sites grew exponentially in the mid-twentieth century (Cox, 2012). For public historians and those who supported them in North Carolina, the boom was both a blessing and a curse. Dr. Christopher Crittenden, director of the state’s Department of Archives & History for thirty-three years, has been credited with turning the Archives & History program into a national model (Jones, 1996). Crittenden warned in 1965 that the number of historic sites in North Carolina was growing “like a hothouse plant, without proper thought, planning, or control” (Crittenden, 1965a). Even as he closed the deal on Somerset Place’s transfer from State Parks to Archives & History, Crittenden advocated a moratorium on historic site designation within the state to allow the Historic Sites Program to catch up on a backlog of research and – most importantly, in his view – to nail down criteria for what actually constituted a historic site. The conversations about where Somerset Place belonged within the government infrastructure – historic site or recreational? Archives & History or Conservation & Development? – are located within a larger discourse of uncertainty about what “historic”

actually meant to the government. “How old is a historic site?” Crittenden asked in the 1965 request for a moratorium. “How old does a site have to be to become historic?” (Crittenden, 1965a)

Crittenden’s question about the proper age of a historic site raises a central question – what *should* be the criteria for historic site designation? – that had vexed practitioners in North Carolina long before he posed it in 1965. In fact, archival documents allow us to trace this anxiety through time in the form of groups of people convened to determine what historic site criteria should be. In 1953, the General Assembly established a Historic Sites Commission, the purpose of which would be to determine criteria for granting state aid for the acquisition and ownership of historic and archeological sites of state-wide historical significance (Giles, 1955). When the North Carolina Historic Sites Program was created in 1955, one of the stated purposes of that group was to determine criteria as well, again with an emphasis on state aid and funding (An Act to Rewrite and Revise, 1955). The push to assign the role of historic site identification and acquisition to a single entity, described above, was deeply informed by larger contexts of state funding, which was in turn interwoven with a need to standardize historic site criteria.

Three years later after the 1955 reorganization, the Director of Archives & History created the North Carolina Advisory Committee on Historic Sites. The thirteen-member group only met once, and only four members attended. However, they adopted criteria for the selection of state-owned historic sites, as well as criteria for state aid to local projects. In the following years, however, the General Assembly consistently appropriated funds for sites that had not been approved by the Advisory Committee (Hayman, 1962). Dr. Crittenden’s request for a moratorium references this tendency when he notes that General Assembly members had been using historic site appropriations to pad checks to their own districts without regard for the

opinions of professional historians. “Had that sort of thing continued indefinitely,” he warned, “there is no telling where we would have ended up, for every little crossroads community might have come to be given funds for its own ‘historic site’” (Crittenden, 1965a).

In Crittenden’s stated opinions, we can see the outline of a hierarchy being established between legitimate historic sites and illegitimate ones. Nested within Crittenden’s concern about General Assembly members receiving money for historic sites outside of the structure of criteria and approval set up by the Department of Archives & History is a concern about protecting what he viewed as the integrity of existing historic sites, as well as the future historic sites to be properly designated by the Department. Legitimacy of site selection, in this view, is directly connected to research done by the Department of Archives & History, setting up this particular department within the state government as arbiter of historic value within North Carolina. With the call for a moratorium to establish criteria, Crittenden is aiming for a standardization of historic designation that translates directly to a growing sense of professionalism of historic preservation as a field.

Not the only entity thinking about historic site criteria at this time, the North Carolina Department of Archives & History was acting in parallel with the federal government. In 1966, the US Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act and established a set of criteria for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The national-scale historic site program was and remains hugely influential in mobilizing resources for historic preservation (Sprinkle, 2014). NPS historian James H. Sprinkle, Jr. (2014), notes that the biggest question for the Park Service between 1935 and 1965 was how many historic sites there were in total, reflecting an understanding of historic value as a finite resource that existed only in limited places in the country. The standardization of criteria, complete with a formal application process,

was the culmination of both thirty-seven years of calls for a complete survey of historic places throughout the nation, and a growing sense among government historic preservationists that a formalized system was needed to ensure the quality and legitimacy of historic sites going forward.

Importantly, the legitimacy assigned to the NPS and the National Register is constructed *against* the more dispersed and locally-driven historic preservation movement happening outside of government channels. These localized programs are painted in contemporaneous documents by professional preservationists as overly sentimental, unlike the objective and fact-based preservation of the NPS, which is touted as the final arbiter of historic value (Sprinkle, 2014). The language is explicitly gendered. While women had been engaged in historic preservation work for decades, utilizing their societal role as homemakers to effectively position themselves as the caretakers of the nation's old homes (Cox, 2019; Lea, 2003), the male-dominated NPS was establishing itself as the scientific, rigorous, and objective professional standard (Sprinkle, 2014). The creation of criteria for inclusion on the NRHP was a key moment of professionalization of historic preservation that further marginalized women's groups.

The gendered language of scientific legitimacy is present in North Carolina's state-run historic preservation efforts as well. The same 1950 report that recommended the state buy the land around the old Collins house so that it would not be overrun by tourist concessions, also recommended that Pettigrew State Park support the creation of a "Collins-Pettigrew Society to sponsor the purchase of suitable house furnishings, but done under supervision of the state and not turned over to them willy-nilly." He clarifies who the "them" in question are in his next sentence: "More harm can be done to a restoration by the goodwill of a bevy of interested ladies than can be remedied in a generation of researchers!" (Crane, 1950). The binary of ladies and

researchers makes a hierarchy clear in both state and Federal historic preservation, explicitly empowering a masculine profession over a feminized hobby.

Both in North Carolina and the US more broadly, efforts to define and solidify criteria for historic site designation and funding display sharply gendered assumptions and stereotypes. Spurred on by the rapid increase in historic sites in tandem with the domestic tourism boom, these efforts to define criteria contributed to a professionalization of the historic preservation field. Alongside these efforts, historic preservation began to be constructed as its own project, separate from nature conservation or outdoor recreation. At Somerset Place, we can see the impact as the historic site was carved out of the state park. Although still intimately connected with the tourism boom and with dominant discourses of leisure and recreation, historic sites were slowly but surely being placed in their own arena, creating a hierarchy of spaces that required novel forms of management.

Pushes for historic site criteria and standardized systems of designation occurred hand in hand with the booming historic tourism industry in the 1950s and '60s. However, another huge social movement was happening at the same time, and would certainly have been on the minds of the public historians and government workers making these decisions: the Civil Rights Movement.

Racialized Mobility, Racialized Preservation

Pushes for standardized criteria by the NPS and related agencies, including those in North Carolina, are very recognizable as gendered projects. I suggest, however, that they are also racialized projects. Pushes for standardization react to the growing potency of a movement by Black Americans and their allies whose purpose, among others, was to push white Americans to reckon with a past of slavery and racialized oppression that had laid the conditions for Jim Crow

and the segregation against which the Movement was fighting. Mr. Morse, Superintendent of State Parks, wrote in 1954: “Today, faced with bombardment from all sorts of ideologies, it is more important than ever to keep clearly in mind the things our forefathers stood for” (Morse, 1954). He is referring here to the preservation and interpretation of historical structures, emphasizing that it is “always important to thus keep the historical heritage before us because ‘the past is prologue’” (p. 62). The quote gains new depth when placed in the socio-political context of 1954: the year when *Brown v. Board of Education* (nominally) ended segregation in public schools and huge numbers of white Southerners, led and sustained by white women, organized “massive resistance” against federally-ordered integration (Brückman, 2021; McRae, 2018; Webb, 2005). Historic sites, then, were being positioned as a white bastion against the Black freedom struggle.

Numerous scholars have shown that the mobility revolution, as well as the tourism infrastructure that grew out of it, was deeply segregated. In her seminal book, *Traveling Black: A Story of Race and Resistance*, historian Mia Bay (2021) notes that car ownership was the latest in a long line of transformations in African American relationships to mobility. However, driving while Black was not without its dangers (a fact which remains true today). While car access allowed many Black people to avoid segregated trains cars, white people objected, often violently, to Black presence on roads (Alderman et al., 2022; Bay, 2021). Similarly, for Black vacationers in the 1950s and '60s, domestic car tourism wasn't as simple as it was for their white counterparts. The travel and tourism infrastructure being constructed and expanded was undeniably, often explicitly, white (Bay, 2021). Anthropologist Antoinette Jackson notes that segregation policies during the Jim Crow era were unequivocally concerned with spaces of leisure and mobility, including swimming pools and bus stop bathrooms. Formally or informally,

white-only roadside bathrooms, gas stations, and hotels further limited the options for Black travelers (Bay, 2021). Access to leisure and tourism was denied to Black travelers through infrastructures of “active exclusion” (Jackson, 2020) that had their roots in antebellum practices that denied movement to enslaved Black people (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021; P. L. Carter, 2008; Dillette, 2021; Jackson, 2020). Furthermore, interstate highways in the South were often being built by Black convict labor and regularly cut through Black neighborhoods, communities, and business centers, obliterating many and cutting many others off from the rest of the city (Bay, 2021).

Of course, Black people did not simply stay put. The Green Book was one of several travel guides published by and for Black people between the 1930s and ‘60s that catalogued businesses, lodging, and rest stops that were safe and available for Black travelers, compiling a textual record of a Black travel counter-geography (Alderman et al., 2021; Bay, 2021). Furthermore, Black people themselves created and enjoyed their own leisure spaces, outside of the exclusion that defined mainstream tourism (Jackson, 2020). Black beaches and other infrastructures of Black leisure were radical spaces of claiming the human right to leisure and rest on their own terms. However, the mainstream tourism infrastructure growing across the US was largely segregated, created by and for white people at the expense of Black and other people of color (Benjamin & Dillette, 2021; P. L. Carter, 2008; Dillette, 2021; Jackson, 2020). As destinations that were emerging in growing numbers alongside and because of expanding highways and car vacation opportunities, historic sites acted within and upon this historical and social context of segregated leisure travel.

The Civil Rights Movement is often absent from contemporaneous (and even many modern) scholarly and official accounts of the period of historic site growth and booming

heritage investment in the 1950s and 60s. However, the growing power of the Freedom Struggle would not have been absent from the minds of the public historians and politicians who were concerned with public historic preservation in the US or in North Carolina specifically. Indeed, North Carolina was a key state within the movement for Black equality. The sit-ins, which spurred the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and countless other nonviolent protests across the South, began in Greensboro, North Carolina, with four college students from the all-Black North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College in 1960 (Morgan & Davis, 2012). Freedom Rides crisscrossed the state, beginning with the Journey of Reconciliation in 1947, in which the greatest amount of violence conducted against the interracial participants occurred in Chapel Hill and Durham (Bay, 2021).

The Civil Rights Movement was not a purely Southern experience. Marches and lawsuits, direct action and boycotts, were happening in the northeastern and the western US as well, with key victories for school desegregation occurring in Boston, and powerful protests for racial equality occurring in Los Angeles, among many other centers of movement organizing (Bloom, 2019; Theoharis, 2018). The decades of the 1950s and '60s were a time of massive upheaval, as resistance to long-standing white domination began to gather steam in the public eye. Black activists and their allies urged white Americans to – among other things – reckon with a history of racialized oppression and white supremacy that had shaped the country and continued to impact the lives of Black Americans.

Black activists also had to contend with a commemorative landscape that honored the “Lost Cause” and buried the stories of their enslaved ancestors in the interest of shoring up white power. The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) are an oft-cited powerhouse of white supremacist narrative building, active from their founding in 1894 in projects that constructed

and perpetuated Lost Cause myths and Confederate history (Cox, 2019; Heyse, 2008). More than simply a part of the local, female-led historic preservation movement against which the NPS and other government entities were defining themselves in the mid-twentieth century, the UDC were explicitly white supremacist in their agenda. Through monuments to Confederate dead and “catechisms” that indoctrinated generations of white children into white supremacist worldviews, the UDC worked consistently and strategically to shore up white power during and after Reconstruction. Their memory work functioned in tandem with physically violent strategies that white people also employed during Reconstruction to limit and counteract growing Black political power. The UDC and related organizations had a lasting impact on the social and political landscape of the US; the impacts of their memory work are still felt today, and the UDC is still a functioning organization (Heyse, 2008; “History of the UDC,” n.d.) A Confederate monument erected by the UDC on UNC’s campus, long a controversial flashpoint, was torn down in 2018 by student and community activists who desired a campus where Black and brown students could feel safe (Purifoy, 2019).

If the UDC’s memory work emphasized a white past at the expense of everything else, even historic preservation projects not associated with the UDC were often explicitly racialized. The mainstream historic preservation movement found a potent new public voice in a 1966 report, “With Heritage So Rich,” which set the stage for the next several decades (and counting) of public historic preservation work (Rains & Henderson, 1999). Not a legal document, it nonetheless invoked state legislatures, city councils, and the U.S. Congress in a passionate call for a standardized and comprehensive plan for national historic preservation. It was wildly successful: nearly all of the recommendations put forward by the report were codified later that same year in the National Historic Preservation Act (Rains & Henderson, 1999).

The content of “With Heritage So Rich” reflects the professional historic preservation movement of the time in that nearly all of the sections are penned by men and advocate for a standardized, science-based, and objective system of historic preservation. However, Lady Bird Johnson wrote the forward. As First Lady, Johnson was a noted champion of city beautification and landscape preservation (“Beautification: A Legacy of Lady Bird Johnson,” 2021). Her name at the beginning of this report signals presidential buy-in, as well as an implicit nod to the women-led preservation movements of the past. Her forward invokes a “sturdy American tradition” of beauty combined with usefulness, and entreats the readers of the report to follow in the footsteps of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson who, though politically at odds, prized the combined beauty and usefulness of gardens (Rains & Henderson, 1999). She explicitly connects beauty and her work on beautification with historic preservation, drawing on the theme of visual beauty to craft an image of a beautiful and unproblematic American past endangered by the sprawling urban present.

The report draws on a sense of urgency coupled with a plea for stability. “Every year 20 per cent of the population moves from its place of residence,” the findings section warns. “The result is a feeling of rootlessness combined with a longing for those landmarks of the past which give us a sense of stability and belonging” (p. 193). The physical past of the United States, the report suggests, is in imminent danger of disappearing and has, in fact, already disappeared in many places due to highway building and urban growth. Furthermore, “With Heritage So Rich” explicitly centers white European-Americans, both in the historical lineages white pioneers and immigrants laid out in the text, and in the majority of examples of historic sites, like county courthouses and the homes of famous white men, that had been lost or must be preserved.

I read this report on two levels: one is anxiety around the physical, tangible loss of numerous historical buildings. The other is anxiety around a less-tangible, felt loss of collective identity and white superiority. The Findings section of the report, for example, argues that the preservation movement must “attempt to give a sense of orientation to our society, using structures and objects of the past to establish values of time and place” (Rains & Henderson, 1999, p. 193). This quote echoes Superintendent Morse in the Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Conservation & Development, that the purpose of historic sites is to keep the ideals of “our forefathers” squarely in view, lest they be buried by “bombarding ideologies” (Morse, 1954). Together, the two quotes emphasize an unstated but deep-seated connection between the growth of historic sites across the country during the 1950s and ‘60s and a historic project, formerly led and still endorsed by white women, but more and more nested within government agencies, that prioritized white narratives in direct response to the Civil Rights Movement. The anxiety about instability, confusion, and beautiful spaces endangered by urban sprawl can be read as anxiety at the state of white superiority in the face of Black and other racially-marginalized freedom movements.

The conversations and anxiety around historic site criteria happening in the 1950s and ‘60s must be understood in the context of racialized social change. In 1965, the year before “Heritage So Rich” was published and the same year Dr. Crittenden asked for a moratorium on establishing new sites, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act prohibiting the use of literacy tests as a voting requirement. Earlier that same year, a march from Selma to Montgomery had ended with “Bloody Sunday” when Alabama police brutally attacked 600 Civil Rights protestors. That February, Malcolm X had been assassinated (*Timeline of the American Civil Rights Movement*, 2023). It was a potent, powerful time for Black Americans and their

allies, who had been carefully building a movement for decades that was seeing tangible legislative and popular results (Bloom, 2019; Morgan & Davis, 2012; Theoharis, 2018). In a time of racialized social upheaval, the emphasis on “legitimate” (read: white) history and the celebration of whitewashed historic sites as crucial markers of a stable national identity cannot be ignored.

In sum, historic sites, and particularly historic plantation sites like Somerset Place, were designed to be recreational for white visitors. Rooted in illusory versions of the past that privileged white narratives and buried the experiences of Black and other people of color, they further developed and grew in number alongside a segregated domestic tourism boom that was changing the ways in which white American families were seeing the country and positioning themselves within the country’s past and present. Black travelers, too, were taking to the road in increasing numbers, joining in new forms of mobility pioneered by activists in the Civil Rights movement. However, even as visitation numbers were soaring, historic sites simultaneously rejected the idea of a purely recreational or purely tourist-focused destination, aiming instead to create “pure” historic spaces grounded in scientific legitimacy, and positioned themselves as bastions of white stability against a rapidly-changing nation. What, then, did this mean for tourism at Somerset Place? How to balance the two? How, then, to join the dual projects of professional historic preservation and recreational leisure that were brought together and separated at Somerset Place?

Race & Tourism: Hierarchies of Space at Somerset Place

I turn now to how the hierarchy between historic preservation and recreation was organized and crafted at Somerset Place. In his 1965 moratorium request, Dr. Crittenden laid out the two objectives of a statewide historic sites program as he saw them: first, “to bring alive for

our people their heritage, by visible, tangible, and other sensory means.” Second: the “promotion of economic development, especially the tourist business. This, it is suggested, ought always to be kept as definitely a secondary motive” (Crittenden, 1965a). I turn now to this “secondary motive,” this “tourist business,” which, at Somerset, crystallizes around questions of what is historic and what is not directly along lines of race.

Between 1950 and 1954, three studies were conducted for the Department of Conservation & Development, one every two years. All three were conducted and assembled by researchers contracted by the Department to assess the facilities present at Pettigrew State Park and provide recommendations for further development of the space as a tourist attraction and – for the Collins complex – as a historic site, despite claims made by the Department of Archives & History that the Division of State Parks would not be able to appropriately manage Somerset Place as a historic site (Harrison, 2012). All three reports drew lines between historic and recreational space. In so doing, they devalued recreational and tourist facilities in comparison to the project of historic preservation even as tourism was invoked as necessary for site development. Importantly, all three do so through a very specific part of Somerset Place: the slave cabins.

One recommendation from the 1950 study that warned against concessionaires and beviies of interested ladies was for craftsmen to be hired to live and work at the Collins site. Doing so would demonstrate various crafts from the time period, produce work that could be sold as an additional revenue stream. Another recommendation is for the state park to re-assemble, as closely as possible, whatever livestock would have been raised on the plantation, again as both an authentic view for visitors and as additional revenue possibilities (presumably through the sale of meat) (Crane, 1950). On the question of how these suggestions could be

implemented, the report suggested that the slave cabins could be restored and used as housing for site workers. Slave cabins would serve as housing for staff who would be directly responsible for maintaining what is essentially a working farm, on a former plantation site, in the interest of tourism (Crane, 1950). Although it is not specified what race these staff would be, we can assume from contemporaneous practices that they would have been white. Black people were not seen as acceptable representatives of Somerset's antebellum era (Harrison, 2012).

Two years later, a report from 1952 advised against trying to recreate a working plantation, instead leaning on interpretation to give visitors a sense of what life would have been like in the past (Tarlton, 1952). The NPS-affiliated researcher who completed the report also advised against a plan (attributed to Mr. Morse) to rebuild slave cabins for use as maintenance sheds. The researcher's rationale is that using reconstructed slave cabins as maintenance sheds would "doubtless require the installation of large shed doors to accommodate machinery and vehicles," thereby destroying the visual authenticity of the view from the plantation owners' house. The researcher's advice: put the maintenance building outside the historic area – "perhaps at the recreation center," he clarifies, again separating recreation and history preservation – and use existing historic buildings only for small equipment needed on the lot (Tarlton, 1952).

Finally, a 1954 report by historian William Tarlton – credited with bringing Somerset Place more fully into focus as a possible historic site for the NC Historic Sites Program (Harrison, 2012) – also recommended rebuilding several slave houses to serve the needs of the historic site. The cabins, he wrote, could be made to duplicate the original exterior appearance of the slave cabins but be arranged inside for modern use. One could be a museum space. The others could serve as tourist cabins or public toilets "that could serve both historical and recreational areas" (Tarlton, 1954).

What becomes visible at Somerset Place through these three archived reports from the 1950s is the racialization and devaluation of certain spaces but not others in the service of tourism infrastructure. The devaluation of historic space associated primarily with Black people is certainly not unique to Somerset Place (Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Small, 2013; Vlach, 1993). Additionally, it is ludicrous to claim that any part of a plantation was *not* associated with Black people, as enslaved people were made to work in houses, in kitchens, in fields, and anywhere else the white owning family needed them (Hanna, Carter, et al., 2018). All three proposals recommend reconstructing the exteriors of the slave cabins faithfully, but using their interiors as anything from guest cabins, to maintenance sheds, to public toilets. This, apparently, would not count as mixing the historic and the recreational to an “objectionable degree,” in Tarlton’s words (Tarlton, 1954).

Slave cabins at Somerset played an important role in defining historical and recreational spaces, constructing a hierarchy of spaces in the process. If the tourism that both supports and menaces historic preservation is being positioned as less important than historic preservation, the slave cabins, seen by the mainstream historic preservation movement as less valuable because of their connection to Black history, sit in the nebulous middle. Moreover, the cabins *enable* the distinctions and spatial the boundaries by straddling both. Neither recognized as fully historic or fully recreational, the slave spaces were enrolled into use as tourism infrastructure, reserving the historically white spaces for the more culturally-esteemed purpose of heritage. Racialized as Black, and so somehow less historical than those coded white, the cabins became the perfect solution to an otherwise unsolvable problem: how to craft a historic space for tourists that is not made less historic by those same tourists?

Despite its lower place on the hierarchy, tourism was deeply necessary to the project of Somerset Place. In the 1965 moratorium, Crittenden notes that tourism must always be second, but is nonetheless near the top. It is there, one of the top two priorities, simultaneously undercutting and undergirding goals for historic authenticity. Racialized spaces of Black history, therefore, are drawn into an equation that demotes their worth. They are pulled into the service of white prestige, enabling a tourist infrastructure at Somerset Place without mixing recreation and white historic preservation “to an objectionable degree” (Tarlton, 1954). “Black” history is only valued for what it can contribute to “white” history: authentic visuals, staff housing, and public toilets.

Past as Prologue

To my knowledge, the slave cabins at Somerset Place were not reconstructed for any of these purposes (although slave cabins at other plantation sites have indeed been used as public restrooms for visitors; see Small, 2013). Still, their continued enrollment in the project of conjoining historic space with recreational and leisure spaces bespeaks a larger pattern. The management and design of Somerset Place State Historic Site between 1950-1965 is a grounded example of the ways in which racialization of space enabled conjoinment between histories of enslavement and recreational leisure. The institutional history of Somerset Place State Historic Site clearly illustrates the very real slippage between spaces coded as historical and spaces coded as recreational for governing bodies working to develop a statewide historic site program. However, I remain alert to the ways in which privileged white history is defined against both recreation *and* Blackness at key archival moments between 1950-1965. In doing so, we clearly see how the definition of racialized spaces alongside (but, crucially, *outside*) the parts of the site valued as historical in the 1950s and ‘60s enables the production of Somerset Place as a tourist

destination that incorporated both historic preservation and the outdoor recreation spaces necessary for tourists.

The blurring and blending of physical and managerial boundaries between present-day Somerset Place and Pettigrew State Park undermines the designations and re-designations of Somerset Place itself as principally recreational or principally historic (Harrison, 2012). Indeed, the uses of the sites today are so intertwined in the landscape that many Somerset visitors arrive, sometimes by accident, while on a hike from Pettigrew State Park. Many more head to the park once their tour of the historic site is done. This chapter has not aimed to classify Somerset Place as either fully historical or fully recreational finally and forever; indeed, I agree with historian Alisa Harrison (2012) that the dichotomy says more about the people drawing the boundaries, and their priorities, than it does about the sites themselves. However, by investigating the archival themes and contexts within which Somerset Place gets defined and re-defined by the North Carolina government and associated researchers, brings the gendered and racialized historical conditions that produced conjoinment into full view.

Somerset Place began its life in 1939 as a historic site in ways indistinguishable from recreation. Over the next thirty years, in tandem with a national movement towards professionalization of the field, and an associated growing cultural prestige of historic sites, Somerset Place began to be defined *against* recreation. We see this definition against recreation in the processes that led to its carving out from the park to be managed by the Department of Archives & History, instead of the Department of Conservation & Development, in 1965. Yet, the site was still necessarily and intimately tied to recreation and must continue to support tourists. Enter the “Black” spaces of Somerset Place, the slave cabins, whose proximity to the

prestigious “white” historical spaces, yet separation from them, illuminate discursive and physical conditions of conjoinment on the land.

Between 1950 and 1965, the North Carolina government was intentionally positioning historical space and recreational space in relation to one another as two separate entities. We see, again and again, that recreational space was necessary for the historical space, but was also dichotomized as ahistorical and less prestigious. Simultaneously, we see the spaces of slave cabins – spaces racialized as Black and therefore less historical in the eyes of the mainstream public historians and government researchers of the decade – appearing as the perfect compromise. They are flexible middle ground whose exterior appearances can further the aesthetic of authenticity of the restored plantation space, but whose interiors can provide whatever modern spaces are needed for tourism and recreation infrastructures.

Superintendent Morse wrote that it is “always important to...keep the historical heritage before us because ‘the past is prologue’” (Morse, 1954). Placed within larger contexts of whitewashed historic preservation in the world in which Morse worked, this quote reads as a desire to return to a simpler time – or at least, a time perceived by white Southerners like Morse to be simpler, burying the racialized oppression and violence that created and sustained the plantation system (Harrison, 2012). The quote also reads as speaking to the need for standardized criteria for historic site designation during a time of intense, and overdue, social change. But there is another quote embedded within this one: “The past is prologue,” by William Shakespeare. More specifically, a character in Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, a play about – among other things – a past that will not stay buried.

The Shakespeare quote is slippery. It is often used to mean that the past sets the stage for our present, and as such, must be properly understood. I suspect this is how Morse meant it, with

a very limited view of “proper understanding.” However, it can also be read in a slightly different way: that the past, for all its many layers, is but the prologue to our own present stories. That we – here, now, each one of us – has the power to write our own new chapters, informed, perhaps, but not bound by any beginning prologue.

Many new chapters have been written at Somerset Place since 1965. Dorothy Spruill Redford was a central author. A descendant of people who were enslaved at Somerset Place, she brought Black and white descendants back to Somerset Place for the first homecoming in 1986. As the first Black site manager, she rebuilt the slave cabins as important historic spaces in the 1990s. Her tireless work of tracing genealogies and engaging communities made Somerset what it is today. Karen Hayes, the current site manager and a Black woman, is another central author writing the new chapters in Somerset’s story. Hayes loves Somerset Place and the ways in which the landscapes of recreation and excavative history work come together on the shores of Lake Phelps. Her staff and the volunteers who work at Somerset Place today will not let histories of enslavement stay buried.

So, too, have new chapters been written in North Carolina’s story of stewarding state-owned historical properties. In 1972, along with previously-independent agencies like the North Carolina State Library and the North Carolina Museum of Art, the Division of Archives & History was brought under the umbrella of the newly-formed Department of Art, Culture, and History. Just one year later, that Department was replaced by the Department of Cultural Resources, which further broadened the number of historical commissions overseen by the state. Most recently, in 2015, the Department of Cultural Resources was renamed the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR). The DNCR today includes the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, the North Carolina Zoological Park...and all of North Carolina’s state parks

(Williams, 2021). After decades of discussion about how to properly differentiate historical space from recreational space, North Carolina today manages both under the same state-level department.

The institutional movements that continue to shape North Carolina's historic sites are embedded within their own political contexts. The 2015 reorganization came as part of a Republican-led push for greater government efficiency in the state legislature and transferred over twelve million dollars – as well as the popular appeal of state parks, aquariums, and the zoo – away from the newly re-named Department of Environmental Quality (previously the Department of Environment and Natural Resources) (Jarvis, 2015). However, for current Director of Historic Sites Michelle Lanier, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources provides an incredible opportunity to do multidisciplinary work across the history/nature divide. “I work with State Parks to create trails [that] help with public health, and also help people connect intellectually or spiritually or emotionally to land,” Lanier said in our interview. Referring to the North Carolina Symphony, Museum, and Library, she added: “The arts are an amplifier” for historic and preservation work. For Lanier, managing historic sites alongside state parks and other arts entities is an amazing chance to do deep and transformative work.

More research is needed to more fully understand the impacts of political parties and recent legislative reorganization on North Carolina's historic sites. It is clear, however, that landscapes of historic preservation and outdoor recreation are still deeply intertwined in North Carolina, perhaps more so now than ever. I turn now to the present to examine how conjoined spaces of recreation and reparative memory work – spaces that were conjoined at specific historical moments and continue to be managed in alignment – are experienced by visitors today.

CHAPTER 3: INVESTIGATING EMBODIED CONJOINMENT THROUGH EMOTION MAPPING

Introduction

To examine how conjoined spaces of recreation and excavative history are experienced today, I move to the scale of the body. Not simply a landscape-level feature of these sites, conjoinment is also an embodied experience. Visitors move back and forth between spaces of leisure and recreation, spaces of reflection and learning, and spaces where the two mix and blur. I examine visitor reactions to that conjoinment through the lens of emotion, understood as produced and circulated through embodied interactions and encounters with the world (Ahmed, 2014). In this way, emotion allows me to access both external and internal movement: both embodied ways of experiencing spaces, and the emotions those spaces provoke.

My novel application of emotion mapping aims to understand the bodily, the sensory, and the emotional in contexts of public history. At plantation museums, this work throws tensions into sharp relief between the violence of slavery in the past and the pleasant embodied experiences of the present. My application contributes important theoretical and methodological perspectives, allowing visitors to record their own encounters with emotion in plantation museum landscapes. This chapter lays out the theoretical grounding, lineage, and methodology for the participatory, visitor-driven emotion mapping exercise that formed the bulk of my engagement with historic site visitors, and uses selected case studies from visitor interactions to

demonstrate the contributions of this methodology application to heritage studies. Grounded in the fields of feminist geography, participatory research, and heritage studies, plantation museum emotion mapping specifically attends to the ways in which members of the public *feel* at different places in a given plantation museum landscape, as well as how they move through what NC Historic Sites Program director Michelle Lanier calls “ecosystems of witness”: those physical spaces that have been preserved to tell a historical story (personal communication, August 23, 2022). Noting how emotions are expressed, navigated, and change through space adds a crucial component to ongoing academic research on public plantation museums as spaces of public memory and reparative memory work.

Feminist Geography and the More-Than-Representational: Theoretical Foundations of Emotion Mapping

Emotion mapping grows out of a rich vein of feminist geography scholarship that emphasizes the need to attend to the embodied, the everyday, and the banal in place (Domosh, 1997; Gökarıksel & Secor, 2022, 2018; Longhurst et al., 2008; Nast & Pile, 1998; Rose, 1993). In addition, I draw on a growing movement within heritage and museum studies to examine intangible elements of historic sites and museums – elements such as emotions, atmospheres, and embodied feelings (Magelssen, 2012; L. Smith & Campbell, 2015; Sumartojo, 2020; Tolia-Kelly et al., 2016; Waterton & Watson, 2014). In contrast to the more tangible, representational aspects of historic sites, such as waysides, old buildings, museums, and guided tours, these “more-than-representational” (Waterton & Watson, 2014), or sensory, elements are more difficult to study with empirical methods. However, insight into the sensory and felt is precisely what I aimed to do in a way that both captures a novel perspective into visitor experience and encounter at

historic sites and allows spacious room for participant input and flexibility. To do so, I build on a rich vein of scholarship on counter-cartographies and participatory research.

In the following chapter, I delve into the theory behind the emotional and the more-than-representational in feminist geography and heritage studies that inform this methodology, then provide an overview of existing methods for examining emotions at museums and historic sites, including plantation museums. I note that, while emotions are emerging as ever-more important concepts within heritage studies, they are often used as a theoretical framework first and a concrete methodology second. Many of these concrete methodologies, furthermore, tend to focus on pre- and/or post-visit interviews or surveys with visitors, providing incredible insight into the visitor experience. But these methods necessarily miss many of the intricate, intimate, on-the-ground experiences and nuances that visitors feel, create, and encounter when actively moving through a historic site – and that I focus on herein. My emotion mapping application thus provides a useful contribution to heritage studies research into connections between emotion, encounter, the body, and place in contexts of memory and historic sites.

Bodies in Theory and Method in Feminist Geography

The body is a central component of feminist geography. Gillian Rose's (1993) seminal book, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*, drew attention to the everyday and the banal as arenas in which the heterosexual patriarchy is created, perpetuated, and contested. The book urged scholars to attend to networks of interaction instead of a single, omniscient point of view. Much has grown out of this call as feminist geographers have continued to attend to the personal and the everyday (Rose 1993; Longhurst 1995; Domosh 1997; Nast & Pile 1998), with important additions. Work in the past decades urges researchers to be attentive to the differentiation of bodies themselves, and the differentiation of power and

privilege that attach to them (Sharp 2009), as well as intersections of bodies, identities, place, and space (Johnston et al., 2020). Women of color and feminists in the Radical Black Tradition are central to questions of embodied space and intersectionality (Mollett & Faria 2018).

Feminist geographers understand the body, not as a separate entity to the researching mind, but instead as a vital place of inquiry and experiential encounter that deeply shapes our experiences of research, others, and ourselves.

Within feminist geography's context of embodiment and intimacy, emotions are understood as a vital counterpoint to hegemonic, patriarchal, and white supremacist conceptions of space and ways of knowing. Emotional geographies as a sub-field grew out of humanistic geographies of the 1970s and '80s, as well as the psychoanalytic geographies of 1990s, and urges scholars to attend to the ways in which emotions produce, and are produced by, place (Pile, 2010). Important work on emotional and affective geographies highlights the contested terrain of emotional geographies, particularly when it comes to asking people to define and communicate their own emotions (Pile, 2010). However, I follow Sara Ahmed's (2014) book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, that presents emotions, not as psychological states, but as socio-cultural practices that infuse our bodies and orient us toward others: other people, other narratives. Ahmed connects the emotions felt by an individual body directly with the social body and presents the idea of "affective economies," where "feelings do not reside in subjects or objects" (p. 8) – rather, they are produced through circulation. Reading this alongside Longhurst et al. (2008)'s statement that "Bodies produce space and knowledge, and space and knowledge produce bodies" (p. 208), I see a rich and vivid framework for attending to, and coming into encounter with, bodies and spaces, where each intimately shapes the other. Recent scholarship on entangled relationships between neighbors – and the public spaces they occupy and circulate

through – in Turkey is one example of many, grounding geopolitical thought and questions in intimate, embodied, and emotional moments (Gökariksel & Secor, 2022, 2018).

My methodological application begins with the deep understanding that embodied experiences, and the emotions that elicit, drive, and come from embodied experiences, are analytically significant. Furthermore, the circulation of emotions – or, their economies of affect – not only shapes our encounters with spaces, but the spaces themselves. I now turn to how emotions are understood within heritage studies.

Visitor Bodies and the More-Than-Representational in Heritage Studies

The trajectory of emotion within heritage and museum studies parallels the trajectory of emotions within the discipline of geography for much of the early twentieth century. As in geography, emotion was consistently dismissed within mainstream and professionalizing heritage and preservation work. As described in Chapter 2, when NPS and other male-dominated agencies moved into the field of historic preservation, they explicitly defined themselves as scientific and objective against a more feminized and emotional historic project they considered less legitimate (Meringolo, 2012; L. Smith & Campbell, 2015; Sprinkle, 2014). Museum studies scholars Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell (2015) identify the “Authorized Heritage Discourse,” which builds on ideas of objectivity and science to define historic preservation as an expert-driven field that is explicitly *not* emotional. Emotions, of course, are present. However, in the Authorized Heritage Discourse, they are repressed, undervalued, and identified as harmful to the heritage project.

Recently, emotions have begun to resurface, both theoretically and methodologically, within heritage studies. The emotional turn has gone hand-in-hand with attention to the more-than-representational aspects of heritage sites and visitation. More-than-representational aspects

can include emotions produced, memories made, and atmospheric or other intangible encounters by visitors. Various terms “commemorative atmospheres” (Sumartojo, 2020), “semiotic landscapes” (Waterton & Watson, 2014), or assemblages (Potter et al., 2022), each of these models aims to expand the more traditional heritage studies focus on the visual or narrative elements of a historic site or plantation museum. While physical and narrative elements such as waysides, old houses, museum exhibits, or artifacts are certainly important to heritage projects, the more-than-representational approaches the experiential, the fleeting, the embodied, and the relational. In the words of critical heritage scholar Emma Waterton (2018), it moves inquiry beyond what “heritage places...might *mean* but also what they might *do*” (p. 222). Heritage places move people. They ignite interest, or excitement, or grief. They spark memories. They act at the scale of the body.

Since embodied experiences exist in excess of the representational infrastructure of historic sites and monuments, attending to these experiential, embodied, and more-than-representational methods can further complicate and unsettle state-led historic narratives that aim for hegemony (Sumartojo, 2020). Affective responses at historic sites occur through complex and multi-layered interactions of place, exhibit, personal agency, and cultural context (Smith & Campbell 2015). It follows, then, that by examining these affective responses, heritage scholars and professionals can find ways to examine the components that shape them: the places, infrastructures, and cultural contexts of plantation museums, as well as the personal trajectories and cultural contexts of their visitors.

Within this framework of the more-than-representational, I understand those who come to historic sites as not merely visitors, but as embodied participants who actively shape and are being shaped by their encounters with historic space. My method thus aims to capture the

embodied, experiential, and intimate encounter between a historic site visitor/participant. In short, I actively seek the more-than-representational alongside the representational aspects of a given historic site.

Developing a Method from Emotion Methodologies in Feminist Geography and Heritage Studies

It is clear that emotions and embodied encounters form key theoretical elements of both feminist geography and heritage studies, as outlined above. But what of the methodological? Acknowledging the importance of economies of affect, emotional exchanges, and emotional and affective responses to historic sites is an important step. Yet we should also ask: how does actually and actively studying these emotional responses work?

Some feminist geographers have answered the call to attend to embodied and emotional encounters by foregrounding their own embodied and emotional responses to their research sites, phenomena, or participants. The role of the researcher, then, is to note these active processes and to record that which would otherwise disappear (Militz et al., 2019). Feminist geographer Robyn Longhurst attends to the emotional through foregrounding her own embodied experiences and responses, both sensory and emotional, while participating in a communal dinner with recent migrants in New Zealand (Longhurst et al., 2008). She informs more traditional ethnographic practices of participant-observation and interviews with discussions of the researchers' own embodied responses, intentionally including even those feelings that might be deemed too private or inappropriate to share (such as a feeling of disgust when trying an unfamiliar dish for the first time). The data produced by Longhurst and her collaborators are explicitly and personally emotional. They theorize these overlapping and conflicting emotions as contributing to the production of place, identity, and cross-cultural knowledge.

Go-along or focus group interviews, photo-voice, and participant observation are other examples of how feminist geographers have articulated, examined, and analyzed emotions and emotional encounters of and with research participants. As one example, Sarah Pink (2015) utilizes digital video and audio recordings to conduct what she terms “sensory ethnographies” that allow research participants to surface and, thus, examine ongoing flows of feelings, actions, and sensory experiences.

Heritage studies, too, has its share of emotion-focused methodologies. Despite the relatively recent theoretical turn towards the emotional in heritage and museum studies, ways of capturing and analyzing visitor emotions are plentiful in the literature, drawn from the needs of management and staff to understand and interpret visitor response to heritage tourist destinations. Surveys are common, as in a recent extensive study at plantation museums in the US South that conducted pre- and post-visit surveys and structured interviews with participants, thereby capturing data on the ways in which experiences at plantation museums engage with and change visitors’ pre-conceived ideas around race, slavery, and plantations (Potter et al., 2022). The majority of the questions focused on visitor interest in certain topics – from enslaved people and slavery to architecture and furnishings. The survey included questions such as “How would you evaluate the entertainment value of your tour today?” and “What did you like best/least about the Plantation tour?” Such prompts allowed for visitors to speak to emotions other than straight-ahead interest or educational value.

Pre- and/or post-visit surveys or interviews are fairly common in studies that seek to examine the emotional responses of visitors (see also Best, 2007; Bruyninckx et al., 2021; Falk & Gillespie, 2009; Palau-Saumell et al., 2016) as are face-to-face structured or semi-structured interviews that occur in the place where visitation is happening (Markwell et al., 2019; Waterton,

2018). Walk-along, or go-along interview methods have also been used at historic sites and museums to examine visitor emotions as told to or observed by the researcher/interviewer (Skov et al., 2018), and one group of researchers utilize directed content analysis to investigate how visitors experience Cape Coast Castle in Ghana by studying visitor comments from guest books already set out and used by museum staff (Abaidoo & Takyiakwa, 2019). One study even used electrodermal data to measure physiological responses of visitors to museum exhibits (Hoare, 2021). Structured interviews and “systematic observation” of visitors moving through exhibits (Markwell et al., 2019) offers yet another way to approach examinations of emotional engagement.

My project offers a new methodological approach to plantation museum and heritage studies that draws directly on a long lineage of counter-cartographic work and participatory mapping within feminist geography and critical cartography. Early feminist critiques of geospatial data and mainstream mapping systems (Kwan, 2002) have paved the way for an ever-evolving area of scholarship that continually aims to undermine or destabilize hegemonic representations of space. Spatialized narratives, oral histories, and counter-cartographies of memory work to trouble the ongoing anti-Blackness of normalized maps (Scott, 2021), colonial alterations of landscape (Gagnon & Desbiens, 2018), and urban planning (Deitz et al., 2018), to name just a few interventions. In addition, participatory research methodologies intentionally center the participants themselves, rather than the researcher(s), and create the conditions for participants to be agents and co-creators of the research in their own right (Chambers, 1981; Kesby et al., 2005). Bridging counter-cartography and participatory research, participatory mapping places the agency with participants as individuals and groups come together to create representations of space and place that go beyond the preconceived ideas or priorities of the

single researcher (Deitz et al., 2018). Participatory emotion mapping, such as the *invisiblecity* project in Parramatta, Sydney, Australia that empowers youth to record their emotions in place using their smartphones (Deitz et al., 2018), enables visual connections between place and experience that are shaped by participants themselves.

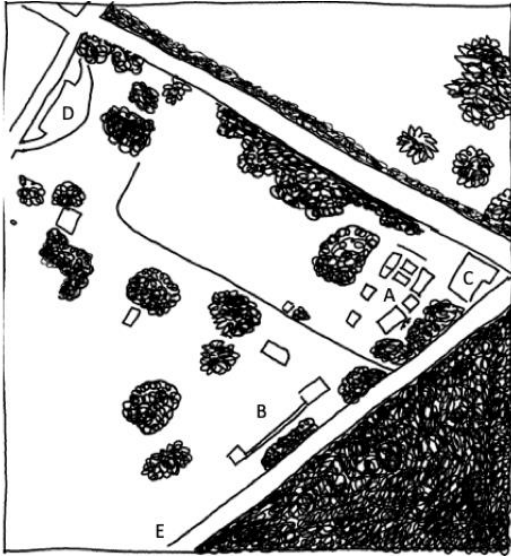
Grounded in the literature on feminist geographies, the more-than-representational in heritage studies, and participatory mapping, my methodological approach adds a novel application of emotion mapping to the ongoing study of the experiential at historic sites. Expanding the methodological work done in heritage studies thus far, and building on participatory action research and emotion mapping methodologies within geography, I provided my participants with the ability to record their own emotions in the moment(s) of their encounter with different parts of a given historic site using maps, stickers, and pens. The method located the emotions in place and offered a heuristic device, or diagram: a way for participants to note and remember their own emotions that stimulated additional conversation and data production (Kesby et al., 2005). Further, this method was flexible enough to allow participants themselves to shape it in multiple ways, allowing them to contribute to my study beyond the role of passive respondents (Kesby et al., 2005). Incorporating short structured interviews deepens the participant-driven, map-based piece of the methodology and offers a new perspective on visitor emotions throughout their site visit, grounded in the spaces of the plantation museums.

Mapping Visitor Emotions

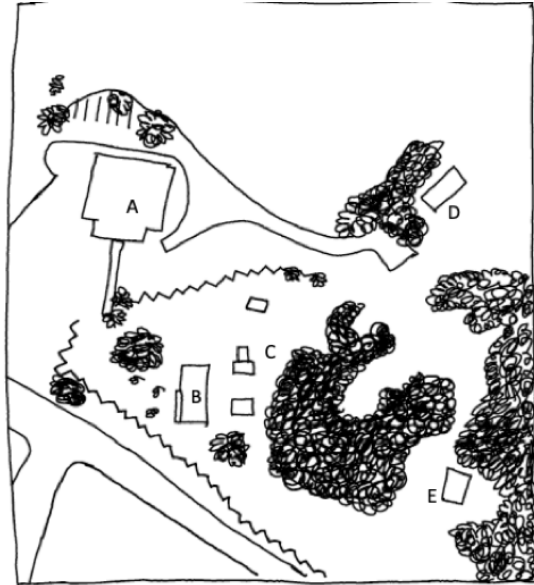
Frameworks of Engagement

My study aimed to examine experiences of conjoinment by investigating how visitors felt as they moved between looking at beautiful preserved buildings, learning about chattel slavery, having lunch, and going on nature walks – to name just a few of the visitor activities observed in

my work. To effectively capture not only what visitors were doing, but also how they were feeling about what they were doing and learning, I developed a method that would allow visitors to record their experiences during the course of their site visits. I collaborated with museum studies graduate student and artist Stefanie Feldman to develop accurate, recognizable, and above all, inviting maps of each historic site. My study sought to make visitors feel as if they had been handed an interesting and engaging activity. The hand-drawn style of the maps encouraged visitors to mark them up and engage with them in creative ways (Figure 9). I provided visitors with black-ink pen and stickers to represent emotions, including green smiling faces, red frowning faces, and yellow faces with a straight line for a mouth (Figure 10). I subsequently gathered all these components, along with my IRB consent forms and my contact information, in brightly-colored folders that I spread over a folding table that I set up at each site during my fieldwork days (Figure 11).



Map Key:
 A: Visitor center and outbuildings
 B: Slave cabins
 C: Collins House
 D: Parking lot
 E: Trail to Pettigrew State Park



Map Key:
 A: Visitor Center
 B: Vance house
 C: Outbuildings
 D: Picnic shelter
 E: Slave quarters

Figure 9: Hand-drawn maps of Somerset Place (left) and Vance Birthplace (right) by Stefanie Feldman. Visitors to each site received full-page versions of these maps, along with other materials for the activity.



Figures 10 & 11: Left: Each visitor received two of these sticker sheets. Right: The table set up outside the visitor center at Somerset Place, May 2022

During the bulk of my fieldwork at each site, I was accompanied by three young, white undergraduate research assistants (RAs) from the UNC Chapel Hill Department of Geography: Jenna, Lee, and Maeve. At Somerset Place, Jenna (a rising senior) and I camped in Pettigrew State Park's adjacent campground. Along with assisting me to interview visitors and distribute maps, Jenna interviewed a staff member and went on three guided tours with members of the public as a participant observer. At Stagville, Lee (recent graduate) interviewed visitors, distributed maps, and went on two guided tours. They also engaged in participant observation at the Horton Grove section of the site. At Vance, Maeve (rising sophomore) interviewed visitors, distributed maps, and attended a special site event alongside me. Among the four of us, we were successful at striking up a rapport with nearly every visitor who visited the sites during our fieldwork days. It became a wonderful running joke how many visitors, especially at Somerset Place, had connections to UNC-Chapel Hill and were especially eager to help us once they learned we were from UNC.

To ensure a consistent foundation and framework, I provided the RAs with formal and on-the-ground training. We met as a group of four once, in mid-April after I had hired them, during which I shared recommended readings on plantation tourism and the specific sites with which they would be helping me and encouraged them to reach out to me with any questions. During subsequent visitor interviews, staff interviews, and tour participant-observation, the RAs and I utilized the same templates and scripts detailing interview questions and observation guides for the guided tours (*Appendix 1*). Since visitor interviews were short, I printed out the questions in large text on a piece of paper and taped it to the folding table so that the RAs and I could all easily reference it. For staff interviews, I provided the RAs with the interview guide that I used for staff interviews, with recommendations for which questions to focus on. I asked that they

observe me for the first 2-3 visitor interactions at each site, during which I introduced myself, my project, and what I was asking of participants. As each RA engaged with their first few visitors at each site, I listened and offered feedback on their engagement styles. All three were successful at hailing visitors, contextualizing the study, orienting participants to the tools and activity, and answering visitor questions. Their presence allowed more visitors to participate in this project, and my conversations with the RAs provided invaluable insights and pushed my thinking in new and exciting directions.

Process of Emotion Mapping

At each site, the RAs and I set up a small table outside the visitor center or next to the parking lot. Our site selection prioritized being able to connect with the largest number of people. We soon noticed, however, that the table locations at both Somerset Place and Vance Birthplace closest to the parking area were also the hottest and sunniest. So, we made the decision to move our table to outside the visitor center (Somerset Place) and behind the visitor center (Vance Birthplace). As a result, we noted an increase in how long visitors were willing to speak with us after their visit and mapping activities were completed.

To open our mapping activity, we greeted visitors as they passed our table with a quick question: “We are students working on a research project about how people experience historic sites. Would you help us out?” Whenever a visitor agreed, we provided them with a folder and asked them to use the included stickers and pen, in whatever combination and method they chose, to record what they were doing and how they were feeling at different places on the site. Multiple people expressed nervousness: “I don’t know if I’ll do a very good job!” “You don’t really want *me*, do you?” We emphasized, again and again, that there were no wrong answers and that we did indeed want to include anyone who wanted to participate.

For the second half of the mapping activity, we asked visitors to return map and consent form to us before leaving and to answer a few additional questions. We recorded responses or took notes, depending on if recording permission had been granted. Our questions began broadly – “What brought you to this site today?” “Have you been here before?” “What were your expectations?” – but quickly turned to the maps. “Why did you place a smiling face there? Why a frowning face there?” The questions about their maps invariably served to jog the visitor’s memory and to open up new avenues of conversation and reflection (Kesby et al., 2005). The interviews guided my interpretations of what an otherwise ambiguous sticker might signify, thus revealing nuance and insight that would otherwise have been lost.

All maps and interviews were kept anonymous, but were still connected to each person’s consent form via a secure numbered system. I also recorded if each participant had or had not gone on a guided tour, and if the participant had self-identified as Black, white, or another race. Over the course of four months, my research assistants and I engaged with visitors at all three sites. With 6 days at each site, we engaged with visitors for a total of 18 days. In all, we spoke with 122 visitors, collected 102 maps, and recorded 110 visitor interviews.

The maps and stickers acted as a heuristic device. Being able to point to a visitor’s map and say “What made you put that sticker there?” enabled visitors to return to the moment in question: in so doing, they expressed their thought processes, feelings around a certain part of the site or something they had learned, and reasons for placing the sticker there. By their very simplicity, the stickers were ambiguous. What does a yellow, straight-mouthed face signify? Despite, or perhaps, because of their ambiguity, the stickers could jog a participant’s memory in any number of ways. The maps enabled participants to engage in their own personal memory-

making activity, which they could then translate to me and my research assistants through the semi-structured interviews.

After active fieldwork was complete, I engaged in a double-pronged analysis. For the maps, I used a spreadsheet to mark down how many of each sticker response (green/smiling, yellow/straight-mouthed, or red/frowning) was recorded by each visitor next to each key letter. I then used this spreadsheet to create graphic visualizations of how many of each sticker/emotion was recorded at various places at each site, as well as in total at the sites themselves (Figure 12). Some people placed stickers in areas that were not marked by letters, so I counted these up as well and marked them using numbers (instead of letters) on the maps. I then placed individual graphs on the map, creating a visual tool for examining what and where emotions emerged (Figure 13). I included a modified heat graph as well, visually demonstrating emotional concentrations at each spot on the map. This piece of the method drew heavily on Hanna et al.'s (2018) narrative mapping method, where researchers noted what tour guides at Southern plantation museums talked about on maps of the historic sites, then compiled their notes and tallies into visual, spatial representations of tour content. Like Hanna et al., the maps that I produced demonstrate the mutability and multiplicity of emotions being experienced at each of these three historic sites.

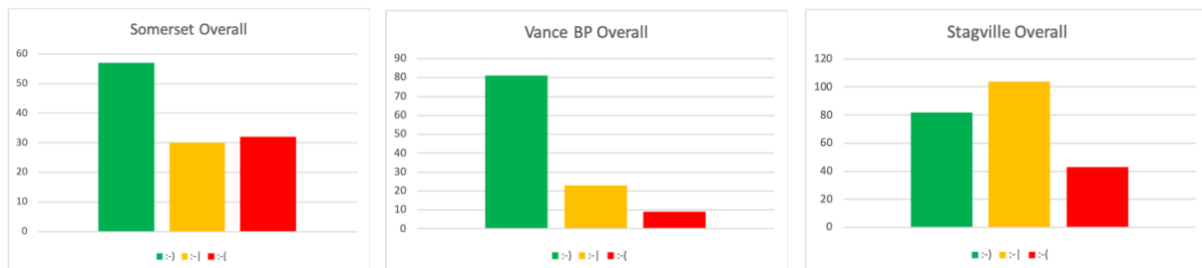


Figure 12: Overall emotion sticker counts for all three sites. Green on the left represents green smiling faces, yellow in the middle represents yellow straight-mouthed faces, and red on the right represents red frowning faces. Y-axes are here based on participant numbers at each site to give a sense of relative proportions.



Map Key:
 A: Visitor center and outbuildings
 B: Slave cabins
 C: Collins House
 D: Parking lot
 E: Trail to Pettigrew State Park

1. Field
 2. Overseer's house & stocks
 3. Plantation hospital
 4. Shady bench by visitor center
 5. Collins garden

Figure 13: Map of Somerset Place with graphs of visitor sticker responses added. The additional spots visitors placed stickers are marked and keyed with numbers.

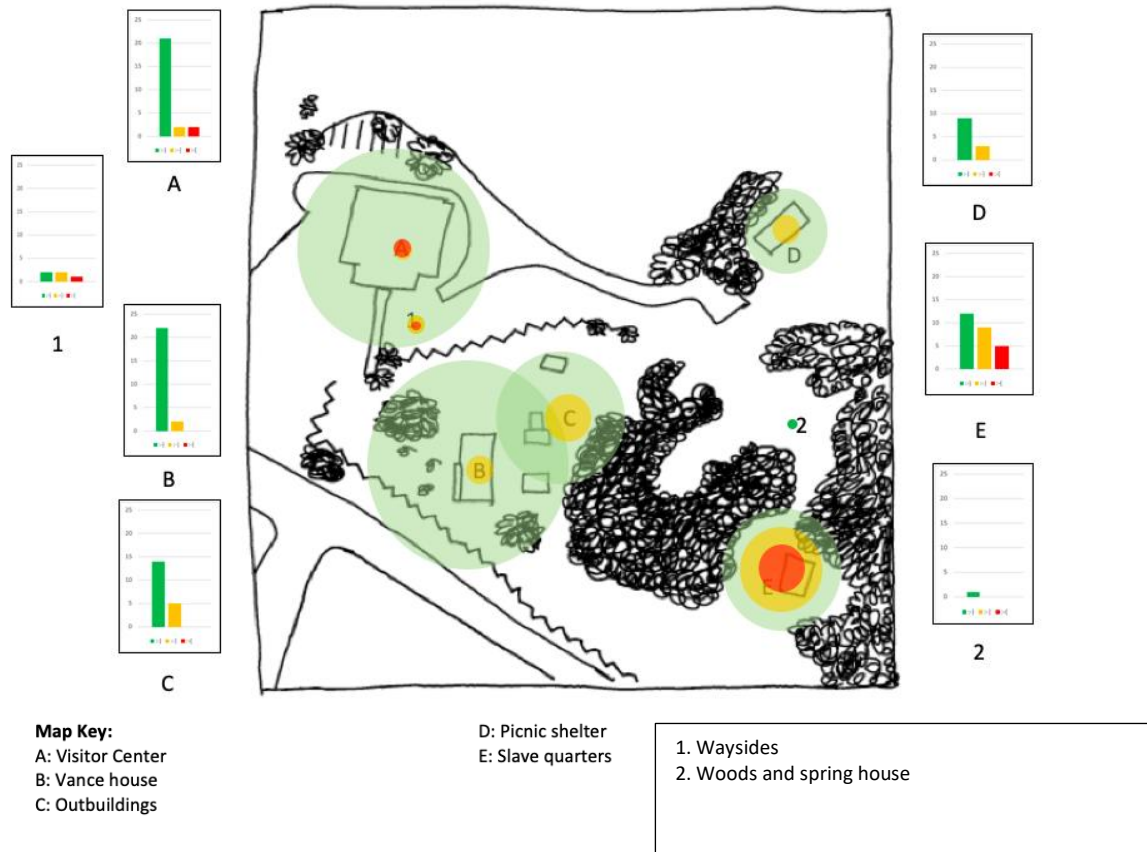


Figure 14: Map of Vance Birthplace with graphs of visitor sticker responses added. The additional spots visitors placed stickers are marked and keyed with numbers.

Emotions are more complex than any three stickers can encompass. Because their reported meaning was ambiguous, the second phase of my data analysis delved into accompanying interview data. I used Trint, a transcription software, to do preliminary transcription work for all interviews that had been recorded before editing for clarity. I then uploaded these transcripts, along with the notes for any un-recorded interviews and transcriptions of any writing that had been done on the maps and utilized ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, to code and analyze across these different forms of data (*Appendix 2*). In a separate spreadsheet, I noted when visitors explicitly mentioned reasons for using a given sticker, resulting in an overview of the different ways visitors engaged with the research tool. Finally, I combined maps and codes together to create cohesive, composite

documents showing relationships between emotion, leisure, learning, and place at Vance, Somerset, and Stagville (Figure 15). I shared these composite documents with site staff as a way to contribute to site interpretation going forward.

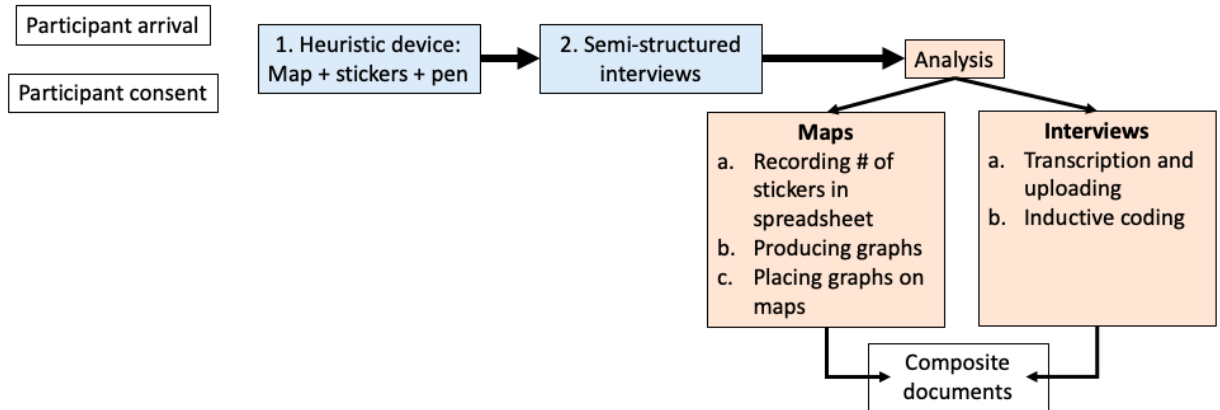


Figure 15: Graphic representation of my methodological process

Emotion Mapping Case Studies

The following case studies of visitor emotion maps and responses provide a glimpse into the interactions and responses of individual people to my novel methodological application. Together, they provide an overview of the analytic contributions and possibilities of this implementation of participatory emotion mapping at plantation museums and historic sites more broadly. I organize the cases broadly into the following categories: stickers as visual emphasis; stickers as space for creativity; interviews and stickers as co-creators of meaning; racial differences; and temporal slippage. Some include one visitor only as an example of a broader theme. Others incorporate several individuals or groups of visitors to illuminate themes in common. All mentions of visitor race in the following sections are self-reported.

Case Study 1: Stickers as Visual Storytelling

It was late afternoon on my third day conducting visitor interviews at Vance Birthplace State Historic Site, just north of Asheville, NC. A family of four (demographic data undisclosed) stopped to speak with me and the father handed me his map. The paper was covered with smiling green stickers, with one exception: over the slave dwelling, set a little apart from the main Vance cabin at the foot of a gently-sloping hill, he had placed a yellow sticker with a straight line for a mouth. I asked him why. He responded as follows:

Obviously, the slave house gets a little...I'm glad it's there. I hate to say it like that. It's history and we're never going to bury it...but the yellow [sticker] because it's you know...yeah...it's kind of how I feel about it. But you know, I am actually glad it's still here.

His verbal response reveals much more than what he actually said. He continually pointed to the yellow sticker, moved his hand back and forth in a “so-so” gesture, and grimaced, before shrugging at the end (“You know, I am actually glad it’s still there”). Much is expressed nonverbally. Much is articulated, not through words, but through expressions, through hand motions, and through references back to the yellow sticker. Much is *felt*, in that mountain valley where twenty-seven people were enslaved, and in that house, which represents where some of them were forced to live. The yellow sticker here stood out in a field of green, creating a visual record of the way the visitor’s emotions shifted at the slave cabin. It also opened space for complex and mixed feelings in which the man acknowledged the horrible history of enslavement but also recognized the importance of preservation and interpretation.

Case Study 2: Stickers as Creative Space

During my first day of research at Stagville, the first people to approach me were two self-identified Black women – cousins, they told me. They were delighted with the setup (“Stickers!” one of them said happily), and took a folder each, heading inside the visitor center to

learn more about the site. About an hour and a half later, they returned to my table and I opened the first folder. A red frowning face looked back at me, marking the Bennehan-Cameron house, but this red-faced sticker wasn't sad. It was angry (Figure 16).



Figure 16: One visitor-participant at Stagville drew eyebrows on the red frowning face to make an angry face.

I was delighted, and said so. The visitor-participant grinned at me, sharing in my delight at her use of the pen included in the folder to draw tilted, angry eyebrows on the red sticker. Upon seeing the owning family's house, she explained that her feelings had gone beyond sadness or unhappiness. "It pissed me off...how much massive land that one white family had." She continued: "[Growing up] I lived in a two-bedroom project with myself, my mother, my older brother, three children, pregnant with two more." Her cousin chimed in: "No more than what you would have had in one of these cabins." By cabins, she referred to the four, four-room houses built by and for enslaved people that still stand at Stagville, and that would have housed an entire family per room. Our conversation, spiraling out from my structured interview questions, covered structural racism today, colorism within families, police brutality, the weaponization of white womanhood, and one participant's time in the US Navy. Both participants effortlessly and

eloquently connected their experiences as Black women today with the experiences of their enslaved ancestors and the white supremacist violence that had impacted their lives over time. The woman who had drawn the angry eyebrows noted a resilience in herself and her family that she credited to their ancestors who survived enslavement. Nonetheless, she reiterated as she left: “The whole thing pissed me off.”

Not merely a passive respondent in this study, the woman who drew the angry eyebrows on the sticker did not see her own emotion as an option within my methodological tool – so she altered the tool itself. She revealed an aspect of this methodology that I had not anticipated, but that reappeared, wonderfully, over and over again throughout my fieldwork. The very simplicity of the tool offered a spaciousness and flexibility to visitor-participants that resulted in wonderfully creative outcomes (Kesby et al., 2005).

Another memorable example occurred at Somerset Place. A trio of friends – self-identified white, appearing middle-aged – opted to share one folder and one map. “I’m sure we’ll all feel the same,” said the woman who seemed to serve as the unofficial spokesperson for the group. When they returned, only one face was on their map but it was comprised of two stickers. They had torn a green sticker and a red sticker in half and created a two-color face – a “Christmas response,” as they called it, referencing the red and green color combination (Figure 17). They spoke at length about the mixed feelings each had as they enjoyed seeing the beautiful buildings and appreciated the preservation work while also hearing about the horrible experiences of enslavement (specifically mentioning family separation, punishments, and long hours). Interestingly, throughout this piece of the interview, the woman who had been so vocal at the beginning was quiet, hanging back behind the other two. Before we ended the interview, however, she spoke up to say she had found the guided tour “biased. They [enslavers] were bad,

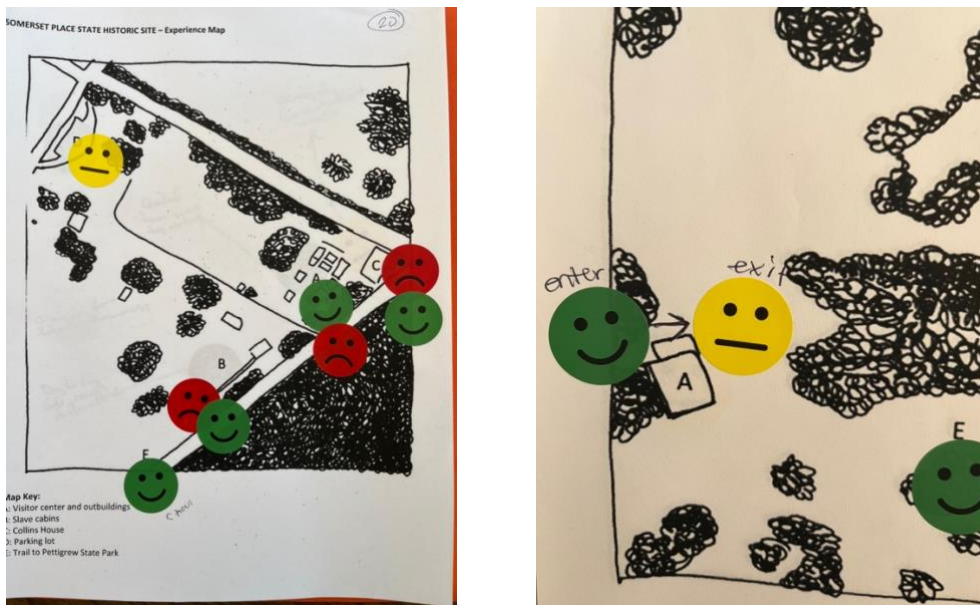
they [enslaved] were abused. Control, control, control.” She shrugged – impatient, it seemed, with what she had perceived as a heavy-handed tour narrative. “We have to be careful not to filter history through a modern lens,” she told me. The other two group members shifted from foot to foot, looking down and away from me and from the woman speaking. As they walked away together, I found myself hoping that the obvious discomfort of the other two would lead to further conversations, perhaps on the drive home, about the systems of enslavement and how those histories are not, in fact, so separate from our modern world and lenses after all. Their “Christmas response” reflected mixed feelings, both in themselves and in their group.



Figure 17: The “Christmas response” of one group at Somerset Place. Ironically, the combination of green and red faces also reflected the differences in opinion in their group.

Visitor-participants often altered or creatively utilized various aspects of the mapping and sticker tool. Many people deliberately layered stickers on top of each other, creating a visual representation of the many emotions they felt when encountering a slave dwelling or a beautiful view (Figure 18). One visitor (demographic data undisclosed) at Stagville placed a green face and a yellow face next to each other over the visitor center and connected them with an arrow,

signifying her shift in feeling from entering the visitor center to leaving it (Figure 19). Many participants placed stickers in places on the map that I had not included in the key, demonstrating the fluidity of emotions and the continuity of emotional engagement at these sites. In these and other moments, visitors not only participated in my research but shaped it themselves, pushing my inquiry in new directions and emphasizing the range and multiplicity of emotions they experienced. The flexibility and openness of this method allowed them to do so in ways that did not ask more from the participants, but rather enhanced their experiences and provided creative and reflective outlets. In fact, numerous participants thanked me or my research assistants for allowing them to participate in the study. On the map of the two Black cousins at Stagville, discussed above, the only green smiling sticker was directly in front of the visitor center. When I asked about it, they both said: “Meeting you!”



Figures 18 & 19: Layered stickers show the multiplicity of responses (left). An arrow describes an emotional transition from entering the visitor center happy to leaving it with a much more complex view of the site and slavery (right).

Case Study 3: Interviews & Stickers as Co-Creators of Meaning

The interviews kept that same flexibility from becoming a liability. If stickers could signify many different things to different people, our conversations provided important chances to clarify. Using the maps as reference and guide, the central question we asked visitors was “Why did you put this sticker there?” These questions elicited explanations about what the visitor had been feeling at that moment, in that place, and often led to further discussion of why they had been feeling that way, or if the feeling or place had brought up other memories for them.

Further, one sticker might mean different things to different people. We especially noticed nuance and differentiation between uses of the yellow, straight-line face. At Vance, three different people (all white) used the yellow sticker in three different ways: “Neutral – an opportunity to learn these facts;” “Too many posters in the museum, not enough artifacts;” and “I feel this was a better home for slaves than what I have seen in the past.” Here, we see the same sticker being used to indicate a feeling of neutrality or evenness toward a learning opportunity, a feeling of dissatisfaction at the museum’s educational facilities, and a feeling that the horrors of enslavement were tempered by a “better home” in the Reems Creek Valley than the participant had seen elsewhere. Similarly, at Somerset Place, several white visitors placed green stickers at the slave dwellings because they were “happy to hear the full story” or glad the history of enslaved communities was being preserved and taught. Often, these same people placed red stickers there as well, indicating the horror of what they were learning and sadness at what enslaved people had been forced to endure. In other cases at Somerset Place, the green stickers indicated delight at the architectural beauty of the Collins home, peaceful rest on a bench with a distant view of Lake Phelps, or a good impression of the quality of the tour guides. Because

visitors were constrained by the materials, they had to pack a lot of emotional nuance into three bright stickers. The stickers themselves provide compelling visual evidence and a useful heuristic device. However, interviews and written segments of the maps, where people used the pens to describe more about what they were thinking and feeling, helped myself and my research assistants to glimpse the multiplicity and movement of emotions around the site.

Case Study 4: Racial Differences

All participants who self-reported race during fieldwork were either white or Black. In general, both white and Black participants frequently used the red frowning face stickers when describing how they felt about enslavement. A notable exception included a white woman at Vance Birthplace who self-identified as a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and explained to me that the slaves her family had owned had been considered family. By and large, however, the red frowning face came up when people learned about, came into contact with places that signified, or thought about enslavement. What is interesting are the differences in what those red faces meant between Black and white respondents in my interviews.

For the Black participants who spoke to me – all at Stagville – it was personal. “We are resilient,” I heard time and time again, along with pride in the examples of everyday resistance by enslaved people to the dehumanization of enslavement that Stagville highlights on tours. “My mother used to tell me how they would work in the fields all day,” said one older Black woman, referencing her mother and uncles’ experience as children of sharecroppers in the Jim Crow South and tying her own life directly to the history shared at Stagville. Her husband added: “I feel that I’m on hallowed ground because it took place here...I’m very proud of the resilience of our people and what they’ve been doing and what we currently endure today. I draw strength from it...I don’t want to bury my head about it. I’m humbled by it.” A 17-year-old on a road trip

across the South with her mother cried and said she felt “terrified” when seeing the Bennehan house (the enslavers’ house) for the first time. Another young woman contrasted the experience of Stagville descendants with her own family’s experience of not knowing where they came from. “The Hart family [one of the Stagville descendant families] can track their family here, so when they come here, they know: ‘This is exactly what happened to my family.’ But here...we get an idea of what could have happened to ours...I don’t know what actually happened to my own family...I might not ever know.” The issue of reparations came up as well, referring to the idea that the US government owes Black Americans money, resources, and wealth-building opportunities to make up for centuries of violence, segregation, and labor extraction (Darity Jr. & Mullen, 2020; Ray & Perry, 2020). “We need reparations,” a young Black woman said, looking me in the eye, and I could only nod: yes, yes, yes we do. Overall, Black participants consistently and clearly identified the linkages between their own lived experiences, those of their ancestors, and the histories of enslavement that Stagville preserves and teaches. Their emotion-laden responses were deeply personal.

In contrast to this personal connection, many of the white people with whom I spoke actively distanced themselves from the actions of white slaveowners in the past, using phrases like “How could people do such a thing?” or “I’m glad we’ve come so far as a country [from slavery].” There were qualifications and comparisons: slavery and indentured servitude were essentially the same; slavery was better at whatever site we were at than at other plantations; “I have more questions”; or other expressions of needing to know more before fully knowing how they felt about slavery at the site. This last stance struck me as particularly insidious: a way to push feelings aside in the interest of gathering more information, always more information. There was a sense from all of the white participants who spoke to the horrors of slavery that,

although slavery was generally bad, it was also separate from themselves – unlike the Black participants, who clearly saw and expressed lived and felt connections between themselves and the Black enslaved people.

Even for white respondents who also saw and articulated the connections between chattel slavery and our current white supremacist society, there was an overwhelming and felt sense of paralysis. “Where do we go from here?” was a question that came up frequently around red frowning faces connected to slavery on the maps, along with expressions of “white guilt.” “We’re still benefitting from slavery,” said one white woman at Somerset Place, “but what can we do at this point? Reparations? What could that even look like?” The same woman later commented: “It wasn’t worth it for them [the white family] either. They had to turn off a part of their brain,” expressing the deep truth that white supremacy culture hurts everyone, although some more violently than others.

One white woman at Somerset Place expressed something other than paralysis around the connections between slavery and our world today. A second-time visitor who had stopped at Somerset Place with a friend on their way back from the Outer Banks, she joined a special Somerset tour that interprets Somerset’s trajectory post-Civil War. The special guided tour explicitly connects Somerset’s past as a plantation with its present as a plantation museum, interpreting post-Emancipation sharecropping and the contributions of Emancipated Black people to present-day Creswell, among other things. “I feel reinvigorated and like my sense of responsibility to use my white privilege for good has been boosted,” she said in a heavy Southern accent as we spoke in the shade after the tour. “For me, being here again gives me courage not to back down and to be speaking the truth...I think it’s wonderful. I feel really lucky to benefit from the work that’s been done here.” Her words provide a stark contrast to the sentiments of distance

and paralysis expressed by other white participants. Her sense of reinvigoration speaks to the power of return to these sites and to the importance of tours that explicitly connect enslavement and emancipation at plantation sites with modern life.

Case Study 5: Temporal Slippage

Even though many white respondents distanced themselves from the white slaveowners, the emotion maps did still capture moments of personal alignment with other aspects of the history. Some of the respondents expressed feelings that, while sparked by the plantation museums, were more connected to their own past than to the history they were learning. A white visitor at Vance placed a green smiling sticker in the wooded area with a small spring house between the picnic shelter and the slave cabin (#2 on the Vance map in Figure 13). He was the only one to do so, and when I asked him why he had placed a green smiling sticker there, he told me that when he was growing up, his father and uncle co-owned a fifty-acre farm. “I was the one that was sent down the hill...carrying empty milk jugs down to the spring. And that was a very steep grade where this one here is just like right behind the house...I thought that was very, very strategically placed because...not only did they get their water there but that’s where they stored some of their goods.”

His response highlighted a connection he had made between the landscape of Vance Birthplace and his own childhood experiences of carrying jugs back and forth to a spring house on his family farm. Remembering aspects of one’s own childhood is a key way in which personal histories arise at historic sites, as memory scholar Laurajane Smith found (L. Smith, 2013). Here, my methodological application’s attention to emotion allows us to glimpse the ways in which plantation museum visits are not singular or bounded temporal experiences. Infrastructural approaches to museum and heritage studies necessarily miss these moments of

temporal slippage. Visitors come with their own histories, their own experiences, and the landscapes of these sites can spark memories in sometimes unexpected ways. Here, embodiment incorporates multiple temporalities that come together at the scale of the body.

Methodological and Theoretical Contributions of Emotion Mapping at Plantation

Museums

Overall, these maps and their stickers tell a story of movement and layers: movement through different spaces, different emotions, and different states of being, and layers within those spaces, emotions, and ways of being in the world. Maps and stickers emphasize the multiplicity of responses, the slipperiness of emotion and the challenge of trying to map such a thing. This application of emotion mapping also brings to light the ways in which asking visitors to share their emotions while at different parts of a historic site can offer new insight into visitor experiences, and historic site mission and purpose. These research tools acted as a heuristic device, creating openings for further conversation and more nuanced thought. For many people who expressed gratitude to me or to my RAs, the tools provided a valuable method for reflection and thought during a day at a plantation museum.

Made visible through these maps and interviews, the visitor emotions are analytically significant not simply as individual responses. They are also affective economies, societal stances, that shape individual and collective relationships to past, present, and future – as well as each other. Moments of emotion are moments of encounter, and moments of encounter are moments of transformation. Emotional moments are transformative moments.

In attending to the experiential, we are “always at the edge of what is happening” (Sumartojo 2020, 9). By focusing on bodies – their excess, multiplicity, and specificity – and the emotions that circulate between and through them, this method opens important ways of

engaging with and understanding visitors to historic sites. My work illustrates that visitors and staff of historic plantation sites experience these sites through their bodies in emotional, sensory, and tactile ways. Yet, the ways may be different depending on their own prior experiences, positionalities, and relationships in relation to larger relations of power, privilege, and historical oppression. Flexible and tactile as it is, emotion mapping enables and encourages participants to reflect, record, and re-evaluate their emotions and encounters with place and the past at these historic sites. Ongoing, emergent methods must not shy away from contingency and possibility (Sumartojo, 2020). In its very simplicity, the method encourages participants to engage with it, often in surprising and creative ways. It also restores some agency to the participants, shifting control over content away from the researcher (Kesby et al., 2005).

Emotion mapping examines emotions in place, and charts their shift and movement across a given site. These maps make one thing very clear: as visitors move through the buildings, paths, and green spaces of these historic sites, emotions are in flux. They shift and lift and drift to meet a wayside, or a shady spot by the visitor center, or a reconstructed slave dwelling. Such shifts and drifts may come through in a post-visit survey or conversation, or they may not. Either way, the invitation to map one's own experiences as they happen, and the record of experiential movement that is produced, provides invaluable insight into lived and felt experiences, moment by moment and step by step, as participants move through plantation museum landscapes.

Emotion mapping, with the crucial interview component, reveals how positionalities affect emotions and encounters, as well as how different emotions can “stick” to the same thing (Ahmed, 2014). Wonderfully, emotion mapping brings Ahmed's word – “stick” – into play, with emotions represented with literal stickers that pile up and overlap across maps, across moments.

The vast majority of stickers on the owning family's house at Somerset Place were green. "Beautiful," "fun," and "luxurious" were all words that arose in interviews when visitors described why they had placed green stickers there. Yet, there were also red and yellow stickers: layers and shades of discomfort, guilt, or grief that came out of knowing the house and the institution it represents was built on slave labor. In conversation about the maps, the historic site was produced anew through the lens of embodied and emotional encounters with space, personal and collective memory, and formal and informal education.

In sum, the stickers create a window into felt moments for visitors. They stand in as something I could point to, or that a participant could point to, while weaving a story. They are ambiguous and slippery, while also being concrete and straightforward. They represent coming face-to-face with part of our collective past and feeling...something...about it. How to interpret that "something" spurred the interview process, helping researcher and respondent to connect in new ways.

Emotion mapping shows the connection between historic sites, bodies, and emotions. By bringing bodies into the learning of history experientially, historic sites offer a mode of learning history different from books or films (Magelssen, 2012; Rymza-Pawlowska, 2017). Despite its simplicity, my methodology was nimble enough to attend to and capture exquisite nuances while also leaving room for the unmarked and the not-yet-mentioned. Historic site visitors encounter a variety of emotions, as described above. This method places the emotional encounter at the forefront of inquiry and urges visitors to attend to their own emotional responses.

Historic sites are emotional spaces that ask emotional questions. There are felt connections between participants themselves and the historical communities being interpreted.

What do these emotional moments show us about the potential of historic sites to position people in relation to racial justice, perhaps towards personal transformation?

CHAPTER 4: INTERROGATING LEISURE AND LANDSCAPE CONJOINMENTS ALONGSIDE HISTORIES OF SLAVERY

Introduction

In this chapter, I bring the participant-created emotion maps and visitor interviews into conversation with staff interviews across my research sites. Through these interviews, outdoor recreation and deep engagement with excavative histories are revealed as simultaneous and co-emergent producers of plantation museum landscapes, rather than irreconcilable antagonists battling for control over these spaces. Though oddly conjoined through historical processes, I argue that recreation and excavative history today irrevocably shape visitor experiences and staff projects at plantation museums and must be managed together, with intentionality and care. Deploying an analytic of movement through space, emotions, and towards a more just society, the chapter thinks toward the possibility of an intentional place-based leisure that does not dilute or undermine education about histories of enslavement. Rather, I describe an integrated pedagogical space that activates people, especially the white people who are currently the main audience of many plantation museums (Eldar & Jansson, 2021), towards racial equality. Following the public history professionals who inform this work, and alongside geographer Rebecca Sheehan's articulation of "regenerative memorialization" (Sheehan et al., 2021), I propose a conceptualization of plantation museum landscapes as active, multi-layered spaces where leisure and transformation go hand in hand. I name this conceptualization as *reparative leisure*, referring to the reparative memory work that can grow from excavative history work and framing a kind of leisure that activates visitors towards racial justice. While I acknowledge that

funding and political landscapes may constrain what public historic sites can do, I offer reparative leisure as a way forward for site staff and site visitors alike who aim to integrate excavative history interpretation with landscape, and with the outdoor recreational activities that form a large part of how plantation museum spaces are used.

In the following analysis, I draw on interviews with both staff and visitors to frame the ways in which recreation and landscape disrupt visitor engagement with excavative history work, while also holding the potential to connect visitors to this work. I begin by placing examples of what staff want visitors to get from their sites alongside staff perspectives on the relationship of outdoor recreational activities to excavative history. Then, I turn to visitor interviews, examining what visitors themselves are thinking and feeling about excavative history, outdoor recreation, and their overall experiences at these sites. I read these two sources – staff and visitors – alongside each other in order to highlight both the overlaps and the discrepancies. Then, I examine the landscapes of the plantation museums as another facet of outdoor leisure experiences that can both hinder and help visitors and staff in excavative history work. I conclude with a formulation of “reparative leisure,” following reparative memory work, that brings together movement through space and movement through emotion. In doing so, I crack open the concept of leisure as automatically distinct from deep engagement with excavative history. I further identify outdoor recreation at plantation museums as a multi-faceted aspect of historic site use that is deeply important for site staff and managers to take seriously.

“There’s nuance there”: Staff Perspectives on Outdoor Recreation

Emotion & Engagement: Staff Goals for Plantation Museum Visitors

When asked what they hoped visitors took from their sites, many site staff spoke directly to reparative memory work through the context of emotion. Beyond simply learning more about

life in the past, staff at all three plantation museums brought up emotional experiences they hope visitors will encounter. “We hope to invite folks to reflect, or mourn, or...process some of the pain and grief [of] this great tragedy of American slavery,” said Stagville’s site manager Vera Cecelski. “Also, that visitors [who] encounter our interpretation might have an experience that opens them up to new curiosity or new questions about the experiences of enslaved people and the way that we remember the history of slavery.” She clarified: “The way that the legacies of slavery might still be present with us.” Assistant site manager Khadija McNair agreed. “The story [of slavery] doesn’t stop in 1865,” she reminded me. Through engaging with Stagville interpretation, McNair hopes that visitors also connect to longer histories of post-Emancipation sharecropping, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and the racialized oppression of today. The responses of both women reflect a desire for Stagville visitors to engage deeply, not only with the site’s interpretation, but with their own emotions, their own grief, and their own relationship to histories of slavery and how slavery is remembered today.

Somerset interpreter Noah Janis also spoke to the reparative memory work he hopes visitors experience. “I hope that [visitors] can see the resilience of the enslaved community, despite all of the forced labor and the dehumanizing institution, just see their culture, their community, their identity.” He noted that one of the main themes of the guided tour is the amount of control the white Collins family exerted over the people they enslaved, but added that “humanizing” the enslaved people, beyond the numbers, is one of his central interpretive priorities. The goal for visitors to see the enslaved people as more than numbers, and as more than slaves, is a constant across the plantation museums. It reflects a desire by all three groups of staff to contribute to reparative memory work by fighting ongoing dehumanization of enslaved people through interpretation.

Several staff members also hope that visitors will have enjoyable recreational experiences at these plantation museums. “I want them to enjoy the site,” said Somerset interpreter Matthew Knight. “To use the trails to have a relaxing experience just being in nature, being [in] this unique historical place.” He continued: “We would also like visitors to learn something while they’re visiting. Enjoying the site for their own intrinsic reasons, but also [interpreters] providing an interpretive experience in order to educate them about why we have this site here in the first place.” For Knight, the two experiences are not at odds. He placed an enjoyable time in nature, using the trails and relaxing, alongside learning about Somerset’s history.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the staff members who are responsible for managing the landscape tended to speak the most about their hopes that visitors will appreciate the beauty of the site and have a nice time in the outdoor spaces. “I hope they see that I try to do a good job, I try to keep it mown,” said Tony Strother, landscape technician at Stagville. “I hope they have good memories [of their time at the site].” He also emphasized that he hopes members of the public learn about the history of the site during their visit. He sees his work as landscape technician as a way to facilitate good visitor experiences that will hopefully lead to good memories of the site itself, along with effective education.

Overall, staff hope that visitors leave these sites with deeper understandings of antebellum history, particularly the roles, communities, and identities of enslaved people. Staff see introspective and emotional experiences as ideal as visitors engage directly with narratives of enslavement and resilience. However, enjoyable times in nature are also prioritized, especially by the landscape managers.

Complex Negotiations between Uses of Space: Staff Views on Outdoor Recreation

Across all three sites, staff expressed complex relationships to outdoor recreation and leisure activities that visitors perform. In the context of the goals they have for these sites, many have seen outdoor leisure both undermine and support their interpretive work. One of the main ways in which staff perceive outdoor leisure contributing to their missions is by bringing more people to the sites. “Not to oversimplify,” Vance assistant site manager Lauren May noted, “but most of the people who are tourists in this area are coming because it’s beautiful mountains...to drive it, hike it, explore it, raft it.” Indeed, even though some of the visitors with whom I spoke in June had come to the historic site specifically to learn about Zebulon Vance and/or the people his family enslaved, they are in the minority of visitors to Vance overall. Many visitors who arrive at Vance Birthplace come first for the views, or the public restroom facilities that are some of the closest to that stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and only then begin to wonder who Vance was.

Similarly, Christa Hobbet, Somerset’s assistant site manager, said that much of their visitation comes from visitors to Pettigrew State Park who may not have even known Somerset was there. “Recreation...is definitely compatible [with learning history] in the sense that it just brings visitors to our site.” She noted that it gives people the opportunity to learn about eastern North Carolina history, even if they were not initially aware of that opportunity. Often, visitors to Pettigrew State Park stumble on Somerset Place by accident. Hobbet hopes their initial, albeit accidental, exposure to Somerset will spark a lasting interest. Perhaps they will return for a guided tour, ideally with friends or family members. Similar opportunities for accidental visitation exist at Stagville, where Triangle Land Conservancy trailheads about the historic property. The physical proximity between Vance, Somerset, and Stagville to spaces of outdoor

recreation routinely brings people to the historic sites who would not otherwise have come, which is a boon for the sites themselves.

The conjoinment of history to recreational areas can also bring problems for site staff, seeming to dilute or undermine the sites' interpretive missions. For May and Floyd, the fact that the vast majority of Vance Birthplace visitors are looking for hiking trails, bathrooms, or driving breaks can pose something of an obstacle to the interpretive work they hope to do. Floyd noted: "I would say that, [since] most people are happening upon it off of the Blue Ridge Parkway, are looking for a restroom, [or] they got lost...I don't think they necessarily make that transition the way that I would like them to...realizing that the land that they're walking on is hallowed ground." Her words imply that visitors who come just to take a driving break or enjoy the site's beauty miss the site's central interpretive goal, which hopes to engage visitors around themes of slavery in the western mountains. Floyd here presents the Blue Ridge Parkway as both source of visitation and something that hinders those very visitors from engaging fully with the site's interpretive goals.

Asked about the interactions between outdoor recreation and visitor engagement with histories of slavery at Stagville, Cecelski expressed similar concerns. "When you have a tour group," the site manager noted, "who are coming to the end of a tour and maybe have been...really affected by it – maybe there's someone on the tour who has cried at some point during the tour or people who are really in conversation with each other...[it's] a little jarring or disorienting...to see a group of hikers come, like, pouring out of the woods, all laughing and joking and slapping each other on the back and getting into a car and talking about where we're going to go get lunch." Cecelski identified individuals using the site as a purely recreational space as one of the biggest challenges for staff as they try to facilitate a contemplative space for

visitors seeking historic interpretation and engagement with excavative history work. The Triangle Land Conservancy trail that connects to Horton Grove to the slave dwellings, in particular, has the potential to bring two groups of people using the space in very different ways into unexpected proximity. For Cecelski, it is not the source of visitation that poses a problem, but rather the people using adjoining recreation spaces in parallel with excavative histories that often undermine site goals.

The proximity to recreational areas, and the recreational root of many visitors' arrival at Vance, Somerset, or Stagville, is sometimes experienced by staff as hindering the interpretive work they are trying to do, even as they appreciate the source of visitation. Like the tension between expanding highways and historic preservation in the 1950s, outdoor recreation can be a double-edged sword, both supporting and undermining site goals articulated by staff.

“I had no problem with enjoying the trail”: Visitor Perspectives on Outdoor Recreation

Analysis of visitor experiences with outdoor recreation in the context of excavative history reveals a multi-faceted layer of plantation museum visitation to which site staff must continue to attend. Read alongside staff perspectives and expectations of how visitors are encountering historic spaces, visitor interviews present outdoor recreation as fairly supportive, or at least unproblematic, in their engagement with excavative histories. While a few exceptions appeared in my research, the overarching theme was one of alignment between outdoor recreation and visitor engagement with excavative site narratives. Interestingly, locals were a sub-group of visitors for whom that alignment was not always the case.

My data supports the notion that people who arrive at the sites by accident or in the course of engaging in outdoor recreation often stay and experience some or all of the historic sites' educational infrastructure. Multiple people at Somerset Place were surprised to find

themselves at a historic site in the middle of their walk. One white couple, just after the site opened for the day, said that they had decided to take a short walk from their campsite before breakfast and initially thought they had wound up on someone's private property. A "Welcome to Somerset Place" wayside had oriented them, and they wandered around the site, peeking into the open buildings and reading the outdoor waysides before stopping to speak with us. Both said they were interested in learning more and planned to come on a guided tour later in their visit, answering the assistant site manager's hope that accidental visitors become intentional visitors later. At Stagville, a white kayaker heading home from the nearby Eno River saw the Stagville sign and stopped for a visit. He went inside the visitor center, spoke with staff members, and took a self-guided tour pamphlet before heading off to explore the site on his own. At Vance, only 7 of the 36 visitors with whom I spoke had heard of Zebulon Vance before that day. Many of the rest had followed the historic site sign. "We're history buffs" was a common response to what had brought them to the site, suggesting that when they see a historic site sign, they tend to visit. Others simply stopped during a Parkway drive or in between hikes. One couple even came looking for a hiking trail, assuming that a historic site would have or be near one. In short, people engaging in outdoor recreational activities are indeed a key source of visitation for these sites. The spatial proximity between spaces of public history and spaces of public recreation thus facilitates visits by outdoor recreationalists and increases access to history sites.

In spite of the potential tensions identified in plantation museum literature and by site staff between leisure and excavative history work, many visitors seemed largely unconcerned about the embodied transitions they were making between outdoor recreational activities and engagement with excavative history. "I had no problem with enjoying the trail," said a white Somerset visitor, indicating the green smiling sticker he had placed by the Pettigrew trailhead.

“Even though, the slave quarters [are] just plainly, unbelievably sad.” For him, the “unbelievably sad” experience of learning about slavery coexisted with a beautiful trail walk with no problem. Similarly, a white Vance visitor pointed to the green smiling face she had placed over the Vance picnic shelter. “This is where I had my lunch, before I even started touring [the historic space],” she said. “I was very moved by the efforts to try to rethink history – the names of enslaved people.” Again, for her, the opportunity to have lunch in a beautiful spot did not detract from the emotional impact of learning the names of enslaved people. “We drove through the nature preserve,” said one white Stagville visitor of her and her husband’s activities after the guided tour. She was referring to the Triangle Land Conservancy’s larger area, which begins at the Horton Grove section of Stagville but continues north for several miles “We didn’t have time to hike, [but] it was nice to see the nature.” All three of these visitors spoke to the place of outdoor recreational activities in their plantation museum experiences: walking the Pettigrew trail; having lunch in a picnic shelter; driving through a scenic nature preserve. Importantly, all three of these examples occurred before or after more formal engagement with site narratives that these participants described as emotional engaging. For these individuals, the conjunction between outdoor recreation spaces and activities with excavative history did not undermine their own engagement with excavative history work.

Indeed, visitors seemed to transition repeatedly between active engagement with site narratives and outdoor recreation during their site visits. Participant observation showed groups of visitors moving fluidly around the sites, first coalescing in small, silent groups around waysides or in front of historic buildings, and then loosening – in their bodies, in their conversations – during walks in between. Many people at Somerset stopped to sit on benches under the sycamore trees before or after their guided tours, lifting their faces to the sky or

looking out over Lake Phelps. At Vance, numerous groups moved from the historic area to the picnic shelter and back as they took breaks or had lunch. They seemed to be balancing outdoor recreation activities with experiencing excavative interpretation, moving fluidly with little to no discomfort between the two registers of engagement.

One Somerset visitor, an older white woman who was camping at Pettigrew State Park with three other friends on an annual fishing trip, was an exception to the rule of seamless transitions between outdoor recreation and excavative history. She said she was experiencing “some discomfort” while going back and forth between learning about enslavement at Somerset Place and hiking, fishing, and camping on the surrounding land. “I work with uninsured and unemployed people,” she shared, “and I can see a lot – I mean, they’re not out here planting the fields and doing things like that, but they’re doing things...to pay for gas and, you know, just anything.” Her words reflect an uncomfortable disconnect between the enjoyable outdoor leisure activities she was engaging in, and thinking about the hard work of survival faced by the uninsured people with whom she works; hard work that she was placing alongside the experience of enslaved people on the former plantation. For her, personal experiences with present-day oppressed populations seemed to bring her into closer contact with the site’s interpretation of slavery. This closer contact resulted in discomfort as she moved with her friends from learning about slavery to fishing, hiking, and camping.

In contrast to the visitors quoted above, who had all come to the sites from out of town, people from the local community often used the green spaces of historic sites as purely recreational space without directly engaging at all with any of the educational infrastructure available, at least during the visits we witnessed. One white couple at Somerset Place said they come there every Saturday, when the weather is good, to walk their two dogs. They had moved

to eastern North Carolina seven years ago from the northeastern US, where, noted the husband, “You don’t really have to confront slavery.” They had not taken the guided tour at Somerset Place, but had read enough of the waysides to know that they were walking on a former plantation and that the houses where enslaved people lived were very crowded. They both compared slavery to indentured servitude, and the crowded slave dwellings to tenement homes. Comparisons between slavery and indentured servitude appeared in multiple interviews. It seemed to serve as a way for visitors to downplay the brutality of enslavement, or distance themselves from that same brutality. For the two local dog-walkers, using Somerset Place as a site for dog walking did not register as uncomfortable at all. None of the available materials had prompted them to think more deeply about where they were, or how comparisons between tenement houses and slave dwellings occlude crucial aspects of both.

At Stagville, however, two dog-walkers (demographic data undisclosed) expressed deep appreciation for the site’s beauty and mission, calling it a healing place. At Vance, a white woman with her small dog laughed when asked what makes Vance Birthplace a good place to walk her dog. “There’s things for him to sniff and things for me to read,” she said, appreciating the stimulation that was present for both herself and her dog. These three dog-walkers, unlike the two at Somerset Place, seemed to have a better understanding of enslavement, and an appreciation for the sites’ outdoor spaces that did not take away from their attention to histories of racial oppression.

Overall, outdoor recreation emerged as a key way in which locals and tourists engage with historic sites. The use of historic spaces as recreational areas for local communities is important for historic sites to consider, especially sites like Somerset and Vance Birthplace that are working hard to engage more with local communities. The conjunction here is direct:

historic space is not simply next to outdoor recreation space, but *is* outdoor recreation space, sometimes instead of, or over, historic space. In this context, the visitors themselves determine if and how they will engage with excavative history. Using historic space for outdoor recreation can not only undermine but also underline connections between the past and the present.

According to respondents, historic sites are bigger than their interpretation. People, especially local people with easy access to site facilities, are using the sites in ways that go beyond conventional models of heritage interpretation and study. Their experience demonstrates how these models often intersect directly with outdoor leisure activities.

“The sun is shining”: Embodied Landscape Conjoinments between Beauty and Pain

As described in Chapter 2, the lake, the trees, the spreading fields – around Somerset Place was a central selling point in early tourist literature. Promotional literature explicitly linked the landscape’s beauty to leisure and a whitewashed history. How, then, do these landscapes appear to visitors and staff today? Are they still considered beautiful? Do the landscapes bury or excavate histories? I turn now to the visual features of the landscapes themselves, building on the previous section which examined outdoor recreational activities.

Harmful Beauty, Helpful Beauty: Staff Perspectives on Landscape and History

Dennis Owenby, landscape technician and interpreter at Vance Birthplace, spoke openly about the tension he feels as the person directly responsible for maintaining a certain kind of landscape at Vance Birthplace. In many ways, he said, making the site look nice is “a disservice to the history” – both how it would have looked in the 1800s, and the pain and trauma that happened there. “I like it when people come here and walk their dogs and say ‘It’s a beautiful space, you do a good job.’ The other side of the coin is they’re not connecting [to the excavative history], they’re pushing it out.” He continued: “We have a picnic area down here that you can

rent, and we have a lot of people that rent it and have weddings here, and I think why would you want to have a wedding where people suffered? It would be like: would you go to a concentration camp in Poland to have your wedding because there were beautiful hills nearby or whatever?” That is an uncomfortable connection, he said, for people to keep in mind.

Owenby’s response represents a beautiful landscape as pushing the excavative history work the site hopes to do out of the visitors’ minds, allowing them to instead focus only on the beauty of the site. Further, Owenby noted that a historic site today looking like it did in the 19th century would be a huge departure from the usual image of a historic site today. He explained that the landscape of a working farm or plantation would be significantly dirtier, more overgrown, and far less manicured than the sites look today. He was referencing what I term an aesthetic of authenticity: a way of managing landscape that reflects the outcome of compromises between site management, tourist infrastructures, and visitor expectations, far more than it reflects historic landscape visuals. The resulting sites reflect dominant and racialized landscape ideals that prioritize evenly-mown, green, grassy lawns and stands of thick trees to visually separate space designated as historic from the surrounding modern space (Biggs, 2022). This aesthetic of authenticity is a near-constant across historic sites in North Carolina, and creates a consistent image of historic space that more accurately reflects modern values than historic realities.

The mown grass lawns and beautiful landscape features result in all three of my research sites being very popular with portrait photographers. For some staff members, portrait photography strikes them as disrespectful to the history, particularly histories of enslavement. “I’ve seen people taking engagement photos, or taking family photos – with white photographers and white families being photographed – that’s literally like families and their kids sitting on the

steps of the slave quarters,” Cecelski noted. At Vance Birthplace, Kimberly said, many photographers come in the autumn, which is a famously beautiful time in the Appalachian South. “Photographers will pull up with...a chair or a hay bale and all kinds of stuff, and they set up little scenes, take their family photos, and leave.” She says she assumes these photos are destined for holiday cards, and reflects that, to her, this tendency is “weird. I don’t want to send out a Christmas card with my family on a hay bale in front of an early 1800s building where someone kept his blacksmithing tools or whatever, that’s just super weird.”

Khadijah McNair, assistant site manager at Stagville, described an experience that happens to her on tour fairly often. “Forty-five minutes into my tour, we’re talking about the history and trauma of slavery and someone says: ‘But, like, the trees are beautiful.’ And...it’s hard, I don’t have a response to that most of the time because, like, it *is* very beautiful here, the landscape *is* gorgeous.” McNair, understood visitor comments about beauty during a tour focused on enslavement as jarring, potentially undermining her interpretive project. Indeed, plantation museums have a long history of highlighting the beauty of trees, gardens, and other landscape elements at the expense of excavating vital stories of enslavement and Black resistance (Hanna, Alderman, et al., 2018). However, McNair acknowledges that Stagville’s beauty is also something she enjoys: sitting outside, listening to the birds, in a peaceful wooded setting. There is nuance here, she says, and neither fact has to overshadow the other.

Other staff members did not see the intersection of landscape and historical narratives as troublesome at all. “History and nature mesh together here on the lake,” said the Somerset Place site manager, Karen Hayes. At Somerset, the trees that still shade the landscape and the canals that still drain the swamp for farming are two very visible landscape-level legacies of enslavement. Along with this, the “expansiveness” of the landscape around the site, in Hayes’s

words, is incredibly helpful in allowing visitors and staff alike to visualize the scale of the original plantation. As far as the tension between difficult histories of violence and subjugation, and learning about them in a visually stunning location, Noah Janis (another Somerset Place interpreter) said that he felt that the very beauty of the space highlights the horrors that he shares during his tours. The contrast here underlines the horror of enslavement, instead of undermining that horror.

Floyd said that she hopes the topography of Vance gives visitors a sense of how slavery looked different in the mountains of western North Carolina than in other parts of the U.S. Even when visitors do not otherwise engage with the pedagogical infrastructures, Kimberly said: “I think there’s still a lot that can be taken from just interacting with nature and being on the grounds. Like, even if you learn the fact that this was a plantation, maybe they’re not actively realizing it, but when they walk our property and they see the buildings, or they’re walking in and seeing how hilly it is, not flat, stretching, sprawling plantation, we’ve already made an impact.” The landscape here becomes a sensory learning tool through which visitors can begin to internalize the fact that not all plantations looked the same.

May’s sentiments echo Floyd’s. “The natural environment – I don’t want to say [it] contrasts with the story because there’s so much beauty [in] the way that these enslaved individuals, these enslaved families were able to continue – many of them communicated over distance, we’ve found, we have some records – and they committed to marriage even knowing they could be separated...So I think that the...beauty of the natural world – they kind of hit home together in a way.” For May, the beauty of the landscape highlighted the beauty and resilience of enslaved communities.

Overall, staff identified embodied experiences of landscape – looking at beautiful trees and mountains, witnessing the open fields of a working coastal plain plantation, walking the hilly ground of a mountain plantation – as experiences with the ability to both hinder and connect visitors to the excavative history work staff are doing. As with more formalized outdoor recreational activities, moments of witness and engagement with the physical site landscapes are nuanced and difficult to pin down for staff.

Relief and Tension: Visitor Experiences with Landscape and History

Interestingly, while the majority of visitors did not speak to discomfort with outdoor recreational activities alongside excavative history, many *did* speak to a discomfort with the beauty of the sites' landscapes in relation to the histories of enslavement they were learning. One white Stagville visitor wrote on her map: “The surrounding land and antiquated barns gave me a feeling of serenity. The geography is stunning, rolling land, soft greens, a myriad of beautiful and majestic trees. But it’s like looking at a body of water and seeing the beauty on the surface and knowing that beneath the surface lies poison and scum, dead organisms and death. The story of this land and these buildings is marred by the tragic stories of the people who lived here both slave and slave holder.” Another Stagville visitor, a Black woman, reflected: “When you know the kind of pain that occurred on the land, but yet the beauty of the land...[There’s] just kind of a somber, mellow vibe, is what I feel.” Other visitors spoke about cognitive dissonance, or a strange juxtaposition between the stories they were hearing about people being enslaved and the beauty of the landscape around them. While visitors seemed largely able to move easily between registers of engagement with historic narratives and registers of outdoor recreation, the beauty of the landscapes around them was visually at odds with the narratives they were hearing. For these visitors, the landscapes did not undermine the history, but rather unsettled it. More accurately,

the beauty of the landscapes themselves was unsettled by the history the visitors were hearing, in those visitors' eyes.

Unfortunately, the fear of some staff that the landscape beauty will dilute or detract from excavative interpretation does hold water. One young white man visiting Vance Birthplace from California seemed to embody Owenby's nightmare. This visitor had never encountered physical buildings connected with enslavement before. Seeing the slave dwelling at Vance, he said it made the whole thing a little bit more "real than, you know, pages, documentaries, on TV or whatever." He continued: "It also, maybe, kind of evens things out because I think it's always portrayed so very dark – which it is, obviously. But at the same time, like – it's still such a beautiful place. The sun is shining." For this visitor, the beauty of the site and his own felt experience of the sun shining on a summer day did seem to dilute the potency of the excavative history work being done at Vance. In this case, an embodied experience of the site's landscape actually undermined staff interpretive goals.

Locals also use the beauty of these landscapes for photographs, as staff noted above. A local white photographer and the white family whom she was photographing Vance Birthplace explicitly credited the history with why they were having their family portraits done there. "Obviously the history of the houses and the buildings, they make really good backdrops," the photographer noted. She added: "A lot of the people that I've done photos for, [they] want that history, that aspect of the history, especially because most everyone I've done them for are native to this area...[we] love the history of the Appalachian Mountains. Cataloochee is another big place [to take family photographs]. Because of the history." It emerged that the photographer and the two parents of the family were all local to the area. They all remembered coming to Vance Birthplace on school or family trips, going inside the old buildings (whereas now you can

only look inside), and making candles. All three of the adults shook their heads when I ask if they've gone on the Vance tour recently. Their conceptions of the site were much more focused on the white pioneer narrative the site had espoused for years and less on the narrative of mountain slavery that the site interprets currently. It was this particular history on which they were drawing when having their family portraits done there, not what is presented today onsite. "The history," to them, was encapsulated in the beautiful log cabin and green mountain backdrops. Slavery did not factor in at all.

Reflective and Transformative: The Potential of Landscape and Leisure

Alongside the beauty of the sites as potentially undermining excavative history work, the beauty of the sites also created reflective space, particularly in the context of difficult or emotionally-challenging historical narratives. Both staff and visitors spoke to this aspect of site use. At Vance, May and Floyd appreciated being able to step outside the visitor center and emotionally-challenging to take breaks and breaths in nature. "You need to rest your emotions, sometimes. I think the beauty of the site is very helpful in that." She continued: "That's how, as staff, we engage with it: when we've had a difficult day, it is nice to be able to step outside." Staff see these landscape-based moments of pause as important for visitors as well. "A conversation that really needs to be had more is how to create reflective space, like a space where people can...take a moment to reflect if they are emotional, and can feel comfortable and safe in that space. And I think...our state parks and our landscapes offer a really great opportunity for that," said Floyd.

At Stagville, Cecelski sees a lot of opportunity with the site's outdoor spaces to incorporate healing. She mentioned reflection in nature, but turned quickly to a planned trail that would wind through part of the site that is currently unused. Interpretation on the new trail would

bring in more information about “freedom seeking and about community building and about resistance among enslaved people, partially because they are spaces that are specifically away from...spaces that are just so strongly connected to forced labor and oppression and surveillance and violence.” The planned trail would educate the public about enslaved use of wooded and secluded spaces as sites of resistance to white oversight and control *through* the use of wooded and secluded spaces.

The landscapes of these sites themselves, as well as the embodied experiences of visitors, are in excess of the interpretive goals, even as they also support, undermine, or otherwise interact with staff goals and visitor experiences. They provide spaces for outdoor recreation; for important “breathers” from the history; for deeper connection to the history and to one’s own place in it, one’s own ancestors; for alleviation and disconnection with the most difficult parts of the history. In short, as Floyd said, they serve as places to “rest one’s emotions,”.

The outdoor spaces of these sites are potent, and the potential of the sites’ beauty to help visitors approach deeper understandings of enslavement is tantalizing. “Something about the fact that all this enslavement and forced labor is happening in such a gorgeous place can be kind of jarring but also make it easier to...stop and think about it,” noted Lauren at Vance. One visitor at Vance – a white woman who was in the area to attend a wood-working workshop at a nearby craft center – engaged me directly on the topic of my project. “Why shouldn’t reconsideration of our past happen in leisure spaces? Is there no joy in thinking about reparations? Is there a space for that?” She went on to say, though, that nothing in Vance’s educational infrastructure actually mentions reparations or talking about how to then repair relationships in the present, so “I don’t know.” The physical landscapes themselves, and the emotional responses they provoke and circulate, have the potential to contribute to reflection and rest. Staff see this as compatible with

reparative memory work, even in cases where it might not be immediately obvious. However, as the Vance visitor noted, if the site's interpretation does not support said reparative memory work, the landscape can only do so much.

Towards a Reparative Leisure

Staff at all three plantation museums are already engaging intentionally with landscape and recreation. Vance Birthplace now offers audio tours so that people like the woman walking her dog can listen to more interpretation as she walks around the site. Somerset Place features as a semi-annual stop on a regional bike tour, during which participants often ask questions and take site tours during water breaks. At Stagville, the new trail offers an exciting space of potential. “[It has] potential as another entry point to our site,” said manager Cecelski. “Not just through...someone who's motivated by recreation and they become curious about [the history]...but also from the perspective of new historical narratives that we can weave into our site.” Cecelski finished: “I think we continue to kind of dream and experiment with how we can provide programming and interpretation [about] that.” Her vision of a trail that facilitates both recreation and interpretation that focuses on the agency of Black people within slavery is a radical departure from outdoor recreation that glosses over or undermines excavative history work. Here, the outdoor recreation would not only bring people *to* the site, but would move people intentionally *through* the site towards a deeper understanding of Black agency and resilience.

Bringing together leisure and excavative history at these sites can create transformative moments. I am drawn, again, to the work of artist and writer Tricia Hersey, who writes explicitly and powerfully about the transformative potency of rest as a “meticulous love practice” and an embodied rejection of grind culture, white supremacy, and binary thinking. “We connect with the

deepest parts of ourselves when we are rested,” she writes in her recent book, *Rest is Resistance* (Hersey, 2022, p. 113). Is this not what is needed? For deeper connections with ourselves and with each other in the work to dream and craft a more just world? There is beauty in these plantation museum landscapes, and there is also the power to facilitate transformative leisure and rest.

Movement & Potential for Movement Towards Racial Justice

In many of the conversations I had with both visitors and staff when talking about excavative history, emotion, and landscape I noted a strong sense of movement, or lack thereof. A paralyzing statement along the lines of “where do we go from here?” was often coupled with the movement through the landscape, emotions, and activities. The landscape and activities might engage visitors more deeply with the history or simply allow them to check out. The tension remains: what is the place for joy, for beauty, in learning a history that is deeply troubling – and that, itself, *also* has space for joy and beauty in the families, the culture, the resilience of the enslaved people?

Asked how it had felt learning this history in this place. a white female visitor at Somerset Place answered initially through movement. She began moving her body, turning first to her right (towards the Collins house) and then to her left (toward the reconstructed slave dwellings). “The juxtaposition,” she said, continuing to turn back and forth, back and forth. “It just...It really makes me think.” She was quiet for a moment, frozen mid-turn as she gazed at the slave dwellings. “And how we’re still benefitting from slavery today,” she concluded. Her words seemed disjointed, as if she were only speaking a fraction of what she was feeling. Her movements communicated unspoken depths beneath the surface.

Another white female visitor at Somerset Place spoke at length about how the beauty of Somerset Place contrasted with its histories of enslavement and oppression. “It’s both/and,” she said, referring to the beauty and the pain and echoing the language of juxtaposition, above. The tour, she said, had given her new insights into the financial and reproductive aspects of enslavement. Like the turning woman, she too connected enslavement and the exploitation of Black lives and labor to the present day, but articulated more clearly the tension she felt. “How can we ever fix it at this point?” she wondered aloud, her brow furrowed. “Reparations? What could that even look like?”

A sense of movement, felt and enacted, illuminates multiple perspectives and situations, as with the first woman’s continual turning between the Collins house and the slave dwellings. The movement through Somerset’s landscape and history that the guided tour facilitated for both of these women deepened their understanding of the lived and felt realities of enslaved people – particularly, for the second woman, enslaved women. Movement on multiple levels enabled them to experience new angles of the past.

However, the first woman’s continual turning can also be seen as a kind of paralysis. The paralysis is further articulated in her pensive, slightly despairing comment – “And we’re still benefitting from slavery today” – and is echoed in the words of the second woman – “How can we ever fix it at this point?” At the root of both of these moments is a kind of helplessness, and a kind of hopelessness. What can be done, they seem to ask, especially by individual people, against the weight of such a history that continues to shape our present moment?

For staff at my research sites, moments of visitor paralysis or disengagement were actually articulated as moments of potential: as the future possibility of delayed movement. There was a hopeful element, a spaciousness that allowed for timelines of learning and

deepening understanding beyond the confines of the tour, or even the physical borders of the sites. Perhaps on their hundred-and-first hike, a local walking group will finally read the informational sign about Horton Grove and decide to take a guided tour. Maybe the two children in the family having their portraits done at Vance will look back on their childhood family photos and wonder about where they were taken. The possibility that more engagement will happen in the future is tempting. What is *too* much responsibility to place on the visitor to ask these questions? How will visitors even know what questions to ask? And who will be there, at this nebulous future time, to answer them?

However, this possibility of future movement also creates a space of possibility, leaving room for visitor responses in excess of the bounded time they spent at the site or within its physical boundaries. Change is seen here as cumulative, and shifts in perspectives, unbounded by time and place, do not necessarily happen all at once. Even the paralysis becomes a kind of movement: a kind of possible movement. Here, the tensions that exist between outdoor recreation and excavative histories can be generative. Tension in the body can lead us to where we need to go, where we need to loosen, what we need to practice. What *could* reparations look like? Can plantation museums answer this question? What is needed?

Funding as Constraint to Reparative Leisure

Funding came up multiple times in interviews with both staff and visitors, as both groups acknowledge that there is only so much that public historic sites can do without more resources. Vance Birthplace only has three full-time employees: Floyd, May, and Owenby are responsible for interpretation and visitor engagement, even as they are also responsible for keeping the bathrooms clean and maintaining the property. Numerous visitors at Stagville noted its exceptional work needed more funding to reach its full potential. “[I’m] comparing this to the

Whitney,” one woman said, who noted that she had recently visited the privately-owned plantation in Louisiana that is famous for its thorough and excavative interpretation that centers enslaved stories. “There could be more [at Stagville] with the [information] boards...We’ve learned much more from the Whitney Plantation and from the Civil Rights Museum in Greensboro.” Funding public historic sites within a regional and national network of tourist attractions is key in the project of continuing to support excavative history.

Director of the Historic Sites Program, Michelle Lanier, encouraged inquiry into the source of funding for North Carolina’s public historic sites. Many of the state’s sites work with nonprofit friends’ groups that do varying amounts of fundraising. Nonetheless, the majority of the funding comes from the North Carolina legislature. “We need more resources, fiscally, from the legislature to do more innovative work and invest in our cultural and natural resources for the State,” noted Lanier. She added that this reliance on the General Assembly greatly influences the contexts in which decisions are made about what kinds of history to display and interpret. “It’s who’s sitting in the seat of Governor, it’s who’s sitting in the Legislature...[and] who are their donors? Who’s at the helm within our departments?” Understanding these sites within their economic and socio-political contexts is vital exerts great influence on who is telling these stories, and what stories are being told.

Next Steps: Landscape and Leisure as Transformative Tools

Lanier hopes that visitors to North Carolina’s historic sites move “slowly.” She advises: “Check in with yourself before you go onto the space. Think about where you’re going. Listen...[and] look for things that are compelling or intriguing, or interesting, or puzzling.” She encourages a perspective of being in a “long-term relationship” with the space, and invites visitors to speak back to the sites they visit, expressing gratitude for positive or transformative

experiences and expressing a need if their visit was lacking. “I’m hoping that people will really continuously have curiosity about what does it take to invest in an ecosystem of memory-keeping that has an equity lens, that has equity and inclusion as its priority, true inclusion. That is paradigm-shifting work.”

Despite funding constraints, the North Carolina Department of Natural & Cultural Resources is currently dedicated to expanding and updating exhibits and interpretation across the state through research partnerships with state institutions and increased local community engagement. Staff goals at the three sites studied herein testify to the importance of excavative history work. Indeed, the staff are a highly-performing group of dedicated people thinking critically about how to engage the public as they balance excavative and reparative memory work alongside leisure and enjoyment.

A central question of this chapter is how to hold visitor emotions in caring, rigorous ways, especially around questions of white guilt, paralysis, and what comes next. White people are already coming to plantation museums, uniquely positioning these sites to speak about slavery with key demographics (Eldar & Jansson, 2021). Training and support are required (Eldar & Jansson, 2021), as is funding. However, acknowledging that these sites are often used for recreation, alongside or in between engagement with excavative history work, could empower staff to engage even more intentionally with landscape and outdoor recreation.

I put forward the conjoinment between spaces of excavative history and spaces of outdoor recreation as a generative juxtaposition that has potential to hold visitors with care and intention. For some people, this might look like spaces to mourn, to celebrate, and to connect with ancestors of blood or spirit. For others, particularly white people, this might look like moving more individuals towards action and away from white guilt, apathy, and paralysis. Site

landscapes are, in fact, already doing this sometimes, but not always. Intentionality is key in building a different kind of leisure: a reparative leisure, building on reparative memory work that combines landscape, excavative history, and movement towards justice. The moments of tension, as well as the moments of alignment, produce spaces of incredible possibility. Lanier notes: “We can leave a site of trauma whole – even more whole than we were when we came there...Finding medicine in these places that represent the most diabolical power systems and inhumane treatment that we can imagine – to be able to leave an experience like that more whole than we were more with a sense of expansiveness and possibility and connection.” In concert with work on regenerative memorialization (Sheehan et al., 2021) reparative leisure as a concept acknowledges the mobilities of memory work, as plantation museum visitors move between spaces, activities, and registers of engagement. Reparative leisure also expands the range of activities that can be understood as making up reparative memory work, and offers another opening for “self-healing” (Sheehan, 2020).

I follow the guidance of my interlocutors – specifically the professional public historians who care for and interpret these sites – to crack open the concept of leisure. There are inherent tensions and difficulties when bringing together two apparently distinct uses of space. However, spending time in beautiful places can include engaging deeply with historical concepts, sometimes with difficult and emotional engagement. Intentionally seeing moments of leisure, like moments of emotional engagement, as moments of transformation, can help chart the next steps for plantation museums. Continuing to incorporate, instead of separate, landscape, recreation, and excavative histories in both scholarship and in practice, can begin to craft a new kind of plantation museum: one in which leisure enables, not hinders, a new kind of movement towards justice.

CHAPTER 5: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF PLANTATION MUSEUMS

In this dissertation, I set out to answer the following questions: what is revealed when we examine landscapes and infrastructures of outdoor recreation as conjoined with the excavative historic interpretation being done at three plantation museums in North Carolina today? How can we understand these strange conjoinments as products of a particular time, and what do these conjoinments produce today for staff and visitors?

In Chapter 2, I examined the historic conditions for conjoinment between spaces of excavative memory work and spaces of leisure recreation. The mainstream historic preservation movement grew and flourished in the US during the 1950s and '60s through gendered and racialized articulations of historic value and management. This movement grew in tandem with a burgeoning but segregated domestic tourism infrastructure. Dependent on tourism as it was, historic preservation was nonetheless more valued than tourism. The tangled histories of Somerset Place and Pettigrew State Park demonstrate how landscapes of preservation and tourism were conjoined through racialization and devaluation of slave cabins. The (mis)use of Black spaces facilitated conjoinment during Somerset's long road to becoming an official state historic site between 1950 and 1965. More broadly, I locate the conditions of conjoinment at a mid-twentieth century nexus of race, gender, and a rapidly changing sociopolitical climate. In so doing, the chapter historicizes today's plantation museums as products of a sociopolitical moment steeped in racialized oppression that intimately shaped historic sites.

Whereas Chapter 2 interrogates conjoinment as a landscape-level condition at plantation museums, Chapter 3 explores the embodied experience of conjoinment among site visitors today. How did visitors experience that interaction between outdoor leisure and excavative, sometimes challenging, memory work? Drawing on feminist and emotional geographies, my novel application of participatory cartography empowered participants to map their own emotions as they moved throughout each site. Marked with sad, medium, and happy face stickers, the maps acted as heuristic devices for subsequent interviews that opened onto each visitor's emotional and active experience. Participatory mapping and interviews provided rich data on the embodied experiences of visitors. The analytic possibilities of such emotion mapping methods at plantation museums are numerous, placing agency with the visitor-participants and revealing how emotions shift, stick, and overlap in historic space.

Building from Chapter 3's focus on visitor perspectives, Chapter 4 brings those into conversation with site managers and argues that outdoor leisure and deep engagement with difficult histories are not necessarily irreconcilable antagonists battling for control over these conjoined spaces. Nor are these two landscape functions mutually-exclusive experiences that irrevocably weaken the other. Rather, interviews with site managers inform my argument that the two functions simultaneously and generatively constitute one another. Drawing on the perspectives of public historians at work in North Carolina, I develop a concept of reparative leisure that allows room for a range of experiences and opens toward the future. Instead of the absence of work or effort, leisure becomes a transformative space of embodied and emotional movement that can shift personal perspectives.

This is not to say that outdoor leisure and reparative memory work always coexist unproblematically. There are moments when excavative memory work is undoubtedly

undermined by the slippage and proximity between spatialized recreation and historic interpretation. Importantly, these are not moments when my research sites are aiming to entertain instead of educate, as is the case at other plantation museums (Potter et al., 2020). At those plantation museums that are not engaging in excavative history work, or that continue to host events like haunted houses that inevitably occlude histories of slavery (Potter et al., 2020), reparative leisure is, perhaps, much farther down the road. However, even at my research sites, the physical conjoinment between spaces of outdoor recreation and spaces of reparative memory work produce emotional responses that sometimes dilute excavative memory work, from jovial hikers shifting mood of a Stagville tour, to the feeling of sun on one's face during a picnic undermining the horrors of enslavement.

Focusing on embodied responses acknowledges the experiential aspects of learning and remembering at historic plantation sites. Thinking about the body also attends to an excess of interpretive discourses. In other words, the more-than-representational aspects of heritage landscapes and experiences emerge as analytical openings. Heritage is embodied, cultural, and performative. Foregrounding the body in examinations of heritage spaces can lead us to the more-than-representational aspects of historic preservation that are crucial to study. Bodies also guide us to the particularity and the granularity of visitor experiences, showing us how visitors are reacting to plantation museums.

Reparative leisure, by which I mean the possible connections between outdoor leisure and excavative history work, allows space for a multitude of emotions. Incorporating reparative leisure into sites recognizes that different communities and groups of people engage with plantation museum spaces in different ways. It offers a management framework that opens new interpretive possibilities. How could a group of dog-walkers be effectively engaged, before,

during, or after their walk across Somerset's grounds? How could the jovial group of hikers be brought into conversation about the landscape through which they are walking and the commemorative space in which they have arrived? From another angle, how can historic sites draw on the natural beauty of their landscapes to move visitors toward justice, instead of away from it? Reparative leisure points to a shift in plantation museum frameworks. Instead of working to make visitors happy, or even making visitors sad, it points to a goal of helping visitors *move* internally (emotionally) and externally (across the landscape).

Importantly, reparative leisure is explicitly not a one-size-fits-all approach. There is not a single way of experiencing a plantation museum because each visitor comes with their own embodied experiences, memories, and expectations. In a very real way, the fact that we all have different bodies means we will all have different experiences and different ways of engaging with these commemorative landscapes. How does one manage for specific experiences when the experiences themselves are always in excess of the management framework? These questions will continue to arise for historic site staff. However, this lack of a straightforward script, I argue, is where movement begins. Reparative leisure asks staff and visitors alike what it means to understand histories at embodied levels, and then to act from that understanding. For scholars of heritage and memory studies, reparative leisure offers an opening into new analytical directions when studying visitor engagement with plantation museums.

Incorporating reparative leisure into site design is not simple. Plantation museums require significant and sustained management support, employee training, and funding structures both to interpret enslavement effectively and to tie those interpretations to present racial inequalities and violence. Yet, plantation museums occupy a valuable position of authority and attract a wide range of people, particularly white people, who might not otherwise engage at all with narratives

of slavery (Eldar & Jansson, 2021). I suggest that the spaces of leisure and beauty of these plantation museums have the potential to strike a tender balance, supporting visitors – particularly white visitors – into a space of bravery from which these visitors can listen, learn, and move.

Rooted in historical contexts of oppression and dominant hegemonic thought, the conjunction of outdoor leisure spaces and excavative history work generate a productive tension. Moments of tension are visible in intense emotions displayed by visitors, including anger, grief, paralysis, and even fear. Alongside public historians, I also see these conjunctions as potent moments of possibility. If handled with care and adequate funding, outdoor leisure can support excavative history through creating spaces of reflection, rest, dreaming, and other ways of connecting with both the past and the self. The conjunctions can let us write new stories of these lands, with these lands; of each other, with each other.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDES & PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION GRIDS

Interview Guide: Visitors (18+)

What brought you here today?

Have you been here before?

- (If so) How many times/what brings you back?
- (If not) First impressions?

What else are you doing today?

How do you see this site in relationship to slavery?

[Utilizing the map as starting point] What was the transition like between these two spaces/emotions? / I see you marked this space as [insert emotion here]. Why? / I see you didn't mark any emotions over here. Why not?

Is there anything else about your experience here today that you'd like to share with me?

Interview Guide: Visitors (15-17)

What brought you here today?

Have you been here before?

- (If so) How many times/what brings you back?
- (If not) First impressions?

What else are you doing today?

[Utilizing the map as starting point] What was the transition like between these two spaces/emotions? / I see you marked this space as [insert emotion here]. Why? / I see you didn't mark any emotions over here. Why not?

Is there anything else about your experience here today that you'd like to share with me?

Interview Guide: Visitors (7-14)

Have you been here before?

- (If so) What were you excited for today?
- (If not) What was your favorite thing to do here today?

[Utilizing the map as a starting point] What were you doing here to make you feel this way? / Why did you put this sticker here?

Interview Guide: Site managers and staff

Please describe your position here.

How long have you worked here?

What made you interested in working here?

What kinds of changes to the site have you seen/done while working here (could be physical, interpretive)?

How do you see this site in relationship to slavery?

What do you hope people do at this site? What do you hope people get out of this site?

How do you see the relationship between the site's landscape and the history you teach here?

What do you see as the most important part of this site?

[If in a position of power, i.e. site managers or landscape technicians] What are your long-term goals for the site?

How have you seen people using this site?

- Is this how you intended that space/this site to be used?
- Has anything surprised you about how visitors use different parts of the site?
- Are there any parts of the site you wish visitors would use more/differently/less?

How do you think recreational activities like picnicking, walking, playing/spending time in nature impact learning history here?

What is the balance between “fun” and “history” here? How do you balance it? Is this something you think about?

Describe what you hope children get from this site.

Do you see a connection between how the landscape is maintained and the visitor experience?

Is there anything else about your experience here today that you'd like to share with me?

Interview Guide: NC Historic Sites program staff

Please describe your position here.

How long have you worked here?

What made you interested in working here?

What kinds of changes to the program have you seen/done while working here (could be physical, interpretive)?

How do you see the NC Historic Sites Program in relationship to slavery?

What do you hope people do at NC state historic sites? What do you hope people get out of these sites?

How do you see the relationship between the sites' landscapes and the history they teach?

What do you see as the most important part of the Historic Sites Program?

[If in a position of power] What are your long-term goals for the program?

How do you think recreational activities like picnicking, walking, playing/spending time in nature impact learning history at historic sites?

What is the balance between "fun" and "history?" How do you hope the sites balance it? Is this something you think about?

Describe what you hope children get from NC Historic Sites.

Do you see a connection between how the landscapes are maintained and visitor experiences?

Is there anything else about your experience here today that you'd like to share with me?

Participant Observation Guide: Guided Tours

Site:

Date:

General notes: (i.e. weather, special events, # of people on tour)

Tour Guide	Mentions of Other Activities <i>Does the tour guide refer to picnic areas, walking trails?</i>	Mentions of Exterior Landscape <i>Does the tour guide refer to spaces outside of the historic buildings?</i>	Participant Questions <i>What kinds of questions are being asked by tour participants?</i>	Children <i>How are children being engaged/engaging themselves?</i>

Participant Observation Guide: Spaces

Site:

Date:

General notes: (*i.e. weather, special events*)

Location <i>What space(s) are in my view? What are their intended uses?</i>	Participants <i>How many people are here? Are they in family groups, or individuals?</i>	Activities <i>What are people doing? Similar or diverse activities? How are people behaving (laughing? eating? listening/reading? playing?)</i>	Movement <i>How/Are people moving between spaces? How/Does behavior shift between spaces?</i>	Children <i>How are children being engaged/engaging themselves?</i>

APPENDIX 2: Qualitative Data Codes

Main Themes	Sub-Groups
Children: References to children and childhood; encompassed both future and past	Children: Enslaved
	Children: Other memory
	Children: Perspective
	Children: Reason
	Children: Responsibility
	Children: Site Memory
Learning: The activity of learning something about history at a historic site	Learning: Excitement
	Learning: Tangibility
	Learning: Identity
	Learning: Complex
Museum: The resources, tours, and overall educational infrastructure of the historic site	Museum: Bad
	Museum: Built Environment
	Museum: Funding
	Museum: Good
Nature: Natural beauty, leisure in nature, landscapes of memory	Nature: Beauty
	Nature: Experience
	Nature: Relaxation/Leisure
Personal Relationship: Personal relationships of participants to the sites and/or the histories	PR: Genealogy
	PR: Locals/Former locals
	PR: Long-time employee
	PR: Not us
	PR: Recreational
Race: Racial structures/justice/injustice in the U.S. today and through time	[N/A]
Relationship Between Landscape/Leisure & History: Mentions of how landscapes and leisure practices supported or undermined teaching and/or learning about histories of enslavement	RBLH: Connected
	RBLH: Tension
Slavery: References to slavery as an institution and as an experience	Slavery: Comparisons
	Slavery: Important
	Slavery: Mixed
	Slavery: Sad
Then & Now: Differences between the past and the present	T&N: Facts
	T&N: Relationship
	T&N: Resilience
	T&N: Unfavorable comparisons
Vacation/tourism: If the participant(s) arrived at the site through or on a vacation or outdoor tourism activity	V/T: Blue Ridge Parkway
	V/T: Pettigrew State Park
	V/T: TLC
	V/T: Other

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