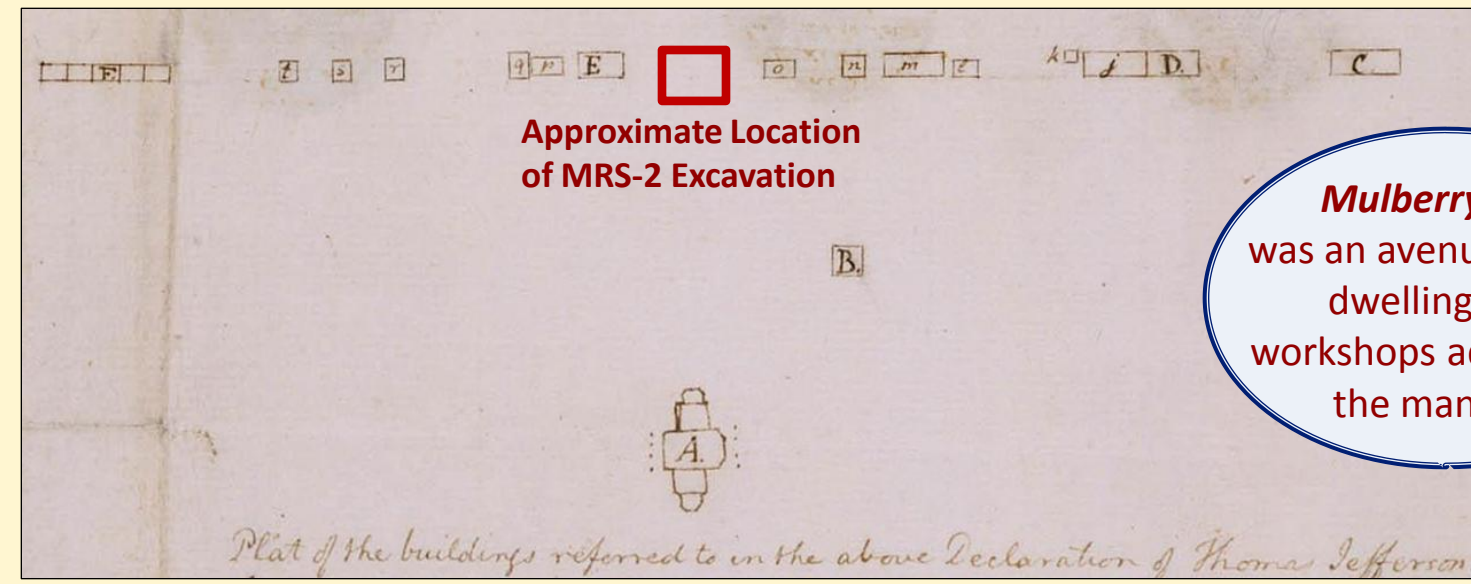


Monticello Before the Mansion: A Comparative Study of Early Domestic and Industrial Structures on Mulberry Row

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1. Overview

Located at the core of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello Plantation, Mulberry Row was a dynamic, bustling landscape from the 1770s through the 1820s. Evolving to fit the needs of the plantation, Jefferson changed the number, layout, and function of the structures on Mulberry Row multiple times during his life. Historical documents provide snapshots of these configurations, the most detailed of which is Jefferson's Mutual Assurance Declaration.¹ It illustrates and describes seventeen structures standing on Mulberry Row in 1796 and demonstrates Jefferson's endeavor towards a highly-ordered landscape.



Mulberry Row was an avenue of slave dwellings and workshops adjacent to the mansion.

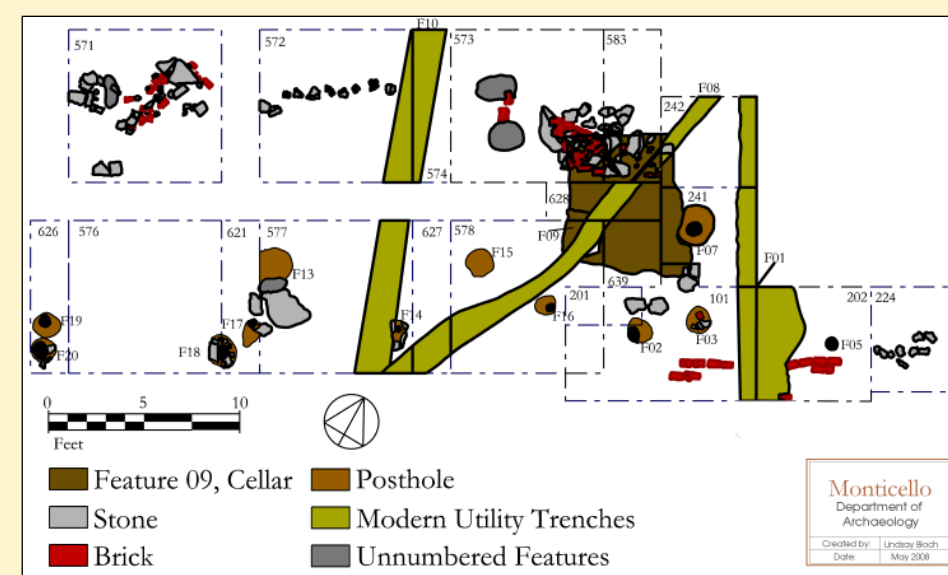
During excavations in the 1980s, Dr. William Kelso uncovered the remains of many structures documented in 1796 and several additional buildings not present on Jefferson's plat. Excavators unearthed a cellar for one such building, designated as **Mulberry Row Structure 2 (MRS-2)**, which is the focus of this poster. No historical documents can be linked to this structure, yet analysis of the archaeological assemblages from this area provides clues to its construction. In addition, this site provides a glimpse into the configuration of Mulberry Row as it existed prior to Jefferson's final, formalized vision.

Therefore, in this poster we:

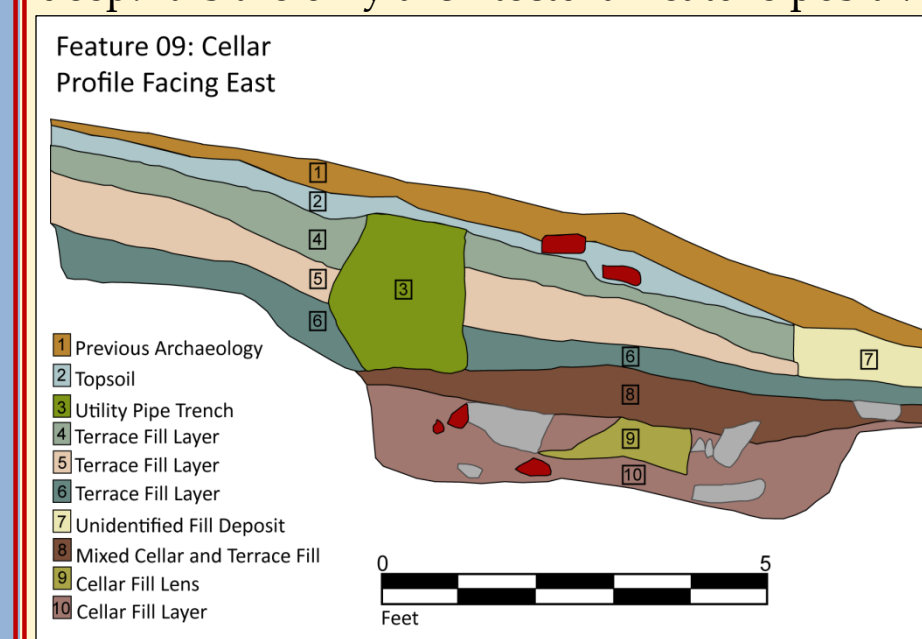
- Determine the phases of occupation at the MRS-2 site
- Explore the position of MRS-2 within the Mulberry Row landscape

2. Site Details

The MRS-2 site, located between Building E and Building o, features a cellar, postholes from two Jefferson-period fence lines, brick stair supports, and 20th-century utility trenches. The structure is estimated to match the size of the larger Mulberry Row dwellings, and possibly measured 20 x 12 feet.

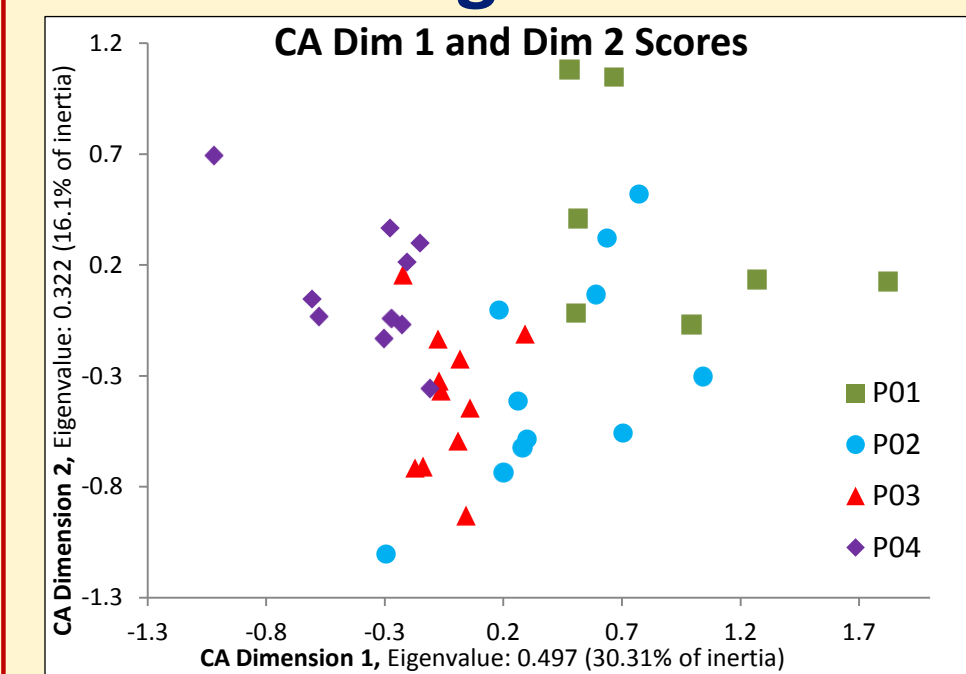


No foundation or posthole remains were positively identified as being part of MRS-2. Sealed by several layers of terracing fill, the 6-by-6 foot cellar is approximately 1.2 feet deep. It is the only architectural feature positively identified as part of MRS-2.

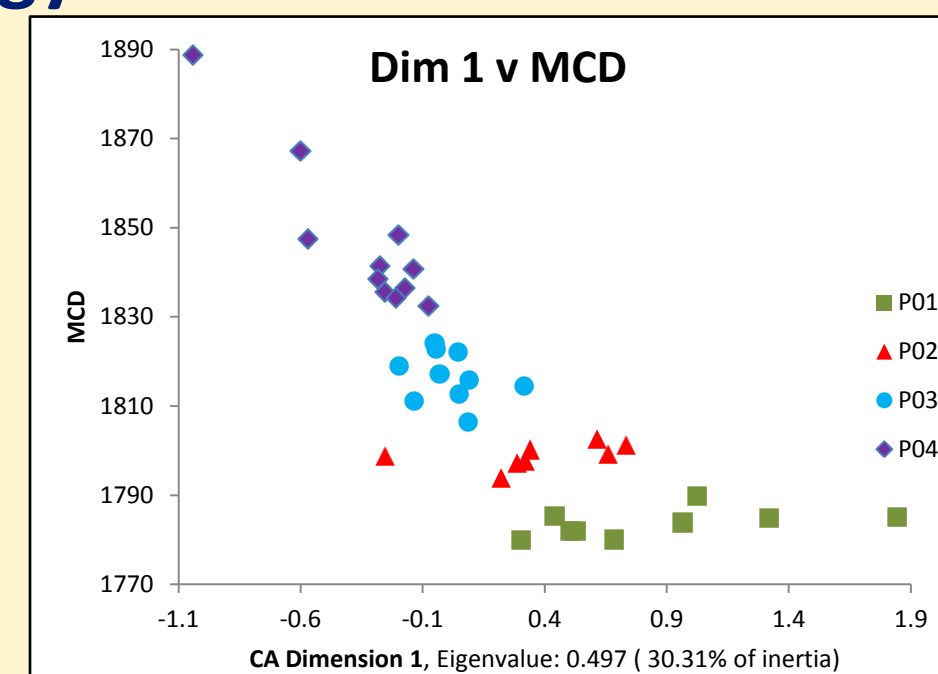


The cellar fill contained domestic artifacts typical of other Mulberry Row dwellings. Some brick and stone rubble was recovered from the cellar, possibly the remains of the building's foundation. A mean ceramic date (MCD) of 1799 of the cellar fill is remarkably close to the drawing of the 1796 Insurance Plat. It is possible that MRS-2 was demolished only shortly before Jefferson drafted the plat.

3. Establishing a Site Chronology



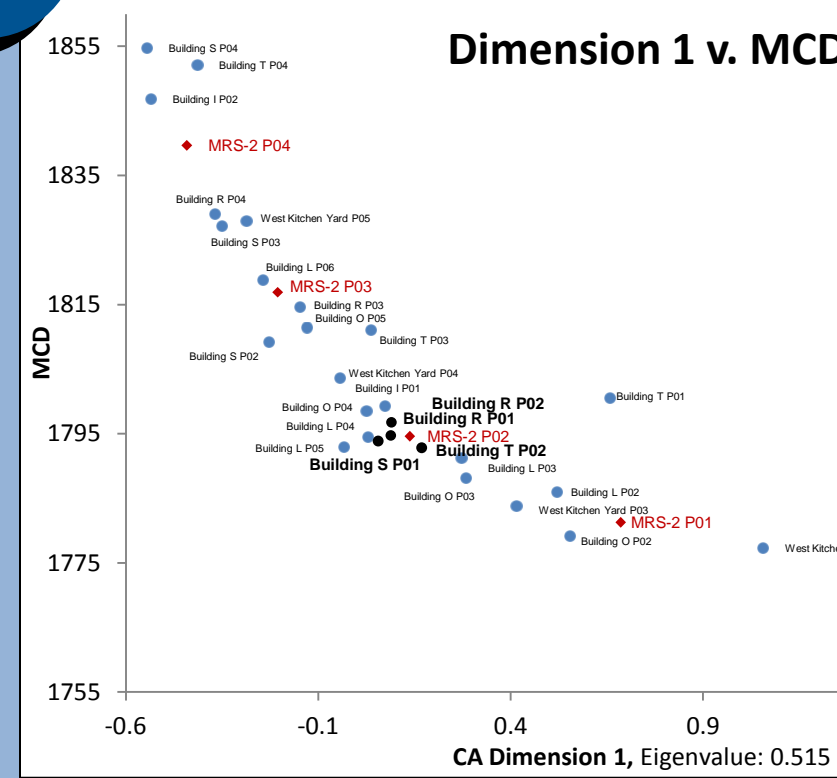
Correspondence Analysis (CA) is a statistical method that analyzes numerous variables and graphs similar assemblages near one another.



We employed correspondence analysis (CA) to investigate the ceramic attributes of the MRS-2 assemblages. Using both CA and MCD data, we grouped the site assemblages into four phases of deposition believed to be broadly contemporary.² Only the last phase post-dates Jefferson's ownership of Monticello. The corresponding dates for the four phases are represented in the table at right.

Phase	MCD	Inverse Variance MCD	TPQ	TPQ p90	Ceramic Count
P01	1781.265	1791.251	1820	1775	360
P02	1794.604	1795.483	1820	1775	117
P03	1816.906	1801.167	1840	1820	564
P04	1839.651	1807.422	1840	1820	1691

4.



We can see that our phases from MRS-2 line up well with the overall trend of Mulberry Row Sites.

How does MRS-2 fit in the landscape of Mulberry Row?

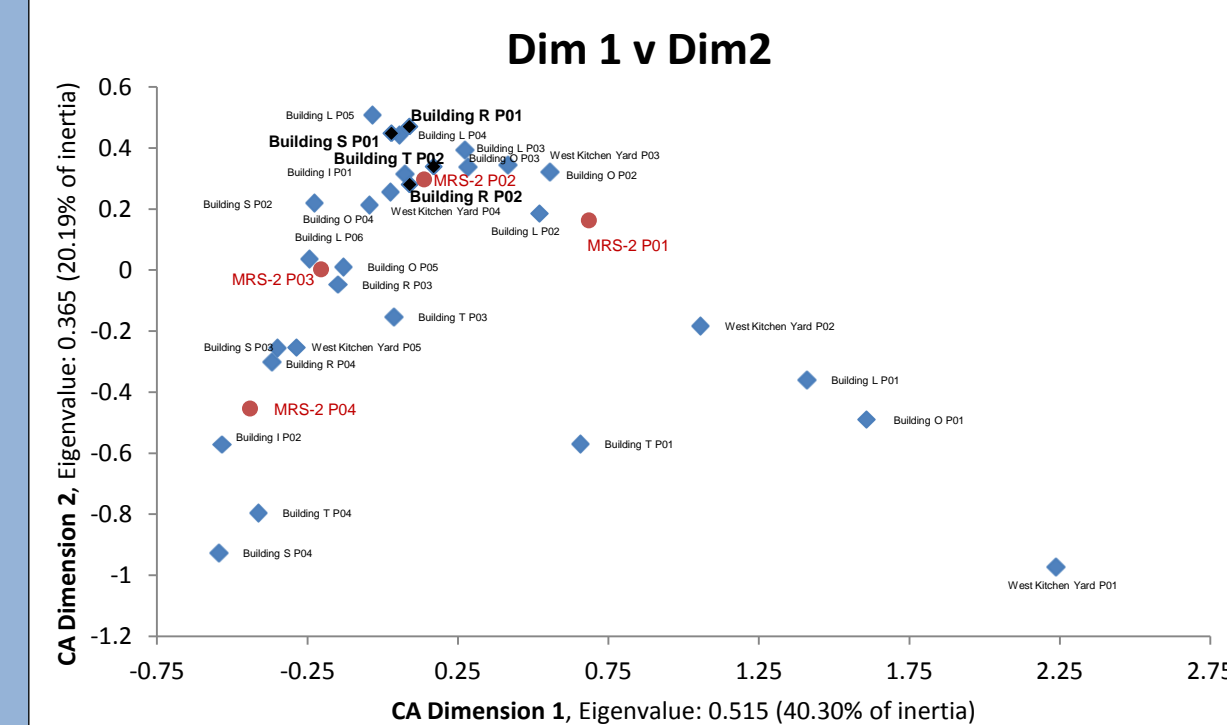
To see how MRS-2 fits into the larger Monticello landscape, we entered the phase data into a larger correspondence analysis with other phased sites from Mulberry Row. The two graphs show us how well the MRS-2 phases fit in the overall trend, and which other sites' phases are most similar to MRS-2.

Dimension 1 v. MCD

We can see in the CA results that four other sites' phases correspond closely to the MRS-2 phase 2 cellar: **Building R P01**, **Building R P02**, **Building S P01**, and **Building T P02**. These are the mid-Monticello phases of the known habitation sites further to the east on Mulberry Row. The fact that MRS-2 phase 2 is similar to these buildings and distinct from industrial buildings such as Building I suggests that MRS-2 was likely a habitation site.

Dimension 1 v. Dimension 2

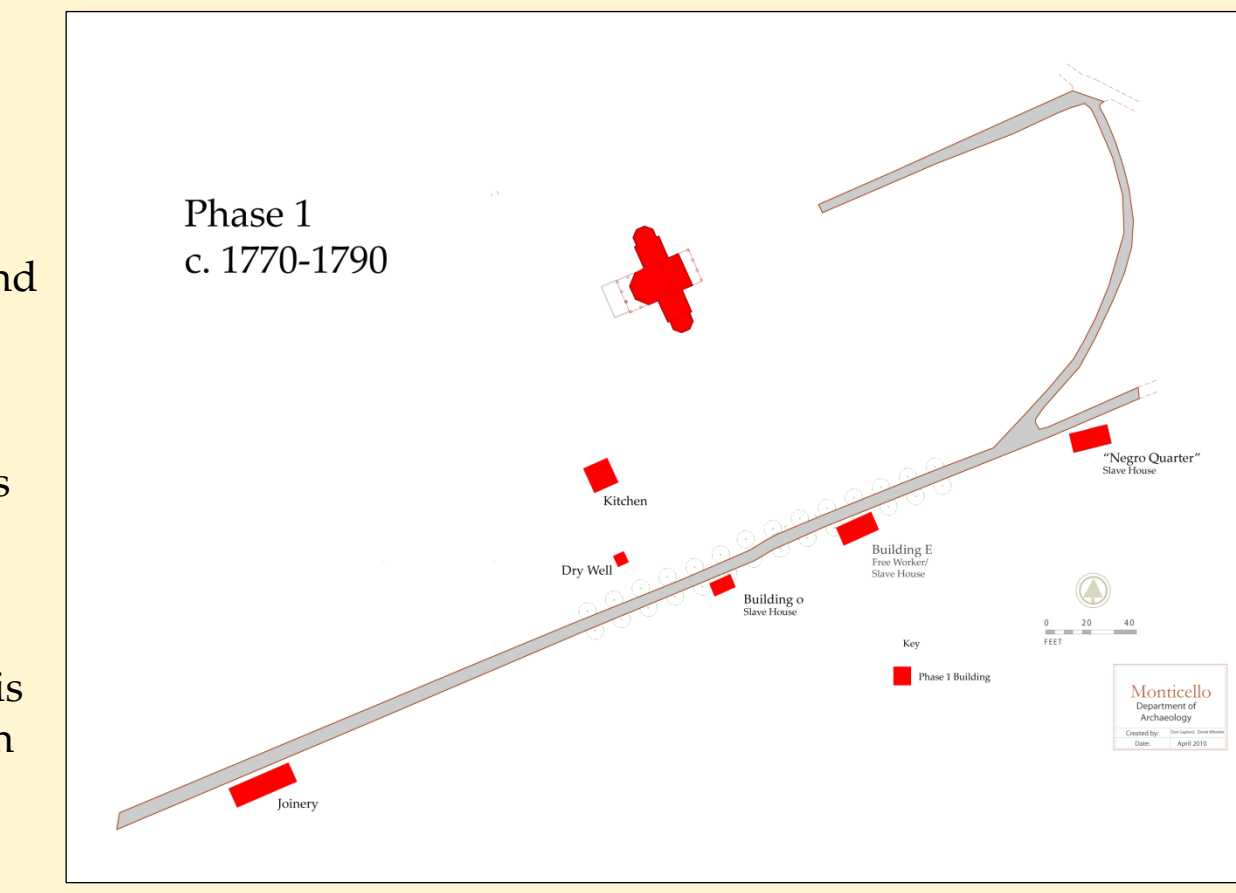
The Dimension 1 v. Dimension 2 graph on the right illustrates the two major CA axes along which the Mulberry Row phase data are distributed. The ascending data on the left half of the graph are later phases. The right side is made up of early phases and the cluster at the top illustrates the height of Mulberry Row occupation during the middle phase.



5. The Changing Mulberry Row Landscape

Phase 1:

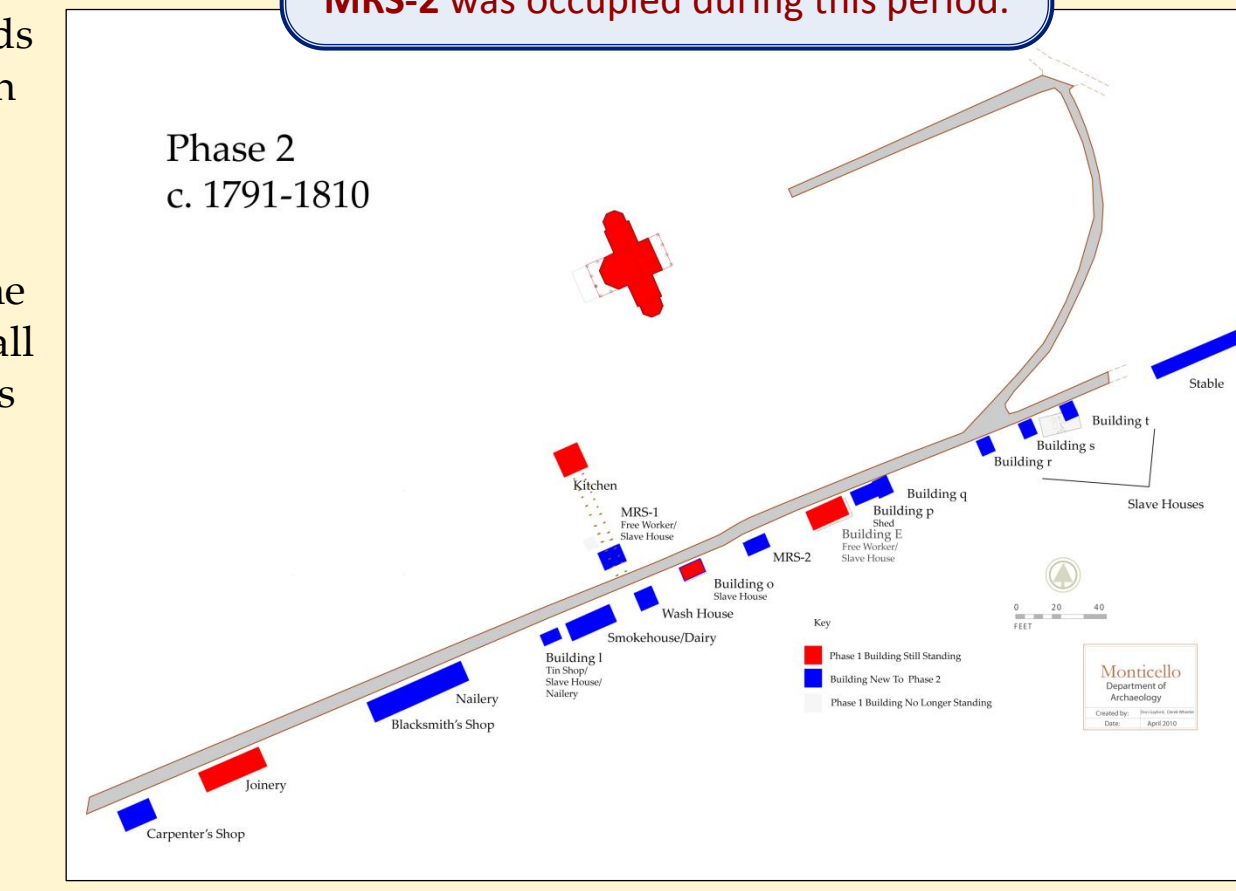
The earliest phase of Mulberry Row consists of fewer buildings and less obvious spatial organization than later phases. The first Monticello mansion was constructed during this phase and the prime function of Monticello plantation at this point was the cultivation of tobacco through swidden agriculture. The buildings that housed workers were larger, barracks-style, log houses that contrast with later Buildings *r*, *s*, and *t* which were designed as single family lodgings.³ The joinery, the kitchen, and the dry well are the major non-habitation features of Mulberry Row during this period and these structures were all necessary for the construction and basic functions of the early tobacco plantation.



The second phase of Mulberry Row's landscape configuration represents the peak of activity on the mountaintop. MRS-2 was occupied during this period.

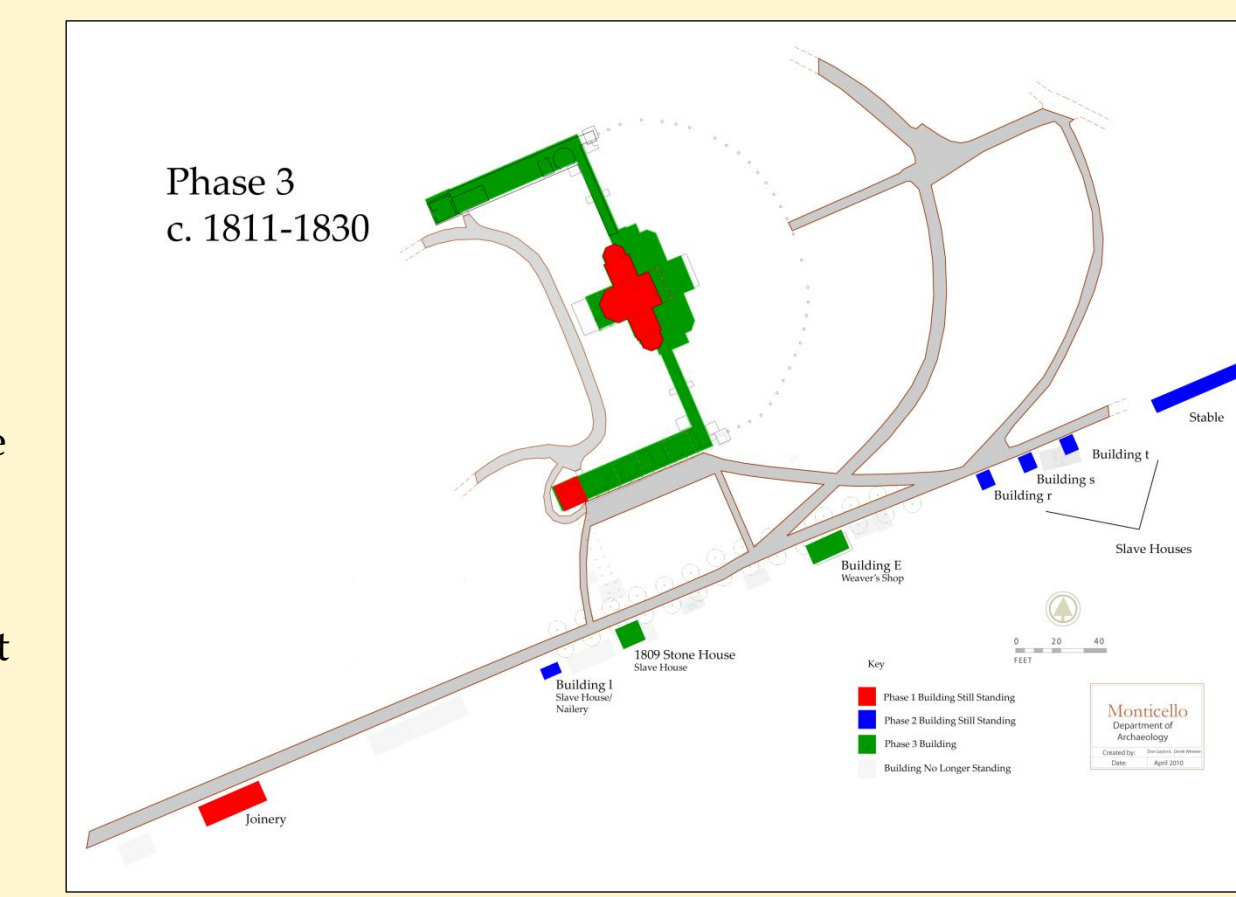
Phase 2:

The boom period of construction along Mulberry Row corresponds with the construction of the second Monticello mansion and much of the industrial activity conducted on Monticello plantation. Jefferson's vision for the plantation came fitfully to life during phase 2, and, not coincidentally, the most buildings are present during this time. The only building abandoned in this period is the original, off-axis "Negro Quarter," which is replaced by three small cabins: *r*, *s*, and *t*. This represents an important shift from barracks or duplex housing to single family housing. MRS-1 and MRS-2, though never included on Jefferson's plats, date to this period as well. It is likely that these were constructed to house some of the many workers located on Mulberry Row, only to be removed as soon as other options became available in the dependencies attached to the house or elsewhere on the mountain as Mulberry Row was rearranged. MRS-2 was possibly in the way of the pathway from the end of the all-weather passage to the garden, hence its removal prior to the next construction phase.



Phase 3:

With the completion of Monticello II and the south dependencies, the number of buildings along Mulberry Row decreased significantly. Buildings *r*, *s*, and *t* remained occupied until the sale of Monticello in 1831. The buildings closer to the dependencies, Building E and the 1809 Stone House, reflect more rigidity and permanence than the earlier post-in-ground structures along Mulberry Row⁴ that one of Jefferson's contemporaries pointed out "appear poor and their cabins form a most unpleasant contrast with the palace that rises so near them."⁵ Phase 3 represents somewhat of a compromise between the housing needs of the plantation and the desire for a formalized plan.



6. Discussion

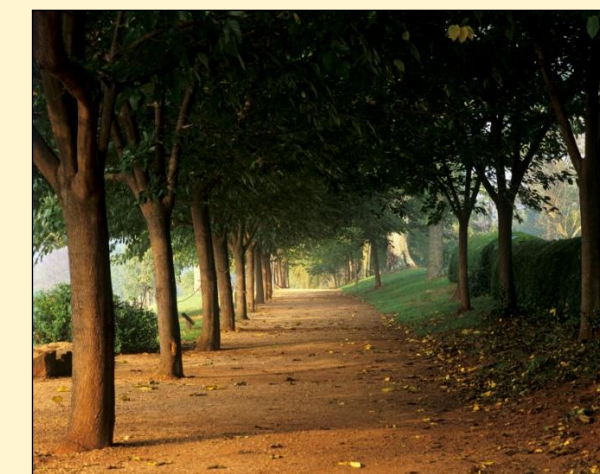
Previously believed to date to the first phase of Monticello, our analysis shows that MRS-2 was likely occupied during Mulberry Row Phase 2. Given its similarities to other slave quarters, based on both temporal and artifactual parallels, MRS-2 was likely used as a dwelling and not as a workshop or storage building.



However, the occupants of MRS-2 remain a mystery. The location of MRS-2 on the eastern half of Mulberry Row suggests that the occupants, like those nearby, worked in the mansion. Similarly, the artifacts found at MRS-2 are very similar to other slave quarters, particularly Buildings *r*, *s*, and *t*. Yet a nagging question still remains: can we identify the inhabitants of MRS-2 as slaves or were they free white workers? We know from numerous Jefferson documents that stone masons, carpenters, and wood joiners were hired to work on the construction of the Monticello mansion. Is it possible that one of these workers dwelt in MRS-2? The presence of the cellar, much larger than the sub-floor pits found in Mulberry Row slave quarters, hints at this possibility.⁶

The Highlights:

- Through ceramic and CA analysis we established phases of occupation at the MRS-2 site
- We can confidently place MRS-2 in the Monticello Phase 2 landscape configuration



Future Research

Future analysis made possible by NEH funding will investigate faunal assemblages from MRS-2, contributing to our understanding of changing diets amongst the enslaved and elites of Monticello. Building on the research presented here, MRS-2 will be further analyzed within the greater context of the Monticello Plantation landscape.

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