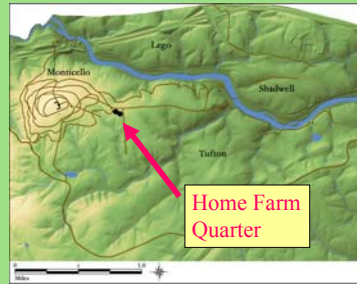


Methods in the Analysis of Slave-Occupied Plowzone Sites at Monticello

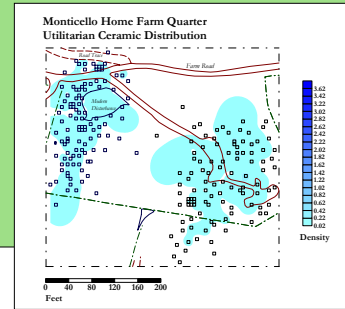
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The Monticello Home Farm Quarter (44AB442) is a domestic site on the eastern flank of Monticello Mountain. Its dwellings housed enslaved African-Americans and an overseer on Thomas Jefferson's 5,000 acre plantation in Albemarle County, Virginia. The Home Farm Quarter was occupied from around 1750 to 1805 or slightly later. During this time, both the agricultural regime and the residential pattern of agricultural workers evolved, moving away from a tobacco-based centralized system to a small-grain, wheat-based system in which workers lived and labored in more dispersed tasks and areas.



Home Farm Quarter

These distribution maps show that ceramics used on the table are much more abundant than utilitarian ceramics at the Home Farm Quarter. The very minimal presence of utilitarian ceramics mimics the distribution of pearlware. This might imply increased food storage or bulk processing in the latest (pearlware) period on the site.



Neither the utilitarian/table ceramic distributions nor the tobacco pipe distribution point clearly to a single pattern of artifact presence or absence around the two known houses. The Site 7 house seems to be marked by a heavy artifact concentration, while the Site 8 house is marked by a light concentration of artifacts.

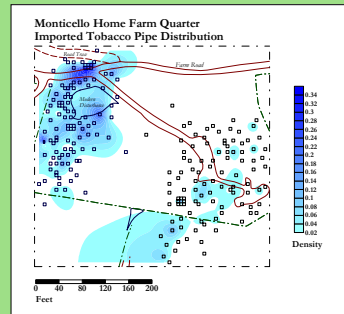
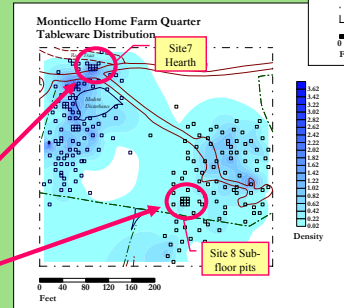
Distinct patterns of artifact distribution in plowzone emerge from the two known houses. There is a low-density ring or partial ring around the known Site 8 house, perhaps evidence of a swept yard or activity area relating to that structure. This contrasts with the higher-density artifact scatter on and around the Site 7 house. The incongruity between these patterns implies that the presence or absence of artifacts alone is a poor indicator of house location and presents difficulty in creating a predictive model of where other houses might be at the Home Farm Quarter. Alternative methods must be considered to interpret the large artifact scatters with high and low density areas that suggest the presence of at least two more houses on Site 7 and at least one other house on Site 8.

The Home Farm Quarter's two semi-discrete residential areas (Sites 7 and 8) were discovered as artifact scatters by archaeological survey in the winter of 1997. Only one of the Quarter's structures, the overseer's house, appears in any of Jefferson's records. There are two other houses known from the archaeological discovery of architectural remains, and at least two other areas where houses are interpreted based on artifact distribution.

Between 1997 and 2003, 215 5 x 5 foot quadrats were excavated in the 430 x 370 foot area covered by Sites 7 and 8. These were dug according to a plan of stratified random sampling in which a 5 x 5 foot quadrat was dug in each square of a 20 x 20 foot grid on the site. Further quadrats were excavated when areas of interest were identified.

A set of two, or possibly three, sub-floor pits on Site 8 are one indicator of a house location, and a hearth on Site 7 reveals the only other sure house location at the Monticello Home Farm Quarter.

Known House Locations

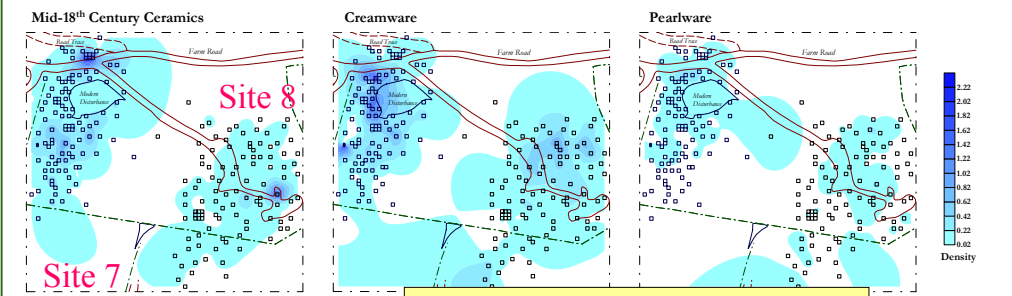


Two Sub-floor pits?

Three sub-floor pits!

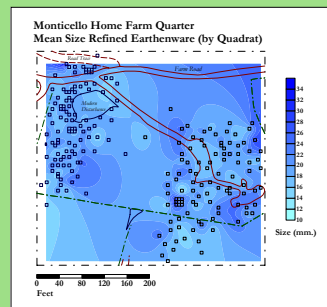
Whether two or three, they tell us that a house was there!

It's a big artifact scatter, with several high-density areas... There have to be more houses!



The plowzone distributions of these three classes of ceramics: a group of wares from the mid-18th century, creamware (ca. 1770-1800), and pearlware (ca. 1785-1820), represent temporal change in occupation and discard at Sites 7 & 8.

The distribution of imported (white clay) tobacco pipes in plowzone contexts is largely centered on Site 7, which had the earliest occupation of the two sites. The presence of imported tobacco pipes may be associated with earlier phases of occupation.



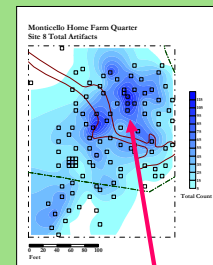
From these plowed sites, the dwellings with sub-floor pits seem to be marked by a larger mean sherd size, suggesting that as protected depositional environments, the pits preserved larger sherds from breakage (by foot traffic in later years of occupation and by some of the earlier plowing episodes).



44ST116 at Stratford Hall, a dwelling with no sub-floor pit

Artifact size may help us further understand the distribution of artifacts on plowed house sites. The mean sizes of refined earthenwares* per quadrat on Sites 7 and 8 again show two distinct patterns between the known house locations, with larger sherds associated with the Site 8 house and smaller ones at the Site 7 house.

The sub-floor pits at Site 8 may have served as protective environments for discarded sherds, which gradually entered the plowzone through occasional deeper tilling. These would not have been subjected to as many plowing episodes or the foot traffic that reduced the size of sherds remaining on the ground surface or in plowzone for a longer period.



To test this locally-observed pattern, the mean sizes of refined earthenwares on two other Virginia plowzone sites were considered. Palace Lands Quarter, and to a lesser extent Rich Neck, display somewhat larger mean size around the sub-floor pits, where 44ST116, without a pit, does not. These sites support our conclusion that houses with sub-floor pits are likely to produce higher sherd sizes in plowzone contexts, although we note that the depositional processes of filling the pits, the use of the site after the occupation of that particular house—factors un-examined here—may also contribute significantly to sherd size.

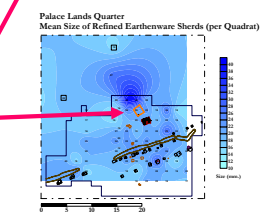
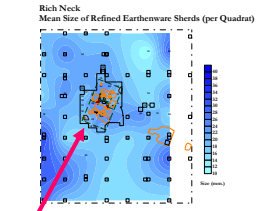
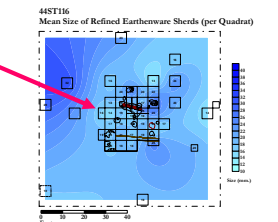
*Historic-period refined earthenwares sherds are considered here because they are a sufficiently abundant group of artifacts with fairly homogeneous physical characteristics and therefore relatively uniform reaction to plowing and trampling, the factors largely responsible for the secondary breakage of discarded ceramics.

Suspected House Location

The heavy concentration of artifacts in the northeast quadrant of Site 8 suggests an activity or disposal area that is too far away from the known dwelling to have served as its trash midden.



If the concentration in Site 8's northeast quadrant is a house, it likely doesn't have a pit, and is later (associated with pearlware), two interpretations that support one another.



The data to produce distribution maps for 44ST116, Rich Neck, and Palace Lands Quarter come from www.DAACS.org.