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Beyond Ideals: Proslavery Reforms on a Nineteenth-Century Cotton Plantation

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BEYOND IDEALS: PROSLAVERY REFORMS ON A NINETEENTH-CENTURY
COTTON PLANTATION

by

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ABSTRACT

The last four decades of the antebellum period witnessed the rise of a proslavery plantation reform movement aimed at preserving slavery in the face of increasing abolitionist pressure. Reformers promoted the image of ideal enslaved households operating as part of efficient modern plantations ruled by reason, benevolent management techniques, and scientific agriculture. Where implemented, reforms resulted in numerous changes to plantation life both around the home and in the fields. Slaves who bore the brunt of these changes struggled to resist plantation reforms or grudgingly accepted them depending on the impact upon established daily routines and any potential benefits bondsmen may have foreseen.

Utilizing a novel integrated landscape and household framework, this dissertation examines two neighboring slave quarter sites that were excavated between 2009 and 2012 on Witherspoon Island, a large nineteenth-century cotton plantation located in Darlington County, South Carolina. Looking at both the dwellings and surrounding yard space associated with these contested landscapes, this study seeks to understand what reforms may have been adopted by planter John Dick Witherspoon and their impact on the plantation's vibrant enslaved community. Specifically, this dissertation examines the material and symbolic impact of labor reforms on enslaved inhabitants, their dwellings and associated landscapes through the lens of dwelling architecture, household sanitation, slave diet, religious instruction, health care, and market access for slaves. While many of the reforms regarding improved housing, diet or sanitation may have appeared outwardly

humane, I argue that the core of the reform movement was concerned with developing a better means to physically control slaves across the plantation landscape both in the fields and in the private lives bondsmen worked to create.

PREFACE

This dissertation attempts to understand the lives of the enslaved individuals on Witherspoon Island through the lens of nineteenth-century plantation reforms. To do so, this study relies heavily on primary and secondary documentation which contains racist language and derogatory terminology common to the antebellum period. All quotations from these documents are unaltered to give readers a true sense of the meaning and context associated with the original source material.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Husband and wife, Hooper and Lucretia raised eleven children, eight of whom were born into bondage on Witherspoon Island plantation. The lives of Hooper, Lucretia, their children, and hundreds of their fellow bondsmen were shaped by a prominent plantation reform movement in the late antebellum period (Darlington District Sales and Appraisal Book 1860, Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina). Utilizing a novel integrated landscape and household framework, this dissertation examines two neighboring slave quarter sites that were excavated between 2009 and 2012 on Witherspoon Island, a large nineteenth-century cotton plantation located in Darlington County, South Carolina. Looking at both the dwellings and surrounding yard space associated with these contested landscapes, this study seeks to understand what reforms may have been adopted by planter John Dick Witherspoon and their impact on the plantation's vibrant enslaved community.

The nineteenth-century plantation reform movement was aimed at preserving the economic institution of slavery. In the face of rising abolitionist pressure, reform proponents promoted the image of ideal enslaved households operating as part of efficient modern plantations ruled by reason, benevolent management techniques, and scientific agriculture (Berlin 2003; Breeden 1980; Oakes 1982). Where implemented, reforms resulted in numerous changes to plantation life both around the home and in the fields. Slaves who bore the brunt of these changes struggled to resist plantation reforms

or grudgingly accepted them depending on the severity of their impact upon established daily routines and any potential benefits bondsmen may have foreseen. Specifically, this dissertation examines the material and symbolic impact of labor reforms on enslaved inhabitants, their dwellings and associated landscapes through the lens of dwelling architecture, household sanitation, slave diet, religious instruction, and market access for slaves. While many of the reforms regarding improved housing, diet or sanitation may have appeared outwardly humane, I argue that the core of the reform movement was concerned with developing a better means to physically control slaves across the plantation landscape both in the fields and in the private lives bondsmen worked to create.

Our current understanding of this agricultural reform movement comes primarily from period reform publications, various plantation records created by slave holders, and elements of showcase model plantations that survive today. While these sources may speak to agricultural reforms and best practices, archaeological and historic research at Witherspoon Island has the ability to see how these ideal practices played out from multiple perspectives on an absentee cotton plantation altering enslaved landscapes, lives and communities.

Both the archaeological record and historic resources associated with the Witherspoon plantation are ideal for this study. The two excavated slave quarter sites were found in exceptional unplowed contexts which perfectly preserved hundreds of intact yard features offering amazing details regarding the use of the landscape and the potential implementation of reforms. The historic resources are also unparalleled and include hundreds of family letters which pertain to plantation affairs including many

reform-related topics which were of specific interest to planter John Dick Witherspoon. Together these two resources offer a unique opportunity to examine late antebellum reforms on a working plantation in remote location far removed from public view that was not built as a showpiece estate.

The examination of proslavery reforms not only helps to elucidate the daily lives and struggles of enslaved individuals who resided on Witherspoon Island, it also offers a chance to help dispel some of the influence of the reform rhetoric which is present within the lingering 'Lost Cause' narrative. The proslavery reform movement heavily promoted a message calling for the creation of the plantation as an institution that would be beneficial to both planters and slaves alike where reforms acted as an instrument for the physical and moral improvement of the enslaved population (Berlin 2003; Breeden 1980).

This well-known and widespread reform propaganda helped lay the groundwork for a postbellum portrayal of the idyllic Old South where slaves and master coexisted in harmony. In this reimagined history, most slaves received the best possible care available - living a life free of wants in conditions often better than the poor farmers or factory workers of the period (Berlin 2003:204; Joyner 1984:124). This misguided image of slavery as a "benign institution" has been championed by supporters of the 'Lost Cause' from the end of the Civil War to the present day, in effect glossing over the history and harsh realities of millions of individual enslaved laborers whose forced labors built the southern plantation economy (Thompson 2013:51-57). This dissertation seeks to examine the true impact of these proslavery reforms across the plantation landscape when implemented by planters. Such a project helps to expose the very roots of this reform

movement which were less concerned with supposedly humanistic goals and more focused on improving slave discipline, preserving invested capital in human property and increasing the profitability of the plantation system (for a discussion of the origins and maintenance of the 'Lost Cause' narrative see Foster 1987; Osterweis 1973; Rable 1994).

This opening chapter will review the cultural landscape theory and household methodology adopted in this dissertation to help examine the influence of antebellum proslavery reforms on the plantation landscapes of Witherspoon Island plantation.

Landscape as Discourse Materialized

The plantation landscapes I examine in this dissertation are viewed as discourse materialized, a theoretical and analytical perspective developed by cultural geographer Richard Schein. As the name suggests, Schein theorizes that cultural landscapes are the material manifestation of varied competing social discourses both concurrently and diachronically (Schein 1997; Schein 2004). When merged with a contextual household archaeology methodology, the resulting interdisciplinary approach offers historical archaeologists an important multi-scalar perspective for the analysis of diverse cultural landscapes at the household scale. Such an interdisciplinary approach is unfortunately rare in mainstream landscape archaeology and both geographers and archaeologists stand to benefit from increased awareness and collaboration.

To contextualize this innovative landscape perspective, it is crucial to briefly examine the origins of cultural landscape studies in the field of geography. The initial development of the landscape concept in cultural geography can be traced to the work of

Carl Sauer and the Berkeley School of Geography in the first part of the twentieth century (Schein 1997). During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the discipline of geography was entirely focused on studies guided by the theoretical perspective of environmental determinism. By the 1920s, a gradual critique of this deterministic approach was building within geography (Winberry 1997).

It was Carl Sauer who introduced the concept of the landscape in his famous article *Morphology of the Landscape*. Originally published in 1925, this paper is one of the foundational works of cultural geography. In *Morphology*, Sauer defines the landscape as the new unit of analysis for geography and firmly rails against the environmental determinism that characterized the geographic theory of the period (Sauer 1963). The article develops a morphologic method to observe and record landscapes. Sauer argues that geographic interest in the landscape must study the interaction of culture and nature. He divides landscapes into two groups: natural landscapes and cultural landscapes (Sauer 1963). According to Sauer, natural landscapes were the untouched physical elements of the landscape including geologic composition, landforms, climates, and vegetation. Sauer treated natural landscapes as the setting for cultural expression. Sauer argued that the “cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group” where “culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium and the cultural landscape is the result” (Sauer 1963:343). New cultural landscapes, according to Sauer, are built directly upon the remains of past cultural landscapes (1963).

To study these phenomena, Sauer called for a historical geography whose goal was to reconstruct these former cultural landscapes. While Sauer’s definitions refer primarily to the tangible material landscape, he also suggests that there remains an

element of landscapes which cannot be captured by positivist scientific studies (1963). Sauer's approach could be summed up as an examination of the cultural "elements of the landscape, their ultimate origin, how they came to be a part of the present day landscape, whether by diffusion, migration, or even persistence as palimpsests from previous landscapes" (Winberry 1997:5).

Sauer's conceptualization of culture drew heavily on the work of anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, a fellow Berkeley professor (Duncan 1980). For Kroeber and other anthropologists of the period (especially Robert Lowie and Leslie White), "culture was viewed as an entity above man, not reducible to actions by the individuals who are associated with it, mysteriously responding to laws of its own" (Duncan 1980:182). This understanding of culture as a superorganic entity was a central hallmark of early cultural landscape research.

Sauer's landscape approach quickly gained an academic following and became known as the Berkeley School approach (Lewis 1979:14). A good example of a Berkeley School landscape study is Kniffen's 1936 *Louisiana House Types* paper. A former student of Sauer, Fred Kniffen sought to legitimize the study of cultural landscapes with his research into culturogeographic regions based on a "quantitative and qualitative consideration of the cultural forms of the landscape" (Kniffen 1936:179).

Culturogeographic region was a term coined by Kniffen which refers to a "geographic region where only cultural forms are considered" (1936:179). In *Louisiana House Types*, Kniffen looked at the architecture in Louisiana and argued that variation in house design reflected "the imprint of varied cultural stains" (1936:179). This was principally a descriptive study of Louisiana's architecture that only confirmed the known settlement

history of the state. The Berkeley School was primarily concerned, not with the process of creating of landscapes, but the physical landscapes themselves. Adherents utilized a diachronic approach which involved both documentary and site analysis of landscapes (Winberry 1997). While the Berkeley school approach received sporadic critiques in the 1940s concerning the definition of the landscape, it remained the dominant approach to landscapes until the new cultural geography of the 1980s (Winberry 1997).

Updated landscape approaches in the 1960's and 1970's built upon the existing Berkeley tradition examining new spaces such urban and contemporary landscapes and explored symbolic aspects of the landscape (Schein 1997:660-661). J.B. Jackson argued that cultural landscapes can be seen as a "concrete, three-dimensional, shared reality" (1997: 302). His work helped to shift the traditional focus of landscape studies away from colonial landscapes and settlement studies to everyday vernacular landscapes including urban cityscapes, drive-in theaters and trailer parks (Jackson 1997). For Jackson, these everyday landscapes had inherent value and meaning both in the past and present. In a pioneering work from the 1950s, Jackson's *Westward Moving House* offered a parable that traced a fictional family from the pioneer forefathers arriving in New England to the modern 1950s family. The story examined the changing ideologies towards landscapes and nature, architectural implications, and views of societal relations (Jackson 1994). This study was some of the first research to explicitly explore ideology and meaning associated with the landscape. While there was little analysis of this ideology, it was an important first step for geographers.

The 1960s and 1970s also saw a building critique of the Berkeley School that challenged the place of geography in social sciences (Winberry 1997:7). Supporters

criticized traditional landscape studies for their reliance on the outdated concept of the superorganic culture, lack of social theory, and positivist methods (Wagstaff 1987). Adherents called for new approaches that were not centered on descriptive studies with antiquarian roots. They argued for landscapes to be treated as “complex expressions; formed in different media and allowing for a broader interpretation of context” that included “an awareness of the social and political underpinnings of human behavior” (Winberry 1997:8).

A seminal work by geographer James Duncan helped to eradicate the superorganic conceptualization of culture from geographic research (1980). In the paper, Duncan argued Kroeber’s concept of culture “reifies the notion of culture assigning it ontological status and causative power” which treats “social organization as unproblematic” (1980:181). While the borrowing of theory from other disciplines is vital for vibrant geographic research, Duncan argued that geographers had “chosen a theory which has come under devastating attack and has since been long rejected by the vast majority of anthropologists” (1980:182). In the superorganic, “the individual is largely absent, consensus prevails, deviance is ignored; it is a world untouched by intracultural conflict” (Duncan 1980:191). Duncan called for cultural geography to shift towards an individualist perspective looking at societal relations and contextual landscape interactions (Duncan 1980).

Geographers such as Denis Cosgrove (1984), Stephen Daniels (1989), Pierce Lewis (1979) and James Duncan (1980) led this humanistic post-processual turn in cultural geography. This new wave of cultural geographers were influenced by a wide array of social theorists from Marx to poststructuralists such as Bourdieu and Derrida.

The specific definition of cultural landscape remained much the same according to Winberry as “those works of man that are inscribed into the Earth’s surface” but the approach and interpretation was vastly different from Sauer’s historical descriptive approach (1997). This new breed of cultural geographers argued that “all human landscape has cultural meaning, no matter how ordinary that landscape may be” (Lewis 1979:12). New themes emerged as a part of this movement including treating landscape as a visual representation (Cosgrove and Daniels) and reading landscape as text (Duncan and Lewis).

The work of Cosgrove and Daniels brought ideology to bear on cultural landscapes, looking at how power relations were structured through control of visibility. Daniels and Cosgrove both utilized neo-Marxist perspectives in their landscape studies. For example, Denis Cosgrove looked at the shifting understanding of land between late feudalism to early capitalism in Europe and argued that the western concept of the landscape cannot be separated from the historical origins of capitalism. Cosgrove describes landscapes as “a way of seeing the world” which is entirely based on the “visual experience” (1998:13-14). For Cosgrove, landscape “is an ideological concept” which “represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationships with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others” (1998:15). Landscapes were linked to the development of geometric perspective (birds-eye view) in landscape painting that strongly influenced fields such as mapmaking and surveying. Perspective allowed elites to obtain visual mastery over their property and subjects reproducing social systems in a way that legitimizes existing power structures. Cosgrove

argues that landscapes as cultural images are part and parcel of ideology working to naturalize and obscure exploitative social relationships (1998). To analyze past understanding of the landscape geographers such as Cosgrove and Daniels examined contemporary representations of the land, architecture and the historical record rather than study physical landscapes. Research in the vein of Cosgrove often falls prey to a Eurocentric bias that denies the possibility of non-western spaces functioning as true landscapes.

Textual approaches suggest that the “human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form (Lewis 1979:12). Pierce Lewis suggests that “like books, landscapes can be read, but unlike books they were not meant to be read” (1979:12). Drawing on linguistic and poststructural theory, these approaches were primarily concerned with the creation of landscape as text, the meaning of the text, and how these texts may influence human behavior (Duncan and Duncan 1988:120). James Duncan and Nancy Duncan argued that “one of the most important roles that the landscape plays is ideological, supporting a set of ideas and values, unquestioned assumptions about the way a society is, or should be organized” (1988:123). If the landscape is read as a text, then unaware readers may base their interpretations on an “ingrained cultural framework” which works to indoctrinate these almost unconscious readers into the existing social structure (Duncan and Duncan 1988:123). Thus landscapes mediate ideology and work to naturalize power structures. Duncan and Duncan suggest that geographers must critically read cultural landscapes in a way that does not consciously, or unconsciously, replicate these power structures (1988). The landscape as text approach advocated by the Duncans

is weakened by the fact that this approach can be seen as reifying text as a physical structure rather than as an interpretive metaphor.

Since the inception of the humanistic cultural geography in the 1980s there has been a wide variety of research in geographic landscape studies. Recent approaches have explored gendered / sexualized landscapes (Hayden 1999; McDowell 2008; Rose 1993; Walby 2009); landscapes of belonging and exclusion (Duncan and Duncan 2001; Price 2004; Schein 2009); wilderness and cultural landscapes (Cronon 1995; Lane 2004; Massey 2006; Robbins and Sharp 2003); landscapes of race (Hoelscher 2004; Popke 2001; Pred 2001; Weyeneth 2005) and landscapes of social memory (DeLyser 1999; McDowell 2008; Mills 2006).

Richard Schein's discourse materialized approach utilized in this dissertation builds off the work of the post-processual cultural geographers to examine the processes behind cultural landscapes that work to naturalize, reproduce, and contest social practices (Schein 2009). For Schein, discourses are understood to be "shared meanings which are socially constituted ideologies, sets of 'common sense' assumptions" (Duncan 1990:12). Discourse materialized builds upon the idea that cultural landscapes mediate ideology. According to Schein, every individual choice behind any cultural landscape is rooted within some form of discourse. When a choice results in a physical landscape expression, the landscape literally becomes discourse materialized (Schein 1997). Multiple discourses are present in all landscapes and offer "competing social and visual disciplines or strategies that combine to constrict or limit human action within and interpretation of any particular landscape" (Schein 1997:663). Together these discourses create a

conceptualization of cultural landscapes as dynamic palimpsests composed of past and present materialized discourses that never remain static (Schein 1997:661).

Theorized in this way, the cultural landscape is both materially disciplined by specific discourses such as zoning laws or homeowners' association regulations and continuously engaged by individuals who can choose to accept, deny, or overlook these discourses. By acknowledging contestation through individual human agency, Schein provides a means to challenge and potentially change dominant discourses in all landscapes (Schein 1997).

Schein's research (like Mitchell 1996), runs counter to the strictly ideological approaches to visual representations of landscapes (i.e. Cosgrove 1984; Daniels 1989) which tend to gloss over the creation and maintenance of material landscapes. The discourse materialized approach adopts a poststructuralist position while retaining a degree of the geographic empirical tradition using historically and spatially contextualized data to understand the social implications of the landscape (Schein 2004). Within this framework, cultural landscapes are not merely fixed representations of ideologies, but also the product of dynamic social relations that are continuously changing the material face of everyday spaces (Mitchell 2002).

One criticism of Schein's discourse materialized approach is that the discursive relationship between discourses and the landscapes is represented as a relatively straightforward homogeneous process (Steele 2007). Steele argues that the relationship is not "structured or neat, but characterized by heterogeneous fluxes and flows of socio-cultural forces" (2007:14). Additionally, Schein's characterization of individual choice to accept,

reject or ignore discourses overlooks the fact that many day to day decisions partially reside in the realm of the subconscious.

Legitimate critiques aside, I argue that the strength of the discourse materialized approach is its inclusive nature that allows scholars to approach a wide range of concerns beyond traditional hegemonic power relations, including nuanced issues of gender, memory, race, identity, and belonging. Schein's approach clearly shows the importance of both temporal and geographic context for understanding the ever-changing landscapes that surround us all. Additionally, the flexible multi-scalar nature of the discourse materialized framework allows broad global and national-level discourses to be fruitfully studied within cultural landscapes at many scales (Schein 1997). Such a multi-scalar perspective is ideal for landscape studies like this dissertation where I attempt to examine the local and individual impact of the broad national / regional nineteenth-century reform discourse on a single cotton plantation.

The Landscape in Historical Archaeology

My usage of Schein's theoretical and analytical perspective on cultural landscapes (and that of most modern cultural landscape research within the field of geography) represents a significant departure from the treatment of landscapes by mainstream historical archaeology in North America. Landscape archaeology has been defined as "a framework for modeling the ways that people in the past conceptualized, organized, and manipulated their environments and the ways that those places have shaped their occupants' behaviors and identities" (Branton 2009:51). Archaeologists studying

landscapes utilize a wide array of methods to analyze past landscapes including: archaeological excavations, the documentary record, topographic analyses, floral and pollen studies, ethnographic sources, and remote sensing surveys (Yamin and Metheny 1996).

The origins of landscape archaeology are linked to the development of settlement archaeology in the mid-twentieth century (Knapp and Ashmore 1999). Settlement archaeology was inspired by the work of Julian Steward's ecological approach which sought to examine the environmental factors that shaped prehistoric cultural change (Trigger 1989). Work in Peru by Gordon Willey (1953) was the first true functional settlement study (Shackel 2003a:4-5). Settlement work before Willey's research had treated "settlement patterns... as evidence of relations between human groups and the natural environment" as part of ecological adaptation process (Trigger 1989:282). Willey's research rejected the full scope of Steward's ecological determinism and sought to analyze patterns of settlement and the built environment as a "source of information about many aspects of human behavior" including the "economic, social, and political organization of ancient societies" (Trigger 1989:282-284). The understanding that cultural factors shape the environment would become a central tenant of early landscape studies as archaeologists worked to challenged deterministic approaches that privileged environmental factors (Shackel 2003a:4-5).

The landscape concept emerged as critique of scale in archaeology that challenged the traditional archaeological unit of analysis, the site (Branton 2009). Landscape proponents argued that site-level analyses had traditionally been associated with occupation areas and largely missed the spaces where most human behavior occurs

(Green 1997). Thus landscape archaeology was to be an inclusive examination of “all of the natural and cultural features that exist both within and outside human settlements: houses, bridges, waterways, trees, grass, mountains, and other settlements” (Orser 1996:368).

Processual archaeologists built upon the early theme of human environment interaction and studied “what people did to the landscape and how it aided or constrained them” (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:7). These processual approaches treated landscapes as a material object of study, knowable through empiricist methods (Branton 2009).

According to Paul Shackel, the processual landscape studies in historical archaeology were primarily particularistic in nature, attempting only to “document and reconstruct historic landforms” (Shackel et al. 1998:212). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, processual landscape studies in historical archaeology were largely focused on two research areas: estate landscapes (Hudgins 1990; Kelso 1990; Mascia 1996; Weber et al. 1990; Yamin and Bridges 1996) and formal garden archaeology (Beaudry 1996; Brown and Samford 1990; Gleason 1994; McKee 1996; Sanford 1990; and Weber 1996). The focus on elite gardens and estates was partially due to available funding during this era and the strong links between historical archaeology and the historic preservation movement (Yentsch 1996). These studies were critiqued for not examining the meanings of landscapes (Knapp and Ashmore 1999) and for overlooking the vernacular landscapes that shaped the experience of common people in the past (Yentsch 1996).

The processual landscape approach in archaeology seems to have directly mirrored the Berkeley landscape tradition in geography. Both approaches treated landscapes solely as material entities and any analysis was based on positivistic methods

which lacked social theory. If these processual studies referenced geographers, it was often only to define the concept of the landscape from the work of Carl Sauer or J.B. Jackson. Archaeologists seem to have acknowledged that geographers studied cultural landscapes, but few of the geographic interpretive models or theories were ever seriously applied.

In the 1980s and early 1990s several landscape studies in archaeology challenged the status quo by focusing on the meaning of cultural landscapes from both structuralist and critical archaeology perspectives (Hudgins 1990; Kryder-Reid 1996; Leone 1996; Mrozowski and Beaudry 1990). A good example is Mark Leone's work at William Paca's garden from the 1980s. Leone utilized a Marxist-based critical archaeology approach to examine the ideology embedded in the formal garden of an Annapolis estate (1996). Leone argued that ideology functioned "to disguise the arbitrariness of the social order, including the uneven distribution of resources" while attempting to reproduce the existing social structure (1996:272). Leone suggested that the intentional geometric design of Paca's garden worked to symbolize power over nature serving as an active metaphor for the justification of inequality in everyday social relations (Leone 1996). Leone's work at Paca's garden paralleled the research of Denis Cosgrove (1984) in cultural geography. Both scholars examined the ideology embedded in landscapes and focused on top-down elite perspectives utilizing the same social theories. While Leone's work is quite similar to the landscape research of the humanistic cultural geographers, he does not cite or incorporate the work of a single geographer.

The innovative studies by Leone and others helped to usher in a new post-processual perspective on landscapes that considered the meanings of cultural landscapes

as political, social, and personal statements (De Cunzo and Ernstein 2006). Post-processual approaches to landscape draw on a diverse set of social theory such as phenomenology, structuration, agency theory and gender theory to help decode symbolic meanings of landscape (Knapp and Ashmore 1999). Typical post-processual studies examine “the active role of individuals in constructing and interpreting the world around them, and in continually reshaping culture and society” (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:7). Landscapes are often treated as polyvalent and multivocal entities (De Cunzo 2003). For most of these studies, landscapes are understood to be “relational entities constituted by people in their engagement with the world” (Thomas 2001:176). This relational view means that each individual may have ascribed different meanings to landscape based on their unique experiences. Recent post-processual approaches have moved beyond estates and gardens and now deal with a wide array of topics including: landscapes of gender (De Cunzo 2003; Lewis 2003; Rotman 2003); sacred landscapes (Kryder-Reid 1996; Savullis 2003 Strang 1999; Tacon 1999); urban landscapes (Dawdy 2000; Derry 2000; Gums and Shorter 2000; Spencer-Wood 2003); landscapes of inequality (Delle 1999; Joseph 2000; Young 2003) and landscapes of belonging and erasure (Guernsey 2008; Shackel 2003b; Smith 2008).

Many archaeologists acknowledge the importance of interdisciplinary work with cultural geography, but serious geographic engagement is still lacking in North American landscape archaeology. Over the last two decades there have been several isolated studies that were able to successfully incorporate geographic landscape scholarship both in defining landscapes and in the analysis of archaeological data (Derry 2000; Hood 1996; Larson 2003; Little 1998; Tilley 1994). While not specific to cultural landscape studies, a

notable exception to the near exclusion of geographic theory in the current archaeological literature is Yu-Fi Tuan's humanistic theorization of the concepts of space and place (see Tuan 1977) which has been quite influential among archaeologists since the 1990s (Blake 2007:215-218; Vis 2009: 79-81).

Barbara Little's study of power laden landscapes in Annapolis (1998) is a good example of successful geographic engagement in archaeology. Her research relied on anthropological theory, cultural geography, and social theorists to explore the movement of printer businesses upon the cityscape according to historic fluctuations in Annapolis' power structures (1998). Looking to the work of postmodern geographer Edward Soja, Little argued that "the constitution of society is both spatial and temporal" and that spatiality is a social construct specific to a certain time and place (1998:226). According to Little, there exists a continuing question of scale within archaeological research. Little believes that a single scale offers limited interpretive power and argues (like Soja) that "it is essential to take advantage of the insights that can be gained by shifting and comparing scales of analysis" (1998:227). This study does a nice job defining space and incorporating a wide range of theory and landscape perspectives in the actual analysis.

In contrast, a volume by Angele Smith and Amy Gazin-Schwartz entitled *Landscapes of Clearance: Archaeological and Anthropological Perspectives* (2008) is a case where interpretive engagement with geography could have significantly benefited landscape archaeologists. In this volume, Smith and Gazin-Schwartz take a landscape archaeology approach to study the "social processes involved in clearing the landscapes past and present and the significance and meaningful impact of these actions" (Smith 2008:14). Smith argues that landscapes can be disputed spaces where "different

communities of people try to negotiate different interpretations of the same landscape" (2008:14). She focuses specifically on colonial and postcolonial landscape settings where removals of individuals and erasures of the landscape were common occurrences. This same topic has been explored in detail by cultural geographers Patricia Price (2004) and Alison Blunt (2003) who looked at physical removal of populations and the smoothing of the landscape to eradicate traces of past individuals who resided there. Price's concept of landscape smoothing concerns the intentional erasure of borders and boundaries in the dominant representations of the landscape in an effort to maintain power and control over space (2004:45-49). These geographic studies directly parallel the research in Smith and Gazin-Schwartz's volume, but are not referenced by a single study in their volume.

Increased cooperation between geography and archaeology in North America will allow for more complex and realistic interpretations of archaeological landscapes. Both disciplines stand to benefit from scholarly engagement. Working together, archaeologists and geographers can hopefully create innovative interpretive approaches to the landscapes rather than produce duplicative research in isolation. Archaeological research also has much to offer geographic landscape interpretation. As B.K. Roberts once suggested "visible landscapes are like icebergs, only a small proportion of their real substance lies above the ground" (1987:83). For geographers, archaeological data is one of the few resources available that can offer clues to the use and meaning of buried landscapes (Roberts 1987). While methodologies must remain different out of necessity, useful interdisciplinary interpretive models can be developed and shared between the two fields.

When considering Schein's discourse materialized approach, both the historical contextualization and multi-scalar implications make this framework particularly well-suited for historical archaeologists concerned with the social implications of cultural landscapes. Schein's understanding of landscapes can be thoughtfully extrapolated to the logical conclusion that not only are landscape features physically materialized by various discourses but so too is the material culture that makes up these features as it was used or left behind by the individual agents that inhabited, managed or visited these spaces (Beaudry et al 1991).

The dynamic landscape of becoming that Schein envisions also poses a significant challenge, however. It is a fundamental question relating to the scale of analysis. For archaeologists, the multitude of competing discourses that impacted the archaeological landscape over a wide temporal span can be extremely difficult to discern at a broad site wide level. When considering the expansive plantation landscapes on Witherspoon Island it became necessary to address the issue of scale in my research. This was accomplished by narrowing my focus to the spatial and social scale of the household landscape which is composed of an enslaved dwelling and the immediate associated yard space.

The Houseyard Landscape

Over the last two decades households have become a common data source for macro-landscape research conducted at the settlement, community and regional scales (Brandon and Barile 2004; Pluckhahn 2010; Spencer-Wood 2002). Less common are studies of the spatial and social household scale from an explicit landscape approach

(Trifkovic 2006). A household level perspective makes it possible to populate the landscape with individuals instead of monolithic social entities (Trifkovic 2006:258). When considering the study of household landscapes, the challenge for archaeologists is not to treat such spaces as unique isolates. These intimate household landscapes both in the past and present are intricately coupled to their local communities or regions.

The decision to examine the small scale landscapes composed of the enslaved dwelling and yard space in this dissertation study is not an arbitrary choice as these landscapes represent an important cultural pattern. Known as houseyards, these cultural landscapes were a common feature found on plantations in the Caribbean and southern United States (Armstrong 1990; Westmacott 2001; Wilkie 1996b). Sidney Mintz popularized the concept of a house and yard pattern in *Caribbean Transformations*, an ethnographic study of Afro-Caribbean culture in Jamaica and the surrounding islands (1974). Mintz wrote that “the house is far more than a fabrication of wood and thatch, the yard far more than a locale for the house. Together, house and yard form a nucleus within which the culture expresses itself, is perpetuated, changed and reintegrated” (Mintz 1974:231-232). He went on to suggest that yard space was understood to be “an extension of the house” where “the limits of the yard represent the outer walls of the house itself” (Mintz 1974:249). According to Mintz, yard space functioned as the center of household life for enslaved Africans and their descendants. The ubiquitous nature of these yards both in plantation and post-emancipation settings suggests a continuity of these cultural landscapes which make them an important locus of anthropological and archaeological study.

Within the houseyard, the physical dwelling was primarily used for sleeping and the yard was the focal point of all social life (Anderson 2004a:29). The yards are found directly outside of the habitations and have space dedicated for a number of activities including: food production, meal preparation, domestic chores, leisure activity, socialization, spiritual activities, childcare, and on occasion burial (Heath and Bennett 2000; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005:157-208).

Historic accounts from planters, plantation visitors, and slave narratives can be used to illustrate the houseyard pattern, but the inherent biases in these sources must be kept in mind (Thomas 1995). One of the most comprehensive visitor accounts comes from Fredrick Olmsted's travels throughout the southern United States during the 1850s. When visiting a rice plantation in Georgia, Olmsted recorded the physical features and typical layout of the enslaved houseyards. According to Olmsted, "Between each tenement and the next house, is a small piece of ground, enclosed with palings, in which are coops of fowl with chickens, hovels for nests, and for sows with pig. There were a great many fowls in the street. The negroes' swine are allowed to run in the woods, each owner having his own distinguished by a peculiar mark. In the rear of the yards were gardens, a half-acre to each family" (Olmsted 1953:184-185).

Yards were often considered the private space of both enslaved and free inhabitants (Mintz 1974:245; Vlach 1993b:15-16; Westmacott 1992:44). Houseyards were bounded landscapes typically enclosed by either some type of fence (commonly a wooden paling fence) or some sort of intentional boundary created by earthen barriers (ditches, gullies, or natural slopes) or vegetation planted (bamboo or other tall foliage) to create privacy and control access (Mintz 1974:245; Wilkie 1996b:35). Studies have

shown that historic houseyard on plantations were often physically oriented in ways to conceal yard activities from the planter and overseers (Armstrong and Kelly 2000; Fesler 2001; Wilkie 2000; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005).

Ethnographic studies and historical sources attest to the commonality of yard features and behaviors in West African cultures and at sites of African enslavement in the Atlantic (Anderson 2004a; Mintz 1974; Pulsipher 1993; Samford 2004; Westmacott 1992). Westmacott (1992) and others argue that the houseyard pattern represents a cultural system brought to plantations in the Caribbean and the Southeast by enslaved Diasporic African populations. These yards are not identical in form or function, but were modified over time for the diverse environments within these wide spread regions (Heath and Bennett 2000:38). Even after the end of slavery, the houseyard pattern continued to be a common element of African American domestic space well into the twentieth century (Westmacott 1992).

As such a culturally important space, the houseyard in antebellum contexts is a vital nexus to examine the intersection of enslaved influences on the landscape and the wishes of the plantation management. A contested space, the houseyard landscape was certainly viewed differently by both planters and slaves who likely attached drastically different meanings to the intimate spaces within and around the dwelling (McKee 1992; Stewart-Abernathy 2004; Vlach 1995). The physical manifestation of these landscapes in their form, function, and general upkeep by both management and individual slaves “involved a continuous discourse” which “resulted in multiple and possibly hybrid materialities” (Beaudry 2015:14)

Recent archaeological studies of enslaved houseyard spaces have examined a wide range of topics from foodways (McKee 1999; Pulsipher 1993; Whit 2007; Yentch 2007), spiritual aspects of the yard (Edwards-Ingram 1998; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005), houseyard burial practices (Armstrong and Fleishman 2003), activity areas within the yard (Anderson 1998; Anderson 2004a; Armstrong 1990; Armstrong and Kelly 2000; Fesler 2004; Franklin 2004; Heath 1999; Heath and Bennett 2000; Neiman et al. 2000; Wilkie 2000; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005); yard maintenance and sweeping (Adams 1987; Adams 1990; Agha 2004; Heath and Bennett 2000; Orser 1988; Thomas and Thomas 2004; Wilkie 2000); and ethno-archaeological studies of yardspace (Anderson 1998; Brabec and Anderson 2007; Gundaker 1993). The treatment of houseyards from an explicit landscape perspective like Schein's discourse materialized approach has not been undertaken by historical archaeologists to date.

Narrowing the scale of the landscape to the houseyard level does not fully solve the methodological issues posed by a discourse materialized perspective. If we elect to conceptualize a cultural landscape as a dynamic palimpsest of multiple materialized discourses, archaeologists must also achieve fine-grained control over landscape features.

Archaeology and the Household

Contemporary household archaeology, especially a contextual household methodology, may provide a viable solution to the issue of landscape control when physically examining the fluid cultural landscapes found on Witherspoon Island

Plantation that were inhabited and altered by enslaved individuals and then tenant farmers over the course of the nineteenth century.

Household archaeology is a methodological and theoretical approach to domestic sites that can address diverse research interests from household demographics and socioeconomic relationships to use of space and architectural design. Interest in household archaeology can be traced to the popularity of domestic sites as a locus of archaeological study (Beaudry 1999; King 2006). The concept of the household has been subject to ongoing debate since the inception of household research in anthropology. Definitions for a household range from the physical dwelling in which a group of individuals reside all the way to ephemeral feelings associated with a dwelling area (Barile and Brandon 2004). While no agreed upon definition for a household exists, I argue that multiple household definitions serve as a strength for this field which allows for creativity and innovation in anthropological approaches to domestic settings.

Academic study of the household can be traced to the early social anthropological studies of kinship and family in the late nineteenth century. Popular cross-cultural studies attempted to reveal the universal building blocks of society shared amongst the world's cultures. These early anthropologists often used the terms household and family interchangeably with no accepted definitions for either concept (Yanagisako 1979). By the second half of the twentieth century, anthropologists began attempting to explicitly define and differentiate the concept of the household and family. A foundational study by Donald Bender defined family strictly along kinship lines and argued the household consisted of "a residence group that carries out domestic functions" (1967:493). This conceptual division of household and family allowed anthropologists to deal with

circumstances where family members were not directly involved in domestic functions or where residents of a dwelling may not have been related (Bender 1967).

Capitalizing on the household trend in social anthropology, archaeologists gradually became interested in the household as the core unit of social organization and economic activity. While the beginnings of household archaeology follow different paths for prehistoric and historic archaeologists, both groups initially shared the Binford's goal of identifying cultural regularities (Tringham 2001).

A session at the 1981 Society for American Archaeology conference initiated the official beginnings of household archaeology as a viable approach to domestic sites. The SAA session, chaired by William Rathje and Richard Wilk, brought together a wide array of archaeologists who attempted to adapt existing household literature from cultural anthropology. A joint paper by Rathje and Wilk coined the term "household archaeology" and offered a new theoretical direction for future household research. The publication of the session papers in the *American Behavioral Scientist* (1982) helped to disseminate household archaeology to a broad audience. The household archaeology of 1980s and early 1990s was primarily characterized by two broad theoretical schools: processual approaches and structuralist approaches. Both approaches attempted to follow the advice of Bender (1967) by separating culturally defined co-residence patterns from domestic function which they believed had value for cross-cultural studies (Barile and Brandon 2004).

For processualists, the household was utilized as the most basic unit to investigate cultural patterns (Breen 2003). The household was seen as an adaptive mechanism where variation in domestic material culture could be linked to differences in cultural evolution

and natural environments (King 2006:299-300). In a sense, the household was being treated as mid-range theory for processual archaeologists (Wilk and Rathje 1982).

Wilk and Rathje argued that the household was the level where “social groups articulate directly with economic and ecological processes” (1982:618). They defined the household as the “product of a domestic strategy to meet the productive, distributive, and reproductive needs of its members” (Wilk and Rathje 1982:618). Accordingly, the household could be divided into three elements: social organization, associated material culture, and behavioral elements. They suggested that archaeologists were in a unique position to speak directly to both the material and behavior aspects of the household. The emphasis on broad patterns and relationships led to processual archaeologists focusing on material remains largely independent of specific archaeological contexts. Detailed contexts were often deemed too site-specific, and linking material remains to these contexts was largely overlooked in analysis (Beaudry 1999). The processual approach resulted in the examination of functional households as entities far removed from the associated inhabitants (Barile and Brandon 2004).

James Deetz was also a presenter at the 1981 SAA household archaeology session and his paper offered a structuralist approach to households that focused on ideology. This approach developed from a contemporary critique of processual household approaches which argued that “social groups and their social behavior were not just found reflected in artifact patterns, they had become those patterns” (King 2006:300). Deetz argued that if folklorists such as Glassie and historians such as Vlach could decode standing homes for clues to cultural and ideological change, then archaeologists at some levels should also be able to gather viable information from excavated dwellings. Deetz’s

structuralist approach to household archaeology saw households and related archaeological deposits as "reflective of the shared beliefs and behavior of "the inhabitants, which "embodies the world of the society at large" (1982:721). Deetz argued (with support from Glassie) that the "behavioral and psychological dimensions of the family must in some way be expressed, however covertly, in artifactual form and texture" which allows archaeologists to extrapolate their findings to the larger society (1982:718).

An outgrowth of the structuralist approach to household was a critical materialist framework interested in the social power within the dwelling from a Marxist theoretical position. The critical approach came to prominence during the late 1980s with the Annapolis school led by Leone and Potter (King 2006). Household analysis from a critical framework maintained a structural definition of the household and treated the meaning of material culture as coded messages that reflect changing ideology in relation to economics and class structure. Household archaeology from this perspective (e.g. Leone 1988; Shackel 1993) was particularly concerned with issues such as inequality of household wealth, access to consumer goods, and evidence of resistance and domination within the material record.

The larger critique of critical, structural and processual household approaches is that they tended to neglect individual variation in the archaeological record and instead looked for evidence of broad patterns or overarching mindsets (Breen 2003). King nicely sums this critique by arguing that each of these approaches relied on normative models of human behavior where "households become 'faceless blobs', that is, undifferentiated and unproblematised social units" 2006:302).

Within household archaeology a post-positivist critique of processual and structural approaches led to an interest in the “role of individuals in the construction and alteration of society and social life” in a realistic manner that does not accept hyper-individualism or downplay the complex societal constraints placed on these actors (Wesson 2008:2) To reach the individual there was a popular theoretical swing towards post-structural theoretical frameworks such as gender (Anderson 2004; Brandon 2004; Dale 2015; Goldberg 1999; Hendon 1996; Lawrence 1999; Lyons 1989; Creek and Seifert 1994; Spencer-Wood 2004) and agency studies (Battle 2004; Stewart-Abernathy 2004; Wesson 2008). Other important developments with the field include contextual household approaches (Beaudry 1995; Breen 2003; Breen 2004; Groover 2004; Mrozowski et al. 1996; Wheeler 1995), household cycle studies (Alexander 1999; Anderson 2004; Frankel and Webb 2006; Groover 2001; Nyman and Kenline 2015), and multi-scalar household research (Anderson 2004; Barile 2004; Barna 2015; Freter 2004; and Reeves 2015). The wide variety of the theoretical and methodological approaches being employed in current household archaeology directly correlates with the multitude of household definitions that can be found in the burgeoning literature. There has become a clear consensus over the last decade that no working definition can be found that will ever encompass the varied manifestations of the household as a social unit (Barile and Brandon 2004; Fogle et al. 2015; Pluckhahn 2010). Definitions of a household and diverse landscapes they embodies inevitably vary and should be flexible both with regard to each site and to the goals of the archaeological research.

Like other recent approaches to the household, a contextual household methodology was the product of a critique of positivist and structural household research.

Initially developed by Mary Beaudry, this method called for “a holistic; contextual approach to the archaeology of historic households that is in direct contrast to the partitive and synchronic studies common in the past” (Beaudry 1989:84). The household, according to Beaudry should be seen as a “critical social unit and vital medium for understanding innumerable aspects of social life” (2004:254). A contextual approach incorporates a broad range of interdisciplinary data “aimed at linking household cycles and family histories to the depositional histories of domestic sites through close attention to site formation processes and site structure” (Beaudry 1999:117). These approaches take advantage of technical developments that can offer new lines of household-level evidence including, pollen studies (Archer et al. 2006), chemical / element residue analyses (Hjulstrom and Isaksson 2009), micro-stratigraphic research (Archer et al. 2006), and a variety of remote sensing techniques (Arnold et al. 1997). Beaudry suggests that such an approach offers important clues to everyday household actions from the ground up that reveal individual variability which is a true hallmark of the archaeological record (Beaudry 1999). The detailed focus on individual households with a contextual approach has drawn comparisons to work being done in the field of microhistory by our colleagues in history (Beaudry 2015:5; Cobb 2015:192). Microhistoric studies like many household approaches work from the ground-up to explore “the local perspective” as a means to elucidate “global patterns and wider narratives, as well as offering unique insights into phenomena and patterns that may lay outside the macrohistorical narratives or flatly contradict them” (Brooks et al. 2008:4).

A good example of a contextual approach is Wheeler’s (1995) study of a nineteenth-century household in New Hampshire. Originally excavated in the early

1980s, the Rider-Woods site was the home of a widow for nearly forty years. The initial interpretation of the site's occupant fit a 'poor widow' stereotype solely based on ceramics and faunal remains recovered from the home's privy. Wheeler refutes this initial interpretation which did not take into account the required maintenance of privies which significantly impacted stratigraphic deposits. Utilizing a micro-stratigraphic analysis, Wheeler was able to link individual strata from a backyard midden to several discrete temporal periods. Detailed analysis of the recovered material culture from the widow's occupation period combined with a close re-examination of primary documents helped refute the flawed interpretation showing that the widow in question was actually quite wealthy and fashion forward for the period. Wheeler argued that the errors made during the initial interpretation were the result of common misconceptions and biased excavation strategies that only placed trust in the chronology of the down-cut features. Her study shows the value of a contextual approach that combines detailed site-specific analyses with extensive documentary research to help reveal a microhistory of the household and its occupants.

Merging a contextual household methodology with a discourse materialized landscape perspective can provide the necessary level of control over the archaeological landscape to allow researchers to examine the various competing discourses that created that unique space. Such a combined approach challenges the simplistic notion of landscape as built environment so common to landscape archaeology and can be used to bring a wide range of multi-scalar discourses to bear on complex archaeological deposits across diverse cultural landscapes such as the proslavery reform discourse that is the focus of this dissertation.

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the proslavery plantation reform discourse exploring both the rise of the movement and the impact it may have had across the southern plantation economy. The second chapter also reviews previous research on the subject by historians and examines the potential contribution of historical archaeologists to this largely untapped field of inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

PROSLAVERY REFORMS AND WITHERSPOON ISLAND

Utilizing a contextual household approach, this dissertation examines a multifaceted antebellum plantation reform discourse that is intricately wound through the houseyard landscapes of Witherspoon Island Plantation. This chapter works to explore the genesis, impact, and previous scholarship relating to this influential reform movement helping to convey the need for greater research into the nineteenth-century plantation reforms from an archaeological perspective.

The origins of the antebellum plantation reform discourse are linked to the close of the international slave trade in the United States in 1808 and the budding abolition movement in the north that placed the institution of slavery under escalating scrutiny (Aptheker 1989:1-3; Ford 2009). In the face of the increasing attacks on slavery, southern planters and political figures actively worked to defend slave-based economic systems that supported their way of life (Finkelman 2007).

Slaveholders utilized a wide range of historical, moral, spiritual and economic arguments to support a southern culture built around the ownership of other human beings (Finkelman 2007:99). For example, proslavery historians drew upon both classical and biblical civilizations and argued that all great societies in history had been built upon slaveholding (Daly 2002:31-35; Finkelman 2007:102). Economic arguments suggested that slavery was integral to the success of the industrial north because many raw

materials, like cotton, were produced in slave-based economies (Finkelman 2007:106-107).

The core of the proslavery philosophy rested on the inherently racist argument that “if southern slavery was humane and generous, and rooted in Christianity, then it could easily be justified to the entire world as an institution beneficial, not only to the master class, but to the slaves themselves” (Finkelman 2007:105). Supporters argued that if slavery was to survive, it would have to shift away from the common aloof patriarchal system of management to a more paternalistic system where engaged masters functioned as sympathetic father-figures to dependent slaves (Morgan 1987:76-79; Ford 2009:143-149). Paternalistic planters in this vision of the plantation would be responsible for providing slaves with Christian enlightenment and healthy environments where obedient enslaved families could live happily and hopefully multiply (Ford 2009:147).

Paternalism was not a new idea taken up by planters. The conceptualization of the plantation as one large sprawling family with the planter functioning as the head of the household had existed long before the nineteenth century. With the increasing abolitionist pressure in the last four decades of the antebellum period, paternalistic ideology on plantations became increasingly common (Berlin 2003:204). This shift towards paternalist management meant that the purview of planters shifted from concerns about the systems of labor in the fields to the “most intimate aspects of slave life” from housing to the cleanliness of individual bondsmen (Berlin 2003:205).

Defenders of slavery contended that slaves within these types of paternalistic systems lived in circumstances significantly better than those of contemporary lower class whites throughout the world because bondsmen were treated as close family

members rather than nameless hired employees in a factory (Berlin 2003:204; Joyner 1984:124). An excerpt from a newly immigrated planter's journal from 1816 reiterates the same view. During the planter's first visit to his newly acquired slave village he commented that he had "never seen people more happy in my life; and I believe their condition to be much more comfortable than that of the laborers of Great Britain" (Lewis 1969:62). Concern for the living conditions under slavery were important to planters as they maintained that slaveholders had a moral and religious obligation to protect and help to develop a biologically inferior race of people that had few means of surviving in the modern world (Finkelman 2007:108; Oakes 1982:154).

The proslavery defense helped spur the development of a loosely-organized plantation labor reform movement in the 1820s and 1830s focused on improving the living conditions for enslaved communities both to counter the increased scrutiny of slavery and to improve agricultural productivity (Berlin 2003:203; Edwards-Ingram 1998:255; Genovese 1976:524).

The reforms to enslaved labor were also part of a larger scientific agriculture movement in the South that attempted to resuscitate agriculture in the seaboard states where erosion and depleted soils from exhaustive corn and cotton farming. This reliance on cash crop monoculture significantly lowered productivity of soils in these regions by the first decades of the 1800s fostered a large scale planter migration to virgin lands in the southwestern states and territories like Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas (McKee 1992:199). Led by politically charged reformers like Edmund Ruffin, this loosely based agricultural movement was an attempt to revitalize the productivity of depleted lands

through a complete reorganization of the plantation system from the treatment of soils in the fields to sweeping changes in slave management practices (McKee 1992:199-200).

First popularized in the agricultural press, plantation labor reform rhetoric was written by influential planters, proslavery politicians, agricultural theorists, and physicians and was distributed through dozens of monthly farming journals mailed to interested subscribers. Several journals had widespread distribution like *Southern Cultivator*, *Southern Planter* or the *Farmers' Register* and others were limited to specific geographic regions or states (Breedon 1980:xii; Moore 1958:73-76). While the journal system was commonly limited to subscribers, the reform discourse became part of the mass media through newspapers who commonly reprinted reform journal article in their agricultural sections allowing the widespread dissemination of reform articles and testimonies in both local and larger regional papers (Breedon 1980:xx; Moore 1958:74).

Initially limited to literate audiences of papers and journals, this national- and regional-level reform discourse spread further afield through agricultural societies, state agricultural conferences, church sermons, political speeches and rallies, and legislative efforts all pushing for significant reforms of the plantation system (Berlin 2003:203-204; Ford 2009:147; Vlach 1995:119). Newly organized agricultural societies were instrumental players in the reform dialogue by holding regular meetings with committees dedicated to slave management, hosting agricultural fairs, and by putting on prize-based competitions for the best reform articles on various topics (Breedon 1980:xx).

Slave management or labor reforms targeted nearly every aspect of plantation life for slaves offering ideal practices regarding issues of sanitation, health care, diet, dwelling architecture, economic ventures, plantation discipline regimes, religious

enlightenment, recreation, and childcare to name a few (Breedon 1980). The circulation of this reform dialogue within agricultural networks and between peers affected slave dwellings and their associated landscapes with both material and symbolic ramifications. The reform discourse was implemented and modified at the local level in varying degrees by a range of individual agents including planters, overseers, enslaved drivers and other slaves (Vlach 1995).

Many of the plantation and labor reforms drew upon eighteenth-century British agrarian reforms for inspiration which called for updated agricultural practices and improved habitations for poor rural estate laborers based on progressive enlightenment principles and neoclassical design (Chapman 2010:110-115; Maudlin 2010:11-12). For example, a number of the housing and sanitation recommendations promoted for plantation slaves in the antebellum period have direct parallels to British reform treatises like architect John Wood's noted 1781 volume *A Series of Plans for Cottages or Habitations of the Labourer* (Wood 1781).

The language of the antebellum reform movement attempted to portray an outwardly humane and benevolent message in an attempt to counter critical depictions of slavery pushed by abolitionists. In actuality, the core of the reform movement was concerned with developing a better means to control slaves, increase productivity and protect the planter's investment in valuable human labor. The true nature of the reform discourse was recognized by the enslaved labors who took what advantages they could from the improved environments, while continuing to actively resist the planter's ulterior motives in creating a visually and spatially disciplining landscape (Vlach 1995:126-127).

Some historians have questioned the actual influence of plantation labor reforms (Breedon 1980; Oakes 1982). For example, Oakes suggests that plantation reforms were generally more applicable only to larger planters, not the majority of small holders with few slaves (1982:166). He goes on to suggest that reforms were also often seen as impractical in their exact implementation and thus likely went unheeded on a majority of plantations with the possible exception of properties whose owners were actually writing reform treatises (1982:164-165).

Other researchers suggest that plantation reforms had a strong impact in the late antebellum era usually noting the presence of surviving plantation architecture that closely adheres to the design ideals commonly laid out by reformers (Genovese 1976:523-529; Vlach 1995). Most modern scholarship on the impact of plantation reforms undertaken by planters between the 1830s and 1860s has been limited to analysis of the historic record and studies of extant plantation architecture for clues to whether structures met the best architectural practices espoused in the reform discourse.

Vlach's landmark research on antebellum plantation architecture and landscapes (1993b) and his follow-up chapter on housing reforms (1995) are two of the best known studies in this field. Vlach's findings suggest that reforms ideals were quite commonly implemented in plantation design including slave housing and the presence of slave hospitals on large estates (1993b; 1995). The work of Chappell (1999) agrees with Vlach's findings but argues that surviving architecture is nearly as biased as the historical record left by planters. He suggests that standing architecture that remains intact represents "the best ever built" not the average dwellings that most would have slaves resided in (Chappell 1999:242). I agree with Chappell's assessment as many of these

survivals represent elements of showcase plantations that were meant to be seen and illustrate a planter's modern understanding of slave management and labor reforms. I argue that the ideals promoted by reform propagandists were just that, ideals, and never wholly implemented at any single plantation as suggested by Oakes (1982) and Breeden (1980). However, due to widespread nature of the reform dialogue that extended well beyond the confines of literate planters, I believe that varied aspects of this reform discourse were certainly applied on many plantations altering the lives of countless enslaved inhabitants throughout the late antebellum period.

Unfortunately many of the existing studies of antebellum reforms in history and related disciplines tend to focus almost exclusively on the implementation of plantation architectural ideals. While housing design was certainly a central component of the reform discourse, this singular focus ignores other cornerstones of the plantation reform including changes to diet, sanitation, religious instruction, health care, and slave commerce. Understandably, non-archaeologists are clearly limited to extant architecture and the historic record for their research, meaning that many reform aspects cannot be fruitfully studied.

Archaeology can provide a unique perspective on the implementation and impact of late antebellum plantation reforms by not relying solely on the biased historic record created by planters or on surviving plantation architecture. The archaeological record gives reform researchers a distinctive ground up viewpoint allowing them to explore the realities behind this influential discourse and see what reforms were actually implemented on individual plantations and to examine the response of enslaved communities and households to specific reforms. Archaeological analysis as employed in

this dissertation has the ability to examine the actual meals that slaves ate, the goods they purchased, and the crops they might have grown, to see the complex interaction between slaves and the various reforms their planters may have attempted to employ.

Archaeology, Plantations, and Reforms

The field of historical archaeology is well suited to examine issues relating to enslaved communities and the structures of plantation life. For the last five decades, sites of the African Diaspora have been a central research interest for archaeologists starting with the work of Charles Fairbanks at Kingsley Plantation in 1968 (See Fairbanks 1974). In a pioneering project, the Florida State Park Service contracted Fairbanks to excavate two standing slave quarters on park property. This was a revolutionary project as previous archaeological work on plantations had largely focused on the lives of wealthy planters or been used to help reconstruct big houses or formal gardens with little to no concern for the enslaved individuals that were responsible for the success of the southern plantation economy (Ferguson 1992:xxxv-xli; Little 2007:107-109) .

Fairbanks' innovative research project was motivated by the ongoing Civil Rights movement and by a longstanding controversy over African-American cultural identity in the social sciences initiated by sociologist E. Franklin Fraizer and anthropologist Melville Herskovits in the 1940s. Fraizer contended that the terrible conditions of the middle passage and the harsh mechanisms of slavery had destroyed any vestiges of African culture among bondsmen and their descendants. The leading detractor of this position was Melville Herskovits who argued that slaves had indeed retained certain aspects of

their original West African cultures. To disprove Fraizer, supporters of Herskovits' position sought to find material or behavioral evidence of these African practices which Herskovits called Africanisms. Charles Fairbanks felt that archaeology was a natural fit for the search for Africanisms and this initiative helped spur the groundbreaking research at Kingsley plantation in Florida in the late 1960s (Ferguson 1992:xxxv-xli; Little 2007:108; Orser 1998:66-67).

Led by the former graduate students of Fairbanks such as Sue Mullins-Moore, John S. Otto, and Theresa Singleton, historical archaeology of the 1970s and 1980s saw a growing interest in the study of enslaved African Americans (Davidson et al. 2006:1-2). Their research and that of other interested archaeologists helped to broaden the field of inquiry beyond the search for Africanisms in slave quarter sites. Most studies fell into a positivistic processual paradigm searching for broad patterns associated with ethnic or racial markers, consumer choice, and socioeconomic status or class (See Adams 1987; Adams and Boling 1989; Crader 1984; Ferguson 1980; Kelso 1984; Michie 1987; Mullins-Moore 1985; Orser 1988; Otto 1977; Otto 1980; Rathbun and Scurry 1985; Reitz et al. 1985; Singleton 1985).

Historical archaeology was not alone in the dramatic research shift to examine plantation life from the perspective of slaves. History departments in the 1960s also witnessed a parallel transition that challenged the dominant historical narratives in place from the nineteenth century to the early 1960s that had either perpetuated monolithic racist stereotypes about bondsmen, defended the benign paternalistic ideology of slaveholders, or had completely ignored the role of slaves altogether (Horton and Horton 2005:8-9; Jordan 2003:xi-xv). Starting in the 1960s, a new wave of revisionist historians

attempted to dismantle these offensive racist narratives with studies that gave agency to enslaved individuals highlighting the complexity of their lives and the creativity needed to survive the harsh conditions of slavery (Chafe et al. 2001:xxvii; Horton and Horton 2005:9; Smith 1998:44-48). Works such as John Blassingame's *The Slave Community* (1972), Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974) and *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (1977) by Lawrence Lavine led this movement and likely helped to inspire growing interest in the archaeology of plantation life as both disciplines pursued studies that attempted to give voice to enslaved individuals.

By mid-1980s, historical archaeology saw the beginnings of an influential post-processual trend. Not a unified movement, advocates for a post-processual turn attempted to move the discipline away from a well-entrenched positivist scientific model. To replace the positivist paradigm, adherents proposed a diverse set of humanistic theories and approaches attempting to address complex issues such as colonialism, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and human agency. This loose movement was characterized by a call for a greater scope of research looking at intertwined social, economic, and political relationships at the global and local levels (Johnson 2006). Perhaps one of the most important developments in historical archaeology was a growing sense of self-awareness leading to the recognition that all research is inherently politicized and that objectivity is impossible to achieve. This newfound reflexivity translated into a greater respect for research subjects and their descendants and work to challenge western and colonial biases enmeshed within anthropological theory and epistemology (Schmidt and Patterson 1995).

The rise of post-processual critiques led historical archaeologists to question the last two decades of plantation archaeology by critically examining earlier interpretations

and looking for new ways forward that allowed for more nuanced and reflexive studies of life in the African Diaspora (See Howson 1990; Potter 1991; Thomas 1995). Critics challenged the past usage of Africanisms and ethnic markers as simplistic conceptualizations that erroneously presented African American culture as static and unchanging. The scope of research also changed with an emphasis on a wider chronological and geographic reach with a greater focus on a diverse African American experience in North America (sites of slavery in northern states, post-emancipation sites etc.) (See Armstrong 2003; Chan 2007; Davidson 2004; Deagan and MacMahon 1995; Fitts 1996; Orser 1988; Wilkie 2000) and a call for increased work in West Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and other widespread sites associated with the African Diaspora (See Armstrong 1990; DeCorse 1991; DeCorse 1999; Funari 1997; Kelly 1997; Orser 1994; Posnansky 1982; Posnansky 1984; Reeves 1997).

The post-processual turn still drives much archaeological research today. Some of the popular research themes that have emerged in the archaeology of the African Diaspora since the mid-1990s include: studies that explore issues of space, place and landscapes (See Armstrong and Kelly 2000; Delle 1999; Fitts 1996; Joseph 2000; Singleton 2015b; Young 2003), studies of power relations especially planter dominance and resistance by bondsmen and freedmen (See Barile 2004; Orser and Funari 2001; Sayers 2014; Weik 1997; Weik 2012), public oriented archaeological studies that attempt to meaningfully engage with both descendants of subjects and local communities through the entire archaeological process from research design to interpretation (See Davidson and Brandon 2012; LaRoche 2012; LaRoche and Blakey 1997; McDavid 2002; McDavid 2007; Mullins 2004; Mack and Blakey 2004), studies that explore the social construction

of race and ethnicity (See Dawdy 2000; Epperson 1999; Epperson 2004; Mullins 2006; Orser 2007; Perry and Paynter 1999), and comparative research studies within the global African Diaspora (See Anderson 2004a; Chowdhury 2015; DeCorse 1999; Fennell 2015; Marshall 2015; Norman 2015; Reeves 2015; Singleton 2015a).

This dissertation draws on many of these modern themes examining power relations across the cultural landscapes of Witherspoon Island and by employing public archaeological sensibilities with strong community and descendant engagement. The contextual household approach utilized in my research attempts to synthesize a complex and diverse set of archaeological data, primary and secondary documentation, and ethno-historical evidence from Witherspoon Island including: refined stratigraphic analyses; various ceramic studies (including refit analyses, minimum vessel analyses, portable x-ray florescence [PXRF] studies, decorative analyses for dating, and vessel function analysis); bottle glass studies by form and function; zooarchaeological investigations; ethnobotanical analyses; primary Witherspoon family correspondence; memoirs written by Witherspoon descendants and by other local planters, state and federal census records, court documents, property records, various narratives of formerly enslaved individuals from the Pee Dee region; contemporary oral histories of Witherspoon descendants and local landowners, local and regional newspaper accounts; merchant and physician accounts of both planters and their slaves; and regional antebellum church records. This level of detail is required to link archaeological deposits and features to discrete historical occupations and allow for a close examination of the multifaceted reform discourse that worked to alter and create the plantation and houseyard landscapes found on Witherspoon Island. Utilizing this diverse data set I am able to closely examine six core elements of

the plantation reform discourse on Witherspoon Island which include housing design and siting, slave provisioning and diet, health care for bondsmen, sanitation within and around the dwelling, Christian enlightenment and moral instruction, and slave participation in local economies.

Of the six major reform themes examined in this dissertation only two, housing and diet, have received archaeological attention from the perspective of late antebellum reforms. The other subjects have long been source of archaeological inquiry over the past three decades but research into these topics has never specifically been framed in terms of the reform discourse. The next section of this chapter will briefly examine the previous archaeological research into these six issues.

Household Sanitation

Issues of sanitation and hygiene have long been of interest to North American historical archaeologists (See Duffy 1993; Ford 1994; Gallagher 2014) who have examined these matters in diverse settings from urban cityscapes (Hautaniemi and Rotman 2003; Palus 2011) to remote mining camps (Gillespie and Farrell 2002). However, one notable absence in this field of study has been sanitation in or around slave quarters which has not been a significant focus of published archaeological studies. Ancillary topics and often not directly considered from a sanitation perspective included studies of general yard maintenance by slaves and sweeping practices in antebellum and postbellum contexts (Adams 1987; Adams 1990; Agha 2004; Heath and Bennett 2000; Orser 1988; Thomas and Thomas 2004; Wilkie 2000) and studies of trash disposal looking at diverse issues such as refuse disposal patterns / activity areas, symbolic or

spiritual meaning of trash, and relationships between disposal and the cultural landscape (Armstrong 1990, Edwards-Ingram 1998, Gundaker and McWillie 2005; Heath 2010; Nyman and Kenline 2015; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005).

Christian Enlightenment

Few archaeologists have undertaken full-fledged studies of antebellum Christian enlightenment among bondsmen as is attempted in Chapter 7 of this dissertation. This is likely due to the fact that material traces of church-going or missionary activities are bound to be quite rare in the archaeological record. Instead many archaeologists working in enslaved contexts have focused on issues of spirituality in the slave quarters (see Brown and Cooper 1990; Fennell 2007; Leone and Fry 1999; Ogundiran and Saunders 2014; Wilkie 1995). Many of these studies attempt to relate their findings to West African influenced belief systems looking at features and artifacts that may be evidence of ritual activities by enslaved individuals. This line of research has been quite active in the archaeology of the African Diaspora especially over the last two or three decades with various studies examining topics such as the ritual uses of subfloor pits (Franklin 2004; Samford 2007; Young 1997), spirituality and African-influenced ceramics (Ferguson 1992; Ferguson 1999; Joseph 2007; Joseph 2011), and other spiritual practices such as ritual bundles (Brown 2014; Fennell 2000; Leone and Fry 1999; Ruppel et al. 2003).

Enslaved Economy

The internal economy of slaves has been of interest to archaeologists since the professionalization of plantation archaeology in the late 1970s and 1980s. Artifacts

recovered from waste and primary-use deposits around slave quarters are analyzed to examine the items provided by planters, goods purchased by bondsmen from merchants, and the crafts and edibles produced by slaves for sale on the open market (See Hauser 2008; Heath 2004; Reeves 1997; Samford 2004; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005). Studies of plantation economies have looked at the production of a variety of goods by slaves such as low-fired ceramic vessels (Isenbarger and Agha 2015, Espenshade 2008); handmade pipes (Agbe-Davies 2004), and various agricultural crops and animal products (vegetables, fruit, eggs, meat, fodder, and grains) intended for the open market (Crader 1993; McKee 1999; Pulsipher 1994; Samford 2004). Consumption of goods by slaves has also been an essential tool in examining issues of market access, identity, and socio-economic status within the plantation community (Heath 2004; Heath 1997; Hauser 2008; Howson 1995; Otto 1977; Reeves 2015; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005). These studies of production and consumption by slaves have helped reveal the inner workings of plantation economies but none of these archaeological investigations have explicitly examined the impact of late antebellum economic reforms aimed at restricting market access for bondsmen which is explored in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Health Care and Bondsmen

The health of enslaved African-Americans and their descendants has been examined by historical archaeologists over the last four decades. Researchers have looked at planter provided-care and overall bondsmen health in antebellum and postbellum plantation contexts from a traditional archaeology framework (See Anderson 2004a; Edwards-Ingram 2005; Handler 2000; Orser 1988; Singleton 1991) and also from a

bioarchaeological perspective (See Blakey 2001; Corruccini et al. 1985; Rathbun and Scurry 1985; Rathbun and Steckel 2005). Archaeologists have also been interested in the varied traditional medicinal practices utilized by bondsmen and freedmen (Groover and Baumann 1996; Handler 2000; Wilkie 1996a; Wilkie 2003). What has not been specifically examined by historical archaeologists is the potential adherence to best health practices recommended by reformers in the late antebellum period both in terms of medical care provided to slaves but also in terms of diet, hygiene and dwelling architecture which are all subjects directly addressed by this dissertation project.

Plantation Diet

Using faunal evidence, plant remains, culinary artifacts, and plantation records, historical archaeologists have been attempting to understand the foodways of enslaved laborers at various sites of enslavement in the Americas since the late 1970s to get at complex issues of identity, African-influenced survivals, status, and everyday life on the plantation (See Armstrong 1990; Bowen 1996; Crader 1984; Crader 1990; Ferguson 1992; Fogle and Wallman 2015; Franklin 2001; McKee 1999; Otto 1980; Yentsch 2007). One of the few archaeological attempts to engage with antebellum reform ideals is a Larry McKee's 1999 study of the plantation food supply in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Virginia. In his study McKee explores the social ramifications of foodways within the enslaved community convincingly arguing that the diet of slaves was "forged from African traditions, plantation deprivation, and active innovations" and functioned as "a core element of African-American cultural identity" (1999:235). In his analysis of the food supply, he examines antebellum reform recommendations regarding provisioning

and food preparation in conjunction with a limited zooarchaeological study of three different plantation faunal assemblages. While fluent in the antebellum reform literature, McKee (1999) is unfortunately unable to directly bring his archaeological or faunal data to bear on the specific dietary recommendations as two of his three plantation assemblages are primarily eighteenth-century deposits which predate the reform movement by several decades. In Chapter 5 of this dissertation I attempt to bring a wide array of archaeological and ethno-historical data to bear on the foodways of the enslaved community on Witherspoon Island to understand the potential repercussions of antebellum reforms on the meals consumed by the Witherspoon bondsmen.

Slave Dwelling Architecture

Explicit studies of slave quarter architecture by archaeologists are rather rare in the expansive body of plantation research. The design and size of the dwelling are certainly important data points recorded by archaeologists, but this type of architectural information is rarely treated critically in most analyses of plantation life. The exceptions to this broad trend include several architectural studies by archaeologists that attempt to look at dwellings to understand the diachronic evolution of slave quarter design, to examine architectural trends in specific geographic regions, or to understand the role dwellings may have played in different aspects of enslaved life (such as use of space, issues of privacy, and gender roles) (See Fesler 2004; Fesler 2010; Heath 2010; Heath and Breen 2012; Herman 1999; Kelso 1984; Sanford 2012; Sanford and Pogue 2009; Yentsch 1994). Only one archaeological study of architecture addresses the late antebellum reforms to the dwellings of bondsmen, a 1992 study by Larry McKee.

McKee's study examines the shift between colonial-era slave cabin design and reformed nineteenth-century cabins utilizing the historic record, studies of extant architecture and archaeological data from several antebellum slave quarters in Virginia. Overall McKee's research is largely theoretical in nature and engages primarily with broad reform patterns with few archaeological specifics. He concludes that many slave owners in Virginia were following the architectural reform models and suggests that the implementation of proslavery reforms were not passively accepted by slaves who struggled to countermand many of these obvious controlling endeavors (McKee 1992).

Aside from the two studies by Larry McKee (1992; 1999) historical archaeologists seem to be either unaware or unconcerned about the influential role of the proslavery reform discourse in the last three decades of the antebellum period. This lack of research is surprising as the archaeological toolkit is well positioned to provide a unique window into many elements of the reform recommendations from the standpoint of reform implementation by the plantation management and resistance to reforms by slaves who attempted to retain the few traditional privileges and rights they had achieved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This dissertation attempts to fill this glaring void in the archaeological literature. Even McKee's admirable efforts fall short when considering the actual implementation of reform recommendations either because his archaeological assemblages are not well suited to the task (1999) or his study is too broad to examine detailed reform specifics (1992). Admittedly McKee's goals are not the same as those of this dissertation which attempts to develop a holistic perspective on the reform discourse across a single plantation landscape.

Approaching houseyard landscapes on Witherspoon Island as discourse materialized allows me to examine these intimate spaces as the product of a regional- and national-level reform discourse intersected with the choices (forced or otherwise) by individual agents at the local level. The unique scope of the dissertation and the varied source materials used in conjunction with archaeological excavation allows me to draw nuanced contextualized conclusions about the implementation and impact of the antebellum reform discourse on Witherspoon Island plantation helping to elucidate an important and poorly studied reform movement that worked to disrupt expected privacy and privileges within slave communities throughout the South under the false banner of benevolence.

In Chapter 3, I provide a history of Witherspoon Island Plantation and its owners based on extant primary and secondary documentation. In this historic overview I focus on the tenure of planter John Dick Witherspoon looking at his involvement in the proslavery reform movement. The second half of Chapter 3 offers a summary of the archaeological fieldwork and methodology undertaken at Witherspoon Island from initial survey to full scale excavations within the plantation slave community.

CHAPTER 3

WITHERSPOON ISLAND: HISTORY AND FIELDWORK

The namesake of Witherspoon Island was John Dick Witherspoon a well-known antebellum lawyer, politician and planter. This chapter examines the history of Witherspoon's plantation properties, his involvement in the proslavery agricultural reform movement, and provides an overview of the archaeological excavations I conducted on the plantation property.

History of Witherspoon Island

A South Carolina native, John Dick Witherspoon (hereafter referred to as J.D. Witherspoon) was born in Williamsburg District to Gavin Witherspoon and Elizabeth Dick in March of 1778. J.D. Witherspoon was educated in local schools and then attended Brown University in Rhode Island. Graduating from Brown, Witherspoon studied law in Georgetown and was eventually admitted to the South Carolina bar. Shortly after 1800, J.D. Witherspoon relocated to the growing settlement of Society Hill in Darlington District to practice law.

After J.D. Witherspoon established a successful law practice in Society Hill, he married Elizabeth Boykin of Camden, South Carolina in 1808. Elizabeth and J.D. Witherspoon had six children that reached adulthood: Sarah "Sally" Cantey Witherspoon Williams (born 1810), Elizabeth "Betsy" Boykin Witherspoon Dubose (born 1812),

Boykin Witherspoon (born 1814), Rebecca “Becca” Elizabeth Witherspoon Wallace (born 1816), John Witherspoon (born 1818), and Jane Witherspoon Evans (born 1820). For the next several decades J.D. Witherspoon continued to practice law, was elected into the South Carolina House of Representatives and later served two years in the South Carolina Senate for the 1828 and 1829 terms (Dubose 1910:11).

J.D. Witherspoon’s legal career and elected offices were only two aspects of his livelihood. As part of the marriage settlement between J.D. Witherspoon and Elizabeth Boykin in 1808, the new couple received a large portion of slave property from her deceased father’s estate (Dubose 1910:8-9). This bequest of slaves spurred J.D. Witherspoon to pursue agriculture in addition to his law practice.

The initial gift of 30 or 40 Boykin slaves from his wife’s family in 1808 meant that Witherspoon needed land to house and employ the newly acquired bondsmen (U.S. Federal Census 1810). One month after his wedding, Witherspoon purchased a tract of 1668 acres of unimproved land along the Great Pee Dee River in Darlington District with a plan to establish a cotton plantation. Located about 18 miles south of Society Hill, the purchase was situated on an inland island surrounded by an oxbow lake known as Lowther’s Lake to the west and the Pee Dee River to the east. The tract apparently had not been utilized by the previous owners who acquired the property as part of an eighteenth-century land speculation movement that saw large swaths of acreage snapped up throughout the Pee Dee region (Dargan 1997:155-157). Witherspoon was familiar with this area as his father Gavin had once inhabited a parcel of land that bordered Lowther’s Lake (Dubose 1910:8).

Clearing fields and the construction of a slave settlement likely began shortly after the purchase of the island property which eventually became known as the Lowther's Lake Farm or Witherspoon Plantation. Although the early years of the plantation are poorly documented, it is likely that the slaves on Witherspoon Plantation were focused on producing cotton, provisions (corn, other food crops, and fodder), and livestock – the same crops that were known to be produced in the last two decades of the antebellum period (U.S. Federal Census 1850 and 1860).

Along with planting and expanding fields, the plantation also required the construction of massive earthen dikes and brick drains to help control the seasonal flooding of lowland fields and reclaimed swamps that bordered the Pee Dee River and the lake. This method of protecting fields was shown to be viable by future South Carolina Governor David R Williams who was the first planter to construct these dams on his Pee Dee plantations in Darlington and Marlboro Districts in the early nineteenth century (Cook 1916:168-172). Many miles of an extensive dam system were constructed by Witherspoon slaves in the first few decades of the plantation and the remnants of this herculean earthmoving task are still visible today (Dargan 1997:157-160).

While the dams were successful at holding back many of the smaller annual floods, years with above-average storms meant that even the strongest of dams would eventually fail causing havoc and destruction for the Pee Dee planters. Two well-documented floods on the Pee Dee occurred in the 1850s, including a noted 1856 freshet likely caused by a hurricane that endangered the slaves, livestock and crops on the Witherspoon Plantation. Daughter Jane Witherspoon Evans reported news of the storm to her father who was traveling in Virginia during the late summer of 1856. At Lowther's

Lake, Jane relayed that “all the stock was saved” and that his “overseer went to work the day after the great rain on the dam & worked day & night until it broke” in several places. The entire plantation was “under water, except a few ridges” according to Jane’s husband William Evans who “seemed to think your losses terrible. I do not suppose your corn can be lost, even covered with water, so much of it must have been too old to sour & spoil. William says the rain water & wind had done damage before the bank broke & that the bank was very soft where it was made of sands & not safe to walk upon” (J. Evans to J.D. Witherspoon, Letter, 7 Sept. 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

Witherspoon lost nearly all his cotton and corn crops for 1856 in the flood and like many area planters was forced to go into debt to purchase supplies for his slaves and livestock (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 4 Oct. 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). When distributing slave clothing and provisions on the plantation in February of 1857 after the flood, Elizabeth Witherspoon writes that “Our negroes looked confounded when I told them the corn, blankets & hats were bought with borrowed money. They thought Master was so rich” (E.B. Witherspoon to E.E. Witherspoon, Letter, 6 Feb. 1857, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). This flood, along with other major events noted by Witherspoon in 1831 and 1852 (among many others not mentioned) were a known risk for large planters on the Pee Dee even when their dams were well-built and properly maintained.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Witherspoon continued to purchase additional tracts of land on or near the island, increasing his holdings at Lowther’s Lake to more than 2500 acres by 1850. This acreage on the plantation was broken into roughly 1200 cleared acres protected by earthen embankments, 600 cleared

acres on the ridges or highlands, and the remaining acres in wooded land (Charleston Mercury 1861). The plantation workforce also quickly grew due to the birth of children and further inheritances of slaves from family members. Additionally, several Witherspoon family correspondences mention the purchase of slaves on the open market by J.D. Witherspoon during the early years of the plantation. For example, an 1856 letter from Elizabeth Witherspoon to her son Boykin relays some news of her grandson John W. Williams and his new planting enterprise:

John Williams has the usual luck with bought negroes. Two out of the three bought in Charlotte only waited to be fitted up with two new suits of clothes before they ran away. John is so mortified he says he will sell them but your father says he ought not for the first offense. Some of his bought negroes did the same who turned out good slaves. Moses for instance, who has been an excellent man. But they are still out (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 24 Feb. 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection)

Census records indicate that the number of slaves owned by Witherspoon grew from 43 slaves in the 1810 Federal Census to 196 slaves by 1860 (U.S. Federal Census 1810 and 1860). While the number of slaves reported in the 1860 census is certainly substantial for the Pee Dee region, it is also misleading and does not represent the true size of the workforce on the plantation which was significantly greater than 196 slaves at different points in time and likely ranged between 225 to 275 slaves during years of peak occupancy at Lowther's Lake.

The discrepancy in numbers is related to the gifting of Witherspoon slaves to the children of J.D. Witherspoon. As the six Witherspoon children married and settled down, their father gave each a large portion of slaves as part of their inheritance. For example, a deed of gift from J.D. Witherspoon conveys thirty-four slaves to Jane Witherspoon soon after her marriage to William H. Evans. These slaves were to be possessed and utilized for the benefit of the William Evans family until the death of his wife (Darlington District Deed Book O, Pg. 109-110, Darlington County Historical Commission). One exception was their daughter Sarah who married John N. Williams, one of the wealthiest planters in the entire region. Williams had J.D. Witherspoon hold his wife's slave inheritance in trust until a later date either to benefit from the eventual increase of the slave families or potentially to obtain interest on the crops made by Witherspoon.

Lowther's Lake Farm was an absentee plantation set in a remote location. It was built to be a working plantation, not a showcase estate, meant to be publically viewed as a testament to the progressive and modern ideals of the planter. The only permanent inhabitants of the plantation were the enslaved field hands, their families, several skilled slaves, and an overseer. Planter J.D. Witherspoon and his family continued to reside in the township of Society Hill. Up until the mid-1850s J.D. Witherspoon took a direct hand in the management of the plantation even though he did not live in a traditional big house on the property. Family letters and memoirs all suggest that Witherspoon made weekly visits to the plantation, riding to the plantation one morning, spending that night and returning the following afternoon, sometimes spending an additional night there if needed. These lengthy visits allowed Witherspoon to see the fields, examine preparations for upcoming crops and to treat any sick slaves (Dubose 1910).

Even with Witherspoon's regular visitation schedule, the overseer played a critical role on the plantation as it was the overseer who directly implemented the planter's vision and weekly orders. One overseer was appointed annually to manage the Lowther's Lake plantation for J.D. Witherspoon. Samuel B. McBride, the second to last overseer to work for the Witherspoon estate between 1854 and 1860 provides a glimpse of the job requirements and privileges afforded to overseers on the plantation. Earlier overseers are often alluded to, but the documentary record is largely silent on their names and exact role on the plantation. A letter written by McBride's relatives relayed that Samuel was the overseer for J.D. Witherspoon saying:

He gets \$200, a cook, and a boy to wait in the house and all of his provisions found him but sugar, coffee, and flour. Sam and Lou [wife of Samuel] are both of them well pleased there. Lou says that she would rather live there at that price than to live at other places and get more. She says the woman they have for a cook is such a good negro. I have heard that Mr. Witherspoon is well pleased with Sam. If so he will raise his wages another year and I do not doubt but what it is so for Sam is very attentive to his business. Sam says he has very little trouble there for he has a negro drive [driver] (Bray and Hale 1993:104).

The Witherspools were initially pleased with McBride's work ethic and indeed gradually raised his salary to a rate of \$500 annually by 1860 (Witherspoon Estate Accounts, Equity Case 484, Darlington County Historical Commission). Early on in his tenure, J.D. Witherspoon's wife Elizabeth noted that McBride "has not laid on the negroes, but

complaints are made of his wife” who was “very harsh” with the household slaves she was given. Will, the enslaved foreman on the plantation also liked McBride but felt that “he takes too many liberties” with his position (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 26 June 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). It is unclear what exactly Will meant by this statement, but it appears that McBride may have overstepped his role and encroached on the traditional authority of the enslaved leadership.

As J.D. Witherspoon’s lead driver or plantation foreman, Will would have been one of the most influential enslaved individuals on the plantation. He was in charge of several under-drivers, like Old Jacob, who managed one of the smaller slave gangs tasked with planting, harvesting, clearing fields, dam repairs, or other plantation needs as dictated by the season (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 29 June 1861, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). Will’s position on the plantation was to ensure the productivity of the field hands, enforce discipline on the plantation, and report directly to the overseer and / or planter as the situation required. Together with the overseer, the enslaved foreman and his under-drivers kept the plantation operating on a day to day basis.

The peak years of the plantation in terms of production and plantation growth appear to have been from 1830 (when Witherspoon retired from law and politics) until the mid-1850s. During the last half of the 1850s J.D. Witherspoon’s health rapidly declined. The beginning of Witherspoon’s health issues started with an apparent stroke he suffered in late 1854 which cost him the full use of his right leg and hand and was a source of much agony for the planter over the last five years of his life (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 24 Dec. 1854, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). Even

after this attack and a limited recovery, Witherspoon still attempted to visit the plantation but gradually became less involved in the planting enterprise (Dubose 1910:21).

Elizabeth Witherspoon wrote in 1857 that her husband had largely “given up the management of his crop to his overseer & I observe he feels less interest in the business than he did when he managed it all himself. He goes into the Island the day he goes down & next morning comes home” (E.B. Witherspoon to E.E. Witherspoon, Letter, 25 Apr. 1857, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). The plantation visit described by Elizabeth Witherspoon was indeed quite short as it took three to four hours (or more) to make one leg of the trip from Society Hill to Lowther’s Lake on horseback (Delaware Farmer 1853).

The role of the overseer grew in importance in the second half of the 1850s as poor health and advanced age started to significantly impact Witherspoon’s ability to directly manage plantation affairs. Visits he did make were less frequent and Witherspoon was quite limited in his ability to see most aspects of the plantation that required access on horseback or on foot. This led to a heavy reliance on the judgement and knowledge of his overseer Samuel McBride which both J.D. Witherspoon and Elizabeth began to question after poor harvests in the late 1850s saying “McBride does just as he pleases at the plantation & I suppose he is a poor planter, but he treats the negroes well.” Witherspoon elected to keep McBride on the job for 1860 because of his good working relationship with the slaves and the nearly impossible challenge of finding another agreeable overseer (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 13 Feb. 1860, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

On April 2 1860, J.D. Witherspoon passed away after a brief illness.

Witherspoon's death is discussed in family letters, but the exact medical cause is unclear (E. Edwards to J.P. Witherspoon, Letter, 4 Apr. 1860, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). One of the few words directly attributed to a former Witherspoon slave, Chaney Chesnut Brown, daughter of Hooper and Lucretia, mentions the death of J.D. Witherspoon saying "I was 26 when 'mancipation came. But before that Old Man John Witherspoon died... Well, when he died, that was the one time I cried over white folks. I'd never done that before, and I haven't done that since. All of us cried, he was such a nice old man. His wife was just as nice, and we liked her too; but not as much as the old man" (Woods 1940:2). To the Lowther's Lake field hands like Chaney, the death of J.D. Witherspoon was more than the loss of a supposedly nice master; his death signaled imminent uncertainty for their futures including the potential breakup of families and the likelihood of long distance relocations for many of the bondsmen from either sale or inheritance.

Witherspoon's death also fractured already strained family relations as several children were concerned about the terms of their father's will which they thought to be unfair. Dr. John Wallace, the husband of Rebecca Witherspoon, planned to legally challenge the will claiming that terms were unequal and that J.D. Witherspoon had not been competent when the will was crafted several years before his death. The main concern of Dr. Wallace had was the large portion of slaves that were to be given to Sarah C. Williams because she had never taken her inheritance of field slaves during her father's lifetime and was thus due more slaves than the other children had received over

the last two or three decades (E.W. Dubose to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 6 July 1860, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

Newly widowed, Elizabeth B. Witherspoon initially kept the plantation intact, but started planning to disperse of the plantation slaves and to sell the plantation property. She intended to fight any legal challenges to J.D. Witherspoon's will in court and made plans to favor her grandson in Alabama (John Witherspoon Dubose) with a below-market hire rate for a large portion of the slaves that were not promised to her daughter Sarah C. Williams. The remainder of the slaves not sent to Alabama or given to the Williams family were to be hired out among her remaining children in order to generate an ample income for the remainder of her life (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 24 Aug. 1860, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). Elizabeth Witherspoon's plan to sell the plantation lands were quickly put on hold as agricultural land prices fluctuated lower during the early days of the Civil War (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 13 Sept. 1861, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

Before Elizabeth Witherspoon had a chance to divide the slaves, she was murdered in September 1861. Four of her household slaves were accused and convicted of the crime. The driving cause of the murder is complex and poorly understood. An account of the murder by Mary Chesnut, a cousin of Elizabeth Witherspoon, suggests the crime was committed in order to make it appear that Elizabeth died of natural causes in hopes that her son John Witherspoon would not punish the household slaves for borrowing Elizabeth's china, linens, and silver for an unauthorized slave gathering (possibly held on the plantation) (Woodward 1981:209-210). A newspaper story of the murder corroborates Chesnut's account saying the murder was committed to "escape a

whipping for an offence of which they own themselves guilty” (Yorkville Enquirer 1861:1). Witherspoon family correspondences leading up the murder suggest that one of the accused ringleaders, William, the former coachman for the family, was involved in some significant transgression in August, only one month before the murder. William was severely punished for the unnamed offence - which may suggest the murder motive also could have been a case of retribution as well (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 2 Aug. 1861, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

While legal action regarding the J.D. Witherspoon estate had been in the court system before the murder of Elizabeth Witherspoon, it was her death that spurred immediate action regarding the distribution of Witherspoon slaves, lands and personal belongings. As executor of his father’s and mother’s wills, John Witherspoon received an 1862 Writ of Partition from the courts that divided the Witherspoon slave property between Sarah C. Williams and himself. Eighty-eight plantation slaves in family groups were to be given to the Williams family, three grandsons each received one slave apiece, and the remaining 96 field slaves were to be divided by John Witherspoon among his siblings in his capacity as executor (Writ of Partition, Equity Case 484, Darlington County Historical Commission). There is little documentation regarding the exact distribution of the 96 field slaves, family correspondences and census records indicate that several families were sent to Elizabeth Witherspoon Dubose in Alabama, many families stayed locally in Darlington with John Witherspoon or Jane Witherspoons Evans, and several others may have been forced to Louisiana to join the plantation of Boykin Witherspoon.

The plantation land holdings, the house and lot in Society Hill, plantation equipment, crops made in 1861, and personal belongings were all sold by John Witherspoon with the proceeds divided among the family either in cash settlements or as credit to pay existing debts as in the case of Elizabeth W. Dubose whose husband owed the Williams family a great deal of money (Statement of Accounts, Equity Case 409, Darlington County Historical Commission).

It is unclear what happened to the Witherspoon household slaves after the murder. Four of the slaves were executed for their alleged role in the Witherspoon murder case, but the fate of their children and several other enslaved families are undocumented in court records. Correspondence from John Witherspoon gives several clues to the fortune of the remaining household slaves. He suggests that Emma and her child Griggs were to be sold along with the Witherspoon house and also mentions that the young children of executed servant Rhoda were to be sent to his plantation since they had no one to care for them in Society Hill (J. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 2 Mar. 1862, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

In May of 1862, the bulk of the plantation land holdings were sold to Mitchell King, a Charleston lawyer and rice planter (Dargan 1997). The purchase of Witherspoon Island by King is enmeshed in the early history of the Civil War which saw a massive surprise Union naval offensive in late 1861 that threatened Confederate strongholds along the Atlantic and wreaked havoc on the coastal plantation economy. In the first days of the offensive, planters fled encroaching Union forces and their slaves rushed by the thousands to Port Royal and other locations controlled by Federal troops (Tomes and Smith 1865:77-78). Savannah River planters like Mitchell King and his sons who owned

three rice plantations (Rae's Hall Plantation, Red Knoll Plantation, and Springfield Plantation) decided to relocate their slaves to a safer location fearing an imminent attack on Savannah (Diary 1861-1862, Mitchell King Papers #400, Southern Historical Collection (SHC), Wilson Library, University of North Carolina).

After initially moving their 200 plus slaves to Augusta, King learned about the sale of Lowther's Lake Plantation. King heard of the sale either from advertisements run in local Charleston papers or through his extended social networks which included some connections by marriage to the extended Witherspoon family. Mitchell King quickly rented the Witherspoon plantation and relocated his slaves there via train from Augusta (Diary 1861-1862:62, Mitchell King Papers #400, SHC). After several favorable reports from his sons, King decided to purchase the Witherspoon holdings on the island for a sum of 25,000 dollars. In his diary, Mitchell King posited several ideas for the name of the new plantation including Hope, Rosseton, and Refuge before finally settling on Hopeton Plantation (Diary 1861-1862:45, Mitchell King Papers #400, SHC). The name choices reflect the refugee nature of the initial King occupation at Witherspoon Island.

The selection of Darlington District was not a random choice by the Kings as many Charleston and Savannah residents looked to the Pee Dee region as a potential refuge from the coastal threats and as a safe location removed from large cities or other vital Union targets. Darlington-area correspondences talk about a flood of Charleston refugees arriving in the area many bringing large numbers of slaves with them (Cawthon 1965:140-150). John Witherspoon is documented in 1863 as offering a planter in North Carolina space on one of his plantations in Marlboro District to shelter his friend's bondsmen who were endangered by nearby Union forces (Crabtree and Patton 1979:350).

In November of 1862, Mitchell King succumbed to ongoing health issues and the plantation in the Pee Dee and the slaves held there were bequeathed to two of his sons McMillan and Mitchell (Will of Mitchell King. Charleston County Will Books, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia). The probate inventory taken after Mitchell King's death details the value of his properties and possessions including his slaves. At Hopeton Plantation, the property is valued at the original sale price (25,000 dollars) and the slaves held there are listed and broken down by family group. The inventory lists 205 individual slaves divided into 57 total family groups (Inventory of Mitchell King Estate. Charleston Inventory Books, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia). Rather than sell the slaves and the Hopeton property, the two sons kept the plantation intact after their father's death.

Four month after the Civil War ended, Hopeton Plantation was still occupied by the former King slaves. It appears that a large portion of the former King Family slaves remained on the island immediately after Emancipation according to a Freeman's Bureau Labor Contract dated August of 1865 (1865 Freedmen's Contract for Hopeton Plantation. Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington). The contract between McMillan King and the former slaves listed 160 individuals. The names largely match the slaves listed on the 1862 Probate inventory indicating that the majority of the former slaves stayed on as plantation laborers in early days of emancipation (Inventory of Mitchell King Estate Charleston Inventory Books, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia). The discrepancy in total number of laborers between the two documents may be related to the presence of children on the island. It seems possible that younger children may not have been required to sign the labor contract.

The contract itself stipulated that the freedmen were in effect sharecroppers receiving a portion of the crop, a place to live on the plantation, rations, and medical care in return for their labor. According to the contract, freedmen on Witherspoon Island had to adhere to certain conditions: follow the orders of McMillan King or his agent, carry no firearms, “avoid drunkenness”, and not “misuse any plantation tools or agricultural implements entrusted to their care” (1865 Freedmen’s Contract for Hopeton Plantation. Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington). If these conditions were not met, then former slaves faced dismissal from the plantation. Also as part of the contract McMillan King was obligated to treat freedmen “in a manner consistent with their freedom” (1865 Freedmen’s Contract for Hopeton Plantation. Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington).

According to the diary of a military Provost Judge who visited the island in December 1865, the former rice slaves were living in terrible conditions and had not successfully raised any crops due to their unfamiliarity with local agricultural practices. The Judge urged the freedmen to return with all haste to the Lowcountry even though this suggestion went against the official recommendation that all former field hands sign new contracts for 1866 (Gould et al. 1997:523-524). A news article from 1866 confirmed that former King slaves followed this advice and left the plantation in late 1865. Apparently the freedmen traveled to Charleston where they caught a steamboat back to Savannah arriving on January 4th 1866 where they were to work for one-third of the rice crop on one of the old King plantations (The Daily Phoenix 1866:2).

In 1866 the former Witherspoon plantation was transferred from McMillan and Mitchell King to their younger brother Alexander Campbell King. Alexander maintained

Hopeton Plantation until selling the property off in 1879 (Dargan 1997). The thirteen years under Alexander Campbell King's management were focused on cotton production with labor received from African-America sharecroppers he employed.

According to Darlington District tax-liens, census records, and voter lists the sharecroppers on the island after 1866 fell into two groups: former slaves from neighboring plantations in the Pee Dee region and former Witherspoon Island bondsmen (who had been inherited locally by John Witherspoon, Jane Evans, or Sarah C. Williams) returning to the plantation where they had once been enslaved. On average there were around twenty sharecropping households on the plantation. Historic records suggest that a large number of these households were relatively mobile, moving from plantation to plantation every five or ten years and sometimes much more rapidly looking for better conditions. Even though the Lowther's Lake plantation was sold a number of times in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, sharecropping continued until the turn of the century when Witherspoon Island was purchased by A.J. Howard. Under the Howard ownership, the property was maintained as a hunt club with only two or three African American families remaining on the island for the next few decades. The property remains in the hands of the Howard family unto this day and has been used for both farming, logging and hunting over the last century (Dargan 1997).

Agricultural Reform and J.D. Witherspoon

The Witherspoon occupation of Lowther's Lake Plantation provides an excellent opportunity to examine the influence of the proslavery labor reform discourse on a single

plantation that was operated and growing rapidly during the peak years of the reform movement. Both Witherspoon and many of his influential peers in the Pee Dee region were interested in modern reforms to slavery and plantation agriculture as a whole.

In Darlington District, proslavery agricultural reformers made their presence known through the Darlington Agricultural Society founded in 1846. This was the second incarnation of an official agricultural society in Darlington District. While the records of the earlier agricultural society are absent, it appears that the original society was founded sometime in first three decades of the nineteenth century and later disbanded (Napier 1997 189-196).

Minutes of the second agricultural society show a progressive agenda dedicated to the implementation of scientific agriculture and labor reforms on Pee Dee area plantations (Darlington Agricultural Society Minutes 1846-1880, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina). The organization met quarterly and had several standing committees who gave regular reports on subjects such as plantation tools, soil improvement, various crops such as corn, cotton, and potatoes, plantation health, and had a committee solely dedicated to the “treatment and management of slaves and duty of overseers and employers” (Napier 1997 189-196).

The committee on labor management included several Witherspoon friends and family including William H. Evans (J.D. Witherspoon’s son in-law) who chaired the committee in the 1850s and J.D. Witherspoon’s son John who took part in the committee immediately after emancipation looking at the challenges of freeman labor and the potential hire of European immigrants as a new source of agricultural labor. Reports by this committee were dedicated to practical issues like new management strategies, the

health care for slaves, the internal economy, and proper housing conditions. As one example, in an August 1857 gathering of the society Dr. Gregg, a local physician, “made some observations in relation to negro houses” arguing for “more room than is usually provided, both on account of the health and the morals of the negro" (Darlington Agricultural Society Minutes 1846-1880, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina).

The progressive reform discourse promoted by the agricultural society (and others like it) was widely disseminated in mass media of the nineteenth century. Reports from various committees and notable speeches given at the Darlington Agricultural Society were regularly published in local newspapers like *The Darlington Flag* or *The Southerner* and often reprinted in larger papers in Charleston or Columbia. Articles from Darlington members also commonly appeared in regionally- or nationally-distributed agricultural journals such as *Debow's Review*, *The Southern Cultivator* and *Farmer & Planter*. Editors of these agricultural journals also attended local meetings and gave speeches on the latest progressive practices while also hawking their publications to members (Darlington Agricultural Society Minutes 1846-1880, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina).

As the membership rolls for the two agricultural societies in Darlington do not survive, it is unclear whether J.D. Witherspoon was an active participant in either organization. While his name does not appear in the extant minutes of the 1846 society, Witherspoon was closely related to many of the society members including his son, his son-in law, and numerous Society Hill peers including John N. Williams, Caleb Coker,

and R. G. Edwards, among others (Darlington Agricultural Society Minutes 1846-1880, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina).

The prominence of the Darlington Agricultural Society in the Pee Dee region strongly suggests that J.D. Witherspoon would have been familiar with their local reform publications and associated with society members on a daily basis. J.D. Witherspoon subscribed to several agricultural journals and even submitted various reports on agricultural experiments to national publications such as the *Monthly Journal of Agriculture*. For example, in an 1847 article on the use of marl (lime-rich mud) to amend soil in his cotton and corn fields, Witherspoon writes that he was following a marling plan established by Edmund Ruffin a leading proslavery agricultural reform figure (Witherspoon 1847:156). This familiarity with Ruffin's analysis of marl suggests that Witherspoon was well-versed in current agricultural reform theories being espoused in literature and promoted by progressive agricultural societies.

Lowther's Lake Plantation was even reviewed in the agricultural journal *American Farmer* in a travelogue looking at southern agricultural practices in 1853. The author, a friend of J.D. Witherspoon's son John visited several area plantation including: Lowther's Lake, Hunt's Bluff (John Witherspoon's Plantation in Marlboro District), and Mulberry (the Chesnut plantation in Camden, SC). The discussion of Lowther's Lake mentions the high productivity of the island land and the progressive agricultural practices that have improved the already rich land (Delaware Farmer 1853: 371).

Not only did the author consider the fields and crops, he also made several observations regarding the slaves he witnessed and met on the Chesnut and Witherspoon plantations saying:

No doubt there are bad and hard masters, and there is as little doubt that they are as much condemned by the community in which they reside, as they are anywhere; but it is I find, generally conceded, that the condition of the slaves has greatly improved of late years; there is less use of the lash, and they are better fed and clothed; and as education and intelligence becomes more general, the improvement will progress, until it is to be hoped there will be no cause for sympathy, and none but a morbid sympathy will be aroused (Delaware Farmer 1853: 372).

Even in his position as an outsider (an influential farmer from the northeast), the author's comments fall in line with the proslavery rhetoric which argued that through the labor reform practices of progressive slaveholders the living condition of slaves were being gradually improved leading to positive influences regarding intellect, morality, and behavior of the entire enslaved population (Delaware Farmer 1853). Given that the Lowther's Lake Plantation operated during the peak years of the reform movement, a contextual archaeological study of the houseyard landscapes on the island has a chance to reveal what labor reforms may have been implemented by J.D. Witherspoon on his remote absentee plantation and their influence on the lives of Witherspoon bondsmen.

Archaeology of Witherspoon Island

Witherspoon Island is an elliptically shaped island located on the Great Pee Dee River in Darlington County, South Carolina. Nearly 3700 acres in size, the island is partially surrounded by the oxbow Lowther's Lake on the north, south and west sides. The eastern edge of the island is bounded by the Pee Dee River and contained a steamboat landing on the river historically known as King's Pocket. The center of the island has the highest elevation and is associated with a series of large sand ridge features. The periphery of the island is a lowland swamp that was once populated with massive cypress trees. Until the mid-twentieth century, access to Witherspoon Island was only available via the boat landing on the Pee Dee, by canoe, or by a flatboat ferry that crossed Lowther's Lake. A permanent causeway was constructed across the lake several decades ago which now allows vehicles to pass onto the island (Dargan 1997).

Starting in August 2009, I began an archaeological survey of the slave settlement of the Lowther's Lake Plantation once owned by J.D. Witherspoon. Based on standing architecture and a diverse set of evidence (including historic maps, period photographs and oral history) a location on the island's central sand ridge was selected for archaeological testing in the form of mapping, walkover surveys, and shovel testing. The suspected site of the slave settlement is composed of a large clearing surrounded with densely wooded terrain. The clearing is divided by the main road which leads to the causeway onto Witherspoon Island. The northern portion of the clearing is a plowed food plot grown to attract local wildlife. The bottom third of the clearing contains a hunting

lodge used by the Howard Family and the Witherspoon Island Hunt Club. The clearing is surrounded by a forest of maturing pines with dense underbrush of vines and saplings.

The hunting lodge on the site is composed of several nineteenth-century structures including a cabin and a barn / shed. The single-pen cabin is constructed of hand-hewn cypress logs and likely began life as a slave habitation during the Witherspoon occupation. The cabin and barn were relocated from their original settings and combined in the first half of the twentieth century by Hunt Club members (Charles Howard, personal communication 2008).

According to the oral history of the property owners, the area around the lodge once contained a large number of log cabins that have since been moved or lost to fire (Charles Howard, personal communication 2008). A 1960 newspaper article on Witherspoon Island contains an interview with a Howard family relative, Hugh Erving who had worked on Witherspoon Island since 1905. In the article Erving gives a tour of several standing log cabins claiming they were built in the 1820s. He also recalled that 15 cabins once stood in the area of the flowing well which is located adjacent to the present-day hunting lodge (Fallon 1960).

Historic maps also potentially place the slave settlement near the location of the hunting lodge. A 1911 drainage map of the Pee Dee River by the United States Department of Agriculture offers a detailed look at Witherspoon Island in the early twentieth century. The map shows the location of earthen dikes, fields, woodlands, and the main road on the island (Figure 3.1). The road shown on the map leads across the island ferry to the sand ridge in the center of the island. The end of the road appears to

show a cluster of seven structures that may represent a former slave settlement (1911 USDA Map of the Great Pee Dee Valley, Darlington County Historical Commission).

A 1912 photograph on Witherspoon Island seems shows a section of this settlement next to the flowing well (Figure 3.2). Three or four single-pen cabins are visible in the background of the image. The habitations appear to be abandoned at this time period with scrub brush growing up around the structures. Additionally, there are no chimneys visible in the image which again suggests neglect and abandonment.

Witherspoon Island Survey

The combination of oral history and documentary evidence strongly suggests that the area around the present day hunting lodge was the site of the slave settlement on Witherspoon Island. In the fall of 2009 a site grid was established at the settlement site location with a total station. The initial north baseline was oriented along a grid north rather than magnetic north to take advantage of open (non-wooded) space. Orientation of this grid system designates 0 degrees grid-North as equal to approximately 35 degrees magnetic North. The primary datum point (a permanent survey spike) was placed at grid coordinates 2000' Northing, 2000' Easting to avoid any negative coordinates in the grid system. Secondary datum points were also established throughout the grid to optimize lines-of-sight required for the total station especially in heavily wooded terrain.

Shovel tests were then excavated at twenty foot intervals in three loci. Locus 1 was the plowed field, Locus 2 was the clearing surrounding the hunting lodge, and Locus 3 included the heavily wooded area directly east of the plowed field. Blocks of close-interval shovel testing at ten foot spacing were also utilized in areas of interest including

potential yard landscapes. The shovel test pits utilized at Witherspoon Island were cylindrical in shape and excavated well into subsoil to recover possible prehistoric deposits. Each shovel test was approximately 40cm in diameter and excavated with a rounded shovel. Profiles were recorded for each sample, but the shovel tests were not excavated stratigraphically (with the exception of close-interval tests). All recovered soil was screened with ¼” mesh survey screens.

Artifacts recovered in the field were cleaned, catalogued, organized and stored in archival grade bags and boxes. The cataloguing data was entered into a relational database created in Microsoft Access. This database design allows for detailed queries between both artifact attributes and provenience which help pinpoint areas of archaeological interest.

Walkover surveys and shovel testing revealed a pattern of disturbance at the site. Twentieth-century disturbance from agriculture, mechanical clearing, and logging has taken a significant toll on several portions of the site helping to narrow the viable areas of archaeological study. Years of plowing have impacted archaeological deposits in the field north of the hunting lodge (Locus 1). Currently used as a food plot, the field likely contains the remains of several dwellings based on copious scatters of nineteenth-century material culture both on the surface and recovered in shovel tests throughout. Over the years, the plot has been widened with heavy machinery. Evidence of these clearing activities can be seen in a series of linear push pile that follow the southeastern edge of the field. The presence of the push piles is important because the earthen features contain a high concentration of relocated material culture which impacted distribution analyses in this area.

The hunting lodge itself was relocated due to the impact of log-truck traffic on the building. To mitigate the vibration-based disturbance, the lodge was moved further south of the road by twenty feet (Charles Howard, personal communication 2008). At the same time as the move, the log structures that make up the lodge were rehabilitated and stabilized. The open space surrounding the hunting lodge (Locus 2) which includes a possible historic cabin site has also been plowed and cleared with heavy machinery. Both the cabin relocation and soil disturbance around the lodge negatively impacted the archaeological record making it undesirable for further research.

Based on evidence from aerial photography, archaeological survey, and the presence of standing architectural features, the far eastern portion of the site (Locus 3) appears to have been untouched by cultivation activities in the modern era. While plow disturbance may not be a factor in this area, historic imagery does suggest that sporadic logging may have occurred in or around this area. The 1912 photograph of the former settlement area shows the log cabins surrounded with scrub brush and a dense tree line in the distance. Aerial images from the 1930s and 1940s show the settlement area and surrounding lands to be clear of trees and the woodland seen in the 1912 image appears to be gone. The evidence of clearing is not surprising given the long history of logging activities on Witherspoon Island. During the late nineteenth century, large portions of the island were logged with a focus on the thick cypress groves that once ringed the entire property (Dargan 1997:159-160). The timber effort was so intensive that small-gauge rail lines were constructed to haul massive cypress trees to the edge of the river for transportation. According to the Howard family, sections of this small-gauge track can still be found on portions of the island (Charles Howard, personal communication 2008).

Logging continues to this day on Witherspoon Island; however, it is mainly associated with the harvest of planned pine forests. The mid-twentieth-century logging observed in the historic imagery was not such a concentrated industrial activity and luckily did not significantly impact the east portion of the settlement (Locus 3).

The archaeological survey on Witherspoon Island confirmed the presence of a nineteenth-century settlement at the site. Artifacts recovered from all loci indicate an occupation from the early nineteenth century to the late nineteenth century. The dates coincide with the established history of the property from a cotton plantation with both enslaved and free laborers to a hunting preserve with only a few inhabitants by the twentieth century. The walkover survey and transect clearing for the shovel tests identified several above-ground features in Locus 3 including three potential chimney falls, several cultural depressions, and numerous large sandstone cabin piers scattered across the landscape.

More than 350 shovel tests were excavated as part of the survey phase of this project. After data entry was completed, artifact distribution maps were produced with the Surfer program from Golden Software. The distribution maps were used to both visualize artifact dispersal and to help confirm field observations. When appropriate, several distributions were produced for each artifact type utilizing both count and artifact weight to offset potential distortions from large objects and heavy fragmentation. Due to the heavy disturbance around the hunting lodge, data recovered from Locus 2 was not included in the distribution analyses.

Of all the shovel tests dug at the site (n=362) only ten (2.8%) were completely sterile. A map displaying the total number of artifacts recovered at site shows several

dense artifact concentrations (Figure 3.3). The strongest concentrations are found in Locus 3, a wooded portion of the site just east of the eastern edge of the plowed field. Four concentrations are of note: three along the edge of field (Concentrations 1, 3, and 4) and one further to the east (Concentration 2).

Three of the heavy concentrations (1, 2, and 3) are dwelling sites with defined chimney falls at two of the concentrations (2 and 3) and pier stones identified at all three. The southern-most concentration (#4) is an outlier which is linked to a series of large push piles in that area which seem to contain a great deal cultural debris from the field. Because the cultural layers of soil were so deep in the test pits on or around the push piles, they resulted in higher levels of material culture which is clearly visible on the distribution map.

Distribution of construction materials (such as bricks and nails) helped to confirm three of the concentrations as suspected cabin sites. Nail distributions show spikes near the three suspected dwelling sites suggesting structures were located in these three areas (Figure 3.4). Surprisingly, the areas closest to the dwellings (as defined by piers or chimneys) had lower nail concentrations which may be a factor related to the log construction of the cabins.

The distribution of domestic artifacts (ceramics, bottle glass and faunal remains) largely mirrors the architectural debris and reveals distinct concentrations of material culture near each of the three suspected dwellings in Locus 3. Overall the distribution of material culture at the site strongly correlates with the architectural features (chimney falls, depressions, and pier stones) identified in the walkover survey and in shovel testing. Testing also revealed that the three suspected dwelling sites were all largely intact with

minimal site disturbance from logging and no evidence of any mechanical cultivation around the habitations.

Excavations at Witherspoon Island

Two habitations and their yards were selected for excavation based on the strong presence of antebellum domestic and architecture remains, intact yard features with little obvious disturbance and confirmed architectural evidence in the form of chimney remains or pier stones which suggest a dwelling (Figure 3.5). The two habitation sites chosen were: Cabin Site 1 (CS1) the dwelling defined by a chimney base with clear pier stones (formerly identified as Concentration 3 in the survey distribution maps) and Cabin Site 2 (CS2) a dwelling site defined by a visible depression with intact pier stones and no obvious chimney remains (formerly identified as Concentration 1 in the survey distribution maps).

Excavations of the two cabins sites began in the fall of 2010 and were eventually completed in the spring of 2013. Access to the site was limited during the winter and spring months when seasonal flooding frequently prevented vehicle access to the property for weeks or months on end making excavation opportunities unpredictable and lengthening the amount of time required to complete fieldwork.

Excavations were conducted using five foot by five foot test units that were laid out following the grid system established during the 2009 survey. Because English measurement units were used in the nineteenth century and may be significant to site interpretation, this measurement system was selected over metric units. Units were initially laid out around CS1 and CS2 as to encompass yard and architectural features

based on results from close-interval shovel testing around the two habitations. A systematic checkerboard sampling strategy was implemented at both cabin sites where every other unit was excavated leaving behind four non-sample units in each cardinal direction around the opened sample unit. Checkerboard sampling allows for detailed coverage of a house and yard area without the need for large-scale open block excavation from the outset and produces a 50% sample of selected zones under study (Dancy 2012: 558; Zvelebit et al. 1992). Additionally, this strategy can be used to produce a variety of site wide profiles which have the ability to document broad shifts in the habitation landscape. After profiles have been recorded, non-sample units in the initial checkerboard pattern were opened, as needed, to expose underlying yard features.

A loose sand matrix with a nearly uniform colored soil limited the number of visible strata at CS1 and CS2. To make up for the challenging stratigraphy, each natural stratum was excavated in sequential 0.2' arbitrary levels until a clear stratigraphic transition was encountered. The use of arbitrary levels helped to develop better control over artifact provenience within a stratigraphy that typically consisted of three broad cultural strata. Non-sample units were excavated by natural stratigraphy to speed up removal of these units. The artifacts recovered from non-sample units were included in the site wide analysis if the stratigraphic units could be positively linked to a discreet occupation period.

For features and every natural stratigraphic level (in both sample and non-sample units), systematic water screen and flotation samples were taken to recover macro and micro floral / faunal remains. All sediment excavated from the two sites (excluding flotation samples and certain feature fill) was dry screened through 1/8th inch wire mesh.

This fine size-grade mesh was essential for the recovery of small faunal remains (like eggshell, fish and bird bones, and even fish scales) and small personal items such as beads or pins. Luckily, the sandy soils present at Witherspoon Island allowed sediment to easily pass through the fine mesh unless the sediment was moist.

At Cabin Site 1 (CS1) a total of 14 sample units and 14 non-sample units were opened (Figure 3.6). The non-sample units were opened to create a large excavation block that fully exposed yard features allowing them to be photographed and mapped before excavation. Over 200 distinct features (n=206 - not including natural features) were identified and excavated around the habitation and in the associated yard space to the south. The features ranged from pier stones of the cabins to clusters of post holes, rodent burrows with cultural fill, small hearths and a variety of trash disposal features of varying size. The presence of so many features illustrates the truly undisturbed nature of the habitation and yard areas at CS1. Based on recovered material culture a broad occupation range of 1840s to 1900 was established for this dwelling.

At Cabin Site 2 (CS2) a total of 12 sample units were opened (Figure 3.7). A large block excavation at CS1 was planned to expose the yard but became impractical due to budgetary and time constraints associated with the fieldwork required and the additional lab time needed to process the expected 15,000 to 20,000 artifacts that would have been recovered from the excavation of 12 non-sample units at CS2. Even with the checkerboard pattern in place, 101 cultural features (relating to architecture, yard maintenance, and trash disposal) were identified and excavated in the CS2 yard space south of the dwelling. The CS2 dwelling appears to have been constructed and occupied

slightly earlier than CS1 based on diagnostic artifacts which suggest an occupation range dating from the 1820s to the 1890s.

Excavations at both cabin sites revealed extensive deposits and discreet features associated with entire occupation history of the Lowther's Lake plantation from the enslaved Witherspoon inhabitants to the sharecropping families that resided in the same homes until the early twentieth century. The rich undisturbed archaeological contexts associated with the Witherspoon bondsmen makes these two cabins and their surrounding yards ripe for the examination of antebellum proslavery reform ideals that were implemented by J.D. Witherspoon and an offer a chance to see enslaved response to this discourse across these intimate contested landscapes.

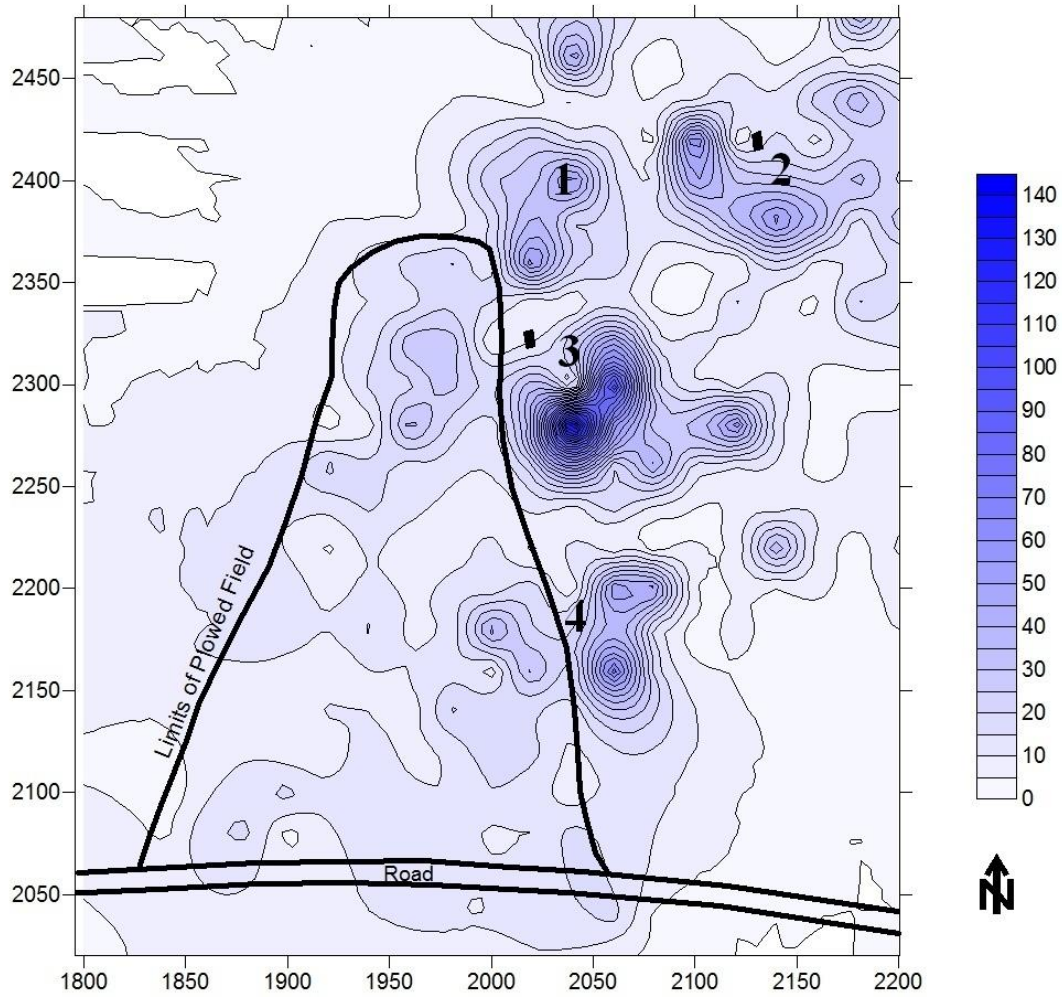
The following chapters each examine a central element of the reform discourse on Witherspoon Island including: health, housing and sanitation reforms (Chapter 4), reforms to the internal economy (Chapter 5), diet and foodways (Chapter 6), and Christian enlightenment among bondmen (Chapter 7).



Figure 3.1 1911 Department of Agriculture Drainage Map, Witherspoon Island (Courtesy of the Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, SC).



Figure 3.2 Cabins on Witherspoon Island circa 1912 (Courtesy of the Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, SC).



■ = Chimney Base

Figure 3.3 Total Artifacts Recovered from Survey Loci 1 & 3, Concentrations Labeled.

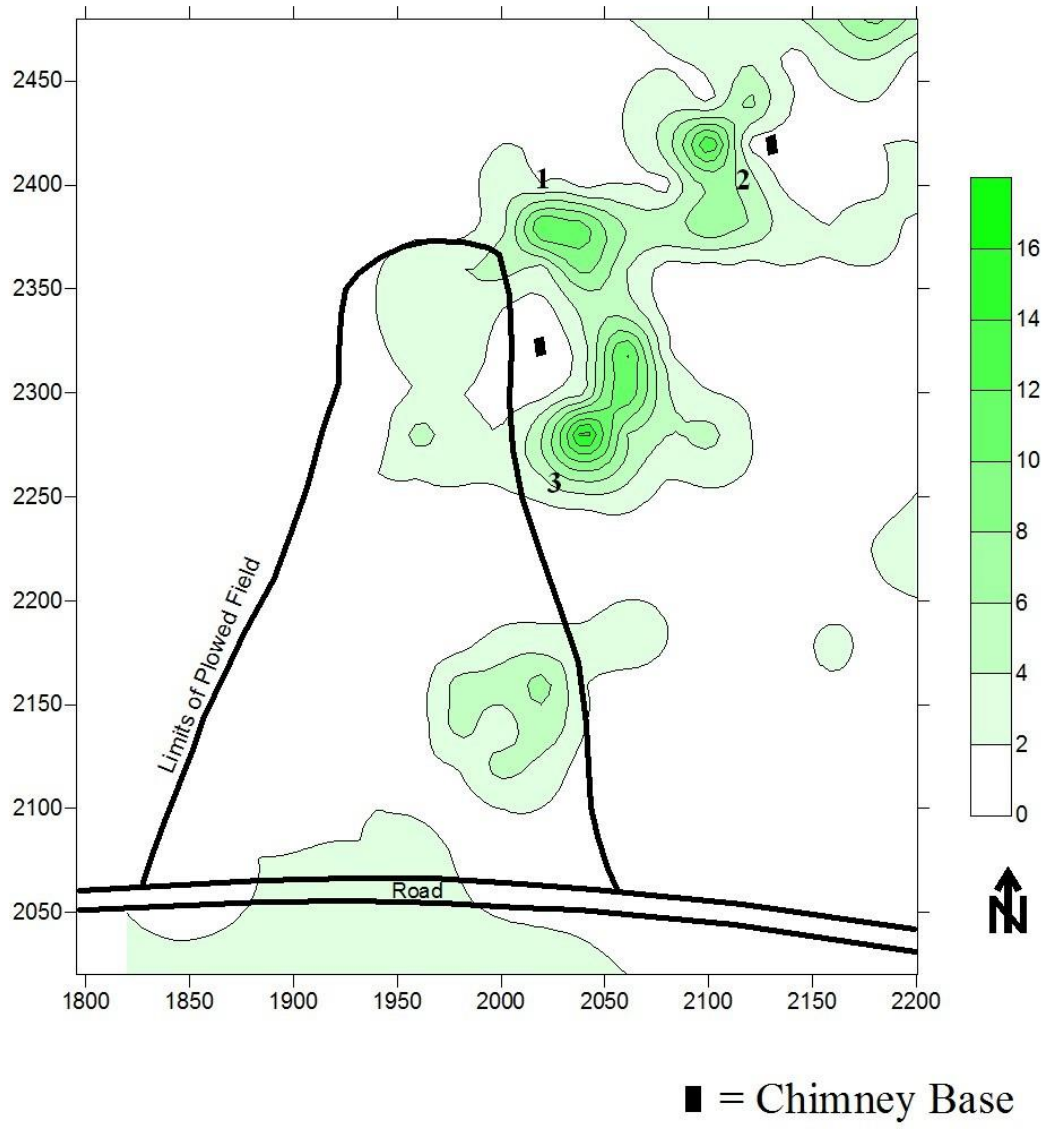


Figure 3.4 Machine Cut Nail Distribution with Labeled Concentrations 1, 2, and 3.

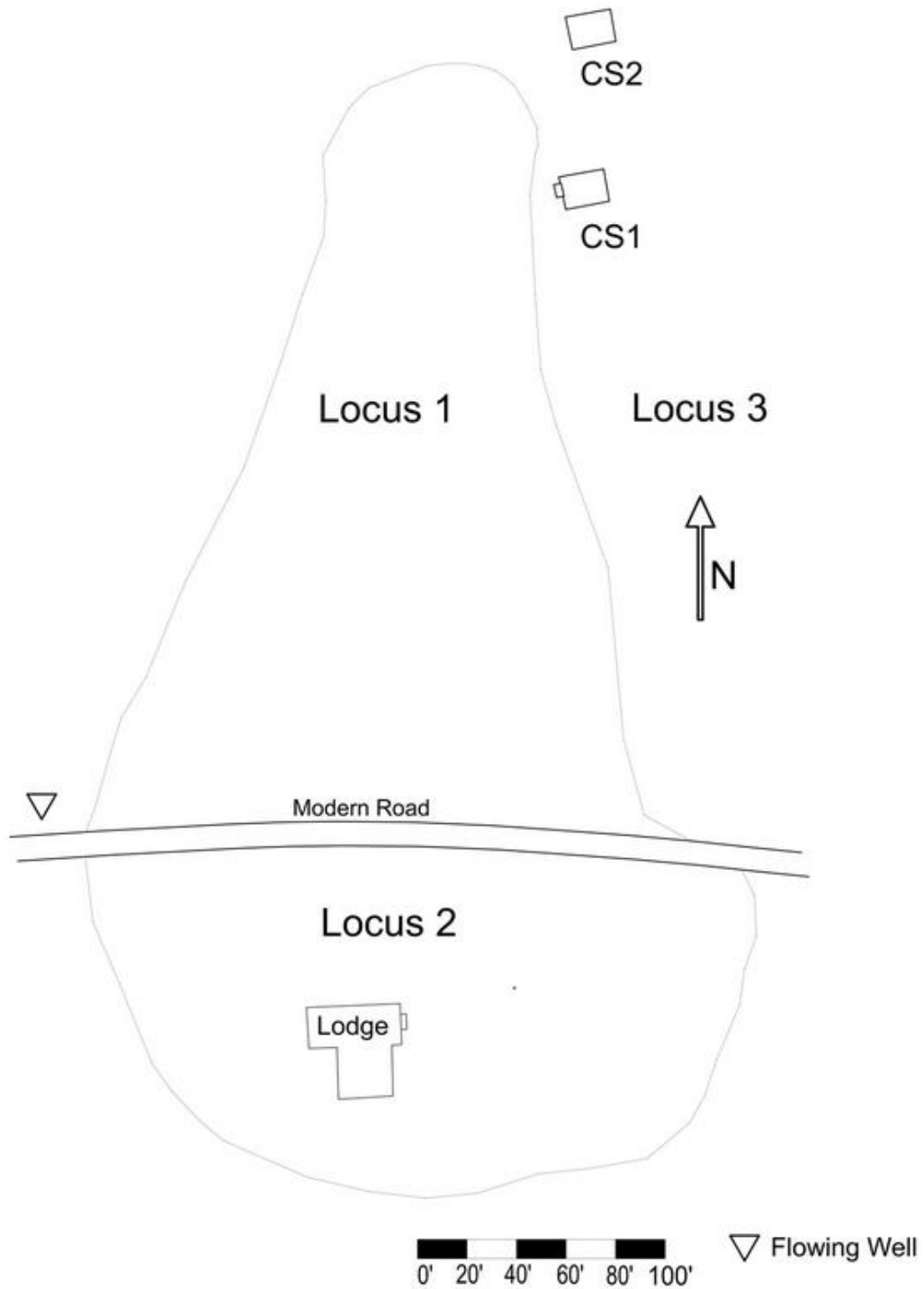


Figure 3.5 Witherspoon Island Base Map Showing Cabin Site 1, Cabin Site 2, the Hunt Lodge, and the Limits of the Modern Field and Clearing.

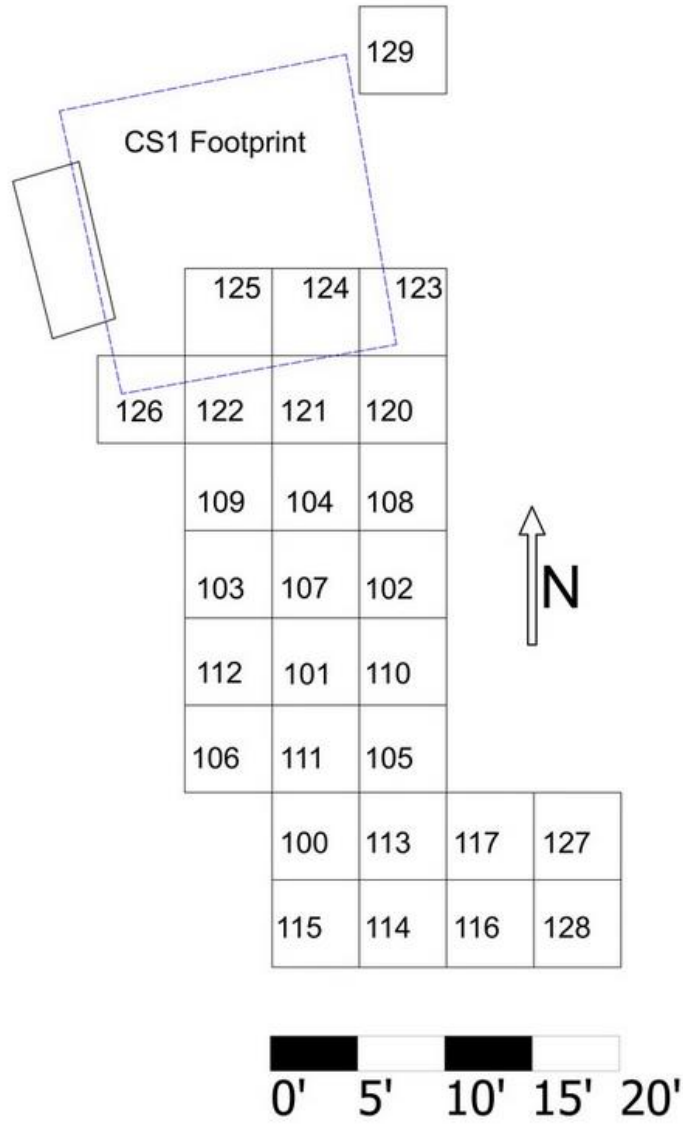


Figure 3.6 Cabin Site 1 Base Map - View to the North

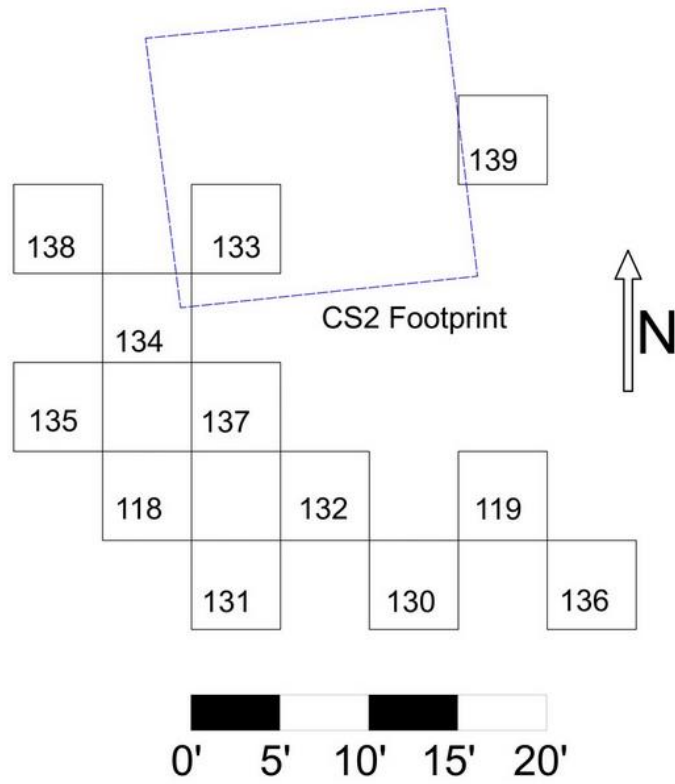


Figure 3.7 Cabin Site 2 Base Map - View to the North

CHAPTER 4

REFORMS TO HEALTH, HYGIENE, AND HOUSING

Progressive plantation reformers attempted to apply modern nineteenth-century hygienic principles on plantations with the intent of preventing and better treating illness among bondsmen who needed the guidance of slaveholders to thrive. Planters argued that “through ignorance and listlessness negroes habitually transgress many of the laws of health, and need to be rigidly subjected to hygienic discipline.” Only through “proper sanitary regulations established and rigorously enforced by masters and overseers” could the goal of health on the plantation be achieved (Smith 1861a:1).

Like the general public of the nineteenth century, most medical experts writing reform treatises on plantation health and hygiene prescribed to a broad miasmatic theory of disease believing that most illnesses were the result of the direct interaction between individuals and their local environment or atmosphere. In particular it was believed that noxious vapors or bad air emanating from decaying filth or swampy lands were the cause of diseases such as yellow fever and the characteristic reoccurring fevers associated with malaria (Magner 2009:19-22; Watts 1997:239-244). These two diseases alone accounted for untold deaths of slaves in the plantation economies of South Carolina in the antebellum period helping to drive the need for health reforms in enslaved communities (Duffy 1988; Watts 1997:239-244). The belief in miasmatic theory helped the shape the influential reform recommendations regarding construction and placement of enslaved dwellings and the sanitary upkeep of yards and habitations (Breedon 1980).

The hygienic reforms to plantation management fell into three broad categories that will each be discussed in this chapter: slave quarter design and siting; cleanliness of the enslaved dwelling and surrounding landscape; and medical care provided to bondsmen.

Slave Quarter Architecture

Improvements to slave habitations and new construction of quarters constitute a major tenet of the hygienic discourse. Proponents argued that proper dwellings were essential to the health and well-being of slaves and for the fiscal health of the planter.

It is sometimes the case that the negro will come in from work wet, and sit down by the fire and go to sleep; and if they have an open house in the winter, he wakes up, finds the north wind is pouring in on him, and his fire has gone out, and he has no more wood to make another; hence he sickens with cold or pleurisies, and dies, all for the want of a comfortable house; when, if his house was close and comfortable, if his fire did go out, he would be in a close, comfortable room, where he could sleep all night without freezing or feeling uncomfortably cold. Thus the life of a negro, worth one thousand dollars, may be saved, frequently, to the owner, by building a comfortable cabin, which would not cost fifty dollars.

(Trotter 1861:133-134)

The stated concern by Trotter (1861) for the value of the slave compared to the cost of proper housing is a theme found throughout health-related reforms. Improved slave health was increasingly discussed by planters during a period where fluctuating cotton prices made annual agricultural returns unpredictable. The stable source of southern wealth during the last four decades of the antebellum period was their slave property whose value had skyrocketed with the close of the international slave trade at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Reforms to hygiene, housing, and other living conditions helped to ensure that slave assets remained healthy and most importantly valuable (Vlach 1995:126).

Commentaries published in nineteenth-century agricultural journals offered many proposals for architectural improvements to slave quarters. Common guidance included suggestions that “negro cabins should be built of plank, have large glass windows and good chimneys, and should be elevated at least two feet above ground” (R.W.N.N. 1856, quoted in Breeden 1980:130). Reformers argued that quarters in poor repair with leaky roofs, dirt floors, and improper ventilation and lighting constituted virtual “laboratories of disease” (*Southern Cultivator* 1850, quoted in Breeden 1980:120).

While not uniform in their architectural recommendations, reformers followed the basic argument that providing slaves with proper shelter and a healthy living environment was a good investment for planters as it encouraged productivity and the development of stable slave families. Planters also “understood that housing had the potential to be used as a benign technique of coercion” (Vlach 1995:118) as reform propagandists believed that improved slave housing would lead to more comfortable slaves who were less likely to contest the plantation order (Vlach 1993:93-94).

Beyond providing a healthy environment for content slave families, the architectural reform discourse also attempted to “promote acceptance of lowly social position by slaves” (McKee 1992:201). By housing slaves in tiny sparse dwellings obviously smaller and less elaborate than their owner’s or overseer’s houses, reform minded planters hoped to intentionally instill a visual mastery of the plantation landscape which could reinforce the low status of their slaves (McKee 1992).

Documentary and archaeological evidence at Witherspoon Island suggests that the planter may have gradually adopted certain aspects of the housing reform discourse that impacted enslaved landscapes at both the settlement and the household scales. The slave quarters on the Island were single-pen cabins made of large hand-hewn cypress logs that likely came from the marshy lowlands that surround the plantation. The identified rectangular cabins all measured roughly 20’ by 18’ based both on the extant cabin remains incorporated into the standing hunt lodge and on the pier stone placements uncovered during the excavation of Cabin Site 1 and Cabin Site 2. This size is slightly larger than the ideal single family cabin which was typically suggested to be somewhere in the range of 18’ by 16’ (Breedon 1980:114).

The basic construction of the dwelling was an unsettled issue among reformers who often advocated for the merits of a specific construction method (i.e. brick, frame or log construction). For example, framed dwellings were thought to be a healthier choice because the interior and exterior boarding could be cleaned easier and unlike log cabins there were few places for slaves to squirrel away filth. Supporters of log construction suggested that their cabins were a better choice as the thick walls kept cabins cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter (Breedon 1980:114-139). This suggests that the log

construction of the Witherspoon quarters does not necessarily prove or disprove the planter's intent in following the best architectural practices outlined in reform articles. Like many planters, Witherspoon was likely utilizing the most convenient and economical source of building materials which surely were the cypress trees on his property.

In an award winning essay on Hygienic Management of Negroes, Georgia physician Dr. J. Dickson Smith discussed proper housing for slaves and wrote about the importance of ventilation to prevent the buildup of noxious vapors in dwellings:

“Proper ventilation... is by far the most important consideration in the construction of Negro houses, from the very fact, that these houses are occupied mainly as sleeping apartments. Air, as a vital element of physical existence, must be supplied continuously – day and night – in order to perfect health. This fact teaches the importance of so planning our sleeping rooms so as to secure free, current ventilation, in order that that fresh air may be abundantly supplied, and that all stagnant air and noxious gases, originating within the houses, may be swept out by the current breeze (Smith 1861b).

Dr. Smith goes on to discuss the various diseases (including pneumonia and typhoid fever) he commonly witnessed on plantations run by unenlightened slaveholders who maintained only “small, smoky cabins, built flat upon the ground, with no windows or apertures for ventilation”.

Dr. Smith was not alone in his call for proper ventilation, as this was a highly regarded topic within the larger body of reform literature concerning housing design and miasmatic theory (Breedon 1980:113-139). Several architectural elements including windows, roof vents, and raised dwellings were recommended to allow good ventilation while preserving the warmth of the home.

Placing dwellings on raised piers was thought to allow fresh healthy air to pass beneath the structure, let any dampness in the structure dry out, and allow access for regular cleaning of accumulated filth beneath habitations. Not only did reformers believe that elevated structures were healthier for the enslaved inhabitants, many authors recognized that there were economic savings associated with this design. By placing the dwelling on raised piers, it helped to keep the wooden structure from rotting quickly due to direct contact with wet earth which meant that cabins did not have to be repaired or replaced quite as often (Breedon 1980:113-139).

The architecture of slave cabins on Witherspoon Island had many of the recommended ventilation features including windows (based on an early twentieth century image of the settlement - See Figure 3.2) and piers that raised the dwellings above the ground. The stone and brick piers would have elevated the dwellings at least two feet above the yard surface. While the elevated dwellings at Witherspoon may have been constructed for health-related or economic concerns, raised building also meant that the space underneath cabins was no longer a viable storage area for bondsmen who may have hidden belongings in these locations as a space removed from the prying eyes of the planter or overseer (McKee 1992).

The fact that the Witherspoon cabins were elevated above the ground would have necessitated wooden flooring rather than the earthen floors. Reformers argued that tight wooden plank floors were an important feature that helped keep the cabin dry and prevented the deposition of trash and dirt beneath the dwelling. Wood flooring seems to have been uncommon in the Pee Dee region as local slave narratives often speak of cabins that had only earthen floors like the account of Sylvia Cannon. Cannon recalled “we live in de quarter bout ½ mile from de white folks house in a one room pole house what was daubed wid dirt... De ground been us floor en us fireplace been down on the ground. Take sticks en make chimney cause dere won’ no bricks en won’ no saw mills to make lumber when I come along” (Federal Writer’s Project 1941g:189).

The chimney of the slave dwelling also received significant attention in reform writings, especially the mud and stick chimneys that Sylvia Cannon described in her narrative which were commonly vilified. Advocates argued that poorly designed chimneys or habitations lacking chimneys altogether were extremely unhealthy for bondsmen. Most of the literature suggested that “instead of wood and mortar chimnies [sic] that draw but imperfectly and fill the houses with smoke and gas, and constantly endanger them to burning” slaveholders should “build good stone or brick chimnies” (Smith 1861b:2). The smoke and vile gases mentioned above were ascribed as the source of many respiratory issues among slaves that reformers suggested could easily be avoided with a small outlay of money put towards the construction of substantial and well-made chimneys (Turner 1857, quoted in Breeden 1980:201). Good chimneys, reformers believed, also allowed for proper heating of the dwelling which was thought to be especially important for slaves because their distinct biological makeup was not well-

adapted to cold climates. Exposure to cold conditions was thought to be another major factor in the death and illness of slaves and could to be prevented by providing modern dwellings, proper attire, and utilizing flexible labor schedules that could be adjusted to weather conditions (Breedon 1980).

The cabins positively identified in the archaeological survey of Witherspoon Island all had large brick chimneys, except for CS2 which featured a stick and mud chimney. Oral history of the property suggests that bricks were made locally on the Island and many show visible impressions of hands and paws of the makers and their companions. The brick chimneys themselves seem to have been quite large. The best indication of average chimney size comes from the semi-intact brick base at CS1 which appears to have been nearly 8' by 4' when it was initially constructed. This size is probably slightly exaggerated by settling and root disturbance that occurred after the fall of the CS1 chimney.

Cabin architecture may have changed as the dwellings were constructed throughout the first half of the nineteenth century on Witherspoon Island. The earliest cabin (CS2), which predates the 1830s, was only identified cabin to feature a common stick and mud chimney which was an architectural feature discouraged in reform literature. The remaining identified cabins that all likely postdate the 1830s were all built with substantial brick chimneys visible as chimney bases (like CS1) or as brick chimney fall piles seen elsewhere in the settlement. It appears that as the slave population on the island increased, housing was constructed to meet their needs and new designs were likely implemented diachronically. The switch to brick chimneys could be evidence for

implementation of reform ideals and / or may reflect increased access to bricks on the island.

J.D. Witherspoon's attention to proper slave quarter architecture, including chimneys, is well documented in the case of former Witherspoon household slaves Murriah and her son Hamlet, who were given to his daughter Rebecca Witherspoon after her marriage to Dr. John Wallace in the 1850s.

Poor Murriah. She is a faithful servant to Becca [Rebecca]. She misses her little boy, Hamlet. She said the first night when she returned from his funeral she missed him. He always went into the woods, cut down saplings & made up her fire in the morning, swept the house, brought water & let down the window & put the nail over it, but now nothing was done. His sufferings from cold, want of fire, the negro house had no chimney. In the day the children sat out by the fire where the wash kettle was used & in the evening Murriah put them to bed before night to keep them warm. This suffering brought Asthma on him. He had nothing of the kind until he went to Columbia. It is only lately that the chimney has been put up. Becca complained of her servants accommodations two years ago & Mr. W [J.D. Witherspoon] told Dr. [Wallace] to have chimney put up & he would pay for that & other additions, but he would not consent. The chimneys would involve another expense." (E.B. Witherspoon to E.E. Witherspoon, Letter, 10 Nov. 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

In account written by Elizabeth B. Witherspoon, both she and her husband place blame on Dr. Wallace for the loss of Murriah's son Hamlet. The death is attributed to the poor quality of slave housing at the Wallace's home in the city of Columbia where Hamlet and Murriah resided. The Witherspoons suggest that Dr. Wallace did not want to pay for the expense of fuel which either would have to be purchased in town or transported from his distant plantation. Even after J.D. Witherspoon offered to pay for the construction of good chimneys and other cabin repairs, Dr. Wallace refused to update the dwellings.

When discussing slave housing, most reform authors also expounded on the importance of having single-family houses rather than duplexes or barracks-style dwellings for various reasons including the health, morality, and comfort of bondsmen (Breedon 1980:114-139). Regarding health, single-family homes were seen a way to avoid crowded conditions in slave quarters which was thought be another cause of illness (Watts 1997:241). Planters also stated that they were concerned about the stability of slave families when more than one family was forced to reside together saying "morality is very directly involved here. The mingling of sexes or the throwing of aliens and strangers together in the same house, without reference to the natural grouping of families, is fatal to most domestic virtues" (McTyeire 1860, quoted in Breedon 1980:135).

In a similar vein, overcrowding of dwellings and duplex-based housing was believed to lead to "quarrels among the adjacent families" stemming from any number of issues including gossip, theft, and other suspicions that created poor relations within slave settlements:

What is said in one house is overheard in the next, and repeated to some one who may feel hurt by it. Hence arises a strong objection to double houses in which two families, with all their opposite interests and antipathies, are brought into contact. Should any report be spread prejudicial to one of the families, are immediately charged upon the other; in like manner all losses by theft or otherwise, are constantly traced to the neighboring tenement, while endless disputes and fighting occur among the children (Clay 1833:13).

Self-interest was certainly present in this recommendation as slaveholders sought to alleviate social strains among bondsmen that were a major source of annoyance for planters and overseers who had to deal with the complex social dynamics of the plantation landscapes they had created (Breedon 1980:114-139).

At Witherspoon Island, slave lists, census data, and dwelling size all suggest that the slave quarters were single-family habitations. According to the slave schedule in the federal census, in 1860 J.D. Witherspoon owned forty-four slave quarters (U.S. Federal Census 1860). Forty of these dwellings were located on the plantation, with the remaining four situated near the Witherspoon residence in Society Hill according to an advertisement listing the Witherspoon house for sale after the murder of Elizabeth Witherspoon in the fall of 1861 (Charleston Courier 1861:2). A slave inventory from 1860 breaks down the Witherspoon holdings into thirty-six family groups, which strongly suggests that dwellings were single-family (Darlington District Sales and Appraisal Book 1860, Estate of J.D. Witherspoon, Darlington County Historical Commission). The discrepancy between the number of family groups and the greater number of quarters is

likely explained by the absence of slaves who had been gifted to the planter's children throughout the 1850s and the presence of single adult males (or husbands with wives living on other nearby plantations) that may have inhabited cabins individually or in smaller single-sex groups.

While housing on Witherspoon Island appears to have met many of the ideal housing standards, one reform recommendation that was not implemented by J.D. Witherspoon is the use of pane glass in the windows. Less than 150 grams of flat pane-type glass was recovered in total from all survey and excavation work at the settlement on Witherspoon Island, which is not enough glass for a single small window pane. The lack of window glass suggests that the plantation dwellings featured open windows with wooden shutters rather than the recommended pane glass windows. The planter's rationale for not employing pane glass windows is ultimately unknowable, but it could be attributed to the additional cost or effort required to outfit the forty slave quarters on the Island. It would be interesting to compare the architecture of the field slave quarters with the dwellings of the Witherspoon household slaves in Society Hill to see if the designs differed in an urban semi-public setting versus the remote absentee plantation landscape. As noted at other plantations, slave dwellings situated in visible public settings often featured more elaborate architectural designs and functioned as status symbols representing control and modernity of the slaveholder (Reeves 2015:38).

Not all of the planter's attempts to create a disciplining landscape through architecture reforms were successful. For example, the attempt to reinforce a lower social status through the use of small dwellings on the plantation landscape (McKee 1992) may have misunderstood common enslaved perception of the houseyard landscape where the

dwelling was primarily used for sleeping and shelter during inclement weather. It was the actual yard space that the planter allotted to households that was often the center of domestic and social activities for the enslaved community (Armstrong 1990; Mintz 1974; Westmacott 2001; Wilkie 1996b). Oral histories collected from descendants of Witherspoon slaves corroborate this conception of the landscape recalling that for their families it was the yard space, more than the dwelling, where nearly every aspect of life occurred (Karen Burney, personal communication 2011; William Bacote, personal communication 2013).

Settlement Layout and Siting

The organization of the dwelling and plantation buildings on the landscape often received as much attention as quarter architecture in treatises on plantation management. Reformers called for organized landscapes upon which every building had a proper place for the comfort, health, and control of bondsmen as well as economic advantage of the planter.

It is best to build the houses in rows, and have them not very far apart; but, at the same time, put them off a sufficient distance from each other so that, in case one should take fire, it will not burn up any of the rest ; say about fifty yards apart. It is best not to have them too far from each other, for the reason that they would be more apt to harbor runaways, unbeknown to each other, and not so easily managed; but just of sufficient, convenient distance from each other to be safe

from catching fire from each other. As it is the case sometimes, in spite of all the caution that can be used, fire will break out; and then, if the houses are within catching distance, they may all burn up (Trotter 1861:134-135)

As mentioned in the above quote, planters also realized that centralized and organized slave settlements allowed for better surveillance opportunities (Breedon 1980; Delle 1999). While the overseer's habitation at Witherspoon Island has not been positively identified either archaeologically or in the historic record, a likely site has been identified to the south of the settlement. On a hill top near the flowing well, the remains of cabin (larger than the typical slave quarter on the plantation) were identified in a walkover survey. This elevated location would allow a good view of the entire slave settlement especially the south-facing slave quarter doors and the yard space between cabins. While the location of the overseer's house is not confirmed, it is alluded to as a sizable structure in family letters that discuss the living conditions of overseer Samuel McBride before he was employed by J.D. Witherspoon in 1854 (Bray and Hale 1993:104). Elizabeth Witherspoon wrote that "McBride was engaged by Maj. Bacot, who had promised him a comfortable house & a cook. Instead of a cook, a plate of food was sent to him at each meal time & the house was of logs & not chimneyed & as M [McBride] was to be married soon he rebelled and quit" taking up employment with Witherspoon (E.B. Witherspoon to E.E. Witherspoon, Letter, 6 Feb. 1857, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). The description suggests that the overseer's house on the Witherspoon was large and comfortable enough to support a new family, well above the unacceptable conditions McBride found on the nearby Bacot plantation.

While fire and surveillance were both real concern on plantations, proper spacing was also thought to help maintain healthy slave communities by allowing for proper air circulation around dwellings and by slowing or preventing the spread of feared communicable diseases. One planter from Virginia suggested that “cabins should not be placed at a less distance than from 75 to 100 yards from each other, for the reason that it is highly probable that infectious diseases, such as scarlet and typhoid fever, measles, whooping cough, and even small pox may not be communicated at that distance” (R.W.N.N. 1856, quoted in Breeden 1980:132).

Archaeological survey of the slave settlement site on Witherspoon Island suggests that the cabins were originally arranged in several rough rows. Unfortunately, twentieth-century cultivation and logging activities seriously disturbed the western two-thirds of this particular settlement, making determination of the exact placement and numbers of structures difficult, especially given the lack of antebellum maps or detailed plats of the plantation. Without having clear data from the western two-thirds of the settlement, it is difficult to determine cabins that are in the same row or between rows.

Even in the eastern portion of the settlement undisturbed by cultivation and logging the antebellum layout is difficult to determine. Emancipation brought a significant shift in the settlement landscape from highly ordered spaces to more-haphazard arrangements as dwellings were relocated and physically moved around the settlement. At the household level, several habitations show evidence of cabins being merged to form larger dwellings. Where the cabins were merged, we often find sandstone piers beneath the original cabin and brick piers placed beneath the additions. The alignment and spacing of the brick piers strongly suggest that the additions were extant

cabins relocated from elsewhere in the settlement. This movement of antebellum structures across the landscape makes it very difficult to determine Witherspoon's original plan of the slave quarters.

Orientation and yard placements of the excavated antebellum cabin sites can help suggest a possible layout where CS1 and CS2 were both part of the same row of quarters. Both the CS1 and CS2 habitations were oriented in similar manner with the two sidewalls facing north and south with chimneys located on the gable end-walls. The location of the chimneys at the CS1 and CS2 habitations are not identical however; with the CS1 cabin featuring a chimney on the west end-wall and the CS2 chimney located on east end-wall. The placement of the chimneys may have been a factor of building age, as habitations were constructed as needed to meet the growing enslaved population. The newer CS1 cabin that featured a large brick chimney on the east end was likely 10 or 15 years newer than the older CS2 cabin with the mud and stick chimney. That cabins appear to have been built as needed, which may have impacted the uniformity of the structures and the layout of the settlement.

The primary doorway at both cabins seems to have been situated near the center of the south facing sidewalls based on a single historic image that shows several former slave quarters within this settlement in the early twentieth century (See Figure 3.2). The central sidewall entry design is also suggested based on the architecture of the standing hunt lodge which is an amalgamation of a former slave quarter and small barn structure. The elements of the former slave quarter within the hunt lodge contain a central sidewall door.

Excavation of the yard space between and around the CS1 and CS2 cabins does not seem to suggest an antebellum common area or road passed between the two cabins. Rather, the space between the habitations is littered with yard features and possible activity areas. The design and orientation of both cabins with activity areas south of the entrances and no evidence of a period road between them may suggest that CS1 and CS2 were part of the same row that extended along a roughly north to south axis.

From the north sidewall of CS1 to the south sidewall of CS2, the distance between the two habitations was 60 feet apart (disregarding the possibility of a porch feature at CS2). The distance between CS2 and a third known cabin site that is directly to the east is around 100 feet. The third cabin to the east may represent the presence of a second north-south row. The rough distance calculated between cabins and rows closely follows the best practices preached in a published article from 1852 that recommended “houses should stand between fifty and seventy-five feet apart, as in the event of a fire occurring but one house may be burned – and the rows of houses should be one hundred feet across” (Arator 1852, quoted in Breeden 1980:125).

The layout of the Witherspoon settlement is also strikingly similar to a cotton plantation in Edgefield district that was nominated in the mid-1840s as a candidate for the “best-managed plantation” in South Carolina by the State Agricultural Society. The nomination included a description of the well-designed slave village on the plantation:

The negro houses have been erected in a shade lot, in a parallel line... presenting front to the south. They are either framed or hewed log buildings, with framed roofs having double brick or rock chimnies, plank floors, and stand from 30 to 50

yards apart... in the rear, a garden and poultry house for each family of negroes. The house of the overseer is a framed building, with three rooms and brick chimneys; and with its appendages occupy the crown of the hill and commanding a view of the blacksmith and work-shop, the negro houses, stable lot and houses, the gin house, lot and buildings (South Carolina State Agricultural Society 1846:287).

The nomination for this Edgefield plantation describes a settlement that met many of the reform ideals laid out in the modern agricultural journals attempting to provide a sanitary, healthy and controlling landscape. Additionally, the above description from Edgefield suggests that uniformity in construction was not always common even within the same plantation, as that settlement featured quarters of both log and frame as well as chimney constructed of stone and brick. This certainly seems to have been the case at Witherspoon, not with the construction of the quarters which all seem to have been hewn log, but rather with multiple chimney designs including both mudcat and brick chimneys.

Just as important as the physical organization of the dwellings and buildings within the settlement was the siting of the settlement on the plantation property. Planters argued that poor or improper siting of settlements led to a range of diseases including feared maladies like typhoid fever, bilious fevers, and malaria which sprang from decaying vegetation, bare earth, wetlands, general filth and numerous other suspect sources. Reform literature was particularly concerned with healthful siting to prevent these diseases and offer mild convenience for slaves regarding resources like water, firewood, and garden land.

Among the first objects that occupy the attention of the planter, in the settlement of a new place, is the selection of a proper location for his buildings. This should always be done with great care and with an especial view to health. Good water is indispensable, and should be obtained at almost any cost, as without it, there can be no permanent health. It should be obtained from wells or springs, if possible; but if that cannot be done, then proper cisterns should be constructed, and placed to receive the rain water from the buildings, by which means a constant supply of healthy water may be kept on hand. (Collins 1854:205)

Clean and close water sources were considered vital for the location of the settlement. If clean water was not nearby reformers feared many of their slaves would resort to drinking unhealthy or dubious water to avoid the effort of hauling fresh water a great distance. Timbered land should also be located near settlements so that bondsmen would not be required to exert undue energy in the cutting and transporting of firewood for cooking, laundry, and heating their dwellings (Breedon 1980:114-148).

Aside from proximity to safe water and resources, planters also recommended the right type of terrain for settlement sites. The common recommendation was for settlements to be placed on well-drained land away from the stables, manure-piles or any marsh land. The placement of homes on the top of hills, on steep slopes, or worn-out agricultural land was discouraged (Breedon 1980). Rather than an entirely flat site, a gentle slope was often recommended by some planters as it allowed filth and unhealthy

debris around the dwelling to be regularly swept away by gravity and rain water (Foby 1853, cited in Breeden 1980: 307).

On Witherspoon Island, the plantation's main settlement was well-sited according to the general tenets espoused in plantation management literature. When J.D.

Witherspoon laid out his settlement he carefully selected a location near the center of the island so that the inhabitants were able to access the various agricultural fields and nearby timbered lands. This central location was elevated on high ground well above the low swampy lands that surround the island. Situated at this spot, the settlement was largely safe from the annual river floods or "freshets" that regularly inundated the swamps and continually threatened the plantation's cotton and corn fields. Clean water likely was another major factor in the selection of this particular area on the island as it was located next to a freshwater spring that flowed year-round. This site continued to be inhabited by tenant farmers in the late nineteenth century and by hunt club members in the twentieth century precisely because of the access to clean water and the fact that the area infrequently flooded (Charles Howard, personal communication 2011).

Sanitation within and around the Habitation

Beyond the physical design and construction of the slave quarters, the concern for control and health on the plantation also extended into upkeep of these dwellings, the surrounding yards and even the cleanliness of the enslaved inhabitants themselves. Proponents of sanitation in the slave quarters argued that even "the very best model of a house, may by negligence or error in its domestic discipline, prove the most unhealthy"

(Smith 1861c:1). Many slaveholders believed that slaves left to their own devices would naturally live in squalor and disorder (Breedon 1980:150-162; Vlach 1993:96). Reform-minded planters felt that this squalor was a normal and expected racial characteristic of bondsmen that could be controlled and ameliorated with a concerted effort on the part of slaveholders. One Georgia physician stated it this way:

So notoriously filthy are negroes that many persons will doubtlessly smile at the very mention of cleanliness when used in connection with a people closely allied to *hogs* in their nature and habits. But while it is admitted that negroes may have a natural apathy to soap and water... their neglect of personal cleanliness is, at the same time, largely due to the nature of their occupations, to the circumstances by which they are surrounded, and to the indifference of masters in this particular” (Wilson 1860, quoted in Breedon 1980:156).

Modern medical knowledge from the antebellum era suggested that dirty conditions in or around the dwelling or on the body itself were at the root of many debilitating illnesses. One physician spelled this belief out saying “there can be but little doubt that typhoid fever, and other fatal forms of disease, often originate from the accumulated filth of years which lies festering about negro cabins” (Wilson 1860 quoted in Breedon 1980:161).

Most reform plans for plantation hygiene suggested that “negroes should be required to keep their houses in a cleanly and neat condition, by carefully avoiding the outpouring of slops in and about them, and often as may be necessary, by scouring and scavaging [sic] the houses and premises, permitting no accumulation of filth, soiled

clothes, or dirty rags about them” (Smith 1861c:1). These sanitation reforms were implemented by planters, tasked to slaves, and enforced by overseers or drivers who were ordered to make weekly or monthly visits to slave quarters to inspect trash disposal locations and the sanitary conditions of the buildings (Breedon 1980:150-161; Clay 1833:13-14).

This level of sanitation was expected to be extended to the “cleanliness both of the paths leading to them [dwellings], and of the surrounding ground” making sure that the yards were healthy spaces (Clay 1833:13-14). It is easy to see why planters were concerned about yards as they were the center of daily life for many enslaved households where cooking and butchery occurred – not to mention the presence of poultry and livestock in the same spaces. The proper upkeep of yards required regular yard sweeping by bondsmen and semi-annual deep cleanings:

There should be at least one raking every year, to remove the accumulations that *will* gather about all inhabited places, and more especially the habitations of negroes. These rakings should be thorough extending beneath the houses, and embracing the yard, and all its surroundings. By pursuing this course you will obtain some rich additions to your compost heap; and at the same time, you will do much towards the protection of your negroes from disease (Wilson 1860 quoted in Breedon 1980:161).

Along with the raking of the yards, dwelling themselves should be also be periodically whitewashed with lime inside and out and “besprinkled with some of the disinfecting

chlorides” which “will materially assist in neutralizing those poisonous effluvia engendered about such old buildings” that cause numerous illnesses and deaths (Smith 1861c:1).

The planters’ concern for the cleanliness of slaves was not solely for the health and well-being of their bondsmen or for the immediate loss of productivity on the plantation. Rather, reformers felt that general cleanliness promoted feeling of contentment among bondsmen and taught personal responsibility that would have positive effects not only around the settlement, but in their daily labors as well (Breedon 1980:156).

Archaeologically, sanitation reforms at the household level may be visible through the trash discard patterns across the houseyard landscape. Yard excavations at Witherspoon Island reveal a shifting refuse disposal strategy between the enslaved inhabitants and the later tenant farming residents. At CS1, the slave occupation was characterized by a clean compacted sand yard surface. The clear nature of the yard with a relatively small amount of domestic debris suggests that the space around the dwelling was policed for trash and may have been regularly swept. Large trash objects generated by the household seem to have been deposited in middens that are found along the perimeter of the yard like the large pit feature located at CS1 (Feature 55 [F.55]) which was completely filled with late antebellum waste. The heavily compact yard surface likely is the product of daily foot traffic and the potential sweeping which allowed a single surface to gradually harden over time. Excavations at CS2 mirror this antebellum pattern with large household debris being deposited further outside of the immediate

yard, likely in a series of unidentified middens that were not within the scope of the excavation.

Like the yards, the earth below both the raised log cabins was also kept clean during the antebellum years. With the exception of renovation and construction debris around the stone or brick piers of CS1 and CS2, it appears the space beneath the dwelling was swept or raked clean as recommended for good hygiene and to keep slaves from covertly secreting items beneath the cabins. Additionally, the relatively clean soil beneath the cabins also helps support my contention that the raised floors of the dwelling were tightly constructed as recommended in reform literature to keep household sweepings and small items inside the home rather than being swept into cracks, knotholes, or open gaps between floorboards.

Above the compacted antebellum yard surfaces at both cabins, excavations documented a series of thick sheet-midden trash deposits from the tenant farming occupation that dates to the second half of the nineteenth century. These artifact-rich trash deposits cover the entire yard space and extend under the edges of the dwellings marking a complete shift in how trash was handled at the two houseyard landscapes on Witherspoon Island after emancipation.

The clean yard space and isolated trash deposits from the enslaved occupation likely indicate that households were being forced to follow the “best practices” preached in the sanitation reform literature. The question remains as to whether this disposal pattern was mandated by the planter or occurred independently. Because both yards exhibit a similar pattern and meet recommended hygienic requirements, I believe that the

antebellum trash disposal patterns were likely imposed on the enslaved inhabitants by plantation management.

This detailed control over enslaved yards and dwellings likely extended to other intimate aspects of Witherspoon bondsmen's lives regarding the cleanliness of dwelling interiors, cooking implements, water and food storage vessels and bedding. Also likely were inspections of clothing and even invasive weekly checks of personal hygiene looking at the cleanliness of the body, hair and teeth.

The only potential evidence of interior sanitation comes from the extant hunt lodge on Witherspoon Island which is an amalgamation of an antebellum cabin and a barn that was joined in the early twentieth century. An inspection of the cabin portion of the lodge suggests that whitewashing may have been common in the plantation dwellings. Protected interior surfaces of the hewn logs in the cabin area shows evidence of whitewashing and fragments of newspapers that may have once lined the walls. While the whitewashing was likely done by later tenant farming residents in the late nineteenth century, it is probable that this tradition started much earlier under Witherspoon's guidance.

While the archaeological and historic record is largely silent regarding these invasive sanitation inspections on Witherspoon Island, reform and plantation management literature is rife with calls for these procedures to preserve health and maintain discipline (Breedon 1980:150-162). The following plan from a South Carolina planter offers a detailed description of what a weekly inspection might entail for bondsmen on a plantation with reform-minded owner:

I appoint a certain hour for attending to this matter on each Sabbath, say nine o'clock in the morning. Every negro distinctly understands, that at this hour he will be reviewed. An hour or so previous to the review, I make it the business of the driver to sound the horn, for the negroes to prepare themselves and houses for inspection... At the door, of each house, the occupants thereof are seen standing with their children, if they have any. My business here is to call their respective names, and to see that every one has had his head well combed and cleaned, and their faces, hands and feet well washed. The men are required, in addition to this, to have themselves shaved. That they may have no excuse for neglecting this requirement, those that need them are provided with combs and razors. I now see that their blankets, and all other body and bed clothing, have been hung out to air, if the weather be fine. Their pots are also examined. I particularly see that they have been well cleaned, and that nothing like "caked hominy" or potatoes is suffered to remain about them. I next enter their houses, and there see that every thing has been cleansed - that their pails, dressers, tables, &c. have all been washed down - that their chimneys have been swept and the ashes there from removed to one general heap in the yard, which serves me as an excellent manure for my lands (A Planter 1837, quoted in Breeden 1980:151-152).

While all plantations likely did not engage in weekly inspections as thorough as the above account describes, sanitation reviews were likely a common feature on many large antebellum plantations like Witherspoon Island.

These reforms regarding the hygiene of slaves and their habitations marked a shift from general uncodified eighteenth-century plantation management notions. Cleanliness in slave dwellings had been less of a concern under patriarchal systems of plantation governance, when quarters often were seen as semiprivate spaces to be managed by the enslaved laborers themselves (Vlach 1993:92). With the shift toward more paternalistic management strategies, masters and their agents became more involved with the private lives of slaves and with the landscapes of the enslaved, challenging traditional understandings of private and public space on the plantation (Berlin 2003:205; Morgan 1987:76-79).

Increased surveillance of the enslaved landscape and household worked to discipline slave behavior, curtailing unauthorized entrepreneurial endeavors and punishing slaves who did not meet the planter's often arbitrary standards (Joyner 1984:124-125; Vlach 1993:108-109). Published recommendation for cleanliness of slaves and their dwellings explicitly detail the surveillance benefits of this intrusion into formerly private space saying that regular inspections keep "your negroes clean and healthy" but also "prevent the concealment of all kinds of roguery" (An Overseer 1836, quoted in Breeden 1980:150). While the author does not elaborate on what items he is concerned about, the author is most likely referring to alcoholic spirits, stolen goods, or other common plantation contraband.

Historic accounts provide examples of slaves ignoring or actively resisting their reform-minded planter's regard for organization and sanitation around the houseyard by putting off upkeep projects or leaving yards strewn with trash (Berlin 2003). Some opposition may also be linked to different understandings of material culture in instances

in which slaves used and reused objects in ways that challenged dominant white understandings. For example, seemingly random objects left in a yard that might be considered trash to a planter may have been specifically placed as part of commemoration or ritual activities (Edwards-Ingram 1998:264-265). Another possibility is that certain bondsmen refused to recognize the slave quarter as a home and intentionally treated the landscape in ways that ran counter to traditional European and African aesthetic sensibilities (McKee 1992:208-210).

For example, unlike the yard landscapes examined at CS1 and CS2 on Witherspoon Island which were kept neat and largely clear of debris, excavations at Flowerdew Hundred by Larry McKee (1992) found the opposite. McKee's research at slave quarters constructed in the 1830s, clearly indicated that the plantation architecture met common reform ideals with raised dwellings, substantial chimneys, and a single family design. The yards surrounding the habitation were covered in a dense deposit of primary refuse from the antebellum occupants which McKee attributed to an act of resistance by the enslaved inhabitants as part of an ongoing attempt to challenge their planter's concern for sanitation ideals that had been adopted in the architecture of the dwelling (McKee 1992:204-206).

Current archaeological and documentary evidence from the enslaved households at Witherspoon Island does not point toward resistance to housing or sanitation reforms. The biggest shift on these landscapes concerning sanitation was the transition that occurred after Emancipation, when houseyard upkeep and trash disposal choices appear to have become the sole responsibility of the former slaves. Without oversight, the houseyards were transformed from highly regulated landscapes to more-complex spaces

characterized by large sheet middens and unsystematic trash disposal locations around the individual dwellings.

Medical Care of Witherspoon Slaves

The primary goal of the architectural and sanitation reforms was to prevent illness on plantations in order to maintain a healthy productive workforce. When slaves did get sick, reform articles and medical manuals designed for untrained laymen offered a variety of advice regarding the best practices for medical care on the plantation (Breedon 1980).

A plantation hospital building was highly recommended in the reform literature as space where sick slaves could convalesce and also as a location to isolate potentially contagious bondsmen from the larger community. Plantation hospitals were to be staffed by experienced female nurses who were to provide specific medical treatments for their patients approved by the planter or overseer (Breedon 1980:163-221; Kenny 2009). Recommendation for hospitals ranged from the simple conversion of former slave quarters to purpose-built structures that featured good lighting, ventilation and multiple beds. Vlach's survey of plantation architecture suggests that this reform recommendation was widely implemented on large plantations during the late antebellum period (1993:144-145).

While the documentary record does not mention a plantation hospital building and no archaeological evidence has pinpointed such a structure, it seems likely that some type of dedicated sick house was present on the Witherspoon plantation given the large enslaved population and late antebellum occupation period. Even without evidence of a

hospital on Witherspoon Island, the historic and archaeological record does speak to medical treatment received by the Witherspoon slaves.

For most sick field hands it appears that care was provided on the plantation by J.D. Witherspoon during his weekly visits when he prescribed medicines and the course of treatment which was to be followed by the overseer and directly implemented by enslaved nurses or family members. In a memoir written by J.D. Witherspoon's grandson John Witherspoon Dubose, he recalls the medical treatments his grandfather provided to his slaves saying, "Tuesday was the day for mixing the calomel and jalap powders for the sick negroes" at Lowther's Lake plantation. "Quinine was then unknown in the family medicine chest. He weighed and mixed all with great care, spending an hour or more at that labor" before he traveled to the plantation on Wednesday's spending two days examining his crops and tending to sick slaves (Dubose 1910:12). Dubose's description seems to be an accurate reflection of J.D. Witherspoon's treatment of sick slaves aside from his mention of quinine which was indeed prescribed to slaves in the 1850s to treat malaria and various fevers according to various treaties on plantation health and medical care (Breedon 1980:163-223).

Illness seems to have been a quite frequent occurrence on Witherspoon Island according to surviving family correspondences that mention various health problems among the slaves from bilious fevers (often various forms of malaria) and measles to dysentery:

I have had a very distressed plantation in the Island. Dysentery among the grown people & whooping cough & dysentery & diarrhea & fever among the children.

We have lost 8 children already, no grown persons yet. Solomon was attacked with bowel complaint & was bad off, got better, went out to work, relapsed & continued so long laboring with bowel complaint, I brought him up here a fortnight ago & have expended all my skill on him & have called Dr. P [Pressly] to him this morning (J.D. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 8 Nov. 1855, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

Soloman's prolonged illness forced Witherspoon to relocate him from the plantation to the family residence in Society Hill where he could be treated under the planter's watchful eye. When Witherspoon's ministrations failed, the planter called on Dr. S. H. Pressly, who regularly treated Witherspoon himself, his family, and his household servants. Dr. Pressly's account book shows that he treated Soloman six times in August of 1855 for his intestinal issue (Dr. S. H. Pressly Account Book, Darlington County Historical Commission). It is unclear exactly what treatment Soloman received, but the 1870 census suggests he survived the illness and eventually returned to the plantation (Sol Witherspoon, U.S. Federal Census 1870).

The account book of Dr. Pressly for the years of 1850 to 1861 shows that he only treated one field hand (Soloman) during the last decade of the antebellum period. The Dr. Pressly accounts seem to suggest that the household slaves received preferential medical treatment, but ignore the potential for other physicians treating slaves on the plantation itself. Only one other doctor has been confirmed to treat Witherspoon slaves. The accounts of Dr. Timothy J. K. Dargan, a physician based in the town of Darlington, show that he traveled to Witherspoon Island the night of September 28 1844 to visit a sick

slave who was cupped and bled and then prescribed a combination of calomel and diaphoretic powder for an unlisted illness (Account book of Dr. T. J. K. Dargan, Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina).

While the surviving accounts of Dr. Dargan list only the single 1844 visit to Witherspoon plantation, other physicians, like Dr. Dargan that were located physically closer to Witherspoon Island would also have been called in treat difficult or serious medical cases. The best candidate for the regular plantation physician is Dr. Horace Williamson who was based in Mechanicsville, the closest community to Witherspoon Island (Williamson 1997:142-143). Surviving plantation accounts show that a Dr. H Williamson was paid \$223.50 by the estate of J.D. Witherspoon for medical services in 1860 and \$253.55 for the year of 1861 (Equity Case #484, Darlington County Historical Commission). These numbers are significantly higher than the \$14 and \$12 bills charged by Dr. Pressly in the Society Hill for the same two years, suggesting he was seeing more patients per year even considering the additional mileage that Dr. Williamson would have billed for travel to the island (Dr. S. H. Pressly Account Book, Darlington County Historical Commission).

Only the most serious of cases would have likely justified the expense of a doctor's visit to the plantation, everyday cases of illness were handled by Witherspoon or his appointed agents. A letter from Elizabeth Witherspoon to her son, speaks of J.D. Witherspoon's care for a pregnant household slave during a measles outbreak in 1856.

Emma had been confined but one week when she took the measles & she has been very sick indeed. I think she was injured by medicine which your father

insisted on her taking, but it will not do to tell him so. The present treatment of that disease is very simple, take care of them, avoid cold & give Flaxseed tea if the cough is troublesome. They have high fevers & no appetite for three or four days, sleep constantly & then gradually improve.” (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 22 May 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

Aside from the unnamed medicine Witherspoon gave Emma, the treatment plan of rest and flaxseed tea is almost identical to the plans for Measles prescribed in family medical volumes of the late antebellum period such as *The Family Physician, or Every Man His Own Doctor* (Whitney 1835:39-41). It seems likely that Witherspoon’s large library contained a similar volume to help determine medical diagnoses and guide treatment of his both his family and his bondsmen.

Witherspoon slaves also sought treatment from their master in the form of popular commercial medicines. While traveling among the mineral springs in North Carolina and Virginia in the late summer of 1856, J.D. Witherspoon wrote that he had received word from his overseer and son John Witherspoon about several sick slaves, including his coachman William saying:

I had ordered William to take our horses down to the plantation... go home every Saturday evening... John wrote your mother that he saw him Sunday evening & he was complaining of cough & pain in his breast & asked for a bottle of cod liver oil. He got one & [John] went back on Tuesday to see him & Rhoda [a household servant] told him William went off Monday morning back to the plantation with a

high fever. If true what folly, Albert [J.D. Witherspoon's slave carpenter] lost his life by walking to Court House with a fever on him. William is a valuable servant to your M [Mother] & me, could not replace. I feel anxious on his account also to get home (J.D Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Undated Letter Fragment 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

While the cod liver oil procured by William is not alcohol-based, many of the commercial cure-all products contain a high percentage of alcohol or opiates and may have been sought out for their intoxicant properties rather than the claimed medicinal values like in the case of Elizabeth Witherspoon's house servant Rhoda:

To add to my difficulties, Rhoda has taken her bed with some incomprehensible disease. Some weeks ago she sent to me when I was undressed & ready to go to bed, to ask me to give her something for a pain in her stomach. Sylvia [Rhoda's daughter] would give me no further information & I sent her Essence of Ginger supposing it was colic. Upon inquiry next day, I found she had dysentery. I told her how very wrong it was in her to conceal her complaint, that she ought to let me know at once when she was sick. After all that she came to me the morning after I got home making heavy complaint of having been sick since Wednesday with an excruciating pain in her back. I asked her why she had not told her master. She did not like to trouble master as he was not well. I told her she was a very provoking person & was altogether inexcusable after what had passed so recently. Your father has prescribed for her two days & she says she is worse

today. I asked Sylvia this morning if her Mamma ate anything. She said she eat her bread & drank her tea last night. I had sent her three biscuits & a bowl of tea, so I hope she is not so bad off as she thinks (E.B Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Undated Letter Fragment Ca. Mid-1859, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

Rhoda's owner appears to be concerned about several issues. The first is that Rhoda may be feigning an illness in order to receive certain medications. Second, Witherspoon was vexed by Rhoda's concealment of her illness which was thought to be a quite dangerous or deadly act. Concealment of illness was a strategy sometimes employed by bondsmen to buy time for potential self-treatment before their slaveholder and / or physicians became involved (Fett 2002:177). Rhoda was certainly not alone in her acts, an 1854 account of Edward, a field hand belonging to J.D. Witherspoon's son Boykin, suggests he was also suspected of feigning an illness:

Your negroes are well again. Edward has not gone out to work yet. I was over to see Mrs. Thomas on Monday. She says Mr. Thomas [Overseer for Boykin Witherspoon] said Edward never would get well again while he had spirits to drink. He complains of pain in his fingers and bones, employs himself in fishing & walking about. He is liking his whiskey too well. I told her to tell Mr. Thomas after he finished the bottle he had carried down, not to send for more (E.E. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 24 May 1854, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

As seen in the cases of Edward and Rhoda, planters were certainly aware of the fact that their slaves may claim to be ill either for the purposes of receiving intoxicating patent medicines (like Rhoda's essence of ginger or Edward's spirits) and / or for avoiding work in the fields or the house. An active form of resistance by slaves, feigning sickness / injury or concealing illness has been well documented across the plantation south and was thought to be major nuisance by planters (Fett 2002:169-192).

Reform literature is littered with all manner of ideas aimed at catching slaves faking illness or "possuming" as several planters referred to this deceptive act. These varied plans suggested everything from docking rations for every day spent in the hospital building to prescribing purgatives like ipecac or calomel to every patient in an attempt to discourage faking (Breedon 1980:163-221). Slaves took a calculated risk in feigning illness when the consequences if caught could be quite severe in terms of lost privileges, corporal punishment and for the potential loss of planter trust in cases of future illnesses real or faked (Fett 2002:169-192).

Patent medicine bottles remains recovered from antebellum contexts at both CS1 and CS2 on Witherspoon Island speak to the utilization of commercial medicines especially bitters which were traditionally made from herbs and other ingredients steeped in liquor. Whether these bottles suggest that enslaved inhabitants may have been either treating themselves or may have been provided with these products is unknown, but these artifacts certainly confirm the use of patent medicines on the plantation.

The obvious and stated goal of planter provided care and treatment by physicians was to "prevent disease and prolong the useful laboring period of the negro's life" (A Citizen of Mississippi 1847 quoted in Breedon 1980:167). However, planters were not the

only concerned party when it came to slave health, as many bondsmen also took an interest in their own health for simple self-preservation and for the wellbeing of their families through a complex combination of herb lore, folk remedies, and some adopted western medical practices (Covey 2007; Goodson 1987; Cadwallader and Wilson 1965). It should be noted that herbal and folk medicine practices were not unique to enslaved African populations and were common among the poor and middling classes throughout the South that often could not afford the expense of a trained doctor and / or may have rightfully distrusted the medical treatments and cures that antebellum physicians provided which commonly included dangerous purges and bleeding (Covey 2007:15-22; Fett 2002:60-61; Goodson 1987).

Self-treatments employed by slaves were a constant source of anxiety for many reform-minded planters who feared harm could come to their valuable property from the use of unknown substances and superstitious practices to cure illness or injury (Breedon 1980:163-221; Fett 2002). However, this is was not a universally held belief among planters and physicians, some of who put great faith in enslaved medical treatments. In fact, some antebellum doctors even attempted to document herbal cures and examine the efficacy of the folk techniques used by enslaved healers (Goodson 1987).

Oral histories collected from descendants of Witherspoon slaves speak to the important role that folk medicine traditions played in their families. According to descendants, herbs and plants with medicinal values were both cultivated in gardens near dwellings and collected from the woods as needed (Karen Burney, personal communication 2011). One descendant recalled that his parents and grandparents relied on “medicinal plants used to make teas” saying that “they used sassafras, garlic, onion,

sage, and catnip. I can remember as a small child taking “shuck tea” for a bad cold I think or possibly stomach problems. This was tea made from the husks of corn.” (William Bacote, personal communication 2013). Passed down from older generations, these treatments (or variations thereof) were almost certainly being utilized by their enslaved ancestors in the antebellum period at Witherspoon Island, similar to traditional medical knowledge employed by former slaves and their families in other nearby Pee Dee area communities (Vernon 1993:56-59).

Some of the medical treatments employed by Witherspoon bondsmen may be visible in ethnobotanical collections recovered at slave habitation sites CS1 and CS2. Even with the very limited sample of professionally analyzed antebellum botanical remains, some common traditional medicinal options were available to residents of CS1 including: peach, cherry, hawthorn, and corn. While the charred remains recovered from CS1 were almost certainly food remains, their presence indicates that these plants grew nearby providing a source of bark, roots, shuck, and other vegetation that were commonly uses for a range of medical conditions in the form of poultices, infusion teas, and ointments (Covey 2007; Goodson 1987:220-223). The vast unanalyzed ethnobotanical collection from Witherspoon Island will certainly shed light on the presence and possible usage of many more medicinal plants by both the enslaved labors and tenant farmers who resided on the plantation.

When taken at face value, the hygienic reform discourse on the plantation was an attempt by planters to institute healthy and improved living conditions for their valuable human property. While this statement is certainly true for slaveholders who implemented various aspects of the reform discourse, many of the changes to dwelling architecture,

household / settlement landscapes, and health care were also covert or in some cases very obvious attempts to control every aspect of their bondsmen's lives in an effort improve discipline and productivity on their plantations. Slaves were not oblivious to these intentions and took what advantages they could from any improved circumstances around the houseyard landscape, while actively or covertly resisting any changes that threatened to impact the expected quality of their daily lives.

CHAPTER 5

ECONOMIC CONTROLS ON WITHERSPOON ISLAND

Peter Stanton, a forty-two year old enslaved field hand living in the Pee Dee region had accumulated a great deal of personal property by the close of the Civil War. According to Stanton, he owned: 300 lbs. of smoked pork “bacon”, 20 lbs. of lard stored in two gourds, four bushels of mill-ground cornmeal, five bushels of husked corn, thirty chickens, five store-bought cloth shirts, one pair of leather shoes, three bed sheets and five quilts made by his family and two store-bought blankets valued in total at two hundred dollars and fifty cents. When asked how he had obtained this property Stanton spoke of growing cotton around his wife’s house, selling the cotton harvest to buy shoats from a fellow slave, growing corn to feed the pigs, and eventually butchering the grown pigs to make bacon and lard. To earn additional money, he and his family also made baskets and caned chairs in the evenings or in any downtime they could secure (Claim of Peter Stanton, Marlboro County, SC, Southern Claims Commission (SCC), National Archives).

Like Peter Stanton, many enslaved individuals in antebellum period were active members of their local economies - buying, selling, or producing goods - and often hiring themselves out for either brute labor tasks or skilled jobs afterhours. As the diverse internal economies of enslaved laborers flourished and thrived in early nineteenth-century South Carolina, many slaveholders grew concerned that free market participation by

bondsmen would jeopardize their hegemonic position on the plantation and potentially undermine the entire intuition of slavery (Campbell 1993; Forret 2006; Hilliard 2014; Hudson 1994:81). Because of this threat, plans to alter the established internal economy were a central element of the nineteenth-century plantation reform discourse which attempted to restrict slave access and participation in local and regional markets.

Internal Economies on the Pee Dee

The form and nature of enslaved plantation economies, often referred to as internal economies, tend to develop regional characteristics intimately linked to the cash crops being grown and the management strategies employed by planters in the area. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a distinctive internal economy system arose in the inland Pee Dee region as cotton plantations began to be developed along the Pee Dee River and its tributaries in northeast South Carolina. This boom of cotton farming in Pee Dee region (and elsewhere in the South) was associated with the increased profitability of cotton as a cash crop spurred by the industrialization of the cotton gin, the introduction of new cotton cultivars, and increased market demand in British and New England mills (Campbell 1993:244; Wright 2007:84-86).

Planters and their enslaved laborers on these new cotton plantations developed a distinct internal economy system that differed in many ways from the well-known enslaved economies on large Low Country rice plantations along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia. The difference between these enslaved economies was partially related to the organization of labor in both regions with task-based organization

predominately found on the rice plantations and gang-based systems being employed on upcountry cotton plantations (Campbell 1993:244-245).

With task-based organization, slaves were assigned a task to be completed for the day, such as a certain amount of ditching or a set number of rows to hoe. If the bondsmen were able to finish their assigned task early, the rest of the day was customarily given to them. The task system thus promised shorter days for diligent workers, thus allowing time for independent production or leisure. This claim may have been true for healthy adults who might have been able to finish their tasks early, but it certainly overlooks the need or obligation of adults to help their young and elderly family members complete their assigned work, thus effectively limiting free time for extra labor or independent production (Berlin and Morgan 1993:14-15).

Unlike the task-based rice plantations along the coast, inland cotton plantations commonly relied on some variation of gang labor organization which better suited the labor requirements for cotton production.

There are few agricultural staples whose cultivation requires so continuous an employment of labor for so long a time as does cotton. The culture of the plant spreads itself over three-fourths of the year, and there is little of this time when labor is not in some way being employed in its cultivation. And even the small portion of the year in which the slaves were not actually employed in the cotton fields, they were not idle, for the need of new cotton lands led to their employment during the mild winters of the cotton belt in clearing new fields. (Hammond 1897:46)

With gang labor, field hands would toil as a single group or be broken into multiple smaller units working from sunup to sundown every day except for Sunday and certain holidays such as Christmas (Berlin and Morgan 1993:14-15). This plantation arrangement left little free time for slaves except for evenings and Sundays. When comparing task and gang labor systems, it should be noted that both systems are broad generalizations that encompass many localized labor organizations that fit the needs of the different cash crops and the seasonality of that crop (Berlin and Morgan 1993:14-15).

The hallmark of the first decades of the nineteenth century in the Pee Dee region was the need for additional labor to clear new fields for cotton production, physically construct plantation infrastructure, and erect earthen dams to protect fields from the seasonal river floods locally known as freshets (Campbell 1993:246-247). For slaves, the labor shortage meant that their free time on Sundays and in the evenings was in high demand. Planters and their neighbors would pay wages to slaves who worked overtime for them clearing fields, building dams, splitting rails, and harvesting cotton in the fall. This wage work system meant a steady flow of cash to enslaved laborers who were able to enter the labor market working for their owners or for neighboring planters depending on plantation rules and the going wage (Campbell 1993:247).

Wage work was the primary economic opportunity for upcountry cotton slaves in the early nineteenth century because planters could not spare viable growing land for personal slave plots amidst a shortage of land for their own fields (Campbell 1993:244-246). As cotton plantations became established and new cotton cultivars were introduced, the immediate need for wage work significantly declined by the 1820s. The

maturity of cotton plantations meant that spent and subpar wooded land was now available for slaves to try their hand at growing profitable cash crops like cotton and corn. A historical analysis of four large cotton plantations in Darlington District found that by the 1840s and 1850s, upwards of 7% of the total weight of cotton grown was being raised privately by slaves and sold to their masters or local merchants for cash or credit (Campbell 1993:249).

A snapshot of the fully developed internal economies in the late antebellum Pee Dee region comes from the work of the Southern Claims Commission which attempted to reimburse loyal unionists and slaves for property taken by the Union Army during the Civil War. Union forces were largely absent from the Darlington area until the last months of the war when General Sherman's army crossed the Pee Dee River in early March 1865, traveling northeast from the ruins of Columbia. After fording the river at Cheraw into neighboring Marlboro District, Sherman's forces captured the town of Bennettsville and camped for two days in the District where they foraged for supplies amongst the dwellings of poor whites, planters, and bondsmen alike (Edgar 1998:372-323; Jamison 1911:315-316).

More than a decade after the invasion of Bennettsville, 24 former slaves from Marlboro District appeared before the Southern Claims Commission and presented their cases for reimbursement of personal property confiscated by Sherman's forces in 1865. Their testimony and that of their witnesses offers a first-hand account of their lives before emancipation and the various ways by which they acquired a wide range of goods and belongings (Marlboro County, SC, Southern Claims Commission (SCC), National Archives).

Former field hand and widower, Allan Quick, claimed the following belongings which had been taken from the house where his 10 children lived on a plantation near his: 20 Chickens, 500 lbs. of cured bacon, 30 lbs. of lard, 5 bushels husked corn, 4 bushels field peas, 13 bed quilts, and 3 bed spreads which had a total value of \$221.50. When asked how he had acquired the property he replied “I had several hogs in the yard on their quarters and I built a smoke house there to keep such provisions in as I could buy or raise for my family in case they would not get enough from their master. I worked at night at shoemaking and making horse collars and chair bottoms - matts &c for which I was paid. I raised hogs and chickens and corn. With my own money I bought the quilts and spreads” When asked how he was certain about the exact amounts of his belongings he replied “I know the quantities because I had no other property in the world” (Claim of Allan Quick, Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

The testimony of former slave carpenter Thomas David shows the economic benefits of having a master willing to let his skilled laborers hire their own time and acquire a great amount of belongings including his own horse, a wagon, and private property purchased in the name of his free wife. He stated:

I was a carpenter & builder by trade all the time during and for many years before the war. I hired my time from my master much of the time before and during the war whenever I could get a good job. I hired my time at \$26 per month... and did work for whom I pleased. When I had no job I went to work for my master, as a carpenter at his plantation... Before the war began I made payment of \$148 on a farm containing 46 acres, 3 miles from my masters' farm and was to pay \$252

balance in five years. My wife and children lived on this land from then until 3 years ago when it was taken away from me and sold because I could not make the other payments on it. My wife was born free, I bought the land in her name with money I earned at my trade, while hiring my own time... During the war I raised a crop each year at the farm where my family lived. I had 8 children there who helped their mother to work the farm (Claim of Thomas David, Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

The claims for Thomas David and Allan Quick are not unique. All of the claimants from Marlboro District were part of their local enslaved economies - working at night or on Sundays in “over time” after official hours - making crafts like shoes or homespun cloth, laboring in the masters fields or ditching for pay, working their own crops around their homes, unloading local steamboats, or applying their skilled trades all to earn money and purchase goods.

Why only 24 former slaves appeared before the Southern Claims Commission in Marlboro District is unclear. Presumably the slaves with the greatest property before the war were often the most motivated individuals to seek monetary reimbursement, but the claims show a wide range of total property valuations ranging from \$40 to over \$500 and come from both skilled laborers and field hands alike. Former slaves may also have been aware of standing disqualifications for claimants. For example, anyone that had received rations from the Freedman’s Bureau after emancipation was typically disqualified. For others, it was likely difficult to find the required witnesses and then get them to travel to the hearings. Common witnesses included former masters, wives, children, and fellow

slaves from their plantation or neighboring plantations many of who were dead or had left the area in the ten or more years elapsed after emancipation.

The types of property claimed by former slaves certainly does not include all of the possessions owned by a claimant, only those items of value to the Union forces, primarily food stuffs (cured pork, lard, flour and corn products), clothing, blankets, livestock, and money. The possessions not listed in the claims likely included ceramic tablewares, stoneware containers, tinware vessels, personal hygiene items, and other assorted goods that were regularly purchased by slaves with their earnings from local merchants (Hilliard 2014:82-89).

When examining the total value of the confiscated property claimed by each of 24 former slaves we can see some stark differences amongst the various households. The claims were from both unskilled field hands (n=13) and specialists like blacksmiths, carpenters, foremen, or millers (n=11). The specialists had on average a claim valued at \$219.80, a hundred dollars more than the average claim of the field hands (\$117.10) (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives). Not all differences in the values of the claims can be attributed to slave occupation alone, factors such as marital status and age also played a crucial role. Inter-plantation marriage was quite common amongst the claimants (n=9) and presumably offered economic opportunities to slaves including access to land to grow crops if their own masters did not allow it or a chance to increase their earning power by growing cash crops on multiple plots (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

The western portion of Marlboro District where the claimants were located is a good proxy for Darlington District as both were primarily cotton based economies

situated on opposite sides of the Pee River. Many Society Hill elite, including J.D. Witherspoon's son John Witherspoon, owned plantations on the Marlboro side of the river (J.D Witherspoon to O. Spencer, Letter, 26 October 1834, South Carolina State Library). Both the close proximity and similar plantation organization suggests that enslaved economic networks and opportunities mentioned in these 24 claims were likely similar to those available to enslaved community on Witherspoon Island. Taken together, these cases offer a small glimpse of the social, trade and relational networks established and maintained by the local enslaved communities.

A surviving account for an enslaved carpenter owned by J.D. Witherspoon suggests very strong market parallels for skilled slaves in Darlington District. A respected carpenter in the Pee Dee area, Albert was regularly hired out by Witherspoon for construction-related projects between the 1830s and his death sometime around 1855 (J.D Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Undated Letter Fragment 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). Restoration of a nineteenth-century house in the town of Darlington in the 1960s revealed a small patent medicine bottle concealed within a front porch column. The bottle contained a short note by the home's original owners that detailed some aspects of life in 1854 Darlington. The note also mentioned that the renovations to the front porch were completed by Witherspoon's Albert (Want 1997:477).

This type of work benefited J.D. Witherspoon directly with financial gains from Albert's employment. Albert himself seems to have earned income from projects assigned by Witherspoon and possibly by taking on jobs in his free time or by hiring his time from his master. Account books from E. W. Charles, a merchant in the nearby town of Darlington, reveal an account for Witherspoon's Albert. The account shows that Albert

received store credit in the amount of \$30 in 1834 for the completion of a project for H. W. Charles. Throughout the year Albert made a series of purchases with the credit buying a range of goods. Albert purchased both consumables such as flour, sugar, candy and tobacco as well as a range of fine clothing articles for himself including a silk hat and an expensive \$12 cloth coat. In addition to the goods he bought for himself, there were clearly items purchased for a female in his life including ladies shoes and hose. The purchases were spaced throughout the first half of 1834 suggesting that Albert may have been employed on another project somewhere near the town of Darlington with regular access to this merchant. (E. W. Charles Accounts, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina).

The ability to earn money or credit combined with the relative freedom to travel was an advantage Albert possessed that most Witherspoon slaves were denied. After Albert's untimely death from illness, Elizabeth Witherspoon reflected about the impact of Albert's hiring out when thinking about his replacement, a young slave named Jesse being apprenticed by a carpenter named Mr. Woolard.

Jessy is a good boy I suppose. I never hear anything of him. He sleeps in his mammy's house. Mr. Woolard has finished at Mr. Williams' at last & will leave tomorrow & Jessy will go to him after Christmas. Mr. Witherspoon agreed to let Jessy stay four years with Mr. W. He is now sorry he allowed him to keep him so long. He will only be a plantation carpenter. Mr. Witherspoon will not spoil another by hiring him out (E. B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 12 December 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

In this quote, Elizabeth Witherspoon is almost certainly referring to Albert, the only other known Witherspoon carpenter. The planter and his wife speak of Albert as having been “spoiled” and ruined from his decades of being hiring out. This spoiling likely referred to the accumulation of property by the carpenter and his expectation of certain rights or privileges as a steady income earner for Witherspoon – well above the privileges that other Witherspoon slaves may have been allowed or expected.

Reforming the Internal Economy

The complex involvement of slaves in local markets as witnessed in the testimony of the Marlboro claimants was seen as a threat to the plantation order by many planters. Both the sense of independence instilled in slaves from free market participation and the economic and social relationships being formed with merchants, poor whites, and free blacks were thought to be dangerous enough to destabilize the entire southern slaveholding system (Campbell 1993; Forret 2006; Hilliard 2014; Hudson 1994:81). More practically, reform-minded slaveholders viewed the economic freedom of their slaves as a direct challenge to discipline on the plantation as it was thought to encourage theft, gambling, and the acquisition of spirits (Breedon 1980:250-256; Hilliard 2014:89). On Witherspoon Island and on many plantations throughout South Carolina, a series of nineteenth-century economic reforms were conceived and implemented in an attempt to reign in the dangerous excesses of the enslaved economies (Campbell 1993; Ravenel 1936:748-777).

Legislators in South Carolina took up this issue early on and attempted to limit slave access to the open market with a series of laws passed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that severely restricted the ability of merchants and private individuals to trade with slaves and outlawed liquor sales to bondsmen altogether (Henry 1914:81-82; Lichtenstein 1988). Cases of trading with bondsmen were hard to convict in court without the evidence of slaves who were barred from testifying under South Carolina law. The proof needed for such a conviction was a reliable white witness who had to see a slave enter a store or house with certain items and leave without those goods (Forret 2006:98-99). Convictions of accused traders and liquor dealers were lower than 40% for indictments in Darlington District court cases. Even though the penalty could range up to a year in jail and a thousand dollars, the greatest fine issued in Darlington was 6 months and \$250 dollars, suggesting that the maximum penalty was rare (Henry 1914:86).

The laws were the source of many complaints from slaveholders about their ineffectiveness at preventing flagrant everyday trading and liquor sales (Forret 2006:103-104; Hilliard 2014:64). Prosecution was also low because small-scale trade with slaves for eggs, chickens or produce had become routine in many parts of South Carolina and the enforcement of existing laws at this level was lax or non-existent. An 1855 commentary by the editor of a newspaper in Laurensville South Carolina made the following observation about the practice:

In our opinion there is nothing better calculated to injure the negro property than that of purchasing from them, without permits from their owners, chickens, eggs,

vegetables and such things. The farmers in the country make great complaints - and we fear they have just cause for it – against the citizens of the village for encouraging such traffic. It is true, we of the village often suffer great inconveniences, for the want of such necessaries, and many attempt to excuse themselves for buying from negroes on that ground, but in our opinion, they are adopting the very plan to make the inconvenience greater. What is the reason that the farmers around us do not raise such things and supply us with them? Why, simply because our citizens will buy them from negroes, who, nine cases out of ten, steal them, either from their owners or the neighboring planters, consequently it is unprofitable business. Let the people of the village unite in refusing to buy chickens, eggs, vegetables, fruits, &c. from negroes at night, or who have not written permits from their owners, or other responsible persons, when they offer them for sale in the day time, and there will be no inducement for them to steal, and that will give encouragement to our farmers to raise such things to supply us with. (Edgefield Advertiser 1855:4).

The weakness of the legal controls and poor enforcement regarding trade with slaves in South Carolina meant that slaveholders needed new means to regulate their bondsmen's access to the marketplace (Campbell 1993; Forret 2006:103-104). Planters responded by attempting to limit illicit trade with a series of reforms to the internal plantation economies. Starting in the 1830s agricultural journals and plantation management literature took up this issue with vigor, proposing a range of solutions (Campbell 1993:253-254; Forret 2006:97).

Reformers laid out plans that attempted to reshape the economic opportunities that were traditionally available to many enslaved communities in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Advocates framed the economic changes as benefiting slaves through paternalistic market guidance via a patchwork of new plantation rules and localized legal reforms. They argued that reforms performed a dual role: they protected their slaves from unscrupulous trading partners and kept their bondsmen from spending hard-earned money on foolish trinkets and unwholesome goods like alcohol (Breedon 1980:266-280; Ravenel 1936:748-777).

The more extreme reform plans suggested that slaves should be restricted from growing cash crops like corn or cotton altogether. Proponents argued that by not growing crops, slaves would not engage in dangerous night work, that plantation tools would be not be damaged and work animals were not injured. Perhaps most importantly, theft of the planter's corn or cotton was more easily detected when cash crops are disallowed on a plantation because stolen crops could not be disguised as legitimate slave-raised crops (Breedon 1980:266-280). Many slaveholders suggested that in return for good behavior and hard work, planters could provide a reward at the end of the year in the form of extra time off, gifts of clothing or mercantile goods, or small amounts of cash (Breedon 1980:257-265).

The use of cash rewards was a plan advocated locally by J.D. Witherspoon's son-in-law William H. Evans and implemented on large Darlington plantations owned by another son-in-law John N. Williams (Delaware Farmer 1853; Evans 1860). In a report on cotton cultivation published in *The Rural Register*, a nationally distributed agricultural publication, Evans argued that:

I know of nothing better than a system of rewards for extra picking – twenty-five cents will pick five times as much cotton as twenty-five lashes. If every planter would discontinue the practice of allowing his negroes to plant a crop for themselves, and instead thereof pay them in money, at Christmas, for extra picking, we would get our crops out in better time, better order, and with more satisfaction to ourselves, whilst we would avoid much of the punishment of our negroes, which is disagreeable to us and injurious to them, and prevents a great measure, that fruitful source of all crimes with them – the constant traffic with every grog-shop in the country (Evans 1860:180).

Evan's plan was only sporadically implemented as many planters were loath to restrict slaves from growing cash crops because they saw this practice as a social reform tool. Slaveholders thought that growing crops promoted industriousness and responsibility amongst the slave population and left their slaves little free time to cause mischief (Breedon 1980:266-280). South Carolina planter R. King, Jr. illustrated this how this practice was also a covert form of social control in his contribution to the *Southern Agriculturalist* journal:

Every means is used to encourage them and impress on their minds the advantage of holding property and the disgrace attached to idleness. Surely, if industrious for themselves, they will be so for their masters, and no Negro, with a well-stocked poultry house, a small crop advancing, a canoe partly finished, or a few tubs

unsold, all of which he calculates soon to enjoy, will ever run away (King 1828:525).

Because many slaveholders wanted their slaves to be diligent, value personal property, and keep them economically tied to the plantation, the practice of planting cash crops was allowed to continue on many plantation landscapes throughout the late antebellum period. Crops raised by slaves on their own accord were even sometimes claimed as a point of pride in the defense of slavery:

Speaking of “negroes’s crops,”... the largest sale which has come to our knowledge is one made in Macon week before last, by Messrs. Jonathon Collins & Son, for the negroes of Allen McWalker’s estate in Taylor county. The crop was of Nankeen cotton and brought \$1969.65 a sum of money which might never have reached the darkies, if it had passed into the hands of many a noisy abolition sympathizer in the North over the “wrongs of the slave.” The negroes’ crops are a feature of the “peculiar institution,” which seems entirely to have escaped the notice of the Uncle Toms and Aunt Tabithas; and it is probably not saying too much to affirm that in the vast majority of cases the Southern negroes little *peculium* is not only more secure, but larger, than it would be were he a free laborer, subsisting himself on wages, and disposed to perform the same amount of toil which is now required of him (Macon Weekly Telegraph 1859:2)

The author goes on to suggest that crops “constitute, ordinarily, only a portion of their little incomes” and cites eggs, poultry, and “rude, but useful household wares” earn them a tidy sum of money “which would, no doubt, look almost princely in the eyes of half the white farm laborers of Europe” (Macon Weekly Telegraph 1859:2).

The interest in letting slaves grow their own crops or produce goods in their free time did not mean that reform-minded planters were willing to let these activities go on unsupervised. Thomas C. Law, a planter in Darlington District developed a set of recommendations regarding slave-controlled crops suggesting that bondsmen “should be permitted to have a small crop that they can call their own to cultivate their little notions, which should be ploughed, by the owner’s direction, as regularly as his own, & which they will find employment in hoeing, when they have finished their tasks or when time is given to them” (Report on Management of Slaves - Duty of Overseers and Employers, August 10, 1852, Thomas Cassels Law Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina). His plan helped to mitigate some of the planter’s concerns regarding cash crops by having slaveholders directly oversee the planting process and by giving his bondsmen time to maintain their personal crops during the day to prevent injury and overtiring.

Where cash crops were allowed to be grown, planters also sought novel ways to insulate slaves from the larger free market and from unscrupulous traders on plantations who paternalistic slaveholders claimed were blindly robbing slaves of their hard-earned income (Breedon 1980:266-280). One of the most widely implemented plans to this effect was the creation of a plantation store. A memoir of plantation life written by

former planter and noted botanist H. W. Ravenel in 1876 mentioned the importance of the plantation store and the evils it helped to ward off.

The matter of trade between the negroes and the small country stores, was always a fruitful source of trouble and annoyance to the planters. Not only was the price of goods exorbitant, but whiskey, rum and other contraband articles were freely sold to them – and stolen goods (cotton, corn, and other plantation supplies) taken in exchange. To correct this evil, the custom was adopted of having a store on the plantation with such simple goods as the negroes would want most, cheap calicoes, homespuns, handkerchiefs, tinware, molasses, sugar, tobacco, etc. These goods were bought by the master at wholesale rates, and sold to the negroes at cost, simply for their accommodation and benefit, and to put a stop to the trade with the country store. It checked the evil completely, and the Plantation store became a successful and amelioratory institution, and was generally adopted. In order to furnish no excuse for dealing with the country stores, it was the custom to take everything the negroes wished to sell, whether wanted or not, and pay them the market price. This was found to work well, as it stimulated them to industrious habits, and they got better prices for their produce. (Ravenel 1936:748-777)

Ravenel describes the plantation store as a counterbalance between the open market where slaves regularly had access to the small merchants, peddlers, and poor whites willing to trade with bondsmen for both licit and illicit goods. A plantation store thus

acted as buffer between slaves and the outside market where bondsmen were subject to the prices the slaveholder paid and merchandize he carried.

Even if a planter did not operate a physical store on his plantation, reform advocates felt that the slaveholder should be obligated to buy everything that his enslaved community produced. When local planter Thomas C. Law presented a paper on slave management to the Darlington Agricultural Society he laid out the benefits of purchasing from his slaves:

When the crop is gathered, let the owner always purchase what they have to sell – giving the highest market price, whether he need it or not. The first prevents their trading with unprincipled men, & the second convinces them of your doing them justice, & induces them to prefer you as a purchaser & prevents their being cheated out of their earnings. The practice enables the master to detect theft if there should be any, as he is better able to judge of the quantity each would probably make from the ground cultivated, when it is submitted to accurate weight or measurement in his presence (Report on Management of Slaves - Duty of Overseers and Employers, August 10, 1852, Thomas Cassels Law Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina)

Cotton plantation accounts from Darlington District found that cotton prices actually paid to slaves for their harvest ranged between the actual market value of goods to exploitative rates where slaveholders were making a profit on their bondsmen's crops (Campbell

1993:259). Law also clearly lays out an added benefit of close involvement in slave crops which allowed planters to potentially detect theft from their fields.

When buying goods from their slaves, planters were urged not to pay slaves in cash or coin. Cash was dangerous in the slaveholder's eyes, "the possession of money itself encouraged slaves to leave the plantation surreptitiously at night to spend their earnings as they desired – and thereby assert their independence" (Campbell 1993:248). Instead of paying slaves cash, for their crops or goods, planters regularly offered their bondsmen credit at a reputable merchants where they had existing accounts. In exchange for goods or services, slaves would be given a credit order valid for a specific merchant. They could then visit the merchant and shop for the amount of credit the order specified amongst goods the merchant thought suitable. Credit systems allowed masters direct control over where their slaves shopped and what they could buy with their earnings (Campbell 1993:265-266)

Reforms and the Internal Economy on Witherspoon Island Plantation

Both archaeological evidence and the documentary record offers some clues about specific role that Witherspoon's plantation slaves played in the internal economy. Slaves on Witherspoon Island, like their counterparts in the larger Pee Dee region, would have grown crops, kept pigs and chicken, potentially labored for pay in overtime, and produced certain saleable goods at home like baskets or ceramics.

Court documents and family correspondence strongly suggest that Witherspoon slaves were allowed to raise their own crops. The only financial accounts that survive

come from the legal battle surrounding the inheritance of the plantation after J.D. Witherspoon's death in 1860. The court records contain a detailed list of the estate's credits and expenses for the years of 1860 to 1862 and have two relevant entries. Both are payments made to plantation slaves in exchange for crops or byproducts of their crops. The first is a payment of \$17.50 on July 24th 1860 labeled "to plantation negroes for rice straw". The second dates to April 1st 1861 identified as payment of \$19.03 "to slaves for crops" (Equity Case #484, Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina). The transactions clearly reveal that Witherspoon Island slaves were growing personal plots. The sale of rice straw by slaves indicated that they were growing small patches of rice along the outskirts of the plantation. Agricultural census data for the antebellum years on the plantation does not list rice which suggests the crops were very small scale - most likely being raised by slaves for personal use or for trade (U.S. Federal Census 1850 and 1860). In addition to rice, it is very likely Witherspoon slaves were allowed to raise corn and possibly cotton patches, but no archaeological or documentary evidence can offer concrete proof of this. Corn is present in antebellum ethnobotanical samples, but it is not known if this corn was a part of a ration provided to slaves or part of a crop grown by inhabitants for personal gain.

Many items like the personal crops produced by plantation slaves are difficult to see archaeologically. Only tasks such as livestock rearing and ceramic production regularly leave telltale signs of independent production around the slave quarters. Zooarchaeological analysis of the two cabin sites suggests slaves were allowed to raise both pigs and chickens both for personal consumption and likely for trade (see Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of livestock rearing at Witherspoon Island).

Ceramic production seems to have been quite limited or non-existent at the enslaved settlement home to Cabin Site 1 (CS1) and Cabin Site 2 (CS2). The only potential evidence of ceramic production at this single settlement by Witherspoon slaves comes from a series of low-fired handmade earthenware pipes that were recovered both in survey and excavation. An XRF study of the pipes, strongly suggests that of a sample of 19 low-fired pipe fragments (representing a minimum 10 different pipes), 74% came from a similar clay source and used a nearly identical clay recipe (Carolyn Dillian, personal communication 2014). The similarity of clay sourcing is not definitive proof of local manufacture on Witherspoon Island, but suggests that production may have occurred somewhere nearby. Whether these pipes were produced for trade or personal use is unclear. Aside from the pipes, there were less than 5 possible sherds of Colonoware, a traditional low-fired earthenware produced by enslaved potters, recovered from both CS1 and CS2. This suggests ceramic production did not occur near these dwellings and that consumption of Colonoware vessels for both households was extremely rare. Survey results from the larger settlement also suggest Colonoware consumption was very low, which is not unexpected for the late antebellum period in South Carolina (Espenshade 2008).

With an active internal economy on his cotton plantation, it appears that J.D. Witherspoon implemented certain elements of the economic reform discourse in an attempt to regulate the economic access of his bondsmen. While we know that Witherspoon allowed his slaves to grow personal crops (and did not pay annual premiums or rewards for good behavior), it is unclear if slaves were allowed to grow personal cotton patches. It seems likely that the plantation slaves were granted this

privilege, as many of the neighboring Pee Dee regional planters treated slave cotton crops as a customary practice (Campbell 1993, Delaware Farmer 1853:371). Also, as an absentee planter, is it is also unlikely that Witherspoon operated a regular plantation store during his weekly or bi-monthly visits to the island.

The best evidence of economic reforms comes from merchants located in Society Hill. Accounts of these merchants show that John and Boykin Witherspoon, the two sons of planter J.D. Witherspoon, were regularly giving a large volume of credit orders to their slaves throughout the 1840s and 1850s, likely as payment for extra work or private crops (W.C. Coker and Company [Society Hill, S.C.] Records, 1842-1907, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina).

Unlike his sons, the accounts for J.D. Witherspoon show only a few credit orders per year, nowhere near the amount that would be needed to support his two hundred plus bondsmen. For the year of 1850, only 10 enslaved individuals were given orders, like that of Jim, who purchased a padlock, shoes, an overcoat and a fur hat between January 10th and 12th of that year (W.C. Coker and Company (Society Hill, S.C) Records, 1842-1907, South Caroliniana Library). A close examination of slave inventories and family correspondence reveals that the slaves with the credit orders were all household servants or skilled tradesmen who lived in Society Hill, not plantation laborers on Witherspoon Island. The low number of credit orders on J.D. Witherspoon's account then, is likely due to the distant location of the Witherspoon plantation. In contrast, the plantations owned by his two sons were significantly closer to Society Hill, meaning that their slaves would have had more convenient access to the merchants in town. Unfortunately, no records

survive for the stores that would have been nearest the plantation that likely received the majority of legitimate trade for Witherspoon bondsmen.

In the tens of thousands of artifacts recovered from Cabin Sites 1 and 2 there was only one coin found, an Indian Head penny dated 1896 associated with occupants from the late tenant farming era. The absence of coins from the antebellum contexts on Witherspoon Island strongly suggests that credit-based economic controls were being rigidly enforced by the planter and that cash was rare on the plantation.

The antebellum household assemblages from both cabin sites also hold clues to what slaves spent their hard-earned credit on. Studies of nineteenth-century slave purchasing behavior suggest that cloth, finished clothing, and foodstuffs like sugar and coffee were some of the most common purchases by slaves when they visited an established merchant. Other items less regularly purchased by bondsmen included kitchenware, ceramic tableware, teawares, and hardware like padlocks (Hilliard 2014:82-88). The 1834 merchant account for Albert, J.D. Witherspoon's enslaved carpenter, supports the purchasing studies by Hilliard (2014) and Campbell (1993). When broken down by functional category, Albert spent 87.7% of his total credit (\$29.57) on clothing (a hat, shoes, a coat, stockings, hose, & pants), 7.6% on consumables (candy, sugar, and coffee), 1.7% on tobacco, 1.7% on sewing-related items (needles and thread) and 1.3% on kitchenware (a water bucket - likely made of tin). While this is certainly an incomplete record of Albert's purchases for the year, the only items that could be recovered archaeologically in normal circumstances would perhaps be the needles, fragments of the tin bucket and various hardware that might have been associated with the clothing or

footwear (E W Charles Accounts, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina).

Ceramics in antebellum contexts on Witherspoon Island are unlikely to have been provisioned by the planter or to have been hand-me-downs from the main house. With an enslaved population that ranged from 150 to nearly 300 during the 1840s and 1850s it would have been financially prohibitive to regularly provide slaves tablewares for household use. Additionally, any unwanted ceramics given out by the Witherspoons would likely have ended up in the hands of household slaves living in Society Hill, not the plantation slaves at Lowther's Lake.

The ceramic tableware assemblages from two enslaved households present a case for both purchasing habits and taste of the inhabitants. To study the ceramic assemblages, a minimum vessel analysis (MVA) was completed for the ceramics recovered from both cabins at Witherspoon Island. The results of the MVA revealed that the northern cabin (CS2) had a smaller assemblage (n=48), nearly half the number of vessels recovered from CS1 (n=94). The size of assemblage is likely not related to factors such as differential market access or financial resources, rather the assemblage size seems to be directly proportionate to the number of excavation units opened at each site - with 28 units dug Cabin Site 1 and only 12 opened at Cabin Site 2. The size of the ceramic assemblage is also slightly smaller at Cabin Site 2 because no primary antebellum midden features were identified around this dwelling as were excavated at Cabin Site 1.

When the different decorative styles of nineteenth-century refined earthenwares are examined from both households (See Figure 5.1) it shows that occupants owned roughly the same types of decorated wares with a few exceptions like a single lusterware

vessel from Cabin Site 1. Rather than personal taste this may showcase the market availability of decorated refined earthenwares in late antebellum Darlington District. The high percentage of undecorated wares, primarily whitewares, suggests enslaved inhabitants of both cabins were following popular mid-nineteenth century trends that sought out plain white vessels for their tables (Shackel 2002:168).

The presence of distinct colorations and designs within the broad decorative categories discussed above, clearly indicate that each household had distinctive tastes in the ceramics they were procuring. For example, no single transfer-printed pattern is found in common for both households. The dipt vessels offer a further line of evidence. From both households, the dipt wares were primarily bowls or cups featuring a variety of colored slip-fields and slip-bands. Each household had several slip color schemes that were not found at the other cabin site. For instance, amongst the dipt decorated vessels from Cabin Site 1 (n=17) 30% featured green or yellow bands, colors not represent in the dipt vessels from Cabin Site 2 (n=8). While the color of banding has been used to indicate some degree of chronological control in dipt wares, it appears that most of the colors present at both household (blues, browns, & yellows) were all popular in the mid-nineteenth century (1830s to 1850s) (Carpentier and Rickard 2001:128-132). That being said, I feel that the colors on the dipt wares more likely reflect consumer choice as both households had overlapping periods of occupation and similar market options.

Padlocks were also a common item being obtained by bondsmen as seen in the 1850 Society Hill Merchant account where Jim, a J.D. Witherspoon household slave, purchased a padlock for 12.5 cents (W.C. Coker and Company (Society Hill, S.C) Records, 1842-1907, South Caroliniana Library). At Witherspoon Island, nine padlocks

were recovered at Cabin Site 1; of these, five can be linked to pre-1860 contexts, two are in sharecropping contexts, and two from chronologically indeterminate deposits and features that could be antebellum or postbellum contexts. This means that the enslaved inhabitants of Cabin Site 1, purchased between at least 5 but possibly 7 padlocks for securing their door or storage containers. In contrast, Cabin Site 2 had only had a single padlock from a defined antebellum context. The presence of so many locks strongly suggests that they were purchased by the slaves themselves and that bondsmen were accumulating personal property that they considered worth protecting behind lock and key.

Enslaved Response to Economic Reforms

Economic reforms implemented by Witherspoon and others attempted to impede slave autonomy in the market while at the same time creating an environment of increased dependence upon the planter. By denying their bondsmen crops, limiting slaves to plantation stores, or using credit-only systems at approved merchants, the only unfettered outlet into the local market was the underground economy based on illegal trade (Schweninger 1992:125).

Most underground exchange in the Darlington region was between slaves and poor whites living close to cotton plantations. Slave narratives and legal filings suggest that most trade was done in the night at either the residence of the poor white or at prearranged locations far from patrols or other witnesses. Slaves primarily traded foodstuffs in exchange for a laundry list of goods including coffee, sugar, molasses,

cloth, finished clothing, liquor and firearms (Forret 2006:79-89). Sallie Paul, a former slave from nearby Marion District, recalled a prolific trade with poor whites during slavery. "You see, all de white folks wasn' equal. Some was poor en de colored people sell dem things dey white folks never want. Oh, dey take anything you carry dem" (Federal Writers' Project 1941c). The single greatest trade according to the historical record involved slaves exchanging corn and pork for liquor (Forret 2006:79-89).

The cases of slave trading that went to trial offer some important clues to type of trade that was occurring between slaves and any number of merchants and individuals. The 1859 case of *South Carolina v. Peggy Elrod* the "defendant was convicted of trading with a slave. The trading took place three years ago last March, and consisted in her letting the slave have a half gallon of whiskey in exchange for a bushel of corn" In a second offense Elrod was also accused of selling a "teacup full of whiskey to a slave named Randall, the property of Major Simpson, for which he paid her ten cents" (Richardson 1860:662-663). The details of the transaction reveal that Peggy Elrod was being paid in both cash and goods for varying amounts of liquor.

In *South Carolina vs. William Rollins*, a poor white storekeeper located near Society Hill was convicted of trading with slaves (Forret 2006:104). The proof in the 1859 case was that a white witness said that a "slave went into defendant's shop with five pounds of bacon and an empty bottle and came out without the bacon and with a bottle of whiskey" The slave in the case was reported as saying "he had five pounds of bacon and would have brought more if he had known that the defendant would have taken it" the defendant replied saying "you might have brought five, ten, fifteen, twenty, or fifty pounds and I would have taken it" (Richardson 1860:297-298).

Two of J.D. Witherspoon's household slaves were known to frequent the house of a poor white in the town of Society Hill. Elizabeth B. Witherspoon wrote that she would "be glad when Moore leaves the neighborhood. Hamlet & Alick frequent his house & it is said he is a retailer of liquor. Someone will supply his place but perhaps not in so retired a situation" (E. B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 14 June 1859, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). Her casual mention of a grog shop in Society Hill belays the certainty that every neighborhood had an individual willing to break the law and provide liquor to slaves in exchange for either stolen or personally produced goods. Records citing drunkenness amongst enslaved Witherspoon members at Welsh Neck Baptist Church during the 1840s and 1850s corroborate the fact the Witherspoon household servants had regular access to intoxicating spirits (Welsh Neck Baptist Church 1737-2010).

To buy from Moore and others like him, Witherspoon slaves like Alick had to be creative in their attempts to earn money or goods that could be exchanged for illicit merchandise like liquor. Some of Alick's illicit entrepreneurial activities were uncovered in 1859 by his mistress Elizabeth B. Witherspoon. Apparently Alick had been earning cash by selling cakes to his fellow slaves and others. He had been covertly baking cakes at night in the Witherspoon's kitchen using their ingredients and supplies. More troubling perhaps to his owners was the fact that Alick had been had badgering and threatening other Witherspoon household slaves to leave the kitchen door unlocked at night. Alick went as far to threaten Emma, the temporary cook, with a conjured illness saying that he had caused the debilitating illness that had permanently sickened Ben, the Witherspoon's primary cook. Upon the discovery of his threats, Alick fled Society Hill (E.B Witherspoon

to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 20 May 1859, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). Gone for nearly three months, Alick was eventually caught working in Charleston and then sold for running away and his other crimes especially his treatment of the other household slaves (E.B. Witherspoon to E. Witherspoon, Letter, 5 August 1859, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). The saga of Witherspoon's footman Alick, shows the lengths that certain bondsmen would go to in order to participate in the open market.

Even in a rural setting, Witherspoon plantation slaves would have had opportunities for exchange with poor white neighbors, nearby slave communities, and traveling peddlers who planters frequently complained about (Morgan and Berlin 1993:33). For Witherspoon Island, a likely center of trade was the private boat landing on the Pee Dee River. The river was a highway of commerce with small steamboats transferring cotton bales downriver to Georgetown and upon their return, delivering supplies to the large plantations. The boat crews were frequently made up of hired slaves, and many flats, canoes, and smaller boats were entirely slave-run, providing ample opportunities for trade (Charles & Company Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina). Charles Ball's early nineteenth-century narrative from central South Carolina mentions an arrangement he made with a river boat captain, secretly trading fish and plantation goods for bacon and other items:

Upon inquiring of the captain if he had any bacon that he would exchange for shad, he said, he had a little; but, as the risk he would run in dealing with a slave was great, I must expect to pay him more than the usual price. He at length proposed to give me a hundred pounds of bacon for three hundred shad. This was

at least twice as much as the bacon was worth; but we did not bargain as men generally do, where half of the bargain is on each side; for here the captain of the keel-boat settled the terms for both parties. However, he ran the hazard of being prosecuted for dealing with slaves, which is a very high offence in Carolina; and I was selling that which, in point of law, did not belong to me; but to which, nevertheless, I felt in my conscience that I had a better right than any other person. (Ball 1859:221)

Similarly, Hector Smith, a former slave from the Darlington region recalled that his grandmother was often punished for having dealings with Pee Dee River boat traffic:

Oh, yes'um, my Massa whip my gran'mammy wid a leather strap. You see she had a knack of gwine off for some cause or another en meetin de boat what run up en down dat big Pee Dee river en bring fertilizer en all kind of goods to de peoples. Massa Randall had told her not to go nowhe' bout dat boat, but some people is sorta high strung like en dey go off anyhow no matter bout de whip. (Federal Writers' Project 1941d)

What exactly, Hector's grandmother was doing at the boat landing is unknown, although illicit trade like Charles Ball described was certainly a strong possibility.

According to the Witherspoons, Society Hill and the entire Darlington region by 1856 had become "so notorious for negro trading that the gentlemen have at last resolved to try to check it". She relays a story about Smoot's store in Society Hill that had been

selling whiskey to a poor white named Kelly who was suspected of providing liquor to slaves in exchange for corn:

They have run off one man, Kelly, who lived at Sparrows & have a stricter police. Smoot's clerk said Kelly's trade was worth from thirty to fifty dollars a week to Smoot. A gentleman saw a number of small bags of corn in Smoot's store & heard the clerk tell Smoot it was Kelly's corn. Kelly got whiskey in exchange for the negroes corn, even Mr. McIntosh's old man Peter has been sent to the plantation for drunkenness & pilfering, he has been thought highly of by his master." (E. B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter 12 December 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

It appears that Kelly was acting as a factor for slaves, taking certain risks from slaves by selling their goods for them, in exchange for a portion of the money or corn. If the amount of trade done by Kelly is accurate, then it represents a significant level of exchange with bondsmen in the Society Hill area.

Because of the forbidden nature of the exchange and the potential need to dispose of stolen goods quickly, historians have suggested that slaves were willing to take a financial loss on most trades as mentioned in the account by Charles Ball. That meant that trade with slaves was very profitable for individuals who were willing to risk the legal consequences and ire of their neighborhood should they be found out like Kelly, who promptly was driven out of Society Hill when discovered (Forret 2006:93). Of course, there is no guarantee that the corn Kelly was taking from slaves was stolen, the

corn may have been part of a repurposed weekly ration or grown by the slaves legitimately in a planter allowed patch, or it could have been pilfered as the “gentlemen” of Society Hill presumed.

Aside from the vast quantities of liquor and other prohibited items entering the slave quarter, one of the more immediate concerns that planters had about the illicit trade of their slaves was the belief that it was driven by theft of their crops, livestock, and supplies. The historic record of planters and travelers in the antebellum south suggests that theft was commonplace on plantations (Lichtenstien 1988). Many planters were of the racist opinion that all slaves are prone to theft and rascality which they ascribed as an inherent racial trait (Hilliard 2014:26-28). The Witherspoons appear to have adhered to a similar view. When looking to purchase a house servant for his new home near Shreveport, Boykin Witherspoon wrote to his mother to see if any of their acquaintances in Society Hill had a suitable servant for sale. She replied about a possible candidate named Robert who had been recently accused of stealing from his master and spoke of his character as such:

None of us think his appropriating money he picked up was at all surprising, tho it was very wrong, few of that class of people could resist the temptation. Most of our yards would be without servants if we kept none but honest ones. I am not sure I would have one left. (E. B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 30 January 1858, Private Witherspoon Family Collection)

Instead of genetics, historians who have examined slave theft suggest it was driven by a complex series of factors including: subsistence or need, customary rights, material gain, for trade, and as a form of active resistance (Forret 2006; Hilliard 2014; Lichtenstein 1988). All of these interpretations are likely correct given the individual context, I would argue that every act of theft is inexorably connected to the mindset, living conditions, base needs and wants of that specific bondsman. Historic sources have shown that many slaves in the nineteenth century considered that pilfering from their planter was not theft but justified “taking”.

Frederick Law Olmstead reported from his travels that it was a near universal belief in slave quarters that “the result of labor belongs of right to the laborer, and on this ground, even the religious feel justified in using "Massa's" property for their own temporal benefit. This they term "taking," and it is never admitted to be a reproach to a man among them that he is charged with it, though "stealing," or taking from another than their master, and particularly from one another, is so.” (Olmstead 1953:82-83). This belief has been framed as a moral economy by historians where slaves challenged the hegemony of planters through an appropriation of goods that their labor created both for their immediate needs and for comfort (Lichtenstein 1988:415-418).

Olmstead’s observation seems to have been prevalent among slaves in the upcountry cotton region as well. At Salem Baptist, a church across the river from Witherspoon Island, the white leadership was shocked to learn in the early 1850s of “certain doctrines partially believed and taught by Negroes who profess Christ” including “a general and very common belief that it is not a sin to pilfer their Master’s property” (Salem Baptist Church 1797-1930:102). The church formed a committee to look into this

belief and reported that “after making extensive inquires” that their slaves “do not hold that it is wrong to steal from their Masters. This seems to be a general sentiment among them as well in the church as out of it. We have ascertained that some of our own members hold it” (Salem Baptist Church 1797-1930:104).

Absent from the Southern Claims Commission testimonies from Marlboro District are the less reputable ways (theft and illicit trade) that surely led to acquisition of belongings or the money used to purchase their goods. This makes sense as claimants would likely be disqualified for any belongings obtained in illegal ways. The best sources to ascertain the character of localized theft in Darlington District are captured in church minutes, narratives of former slaves, and private family diaries or correspondences. Only major cases of slave theft would have entered into the well-documented legal system, meaning that most instances of larceny were dealt with by the planters directly and not typically recorded.

The cases of theft amongst the enslaved members of antebellum churches likely typify the common thefts perpetrated by Darlington-area slaves. The church discipline cases regularly include charges of hog stealing, corn theft, and the pilfering of other foodstuffs. At Welsh Neck Baptist Church in Society Hill, enslaved members Daniel and Rose were charged in the year 1836 for their involvement in the theft of hogs:

Daniel had been engaged with the husband of Rose, in stealing hogs... he was excluded by unanimous vote. Rose had found out the conduct of her husband, & had reproved him: but... she had not, as she should have done, promptly made

known his conduct. She was placed under censure (Welsh Neck Baptist Church 1737-2010:171).

In 1839 Billey and Evelina, also members of Welsh Neck were charged with pilfering corn from the plantation and found that Billey was “guilty of stealing corn from the plantation crib” and his wife Evelina was found “guilty of partaking of the corn stolen by Billey, knowing it to be stolen” and “also of carrying home corn from the field, after replanting, contrary to the rule of the plantation” both were excluded from the church (Welsh Neck Baptist Church 1737-2010:220).

A slave member named Paul at Salem Baptist Church was accused of theft and found guilty “for milking his masters cattle unbeknowing to his master... and denying of it”. Paul was found to be guilty and was excommunicated for the crime in 1831 (Salem Baptist Church 1797-1930:100). While the case of Paul milking cows was likely for personal consumption, there is no way of knowing if the hogs or corn in the above cases were intended to supplement a hungry family’s diet or intended for barter on the black market or both.

As illustrated in the previous examples, being excommunicated from church was certainly one result of participating in theft or of being accused of the crime. Aaron Ford, a former slave from the Pee Dee region recalled a tale about corporal punishment for pilfering on the plantation. “Heard my grandfather tell bout whippin slaves for stealin. Grandfather told me not to take things dat were not mine. If a pile of corn was left at night, I was told not to bother it. In breakin corn, sometimes people would make a pile of corn in de grass en leave it en den come back en get it in de night. Grandfather told me

not to never bother nothin bout people's things" (Federal Writers' Project 1941b:75-76). Other serious consequences were certainly possible as in case of George and Anderson, two slaves who belonged to a local Darlington planter:

Yesterday your father sold George and Anderson to the traders, Weatherly and Edens. George had been recently found in the possession of some pork, supposed to be of missing hogs of your father's. He got for the two, two thousand dollars... Your father went to the plantation yesterday morning to secure George then went on the cars to Darlington C. H. for Anderson, and returned on the 12'oclock train, sold the negroes, came out to dinner (B. W. Edwards to W. Edwards, Letter, 28 Apr. 1857, B. W. Edwards Biographic File, Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, SC).

While the reason for Anderson's quick sale is unknown, George was parted from his friends and family for the theft of several pigs on the plantation. Stealing hogs seems to have been a pretty common crime according to slave narratives, yet George paid a high price for his supposed larceny.

An 1858 letter from Elizabeth Witherspoon to her son relayed a complex story of theft and blame between a Witherspoon household servant, Rhoda, and her husband Hercules who belonged to a neighbor Capt. Edwards:

Dr. Presley came to see me several weeks since & said he had been robbed of fifty dollars, that Hercules had changed twenty dollars at Carrigan's [a local

merchant], Hercules confessed he had taken money from the Dr. & described the place & time when he got it. Three days after, he changed his story & said Rhoda had given him twenty dollars. Upon hearing that your father [J.D. Witherspoon] counted his money & said he had lost \$20. I told him he probably was mistaken that he often had panics about money. Unfortunately a few days after he went to Mr. Coker's [another merchant] to get money to pay his taxes & there met the Capt. & told him he had lost twenty dollars. It was a great relief to the Capt. He said he had never known Hercules to steal anything except bacon. When your father came home & told me I was much annoyed at his mentioning the money. I soon recollected that I had paid Mrs. Josey five dollars for weaving. Your father then recollected he had taken ten dollars to the plantation & William Evans reminded me that I had paid him 3 dollars for a sack of flour & I had the two dollar bill, so the twenty dollars was accounted for but still the stigma rests on Rhoda. She is very indignant. Capt. brought H. [Hercules] here to confront Rhoda. He could not raise his eyes when he accused her & Mr. Kiroin who was present said he was mad enough to give him fifty lashes. Col. Wilson advises Capt. to put him in his pocket, but he thinks him innocent. Rhoda says he shall never come here again unless he clears her of that charge & others equally unfounded. I was so astonished at Hercules' charges against Rhoda & so distressed that I never spoke to her about it. She waited two or three days & finding I said nothing she told me she wanted to talk to me that I might tell Miss Betsey [J.D Witherspoon's daughter Elizabeth] before she went away what I thought of her. I told her I had nothing to say to her that I had trusted her & she

had deceived me. She protested she had not taken from me the cloth which Hercules told his Master Rhoda had given him. Capt. saw cotton cloth which H. said Rhoda had given to make sheets. Capt. did not say how many yards he had & I have not seen the cloth, but if he had sent it I could not probably identify it. Rhoda has abundant opportunities to pilfer from me. I am not very watchful of the cloth. I give her everything she asks me for anything I always give her & more than she asks & this made me think she would not rob me. I wish I could know the truth. I am not disposed to give much credit to H statements, but it is so base an act for a man to accuse his wife wrongfully that I am staggered & know not what to think. H was asked if Rhoda had given him any other cloth he said she had given drawers. Rhoda says he has no drawers except his master's old ones. He made other charges but it is too tedious to go into all particulars. A lady told me she felt very sorry for me, that she heard Hercules was cleared & Rhoda convicted & she knew I thought so much of Rhoda. I am not fully persuaded of Rhoda's innocence but I have no doubt of Hercules' guilt. I was so shocked at the idea of her perfidy that I could say nothing to her. Nothing that I would say could be harsh enough if she was guilty. My silence hurt her I dare say she would have preferred my scolding her to my total silence. This affair has troubled me but not half so much as it would have done had I not gone through far greater. (E. B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 26 April 1858, Private Witherspoon Family Collection)

There is no clear answer in the letter of who committed the theft of money that began the entire incident. As the investigation into the crime continued, Hercules threw suspicion on his wife for the theft of money and other crimes of opportunity. The obfuscation of the case may have been intentional and appears to have stymied any punishment for Hercules or Rhoda aside from the silent treatment by her mistress. Also within the letter, Capt. Edwards mentioned it was a “great relief” to find that Hercules was innocent of the initial theft as he had only known to steal bacon in the past. For Edwards, the theft of food by slaves was customary which fits well in the moral economy framework where slaves attempted to justify and convince their masters that small losses were expected or even accepted.

Slaves also found ways to circumvent the credit-system utilized by J.D. Witherspoon and his sons by intentionally purchasing more goods than they were allowed or by forging credit orders (Campbell 1993:266-267). In 1852 a slave maroon camp was broken up in the Pee Dee swamplands near Society Hill by a posse of local planters including the Witherspoons and Williams families. A northern tutor named Ruth Hastings who lived with Sally Witherspoon Williams, the eldest daughter of J.D. Witherspoon, recorded the hunt in a letter to her parents living in New York. She reported that:

A camp had been discovered on the swamp very near here, they suppose it had been there two or three years they, the Negroes, had guns etc. and they had found pens and paper there. Someone had taught many of them to write and read - that one of Mr. W's Negroes presented a forged order at the store as they found several had done before on Saturday night and when they inquired about it, he went away

– they found he had left the plantation, and supposed he was in this camp which they mean to break up.” (R. Hastings to R. N. Hastings, Letter, 16 June 1852, Ruth Hastings Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan)

The slave belonging to Mr. W. was likely owned by either J.D. Witherspoon or his son John Witherspoon based the shorthand code Hastings employed in her letters. The account by Hastings is important because it details a case where literate slaves were able to successfully forge orders for credit at local stores allowing them to purchase anything they wanted as long as the forgery was good and the requested amount was reasonable enough not raise the suspicion of the merchant.

When reforms at the plantation level and the existing legal code failed to curb the wave of slave theft and illicit trade, local planters in Darlington took the law into their own hands as witnessed by Kelly, the poor white trading at Smoot’s store in Society Hill. The problem was so prevalent that in 1857 planters in Darlington formed a Vigilance Society in addition to the regular neighborhood patrol. The stated goal of the Vigilance Society was for the “detection and punishment of negro traders” and to push for increased legal punishments for those convicted. The local *Darlington Family Friend* newspaper published the formation notice of the Vigilance Society and made an editorial comment stating that “we are led to believe that, until the law provides a sufficient punishment, it will not be asked to interfere between the public and the negro trader in this district” (Charleston Mercury 1857:2).

The Vigilance Society made national news in 1858 for a raid on a small store near Darlington rumored to be a supplier of liquor to slaves. When three barrels of whiskey

were delivered to the store, the Society attempted to shut the store down and dispose of the liquor. They were rebuffed by friends of the retailer and a bloody conflict ensued the next day when a large group of armed Vigilance Society members gathered to storm the store. Shots were fired on both sides, a melee broke out and two individuals inside the store were killed by the vigilantes with many wounded on both sides. More than fifty members of the society, including several Witherspoon acquaintances, were tried for the murder of the accused slave traders and all were quickly acquitted by the jury (The Brooklyn Daily Eagle 1858:2). This deadly incident highlights the real concern of planters regarding trade with their slaves and also the profitability of such exchange for merchants, so much so, that both groups were willing to shed blood.

Resistance on Witherspoon Island

The hundreds of plantation slaves on Witherspoon Island left no documentary trail regarding their involvement in cases of theft or illicit trade. It seems highly probable that plantation bondsmen, like their Witherspoon household counterparts, were intricately involved in some aspects of the underground economy. Either by growing crops and disposing of legitimate property in unauthorized ways or by stealing plantation goods or livestock for trade, enslaved laborers at Witherspoon Island found ways to wrest economic control back into their hands.

Without historic documentation, archaeological analysis of houseyard landscapes on Witherspoon Island may provide some evidence of enslaved participation in the underground economy. One of the main challenges is that the archaeological record is

often silent regarding items that were stolen or purchased with pilfered goods. In most cases, it is impossible to discern enslaved belongings or supplies that were received from the planter as part of their allotment or purchased legitimately from those that were stolen or ill-gotten on the black market (McKee 1999:232). Good context is essential for making these types of interpretations. Examples might include: unusual caches of intact goods, animal remains where the carcass of a consumed pig or chicken appears to be intentional concealed, or cases where traditionally prohibited items like liquor or firearms were hidden or disposed of. Historical archaeologists examining any nineteenth-century slave habitations must consider the possibility that a portion of the household assemblage may have been obtained by theft or purchased on the underground economy that thrived wherever reform restrictions on market access were in place.

Liquor, one of the most common items purchased illicitly by slaves in the Darlington region may provide the best evidence for black market access at Witherspoon Island Plantation. In the late antebellum period, liquor was commonly prohibited on plantations as it was thought to spur unruly behavior, lead to sleepless nights, encouraged further theft, and generally challenge the plantation order (Breedon 1980:250-256). This was almost certainly true at Witherspoon Island based on the planter's negative regard for excess liquor in society at large (Witherspoon Letter Collection, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

For the archaeologist, liquor bottles themselves may occasionally be considered indicators of black market activity when found within certain antebellum enslaved contexts. A major challenge is that bottles originally created for alcohol likely made up a very small proportion of the liquor trade with slaves. As witnessed in court cases

documents, slaves were often buying small irregular volumes of booze that would have been put in bottles or vessels provided by the slaves themselves and certainly would have including non-bottle storage vessels like tinware coffeepots, ceramic jugs or mugs, waterproof bags, glass tumblers, and even teacups as noted in the case of South Carolina vs. Peggy Elrod (Richardson 1860:662-663).

The use and reuse of non-liquor bottles certainly made planter detection less likely and hiding liquor a much simpler task rather than attempting to conceal an obvious whiskey bottle. Also many slave traders, as seen in the case of the Darlington Vigilance Society were buying liquor in bulk barrels rather than selling spirits in bottles marked whiskey or otherwise. According to planters, the sales of bulk liquor gave traders the ability to make additional profit by selling ‘poisonous’ adulterated liquors or watered down spirits (Hilliard 2014:24).

Analysis of the antebellum bottle glass assemblage at Cabin Site 1 on Witherspoon Island was made difficult due the highly fragmented condition of the glass recovered from yard contexts around the dwelling. A study of bottle function (both form and color) suggest that nearly 29% (n=377) of the total bottle remains (n=1309) were originally associated with storage of alcohol. That being said, a very large proportion of all bottles manufactured in the early to mid-nineteenth centuries were manufactured with the intention to hold some form of alcohol (beer, wine, liquor, champagne) so it is hardly surprising that the nearly a third of the antebellum glass at Witherspoon Island was related to alcohol.

Bottles in this yard context do not necessarily represent a high-level of liquor consumption by Witherspoon slaves, but may instead show a pattern of moderate alcohol

consumption with significant bottle reuse. Many of the bottles in the assemblage show extensive wear and scratching on the interior walls which is indicative of extended reuse for various household purposes. Additionally, it is likely that non-alcohol bottles within this assemblage would have stored illicit spirits at some point and certain medicinal products, like bitters, may have been consumed, not for their curative properties, but for their high alcohol content instead.

The unplowed yard context surrounding the cabin site is pockmarked with hundreds of features that represent everything from posts and planting holes to rodent tunnels and small pits. Among the sheet middens, yard deposits and multitude of miscellaneous features, there is only a single context at this Cabin Site 1 that may be considered a very strong candidate for illicit activity. The evidence comes from a small pit feature (MT102.F54.A) within the yard area that contained only a single crushed bottle. The stratigraphic context of the pit feature strongly suggests it was dug in the late-antebellum period. Based on bottle form, manufacture techniques, and embossed “Patent” decoration, it was determined to be a quart-sized liquor bottle that was likely produced in the 1850s. Similar pit features in the yard area all contained a significant amount of material culture rather than a single item, suggesting that the concealment of the bottle may have been the intended purpose. The bottle showed no obvious evidence of reuse and had broken soon before it was buried, as the majority of the fragments were found within the feature. With regular inspections from overseers or drivers, it would have been essential to hide and dispose of true liquor bottles in covert locations like this shallow pit. The proprietary nature of the bottle may suggest it originated as part of a one-time trade of opportunity, perhaps associated with river traffic, rather than a purchase from illicit

grog-shops that typically sold bulk liquor. It should also be noted that the placement of the bottle within the landscape, its orientation, and the feature contents do not lead me to argue for any spiritual interpretation of this feature.

Excavations at Witherspoon Island revealed several additional features that may be evidence of illicit activity. These features include a small antebellum trash pit feature (MT108.F146.E) at Cabin Site 1 that contained two intact folding knives that may have been hidden intentionally and another possible concealed bottle feature (MT132.F354.A) from Cabin Site 2.

Ancillary evidence of the underground economy on Witherspoon Island may also include the various locks recovered from both cabin sites that were probably purchased by slaves themselves. The presence of so many locks and padlocks at both Cabin Site 1 (n=5) and Cabin Site 2 (n=2, including a retrofitted door lock) may suggest that Witherspoon bondsmen were concerned about the possibility of theft from fellow slaves. Alternatively, locks on doors or on boxes and chests would have also provided a small degree of protection from search and seizure of illicit or prohibited goods by overseers or drivers.

The limited archaeological examples from the two Witherspoon houseyard landscapes show the challenges that all archaeologists face when attempting to identify specific features or items as evidence of contraband that may have been stolen or purchased on the black market. Raising livestock, growing crops and potential producing low-fired earthenware pipes are the only markers of economic activities by Witherspoon Island slaves that survive here in the archaeological or historical record. However, a close examination of belongings owned by the slaves residing at CS1 and CS2 and their discard

behaviors reveals that they were active in the internal market and likely just as involved in the black market much like the Witherspoon slave who was caught attempting to pass forged credit orders.

As planters in Pee Dee and elsewhere in the Southeast “sought to establish controls over slaves — with regulations, laws, judicial decisions — the more it became apparent that the cultural and economic constraints working against such controls were simply too strong to overcome” (Schweninger 1992:119). With restrictive credit-based systems in place, Witherspoon slaves, like others in the Darlington region, were often forced to find creative ways to access the wider marketplace for commodities they needed and wanted. Instead of quelling illicit trade and making the planter the center of the economic world for slaves, the late antebellum market reform discourse pushed trade networks further out of sight to the backdoors of willing merchants and the dwellings of poor whites where new relationships were forged (Forret 2006).

Squire Dowd, a former slave, made the following observation regarding the relationships between slaves and poor whites that slaveholders feared most. “The white folks rode to church and the darkies walked, as many of the poor white folks did. We looked upon the poor white folks as our equals. They mixed with us and helped us to envy our masters. They looked upon our masters as we did” (Federal Writers’ Project 1941e).

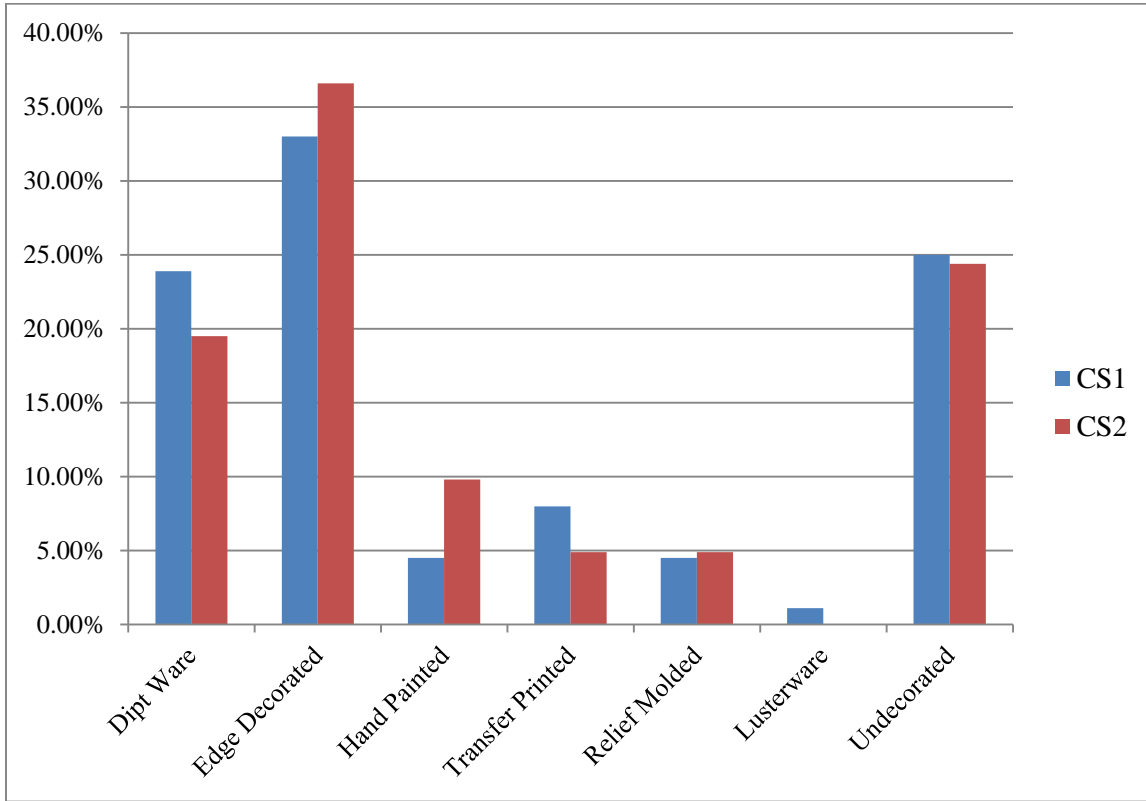


Figure 5.1 Percentages of Earthenware Vessels by Cabin Site and Decorative Style

CHAPTER 6

FOODWAYS AND DIETARY REFORMS ON WITHERSPOON ISLAND

Among progressive planters, slave diet was a highly scrutinized subject often regarded as another cornerstone of a modern productive plantations (McKee 1999:222-224). Regularly debated as part of the late antebellum labor reform movement, management literature recommended a well-regulated dietary regimen for plantation slaves in an attempt to ensure that bondsmen received a diet that was adequate enough to both sustain slaves in their daily labors and keep them in good health.

The wellbeing of slaves was important to slaveholders and went beyond paternalistic benevolence as their human property represented a significant capital investment and diet was known to be related to good health (Breden 1980:89-90). Planters understood that “improper attention to diet is one of the most prolific causes of disease among our negroes” (A Planter 1836:494-495). Planters and medical professionals in the late antebellum were convinced that a healthy diet was an essential factor that could help prevent the occurrence of many illnesses among plantation slaves including cholera, dysentery, diarrhea, indigestion, geophagia (pica), scurvy and a range of fever-related illnesses (Breden 1980; Drake 1854; Merrill 1853).

For planters, food not only was used to sustain slaves but also served as a tool of slaveholder domination on the plantation. McKee (1999) suggests that “masters made use of special rations, garden plots, and stock-raising privileges as ways of rewarding

conformity to behavioral standards and of increasing a slave's commitment to a master's conception of orderly plantation life" (1999:223). While his statement is validated in the existing body of nineteenth-century reform literature, both garden plots and stock-raising privileges were so commonplace they had largely become a de facto "right" of bondsmen by the late antebellum period in many areas, like the Pee Dee region, as witnessed in local slave narratives and Southern Claims Commission data from Marlboro District (See Chapter 5). While stock or garden privileges could certainly be rescinded by masters as punishment, I would not consider these activities as viable rewards. The special rations mentioned by McKee (1999) are undoubtedly an exception to the above statement in contexts where planters offered edible treats (like coffee, cheese, liquor, wheat flour, sugar) to their slaves in return for good conduct or hard labor. McKee's (1999) central argument that food, in a broad sense, was a functional tool of social control utilized by planters and an arena of constant negotiation between masters and slaves is unchallenged here.

With a motivation to best protect their investments, motivate their bondsmen and appear humane in the eyes of their critics, reformers worked to counter problems common with slave diet on their plantations. The most prevalent dietary challenges mentioned by reformers included feeding inappropriate foods to slaves, issuing insufficient rations, providing bondsmen with low-quality or spoiled foodstuffs, and the poor cooking of food by slaves themselves.

Certain foods such as pork and corn were thought to be well suited to health of slaves. One thesis on plantation management written by a South Carolina medical doctor described corn this way: "In the Maize, a native of our own country, the Almighty has

furnished us with an article, inferior to no other in point of healthy action on the human frame” (Pope 1837:3). The advice offered by many reformers characterized bondsmen as a biologically distinct race who had dietary needs that were specific to slaves of African descent (McKee 1999; Oakes 1982:153-155). This racist perspective was common within reform literature which often framed diet within a lens of “biologically based arguments” (McKee 1999:223). A good example of this biological and pseudo-medical rationale for specific slave diets comes from an antebellum physician in Georgia:

It is a very prevalent notion that fat bacon and pork are highly nutritious... These fatty articles of diet are peculiarly appropriate on account of their heat-producing properties; they generate sufficient heat to cause the wheels of life to move glibly and smoothly, without drawing on the stores of fat deposited in the cells of the body; and hence negroes who are freely supplied with them grow plump, sleek and shiny; this high condition, with the smooth greasy appearance of the skin, produced in the manner above described, has given rise to the common opinion that fat meat, and particularly fat bacon and pork, are the most nourishing of all foods. Corn, abounding as it does in oily matter, is also a heat-producing agent, acting precisely like fat meat; and in addition to this its other elements render it a valuable muscle producing food. How fortunate that pork and corn the most valuable of all articles of diet for negroes, may be so readily produced throughout the whole region where slaves are worked! Southern planters should not fail then to improve the advantages thus bestowed on them by a beneficent Providence, and no consideration should prevent them from furnishing an abundant home

raised supply of these great staples of negro food... But lest white people should take license from these views we must say that negroes and white people are very different in their habits and constitutions, and that while fat meat is the life of the negro, there can be no doubt that it is a prolific source of disease and death among the whites of the South and West” (Wilson 1859:197).

While diets high in corn and pork were thought to be healthy for bondsmen, modern research into enslaved diets has suggested that the espoused nineteenth-century ideals would have been quite unhealthy likely causing a range of health issues (such as pellagra, beriberi, and scurvy) due to essential nutrient deficiencies (Byrd and Clayton 2000:225-227; Kiple and King 1981:77). Byrd and Clayton suggest that while the caloric intake for an average slave diet might have been roughly sufficient to complete his or her required tasks, the diets provided by planters were missing many essential nutrients and vitamins found in vegetables and fruits (2000:226). While not couched in modern medical knowledge, some dietary reformers were concerned about the lack of fruit and vegetables in the enslaved diet. One such reform voice was a medical doctor who noted that in his home state of Mississippi as well as the larger south that “not nearly enough of vegetables are grown and fed to negroes” (Affleck 1851:431).

The tendency of reformers to rail against the substandard dietary norms suggests that common everyday practices regarding the food supply and slaves were diverse and often objectionable in the eyes of progressive planters (Breedon 1980; McKee 1999). Reformers questioned the logic of supplying slaves with inadequate foodstuffs in the name of thrift forcing slaves to go hungry or supplement their rations by hunting and

raising their own livestock and grain in their off hours. Advocates for reform argued that “there are many farmers who feed their negroes sparingly, believing that it is economy that they save by it, but such is not the fact. In the first place the negro will have it, and he is sure to steal it generally from his master, believing he has a right to do so; and pray, who is there to dispute his right?” (Thompkins 1853:52-54). They argued that stingy planters lost more livestock and grain to theft because slaves needed the calories and /or wanted variation in their monotonous diet. The same argument was made towards planters that regularly provided sub-par or spoiled rations which they felt would again result in sickness amongst their bondmen and / or increased theft of plantation property (Breedon 1980:90-113; Covey and Eisnach 2009:97).

Perhaps the single greatest topic within the dietary reform discourse was a concern over food preparation on the plantation. There were two broad models of food preparation on large plantations in nineteenth-century South Carolina: the allowance model and central kitchen model (Breedon 1980:89-90, McKee 1999:223).

With an allowance model, enslaved individuals were given a set amount of meat, grain, and occasional vegetables that were to be cooked at home or in the field and meant to last from a week to the entire month. The volume of food allotted to each household usually depended on the age and occupation of individual slaves with adult field hands usually getting more calories than the elderly or very young children. Former slave Henry James Trentham from Camden, South Carolina described the allowance system this way. “Most of de slaves cooked at dere own houses, dat dey called shacks. Dey was give a 'lowance of rations every week. De rations was tolerably good, jest bout like people eat now” (Federal Writers’ Project 1941f:364).

Letting slaves prepare their own meals was not the ideal model for most reformers. They felt that “it can not be expected that the slave who is all day at hard work can pay a proper attention to preparing his food after the day’s labor. He generally comes home tired, and before he has half cooked his meal, hunger induces him to devour it” (A Planter 1836:495). This fear of tired slaves eating unhealthy raw or half-cooked food was only part of the problem that many reformers had with the allowance model. The time spent cooking meals at night after a long day in the field was felt to interrupt the amount of sleep thought to be required for slaves. This argument shows the influence of the paternalist perspective which characterized slaves as incompetent children whose entire lives must be managed and well-structured.

Additionally, planters were concerned about providing their slaves with a surplus of raw or unprocessed foodstuffs like shelled corn or cured pork that some of their bondsmen might be tempted to squander in various ways and go hungry before the next allowance was provided suggesting:

Every planter knows that there are many negroes who rather than be at the trouble of cooking their own victuals, will trade away their allowance with their more industrious fellow-workers for one-half; and even where this is not the case, they are always found ready to barter away their whole weekly allowance to some neighboring dram shop for a gallon of whiskey or a pound or two of tobacco or bread (A Planter 1836:495).

When writing about food for his slaves in the agricultural journal *American Cotton Planter and Soils in the South*, Ralph Butterfield (1858:293), a medical doctor and planter, recommended that “It is better, as a general rule, to have it cooked for them, than to give them their allowances to be cooked by themselves, as is frequently done. I am aware that they prefer to cook for themselves, but there are always some negroes on every place who are too careless and indolent to cook their food in a proper manner”. Butterfield’s published advice refers to a central kitchen model promoted by many reformers as a preventative and progressive measure that could eliminate some of the real concerns with traditional allowance systems. On plantations with a central kitchen system, enslaved cooks were tasked with producing some or all of the meals for the plantation’s labor force. Planters felt this system was a more efficient form of provisioning which allowed their field hands to be more productive, helped to ensure proper cooking of foodstuffs and made for a fair distribution of meals among families and slaves of all ages (McKee 1999).

Hester Hunter, a former slave in the Pee Dee region described the central kitchen on her plantation in a WPA narrative saying:

I 'members when de plantation hand wha' work in de field been come to de house in de middle uv de day to ge' dey dinner, I been lub to stand 'round de big pot en watch em when dey ge' dey sumptin to eat. Yas'um, dey is cook aw de food for de field hand in de same big ole black pot out in de yard. Yas'um, dey is put aw de

victual in one pot. Dey'ud go to de smokehouse en cut off uh whole half uh side uv bacon en drap it right in dat pot (Federal Writers' Project 1941b:332).

To offset the loss of labor required to both cook and deliver the food to field hands, advocates suggested using elderly female slaves as the primary cooks and putting older children to work helping to prepare, serve and tote the meals to the fields. They suggested that costs incurred with a central kitchen producing properly cooked meals would quickly be overshadowed by a healthier more productive labor force. Planters also liked the idea of slaves receiving cooked foods rather than their unprocessed ingredients with their ongoing concerns regarding illicit trade with both merchants or neighboring poor whites (A Planter 1836). Other planters also suggested that money could be saved by using less meat and adding more vegetables to the common soups or stews typically provided by the central kitchen compared to the traditional amount of protein provided with allowance systems in South Carolina (Breedon 1980:90-113).

On plantations where the central kitchen model was established, it meant that enslaved households lost the ability to control the preparation of food, schedule meals and the right to serve meals as they saw fit. The majority of foods consumed by slaves, in all variations of the central kitchen system, were those approved by planters (McKee 1999). Regular surveillance of the kitchens was recommended, with overseers or drivers often ordered to make weekly inspections to verify that the meals being produced by the kitchen slaves were cooked thoroughly, properly proportioned and seasoned correctly (Breedon 1980:90-113).

Plantation management literature suggests that this was not a system that slaves preferred, even though it came highly recommended by reformers for both the health of slaves and plantation discipline (McKee 1999:223). A slaveholder in South Carolina wrote about the implementation of a central kitchen model saying: “when I first adopted this rule, my negroes objected to it very much. But in a year or so they saw the utility of the practice, and now I am convinced that they would not abandon it for a great deal, so much does it contribute to their comfort and health” (A Planter 1836:494-495).

On plantations where a central kitchen model was impractical, reformers suggested that the traditional allowance model be updated and closely supervised by all levels of plantation management from the planter down. Common recommendations involved changes to the distribution scheduling, amount of time provided for meals, and the specific amounts and types of the food issued as rations for bondsmen (Breedon 1980:90-113).

Rations, reformers argued, should be doled out only on a weekly basis rather than once every two weeks or once a month. The weekly ration plan attempted to limit the volume of raw foodstuffs with trade value given to slaves in an attempt to encourage bondsmen to actually use the smaller amounts of food for their immediate dietary needs (Gage 1857:25-31, cited in Breedon 1980).

In order for food to be prepared and consumed in a healthy manner, reformers argued that slaves needed several hours in the middle of the day to cook and eat their dinners and some additional time after returning from the field to organize their evening meal and breakfast for the next day (Breedon 1980:90-113). By allowing slaves an hour or two to prepare their mid-day dinner they felt that bondsmen would not overeat or rush

their meals, would have time for some rest, and thus be more productive during the remainder of the work day (Report on Management of Slaves - Duty of Overseers and Employers, August 10, 1852, Thomas Cassels Law Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina). In the same vein, reformers argued that if corn was included in an allowance, it should not have to be hand-ground by slaves who often spent hours of their free-time waiting in line to grind their grains. Ground cornmeal should thus be provided or slaves should have access to a more efficient grinding operation such as a water or animal-powered mill (King 1828).

The most common allowance recommended for an adult field hand per week was generally in the range of 3 to 5 pounds of bacon (cured pork), a peck of shelled corn or ground corn meal, seasonal vegetables like sweet potatoes and greens, and often some molasses (Breedon 1980; Covey and Eisnach 2009:20-26). To supply the vegetables for the allowance, reformers suggested that planters manage large vegetable plots of crops like pumpkins, squash, and sweet potatoes and utilize these harvests for regular rations. Some reformers also suggested that fresh meat, rather than cured meats, were a healthy addition to the enslaved diet (Breedon 1980:90-113).

The existing body of nineteenth-century reform literature is full of regional differences related to the specific types of protein and grain common in the different regions of the South. It should also be noted that many variations in the ration components or amounts were also based the specific whims of the individual planters.

Foodways in the Pee Dee Region

Slave narratives from the Pee Dee region suggest that both central kitchen and allowance models were commonplace on local plantations. Former slave, Gable Locklier, recalled living on a plantation with central kitchen where his mother was the assigned cook. “My mother done all de cookin for de slaves 'cause our folks all eat out de same pot. Cook rice en fat meat en dese collard greens en corn bread en cabbage. Make plenty of de cabbage en eat heap of dem.” (Federal Writers’ Project 1941b:113). Hector Smith lived on plantation with a weekly allowance model saying that “my Massa give everyone of he colored family a peck of meal en a quart of syrup en so much of meat every week en ‘low em all to have a garden of dey own. Oh, dey work dey garden by de moonshine en fore light good in de morning cause dey had to turn dey hand to dey Massa work when daylight come here” (Federal Writers’ Project 1941d:78). The accounts of Gable Locklier and Hector Smith, among other narratives from the Pee Dee region, speak of diverse food preparation systems that were based on numerous factors including plantation size, presence of the planter’s residence on the property, the will of the ownership regarding plantation design and economic constraints, and oftentimes the buy-in of the enslaved community.

The Southern Claims Commission data from neighboring Marlboro District does not offer any descriptions of central kitchens, but does provide clues to typical rations received by area slaves and the foods raised or purchased by them in the late antebellum period. Since these depositions occurred roughly a decade after the close of the Civil

War, it is likely that many accounts may be slightly more accurate than the slave narratives recorded nearly seventy years after emancipation in the 1930s. Biases are certainly possible within the Southern Claims data and may include issues relating to the inflation of personal property holdings and / or devaluing the amount of rations to increase the valuation of potential claims (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

James McQueen, an enslaved carpenter spoke of the rations he received from his master in his 1870s testimony saying that: “my master gave us rations every 2 weeks – bacon, corn meal, and syrup – enough only to last my wife and me for that time – my children were all fed by a nurse who fed all the plantation children” (Claim of James McQueen, Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives). His account matches many of the Marlboro District claims that also describe rations as cured pork, corn or corn meal, and often included sorghum syrup or another sweet substance like molasses. That McQueen’s children were fed separately by the planter is not surprising as it was a common reform recommendation put in place to ensure the health and growth of children through special diets that were usually high in dairy with items like clabber or sour milk provided. This practice was common even on plantations that lacked central kitchens by employing slaves, often elderly females, as nurses to feed and care for the youngest children (A Planter 1836:494-495).

Samuel Fuller, a field hand living in nearby Marlboro District recounted a story from the Civil War where he harbored and fed a typical meal to a Yankee prisoner that had escaped from the nearby Florence Stockade:

He stayed in the garden back of a house near mine while I went to see the colored man and woman who lived there. I lived in another house close by, but this woman always did my cooking for me, I had no wife then. I told her and her husband that I had found a Yankee on the road and that I wanted to have some of my food cooked there for him, which they both said they were glad to do. I then went to my house and brought a lot of bacon & greens and some potatoes and meal. All of this I had cooked for him and he ate very heartily... I knew that if I had been seen with him, or suspected of having given him food, I would have been killed at once (Claim of Samuel Fuller, Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

The details of Samuel Fuller's claim show how single adult men on his Marlboro area plantation prepared their meals. Fuller's experience is quite similar to the recommendations of planter Robert Collins who suggested that "provisions are given out on some designated night of each week; and for families it is put together; but to single hands it is given to each separately, and they then unite in squads or messes and have their meat cooked for them by a woman who is detailed for that purpose, or keep it to themselves as they please" (Collins 1854:205-206, cited in Breeden 1980).

In his claim, Daniel David recalled that the rations provided to his family were inadequate saying:

"I never hired my time but I often worked at night "over time" as a carpenter – in this way I earned money and was able to buy clothes and provisions for my

family. The property named in my petition was none of it issued to my wife by her master – She received rations of bacon, meal & syrup for herself and children but she did not get enough. I made a smoke house for her and put in it such provisions as I could for the use of the family.” (Claim of Daniel David, Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

David’s account was not the only claim to a mention food shortages in planter provided provisions forcing bondsmen to either raise or purchase the food necessary to support families in meager times. Broad studies of plantation foodways also have suggested that it was commonplace for planters to provide insufficient rations, in the name of thrift, hoping or knowing that their slaves would be forced to supplement their diet (Yentsch 2007:66). These miserly planters are some of the individuals specifically called out by progressive planters as part of the plantation reform discourse.

An examination of the food-related property claimed by the former Marlboro District slaves also provides some clues to edible items being raised by or purchased by slaves (Figure 6.1). Every single claimant from this district (n=24) listed bacon and 88% of claimants listed live chickens as personal property that had been requisitioned by roving Union forces. Most of the claimants made their own bacon from pigs that they raised around their cabins. The pigs were butchered in the winter and the meat was salted and cured. The low number of live pigs claimed by the Marlboro slaves is due to the timing of the Union raids which occurred in March 1865, a month or two after most butchering was completed (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives). Claimants, like Samuel Fuller, mentioned living off the salted scraps from the butchering process

eating byproducts during the winter as a means of rationing the cured bacon. Fuller stated that he “had not used, or given, or sold any... bacon. I was then using the heads, backbones & feet of my 2 hogs” which he had killed and processed earlier that winter (Claim of Samuel Fuller, Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives). This data set suggests most planters in this region allowed slaves to raise chicken and hogs around their dwellings for personal use and / or trade.

Corn products like dried corn, cornmeal, or hominy are also listed and occurred in nearly half the claims. The corn claimed by the former Marlboro slaves was supposed to be property they had raised or purchased themselves and was not to have come from the rationing process. The fact that many claims had no corn products listed does not suggest this grain was not being consumed in every household. Rather, it suggests that corn was commonly provided as part of the slave’s regular allowance and thus ineligible to be claimed. It should also be noted that some of the corn was likely being used to feed livestock owned by the slaves (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

The only items listed by claimants that were consistently purchased, rather than produced at the slave quarter, were refined wheat flour and possibly some of the syrup. In addition to flour and syrup, some of the skilled bondsmen also noted that they had purchased corn and bacon from their fellow slaves with cash earned in their trade, rather than raising it themselves (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

One staple notably absent from the Marlboro claims is rice. Antebellum agricultural census data for Darlington District suggests that commercial rice production was relatively uncommon with only 5.4% of the farm or plantation owners (n=1000) growing rice in 1850 and dropping to 4.8% of owners (n=1039) in 1860 (U.S. Federal

Census 1850 and 1860). These percentages do not reflect the rice likely being produced by enslaved field hands in their free time. Oral histories gathered by Amelia “Mimi” Vernon suggests that rice was an important staple in Mars Bluff a community just south of Witherspoon Island on the Pee Dee River. Vernon’s research found that rice had been grown during the antebellum period by slaves and then by tenant farmers all the way until the 1930s. The crops were grown in small patches for both personal consumption and gifting (Vernon 1993:126-128).

The Marlboro claims also do not capture data on foods that were hunted and gathered. Local slave narratives luckily provide a good window into the common methods through which bondsmen actively supplemented their provided rations that were either nutritionally inadequate or unappealingly monotonous. In particular, the narratives refer to the frequent hunting and consumption of small mammals, specifically opossum, raccoons, rabbits and squirrels. Although not as consistent within the narratives as small game hunting, freshwater fishing was also common on plantations in the areas where sources were accessible, such as ponds on the plantation grounds or nearby rivers. Jessie Sparrow a former slave from the Pee Dee region recalled that:

Us eat aw kinder wild animal den sech uz coon, possum, rabbit, squirrel en aw dat. Hab plenty uv fish in dem days too. Hab pond right next de white folks house en is ketch aw de fish dere dat we is wan'. Some uv de time dey'ud fry em en den some uv de time dey'ud make uh stew. Dey'ud put uh little salt en onion en grease in de stew en anyt'ing dey been ge' hold uv (Federal Writers’ Project 1941d:128).

Witherspoon Island Provisioning

Primary documents, oral histories and narratives like that of Jessie Sparrow reveal some essential elements of the diverse food traditions found amongst the enslaved communities of the Pee Dee that were the product of many sources including: rations provided by planters; goods purchased or bartered; stolen foods; slave-raised crops, poultry, or livestock; gathered foods; and fish or game taken by slaves. At Witherspoon Island Plantation, archaeological data combined with the ethno-historical and primary records of the plantation and larger Pee Dee region can shed light on the antebellum diet of Witherspoon Island slaves and offer important clues to the implementation of the dietary aspects of the plantation reform discourse which attempted to alter enslaved foodways.

A vivid summary of the sanctioned enslaved diet on Witherspoon Island comes from a memoir written by southern historian John Witherspoon Dubose, a grandson of J.D. Witherspoon. In the memoir, Dubose describes a weekly rationing process for slaves on the plantation as this:

The negroes at the Lowther's-lake plantation were a little more liberally fed and a little more freely clothed than other plantation negroes in the Pee Dee, as I remember... The bacon in plentiful supply, all home cured, was weighed to the people once a week. Not so with cornmeal. A grist mill was run on the place one day in the week; the night before mill day, every grown person the property went

to the open corn crib with his or her sack, shelled corn, ad libitum, and sent the full sack to the miller next day. No restrictions on meal was placed to the consumers (Dubose 1910:12-13).

Dubose goes on to suggest that pumpkins, peas, and yams were also essential staples of the weekly ration on Witherspoon Island. The corn being ground at the mill according to Dubose was for both corn meal and hominy. He mentions that additional hominy was ground and provided to a cook who cared for and fed the young slave children whose parents were toiling in the field (A Memoir of Four Families, Volume 1, 1898:125-126, *John Witherspoon DuBose Papers*, Alabama Department of Archives and History).

Dubose's work should be examined with a critical eye as he was related to his subjects and was known to be a prominent Ku Klux Klan member, whose history publications often perpetuate the idyllic image of the "Lost Cause" which portrays an antebellum south where slaves and masters supposedly existed in harmony (Feldman 2004:37). That being said, many of the individual details offered by Dubose likely were not altered by his racist political views. For example, it seems unlikely that Dubose would have changed his recollection of what and how Witherspoon slaves were fed. However, certain aspects of the recollections, like the story of unlimited corn available to slaves, may have been exaggerated to strengthen his narrative of harmonious antebellum plantation life.

The central elements of Dubose's commentary on the slave diet at Witherspoon Island indicate that the plantation operated on an allowance system rather than a central

kitchen model. (Dubose 1910). The lack of a central kitchen is a major deviation from the majority of recommended dietary reforms published in the plantation management literature. It is not clear why J.D. Witherspoon did not implement this reform tenet that was so highly encouraged. Cost could have been a concern based on the large enslaved population on Witherspoon Island. With a populace that would have exceeded 300 individual slaves at certain times, the plantation would have likely had to maintain several kitchens and employ enough cooks and helpers to ensure that everyone was fed within a reasonable amount of time. Archaeological remains strongly confirm Dubose's assertion that the plantation followed an allowance system as large amounts of plant and animal remains were recovered from identified cabin sites, along with accompanying cooking implements, suggesting that significant meal preparation was indeed occurring within and around the dwellings.

Dubose also indicates that the chief rations on the plantation consisted of pork and corn allotments which is not surprising given the importance these two staples are given within both the Pee Dee region and reform literature (1910). The 1860 probate inventory for the estate of J.D. Witherspoon helps to confirm some specifics of the Dubose memoir. Under plantation property there were nearly 12,000 pounds of bacon, 2,500 bushels of corn, and 450 bushels of peas listed (Darlington District Sales and Appraisal Book 1860, Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina). These items appear to be the contents of a plantation storehouse and smokehouse likely set aside for exclusively for rationing or for both sale on the open market and plantation rationing.

The agricultural schedules from the 1850 and 1860 Federal censuses demonstrate that the plantation focused on more than cash crops raising large provision crops in

addition to the ubiquitous cotton crop. Provision crops were a common topic of conversation in the Witherspoon family correspondence. Elizabeth and J.D. Witherspoon frequently commented that in years of flood or drought that the family only hoped to make enough provisions so that they did not have to go into debt to purchase corn or pork to feed their numerous bondsmen (Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

Agricultural census data reveals that the principal food crops raised on the island included Indian corn, rye, oats, sweet potatoes, peas and beans (U.S. Federal Census 1850, 1860) (Figure 6.2). In addition to these crops, domestic livestock were also kept on the Witherspoon Island Plantation. Livestock included hundreds of swine, sheep, cattle, milk cows and beasts of burden (Figure 6.3). A family letter confirms some of these details during a visit by plantation owner Elizabeth Boykin Witherspoon and her son John Witherspoon after the death of her husband in 1860. “I went down with John last week to see the Crop... I went where I never had been before, through the Ervin field up to the Barn, the corn is very fine indeed, & the Cotton better than I ever saw it, everything looks well & prosperous, fat cattle & sheep & hogs” (E. B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 13 Sept. 1861, Witherspoon Biographic File, Darlington County Historical Commission (Darlington, South Carolina)).

The details from Dubose also suggest that J.D. Witherspoon had access to a grist mill on or near the plantation and that slaves were not required to grind their own corn meal, only shell it and take it to the mill once a week (1910). Archaeological evidence may partially support this element of Dubose’s memories. While no evidence for a gristmill structure was uncovered during the survey of the plantation, a disc from a corn

sheller was recovered from Cabin Site 2. The disc was from an early nineteenth-century portable corn sheller with a vertical wheel, likely a Harrison's Improved Corn Sheller. Advertisements for this implement claim that it could shell 10 to 12 bushels of dried corn per hour with only a single man turning the hand crank (Wiggins 1840:443). The presence of the sheller seems to confirm Dubose's account that slaves would shell corn at home or near the crib and likely transport the dried kernels to the mill for a weekly grinding. The corn shelling and grinding process at Witherspoon Island appears to conform to the best practices preached for plantations without a central kitchen system regarding the proper processing of corn as access to the grist mill meant significantly less time was required on the part of slaves to processing grain for their daily meals.

One common ration item not mentioned by John Witherspoon Dubose is molasses. This was an item highly regarded by reformers as a healthy addition to the slave diet.

“No articles of luxury are more esteemed by negroes than sugar or molasses, and none are more useful. A daily allowance should be given to all, even though the quantity may be very small. Digestion is much improved by a regular allowance of these articles, and they exert a protective influence against scurvy” (Merrill 1853:270-71).

A Civil War-era letter from John Witherspoon to his brother Boykin Witherspoon helps elucidate the use of molasses on Witherspoon Island and on his own plantation in Marlboro District:

I hear sugar can be bought for 10 cts [per lb]. This is better than molasses at 1.10 [per gallon], tho I do not suppose the negroes will like it as well. I am satisfied from my own experience - negroes are healthier where molasses forms a part of their regular diets. Dr. Smith has been of that opinion for a long time (J. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 26 Mar. 1862, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

With the war raging, the cost of molasses had risen and John Witherspoon was looking to replace that staple in his slave's allowance with sugar that was cheaper at this point. He mentions that he and Dr. Smith, a physician and Witherspoon family friend, were proponents of molasses being rationed to bondsmen as a healthful dietary addition. Existing plantation financial records from after J.D. Witherspoon's death show two mass purchases of molasses from his factor in Charleston between winter 1860 and spring 1861 totaling 320 dollars (Witherspoon Estate Account Summary 1861, Equity File 484, Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina). Based on the wartime price per gallon quoted by John Witherspoon, these two purchases in total would have been for nearly 300 gallons of molasses. This high volume most likely was purchased for the Witherspoon Island plantation as part of their weekly rations and delivered by steamboat to the plantation's landing. No definitive archaeological evidence for molasses consumption was found at the plantation, although stoneware jugs recovered from antebellum contexts at both cabin sites may have been used to store the week's ration of molasses for the household.

Family letters also offer some clues to the opinion of J.D. and Elizabeth Witherspoon regarding diet for their slaves when their daughter Rebecca Witherspoon Wallace and her infant visit Society Hill in 1856. Along with her baby, Rebecca (Becca) brought her nurse Murriah, who was a former household slave of J.D. Witherspoon's and later bequeathed to their daughter upon her marriage to a Dr. Wallace of Columbia.

“I think she [Rebecca] enjoyed the visit & her baby improved daily, which brightened up the mother. Murriah told Becca she thought the “food here was so nice, it tempted the baby to eat. Our bacon was so nice, it was nicer than they got in Columbia. The hominy was so nice & the biscuit were so nice the baby could eat them.” She might have added the milk was so nice & so abundant & for her own part she enjoyed the collards greatly. It made her mouth water to look at them. She could not think why the chickens here were so much nicer than they were in Columbia. Becca solved that mystery by saying they were fat & as to the milk the negroes never taste it. The Dr. [Dr. Wallace] will not keep a cow, it is too expensive & they send more than a mile to get a pint. I had bacon & collards every day after I heard what a treat they were to poor Murriah. She is a faithful servant to Becca” (E. B. Witherspoon to E. E. Witherspoon, Letter, 10 Nov. 1856, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

Elizabeth's letter describing the visit suggests that she is concerned with the quality of the diet provided to the Wallace family slaves such that collards and good bacon were a treat. There seems to be an underlying tone of contempt regarding the somewhat poor diet

received by the family slaves given to her daughter Rebecca. The letter also suggests what food items might be commonplace for the Witherspoon's household servants including hominy, milk, greens, and "nice" bacon.

The planter provided diet for Witherspoon field hands as described by John Witherspoon Dubose (1910) and as revealed through primary plantation documentation is quite similar to the diets on other Pee Dee area plantations like those in Marlboro District. Planters in the region seem to have relied heavily on the basic pork, cornmeal, and molasses diet with some supplemental vegetables like pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and peas when available. Instead of the provided health benefits suggested by reformers, this recommended diet is rife with nutritional deficiencies especially during hard years with poor harvests or during the winter months when fresh fruits and vegetables were simply unattainable (Kiple and King 1977).

The reliance on corn and low quality fatty pork likely led to numerous antebellum cases of pellagra, a deadly disease caused by long term deficiencies of niacin (Vitamin B3) in the diet. While corn is high in niacin, the chemically bound form of niacin found in corn is not able to be efficiently utilized by the human body when processed by grinding alone. This deficiency was compounded by the preponderance of fatty salt pork in the slave diets which lacked sufficient quantities of the amino acid tryptophan that can be converted by the body into niacin (Kiple and King 1977; Rajakumar 2000: 272-276). Although not diagnosed in the United States until the twentieth century, pellagra is thought to have been regularly treated by plantation physicians under the different names like black tongue or typhoid pneumonia, all similar diseases that primarily affected the enslaved population. The confusion surrounding this disease in the antebellum record is

likely due to the seasonal nature of the pellagra caused by fluctuations in diet and a broad range of early symptoms that can be expressed different between individual patients (Kiple and King 1977). Pellagra and other diseases linked to nutritional deficiencies were likely quite common on plantations like Witherspoon Island that seems to have relied on the basic reform recommended diet (Kiple and King 1977; Rajakumar 2000: 272-276).

Slave Diet on Witherspoon Island

The family letters, memoirs, and plantation documents utilized above, offer a rather one-sided view of slave rationing on Witherspoon Island, primarily from the perspective of the planter. To examine the actual diet consumed by enslaved field hands on Witherspoon Island, documentary evidence from the planter and the larger Pee Dee region needs to be integrated with a range of archaeological data including: the remains of plants and animals that were eaten; cooking, serving, and food storage implements used by enslaved households; and various artifacts relating to food-procurement.

Animal remains from Cabin Site 1 (CS1) and Cabin Site 2 (CS2) were subject to a thorough zooarchaeological analysis (Wallman and Fogle 2015). The findings of this study reveal a unique dietary pattern that is distinctive to Witherspoon Island due to both to the foods provided by the planter, the resourcefulness of the enslaved labors and the diverse natural resources of the local environment.

All remains recovered at both cabin sites were analyzed with the exception of the smallest faunal remains (less than 1/8”) found in the dry fraction samples. A greater number of remains were recovered from CS1 (n=14829) from confirmed antebellum and

postbellum contexts, than from the CS2 (n=2205, from both contexts). As noted in Chapters 3 and 5, the lower sample sizes for Cabin Site 2 due to the fact that the non-sample units (and the yard features beneath them) were not excavated due to time and budgetary constraints. Additionally, excavations at CS2 did not reveal any large primary trash disposal features comparable to the large midden feature (F.55) uncovered south of CS1. Without any dedicated midden features, faunal counts from CS2 were primarily from highly fragmented general yard refuse, not the dense trash deposits which tend to offer better preservation. With this in mind, the remains from CS1 offer a more robust sample of the foods consumed by a slave household on Witherspoon Island and are used as the primary source for this dietary analysis.

At both cabins, the faunal assemblage is primarily mammal (68% at CS1 and 94% at CS2) with both households supplementing their diet with a range of fish and bird species (Table 6.1). The assemblage from all contexts, at both cabins, displays a high degree of fragmentation with an average weight of 0.33g per specimen. When combined with a relatively high rate of burning (nearly 50%) it resulted in a very low rate of identification, with only approximately 9% of the specimens identifiable to at least the level of family. Fragmentation of the sample varied between yard and feature contexts, with the feature deposits containing slightly larger fragments of bone than the yard deposit, indicating that trampling by humans and animals may have impacted exposed specimens in yard contexts. Trampling may be a factor in yard contexts, but the bones recovered from protected features were still heavily fragmented, averaging 0.50g (CS1), only slightly larger than average specimens in the yard 0.31g (CS1). This suggests the

fragmentation cannot be attributed simply to trampling, rather it is likely related to butchering and cultural practices discussed later in this chapter.

The species represented in antebellum CS1 contexts (Table 6.2 & 6.3) illustrate that a wide range of domestic and wild resources were being exploited by the members of this household. Pork was the most common species (domestic or wild) being consumed at CS1 and the raw numbers downplay its importance, as many pork bones were too fragmented to be positively identified by species and were lumped into the medium mammal category which is probably 90% pig or greater (Diane Wallman, personal communication 2015). It is likely that the pig remains represent two activities: cured pork being provided as rations for the slaves and pigs raised, butchered, and processed by slaves in their own time.

Cured pork, commonly referred to as bacon, was rationed to the field hands according to John Witherspoon Dubose's account (1910). Small chunks of bacon were likely cut off large sides of cured pork stored in the plantation smoke house, weighed and then distributed to families and unmarried individuals in portions determined by age, gender and occupation. The pork being provided to slaves by Witherspoon was all likely raised on the island as documented in census records that show large populations of pigs on the plantation in the 1850s and 1860s. It is also expected that some of the pork remains were from pigs being raised by Witherspoon slaves as this was a very common right granted to bondsmen in the Pee Dee region.

The high fragmentation of the faunal assemblage made a skeletal representation analysis challenging, but the results suggests that most parts of the pigs are accounted for in the faunal assemblages from CS1 and CS2. Since slave and planter-owned pigs were

both raised and butchered on the island it is nearly impossible to distinguish between them. The presence of the cranial elements and lower forelimb bones seems to confirm that butchering was done locally either at the quarter with slave-owned pigs or nearby on the plantation with the Witherspoon pig herd. It is likely that slaves would have been given the fresh byproducts from the plantation butchering process including the heads, backbone, lower limbs, and offal of the pigs during the sporadic hog killings that occurred in the winter months. Slaves also took advantage of these same byproducts as documented by several of the Marlboro District claimants who spoke of butchering their own pigs, curing the meat in a smokehouse, and consuming the head and other scraps (fresh or salted) while the remainder of the pork was curing (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

A good description of a butchering day and the byproducts being consumed by slaves comes from the plantation of J.D. Witherspoon's son-in law John N. Williams in 1852. Ruth Hastings, the northern tutor for the William's children wrote to her parents describing the butchering saying "the Negroes are making sausages out in the smokehouse chopping the meat, they killed 15 or 20 hogs before now, and now 20 more. They eat the brains, and I don't know what all that don't seem fit to eat to me and they chop out the whole backbone and eat it fresh instead of salting it as we did. (R. Hastings to R. N. Hastings, Letter, 29 November 1852, Ruth Hastings Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan). Hasting's account almost perfectly matches the description of butchering found in the Marlboro District claims and provides a good parallel to butchering and pork processing that occurred on Witherspoon Island.

Cattle and sheep/goat remains make up a very small percentage of the faunal remains recovered from CS1 and CS2. For cattle, and large mammal remains (presumably all from cows), the skeletal representation is quite skewed at both CS1 and CS2, with a severe underrepresentation of the post-cranial skeleton (especially the extremities and axial skeleton). The fact that only random portions of cattle were being consumed suggests they were not being raised by slaves or regularly consumed by bondsmen. Sheep / Goat remains follow the cattle pattern and do not seem to be a regular part of the enslaved diet (Wallman and Fogle 2015). Amongst the Marlboro District claimants, only one former slave appears to have been raising cattle, and none mention sheep or goats (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives). The recovery of these two species may be evidence of three scenarios: that cattle and /or sheep/goat were part of special rations doled at butchering time (or during special holidays); the remains may be evidence of irregular theft from the sizable cattle and sheep herds that roamed the Witherspoon plantation; or a combination of the former. Historic evidence suggests these conclusions follows a broad pattern in the antebellum south with slaves regularly consuming high volumes of pork with relatively little beef or mutton in their diet (Covey and Eisnach 2009:101-105). Studies have also suggested that beef was not rationed both because it tends not to preserve well when it is smoked or salted and fresh beef was thought to be a source of slave illness (Kiple and King 1981:82).

The recovered chicken remains are almost certainly from the fowl being raised by plantation slaves themselves as most poultry was not utilized as a commercial crop until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Fender 2003:244). Most households likely had chickens that were allowed to roam around the yard (which may have been

enclosed with some sort of fencing) and then ushered into a coop for the evening. For his Southern Claims Commission testimony, a former field hand from Marlboro District stated that his chickens had all been taken by the Yankees saying “I had a coop at my yard and every night I counted my chickens, I had 40 of them.” (Claim of Samuel Fuller, Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives). Twenty of the 24 claimants from Marlboro District kept chickens, with an average number of 23 chickens per household (with all but 3 claimants owning a dozen or more fowl) (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives). On Witherspoon Island, and elsewhere, chickens likely had greater value as egg-layers rather than an everyday protein based on the low percentage of chicken bones in the zooarchaeological assemblage (Covey and Eismann 2009:102). The presence of high levels of egg-shell in features and yard-deposits certainly speaks to this fact. Outside of the slave diet, eggs were also important trade good for bondsmen. Historic sources and narratives suggest slaves cornered the egg market regularly providing eggs to their owners, neighbors and at regional market days (Covey and Eismann 2009:141).

The enslaved community on Witherspoon Island also took advantage of the rich local environments found within and around the plantation. These diverse habitats included the Pee Dee River and its associated flood plains, Lowther’s Lake, varied forested zones, the plantation’s agricultural fields and peripheral zones that surrounded the developed plantation property, all of which were home to a wide variety of wild fauna that were regularly exploited by bondsmen.

Some common mammal game species available in the local Witherspoon Island area include deer, raccoon, muskrats, squirrels, rabbits, river otter, beaver, opossum, and

foxes (Golley 1966). The forests, flood plain drainages, and fields were also home to hundreds of species of wild birds, with many game varieties including multiple duck, pheasant, and quail species. The river, lake, and nearby tributaries also support many species of fish, reptile, amphibians and invertebrates. The Pee Dee River alone is home to 112 freshwater fish species according to ecologists (Rhode et al. 2010:14-16). Common taxa of freshwater game fish in the lake and river include: bass, catfish, trout, bowfin, bullhead, redbreast sunfish, longnose gar, perch, crappie, and mudfish (Laurie and Chamberlain 2003:114; Rhode et al. 2010:31). Migratory fish, including shad, herring, and sturgeon also come in from their coastal habitats to spawn and grow in the Pee Dee and provided rich periods of seasonal fishing (Laurie and Chamberlain 2003:114). In addition to numerous fish species, the riverine and lake habitats also support crawfish, alligators and nearly twenty species of turtle, including snapping turtles and river cooters that are sought out for consumption (Wallman and Fogle 2015).

Oral histories collected both from descendants of Witherspoon slaves and from established local residents who have hunted and fished in the area since the first half of the twentieth century help to reveal longstanding traditional practices regarding the consumption and procurement of wild species around the Island. Wild species mentioned by Witherspoon slave descendants as having been hunted in the past included geese, ducks, partridges, doves, quail, pheasants, turkeys, river cooters, frogs, wild hogs, opossum, raccoon and deer (Karen Burney, personal communication 2011; William Bacote, personal communication 2013). Oral histories also reveal that some of the most common freshwater fish that were sought in the lake or river included bass, redbreast sunfish, catfish, crappie and perch. In addition to the freshwater fish, the huge migrations of

herring and shad were targeted with large hand-made bow-nets and collected by the thousands by local fishermen throughout the last century (Charles Howard, personal communication 2011; Anonymous Fishermen, personal communication 2011). Historic newspaper accounts of picnics and fishing on Lowther's Lake, typically associated with the shad and herring season, confirm that the harvest of migratory fish was a tradition that extended well in the nineteenth century (The State Paper 1896:6).

The antebellum faunal assemblages from CS1 and CS2 reveal that wild mammals, birds, reptiles, and fish were an important supplemental food source for the enslaved inhabitants on Witherspoon Island. At Cabin Site 1 common wild game species (including fish) represent 16% of the total assemblage based on the number of identified specimens (NISP). It should be noted that the entire assemblage is slightly skewed based on the high rate of fragmentation which resulted in a low rate of identification which clearly impacted the number and types of both wild and domesticated species in this analysis (Wallman and Fogle 2015).

Wild mammals that appear to have been consumed at both cabins include deer, fox, opossum, squirrel (three species), rabbit and raccoon. Five species of identified turtles and several unidentified snakes were also present in the assemblage.

Undomesticated bird species also provided supplemental protein to the diet of the Witherspoon slaves who targeted pigeon/dove, turkey, bobwhite quail, white ibis, and kingfisher (Wallman and Fogle 2015).

For both enslaved households, fish were also an important resource, with the sunfish family being the most abundant fish consumed (this family also is the most abundant taxon in the Pee Dee today). Other species present yearlong in the river and

lake such as catfish, bowfin, and gar were also consumed. Seasonal species were also exploited included herring and shad that were likely acquired using nets during their migration upriver (Wallman and Fogle 2015).

Artifacts recovered from antebellum contexts at both cabins speak to the active role slaves had in the acquisition of fish and game including lead shot (both bird shot and larger calibers), percussion caps, gun flint chips, lead sinkers, and the occasional fish hook. These artifacts also suggest that field hands had access to a range of firearms well before emancipation and used them for hunting wild bird and game species identified in this analysis. The presence of the sinkers and hooks suggests line fishing was common in addition to the cast nets used to capture certain species.

Faunal remains only make up one aspect of the enslaved diet that we can establish from the archaeological record. Floral samples from Witherspoon also provide a glimpse of the plant foods being provided, raised and gathered by the enslaved families living in Cabin Site 1 and 2. Ethnobotanical analysis of existing flotation samples has been restricted due to funding, but a series of antebellum samples (n=12) from both yard and feature contexts have been professionally analyzed (Table 6.4). While these findings are too limited to be a true representative sample, they do illustrate the presence and utilization of several important grains, fruits and legumes during the antebellum occupation at Cabin Site 1.

The following discussion of floral remains also references charred macrobotanical remains captured in dry screen samples that are not a part of the ethnobotanical analysis (referenced in Table 6.4) and included peach pit fragments (n=5), grape seeds (n=2), unidentified legumes (n=2), and several additional corn cupule fragments (n=3).

The visibility of corn in the archaeological record is not surprising based on the importance of this staple in the primary records as a major plantation provision crop for slave rationing, as animal feed and as a crop likely being grown by slaves for sale and personal consumption. Other possible provisions visible in the floral assemblage are beans and a possible pea. Both are crops known to have been provided to slaves and have the potential to have been raised by bondsmen themselves.

The other recovered cereals include charred rice and oats. Management literature, narratives and oral histories very rarely mention oats as a provision crop. Instead, oats were likely planted for animal feed by the plantation management, but may also have been provided to enslaved labors, or appropriated by individual slaves, to either feed themselves or their livestock.

The presence of charred rice grains was found in several antebellum contexts suggesting it was a common dietary supplement. The 1850 and 1860 agricultural census for J.D. Witherspoon (see Figure 6.3) does not list rice, suggesting it was not grown commercially by the planter (unlike oats). The recovery of the rice combined with documentation showing slaves were selling rice straw to J.D. Witherspoon (See Chapter 5) strongly argues that plantation bondsmen were raising rice for their own benefit as witnessed in oral histories from the Pee Dee region (Vernon 1993).

Fruit seeds show the presence of both wild and cultivated fruit species within the enslaved diet including cherry, grapes, peaches and brambles (blackberry or raspberry). Many of these fruits would have been grown either directly in the yard or along the border between households (Westmacott 1992) providing shade and sustenance around the quarters. A fruit not found in the floral analysis was persimmon. This is likely a factor

of the small sample analyzed as persimmon trees are still quite common in the settlement site today and also may have been an importance source of food as well as a base for beer made by local slaves as noted by several local accounts (R. Hastings to R. N. Hastings, Letter, 9 October 1852, Ruth Hastings Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan).

Peanuts were also present in the samples. The peanuts are not unexpected in the slave diet as they were known to be a favorite crop of bondsmen (Pope 1837, Yentsch 2007). This appears to be true of the Pee Dee region as well from a brief mention by Ruth Hastings, the northern tutor living with J.D. Witherspoon's daughter S.C. Witherspoon Williams. She recorded a story where Amy, a household slave owned by the Williams family, brought her a present consisting "of a great handful of peanuts (pindar they call them here) which she roasted for me, the Negroes raise them and sell them or give them to their masters." (R. Hastings to R. N. Hastings, Letter, 6 November 1852, Ruth Hastings Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan). The single peanut fragment found on Witherspoon Island was almost certainly grown by a field hand or his family for personal consumption or localized trade.

The floral remains certainly offer evidence of small yard gardening and the almost certain presence of slave-managed plots removed from the yards in the case of the rice which would have been grown in wetlands areas nearer to the river or the lake and the corn which was likely grown by slaves in addition to the planter's provision crop. Archaeological evidence of houseyard gardens was not clearly identified in the yard space excavated at CS1 or CS2 but several areas of slightly disturbed yard stratigraphy

may be evidence of concentrated planting zones— although most of these disturbances are likely to be related to the postbellum tenant farming occupants of the dwellings.

When archaeological evidence from the faunal and floral remains, ceramic vessels, and various subsistence artifacts are combined with slave descendant oral histories and other ethno-historical evidence, they can help reveal the broad character of meals actually prepared by and consumed by the enslaved community bound to the Witherspoon plantation.

One distinctive aspect of the faunal assemblage from Witherspoon Island is the high rate of fragmentation. Within the antebellum assemblages, fragmentation is particularly high amongst medium and large mammal remains. For all medium-large mammals (cattle, deer, pig, sheep/goat) remains recovered, the only complete elements were teeth and some foot bones. The evidence suggests that the bones were intentionally butchered for purposes of boiling or stewing (pot-sizing) with the teeth being removed and smaller bones associated extremities being thrown into the pot unaltered. This assertion is further supported by occasional hack marks and impact fractures on medium and large mammal bones, but clear evidence of butchery was only present on approximately 2% of the mammal bones. The low rate of butchery marks identified is likely also likely due to the severe fragmentation itself (Wallman and Fogle 2015).

Oral histories collected from descendants of Witherspoon slaves attest to the importance of stews in their families amongst older generations and in the present. One descendant speaking on stews in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century said that “those less fortunate (there were a lot) did have mostly one pot meals or ate

mostly meats from animals caught in the wild such as turtle soup... fish stews, possum, coon, venison, wild birds” (Karen Burney, personal communication 2011).

Another descendant, William Bacote, whose family still lives in the Darlington region stated that stews were not necessarily created from a single recipe, his relatives “took whatever they had and made a stew. They made cabbage stew and stews with whatever meat they had” (William Bacote, personal communication 2013). Bacote went on to say these stews often contained rice, which was a central staple of many meals in the Pee Dee region. By the mid-twentieth century most rice was being purchased rather than grown locally. This was not always the case as Bacote’s father and others recalled that rice was still being grown in the early twentieth century although according to the family, it was a fickle crop (William Bacote, personal communication 2013). The local production of rice into the mid-twentieth century is corroborated by Amelia “Mimi” Vernon’s research on rice at Mars Bluff (1993).

The narrative of Gable Locklier also mentions rice being served as part of a stew in the central kitchen his mother ran on a Pee Dee area plantation saying that it contained “rice en fat meat en dese collard greens” (Federal Writers’ Project 1941b:113). This account likely captures a description of a common type of stew or one-pot meal being produced by Witherspoon field hands made with the pork they raised or were provided, along with seasonal vegetables they grew and cereals like the rice that some households were producing.

Archaeological and ethnographic studies have shown that the types of meals described above may have been quite similar to the foodways found in many West African cultures which typically consisted of “a starchy main course boiled or simmered

in an earthenware or iron pot” served in communal setting with a large bowl holding the main dish and with many smaller bowls used to contain sauces or for drinking (Ferguson 1992:97). Researchers have shown that many aspects of these West African foodways were retained and modified among their diasporic descendants enslaved in the southeastern United States (Ferguson 1992; Wheaton 2002). At many eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century slave quarters sites, local slave-made Colonoware cooking pots were a common artifact uncovered used for heating soups, stews and starches over an open flame (Ferguson 1992; Isenbarger and Agha 2015). Bowls and general hollowware forms tended to dominate vessel assemblages among the locally made Colonowares and the mass –produced European ceramics which has been linked to traditional West African patterns of meal service and consumption (Ferguson 1992; Isenbarger and Agha 2015; Otto 1977).

Colonoware vessels (both cooking pots and bowls) were completely absent from the two antebellum ceramic assemblages at Witherspoon Island. This is likely a factor of the mid-nineteenth-century occupation of the plantation - a time period which witnessed a broad decline in ceramic production by enslaved populations in South Carolina (Espenshade 2008). The only local low-fired ceramic production near Witherspoon Island appears to have been the hand-built pipes discussed in Chapter 5.

Before the general decline of Colonoware production in South Carolina took place, the early nineteenth century also witnessed in a general shift in food preparation away from the use of local earthenware cook pots in favor of iron cook pots and kettles (Ferguson 1992:106-107, Wheaton 2002:39-41). This appears to be case on the Witherspoon plantation as iron kettles and smaller diameter pots / pans appear to have

been the primary cooking vessels as evidenced by the presence of kettle legs, kettle / pan rims and body sherds, and pan handles (n=20 in total) that were recovered from both cabin sites.

A functional analysis of mass-produced ceramic vessel forms identified in a minimum vessel analysis (MVA) from antebellum contexts at both cabin sites does not necessarily support the established narrative regarding a predominance of hollowware vessels in relation to flatware at sites of enslaved occupation (DeCorse 1999; Ferguson 1992; Otto 1977). The ratio of hollowware to flatware on Witherspoon Island is found to be 1:1.88 at CS1 and almost exactly the same at CS2 with a ratio of 1:1.82. The fact that there are nearly two plates for every bowl was slightly unexpected given the extensive archaeological literature on this trend. Even when known soup plates are analyzed with the bowls, the ratio only shifts to 1:1.6 at CS1.

It is unclear what the remains of so many plates may mean for the enslaved foodways at Witherspoon Island. The fact that both household assemblages have nearly the same ratio of hollowware to flatware may suggest the results are more than an exceptional outlier relating to high fragmentation or sampling strategies. The use of ceramic vessels as the manufacturer intended should not be taken for granted (Leland Ferguson, personal communication 2015). While these plates certainly could have been used to hold individual portions of a protein and accompanying side dishes as intended, there is no evidence within the faunal assemblage that would support the practice of fine butchering associated with roasts or other formal cuts. Instead plates may have been used to serve thick stews instead of bowls or any number of other alternative functions. While it is possible the preponderance of flatware represents a reform initiative on the part of

the planter to alter enslaved meal habits, this seems unlikely as the plates appear to have been purchased by enslaved individuals residing in the two dwellings rather than distributed by the slaveholder. Another possibility is that these flatwares represent aesthetic or status purchases by slaves meant primarily for display rather than as regular dining pieces (See Howson 1995), however the vast numbers of plates recovered at both CS1 and CS2 seem to undercut this possibility.

Evidence from slave narratives, oral histories, primary documents and the fragmented (and likely pot-sized) condition of the faunal remains all strongly suggests that major proteins were being regularly prepared as stews or soups rather than as specific cuts of meat. The most likely scenario is that ratios in the analysis are heavily skewed by the fragmentation of the ceramic assemblage making it extremely difficult to distinguish between true plates and soup plates which are intended to hold liquids (Wilkie 2000:140-142). If antebellum plates had been used for roasts and single cuts of meat I would have expected to see an abundance of knife marks on the plates. Unfortunately the high fragmentation of artifacts also prevented an analysis of use-wear marks on the surface of antebellum plates as most base fragments were unable to be linked to the corresponding diagnostic rim fragments used in the MVA. A future study of the ceramic assemblages at a sherd level could help clarify the remaining questions about plate usage at the two cabin sites during the Witherspoon occupation.

Late antebellum dietary recommendations attempted to ensure the continued health and productivity of bondsmen through a reform discourse fueled by pseudo-scientific claims, medical experts, first-hand experience of established planters and an overt racist ideology that assumed black bodies and lives were fundamentally different

than white slaveholders. Aside from the purely health-related concerns, planters also argued that well-fed slaves were more manageable and content in their subservient roles - with less incentive to steal or complain – hopefully diminishing many disciplinary concerns of plantation management (McKee 1999).

The diet of field hands at Witherspoon Island was somewhat mixed in terms of adherence to many of the best practices recommended in the proslavery reform literature. The greatest deviation from dietary advice offered by reformers was the absence of a central kitchen on the plantation which was highly recommended to ensure slaves ate proper foods that were both well-cooked and served in correct proportions. The lack of a central kitchen for Witherspoon Island does not mean that some aspects of the dietary reform discourse were not implemented or already being practiced on the plantation.

The allowance system in place at the Witherspoon plantation was allotted weekly rather than monthly. The weekly allotment was commonly advised for planters who chose to maintain allowance-based provisioning systems in an attempt to limit the unauthorized use of rations provided to bondsmen. The general makeup of the rations provided to Witherspoon slaves seems to have fallen within the basic reform guidelines and featured pork as the primary protein, along with mill-ground corn meal & hominy, field peas, sweet potatoes & pumpkins when in season, and molasses. Children also received the recommended reform diet through an enslaved cook / caregiver who provided them with hominy and likely dairy-based goods.

Witherspoon slaves employed a range of strategies to contribute additional foodstuffs to the basic provisions provided by the planter either out of necessity in the case of food shortages or to add variation to the monotonous rations of cornmeal and

pork. These strategies included: seasonal vegetables grown in yard gardens, crops like rice or corn grown in patches further afield, fruits collected either from their own yards or trees growing in the margins of the settlement, chickens and pigs raised by families, fish and wild game that were regularly targeted by households, occasional pilfering, and the purchase of unavailable food stuffs from legitimate merchants or on the black market. Hunting, fishing, raising stock, and gardening activities all helped Witherspoon slaves supplement their rations and potentially lessen the likelihood of suffering from pellagra or other dietary disorders by consuming a range of produce, rice, fish and wild game all of which had greater nutrient content than the provided pork and cornmeal (Hardeman 1981:148-152; Kiple and King 1977). This distinctive diet that blended rations and slave produced foods also functioned as a tool to assert dietary independence in the face of slaveholder hegemony regarding the dietary reform discourse on the plantation landscape.

It is also distinctly possible that the lack of a central kitchen at the plantation was the result of gradual pushback by Witherspoon slaves, who like slaves on other plantations mentioned in the reform literature, preferred the ability to prepare their own meals on their own terms. It is impossible to know the accuracy of the above statement, but negotiation over how and what foods were provided to slaves was certainly an ongoing conversation that bondsmen were deeply invested in.

Table 6.1 Class Representation of Faunal Remains From Antebellum Contexts at Cabin Sites 1 & 2 by Number of Identified Specimens (NISP) and Total Weight

		Antebellum NISP		Antebellum Wt (g)	
Cabin Site 1	Total Mammal	7898	67.70%	3081.1	91.40%
	Total Bird	2645	22.70%	129.8	3.90%
	Total Reptile	232	2.00%	148.1	4.40%
	Total Amphibian	51	0.40%	3.6	0.10%
	Total Mollusc	27	0.20%	8.9	0.30%
	Total Fish	816	7.00%		0.00%
	Total	11669		3371.5	
Cabin Site 2	Total Mammal	1539	94.40%	677.8	97.10%
	Total Bird	7	0.40%	0.7	0.10%
	Total Reptile	37	2.30%	19.9	2.80%
	Total Amphibian		0.00%		0.00%
	Total Mollusc	3	0.20%	0.2	0.00%
	Total Fish	45	2.80%		
	Total	1631		698.5	

Table 6.2 Species Representation from Antebellum Context at Cabin Site 1 by NISP, Weight, and Minimum Number of Individual (MNI)

Taxon	Common Name	NISP	%NISP	Wt (g)	% Wt	MNI
Class Mammalia	Mammals					
<i>Didelphis virginianus</i>	Opossum	14	0.13%	14.79	0.44%	2
<i>Blarina carolinensis</i>	Short-tailed shrew	1	0.01%	0.03	0.00%	1
<i>Sylvilagus floridianus</i>	Eastern Cottontail rabbit	9	0.08%	5.85	0.17%	2
<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	Eastern Grey squirrel	11	0.10%	1.48	0.04%	2
<i>Sciurus niger</i>	Fox Squirrel	4	0.04%	1.77	0.05%	2
<i>Sciurus sp</i>	Ground Squirrel	3	0.03%	0.78	0.02%	1
<i>Glaucomys Volans</i>	Eastern Flying Squirrel	1	0.01%	0.13	0.00%	1
<i>Sigmodon sp.</i>	Cotton Rat	1	0.01%	0.25	0.01%	1
<i>Mus musculus</i>	House Mouse	36	0.33%	1.181	0.04%	6
<i>Rattus sp.</i>	Old World Rat	1	0.01%	0.14	0.00%	1
Medium rodent	Squirrel sized	3	0.03%	0.54	0.02%	
Small rodent	Rat-sized	3	0.03%	0.3	0.01%	
Very small rodent	mouse sized	2	0.02%	0.02	0.00%	
<i>Procyon lotor</i>	Raccoon	18	0.17%	13.61	0.40%	2
<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	Grey Fox	1	0.01%	0.46	0.01%	1
<i>Felis domesticus</i>	Domestic Cat	1	0.01%	0.01	0.00%	1
Small carnivore	Raccoon sized	3	0.03%	1.35	0.04%	
<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Domestic Pig	324	2.99%	658.32	19.53%	12
<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	White-tailed Deer	13	0.12%	58.54	1.74%	2

Taxon	Common Name	NISP	%NISP	Wt (g)	% Wt	MNI
Medium Cervid	Deer sized	1	0.01%	0.4	0.01%	
<i>Bos Taurus</i>	Domestic Cattle	44	0.41%	446.28	13.24%	2
<i>Capra hircus</i>	Domestic Goat	1	0.01%	4.66	0.14%	1
<i>Ovis aries</i>	Domestic Sheep	1	0.01%	5.24	0.16%	1
<i>Ovis/Capra</i>	Sheep/Goat	36	0.33%	18.92	0.56%	2
Medium bovid	Sheep/Goat sized	10	0.09%	1.18	0.03%	
Medium artiodactyl	Pig-sized	5	0.05%	1.25	0.04%	
Large mammal	Cattle-sized	126	1.16%	215.98	6.41%	
Medium / Large mammal	Deer-sized	54	0.50%	37.14	1.10%	
Medium mammal	Pig sized	2908	26.79%	1027.72	30.48%	
Small / Medium mammal	Dog-sized	36	0.33%	14.68	0.44%	
Small mammal	Raccoon sized	562	5.18%	60.431	1.79%	
Very small mammal	Squirrel sized and below	93	0.86%	1.422	0.04%	
General Mammal	Mammals	3572	32.91%	486.25	14.42%	
Class Aves	Birds					
<i>Eudocimus sp.</i>	White Ibis	1	0.01%	0.85	0.03%	1
<i>Colinus sp.</i>	Bobwhite Quail	1	0.01%	0.1	0.00%	1
<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	Turkey	2	0.02%	20.8	0.62%	1
<i>Gallus gallus</i>	Domestic Chicken	44	0.41%	15.14	0.45%	4
Columbidae	Pigeon/Dove	14	0.13%	0.58	0.02%	4
c.f. Alcedinidae	Kingfisher	1	0.01%	0.01	0.00%	1
UNID medium bird	turkey-sized	54	0.50%	5.1	0.15%	
UNID small/medium bird	Chicken sized	2476	22.81%	85.791	2.54%	

Taxon	Common Name	NISP	%NISP	Wt (g)	% Wt	MNI
Small bird	Pigeon sized	48	0.44%	1.41	0.04%	
UNID bird	Birds	4	0.04%	0.05	0.00%	
Class Reptilia	Reptiles					
<i>Chelydra serpentine</i>	Snapping Turtle	3	0.03%	3.19	0.09%	
<i>Kinosternon sp.</i>	Mud Turtle	1	0.01%	1.02	0.03%	
<i>Deirochelys reticularia</i>	Chicken Turtle	10	0.09%	25.15	0.75%	
<i>Pseudemys floridana</i>	Florida Cooter	10	0.09%	25.15	0.75%	
<i>Trachemys scripta</i>	Slider	3	0.03%	5.51	0.16%	
Emydidae	Water Turtles	130	1.20%	54.54	1.62%	
Turtle	Turtle	49	0.45%	10.87	0.32%	
Serpentes	Snake	26	0.24%	22.63	0.67%	
Class Amphibia	Amphibians					
Hylidae	Tree Frog	2	0.02%	0.1	0.00%	
Bufoidea	Toad	1	0.01%	3	0.09%	
Ranidae	Frog	47	0.43%	0.46	0.01%	
Amphibian	Amphibians	1	0.01%	0.02	0.00%	
Phylum Mollusca	Molluscs					
Unionidae	Freshwater Mussels	2	0.02%	2.58	0.08%	
Veneroidea	Bivalve Molluscs	7	0.06%	1.08	0.03%	
Bivalvia	Bivalves	18	0.17%	5.25	0.16%	

Table 6.3 Fish Species Representation from Antebellum Contexts at Cabin Site 1 by NISP and Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI)

Taxon	Common Name	NISP	%NISP	MNI
<i>Anguilla rostrate</i>	American Eel	2	0.25%	2
<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>	Black carp	1	0.12%	1
<i>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</i>	Black Crappie	1	0.12%	1
<i>Lepomis machrochirus</i>	Bluegill sunfish	1	0.12%	1
<i>Amia calva</i>	Bowfin	33	4.04%	19
<i>cf. Salvalenus</i>	brook trout	2	0.25%	1
<i>Ameiurus nebulosus</i>	brown bullhead catfish	3	0.37%	2
<i>Ameiurus sp.</i>	Bullhead catfish	11	1.35%	6
Cyprinidae	Carp	1	0.12%	1
Ictalidae	Catfish	43	5.27%	18
<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>	Channel catfish	21	2.57%	8
<i>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</i>	Black Crappie	1	0.12%	1
Actinopterygii	Fish	316	38.73%	
<i>Pylodictus olivaris</i>	Flathead catfish	8	0.98%	1
<i>Lepisosteus</i>	Gar	23	2.82%	8
Clupeidae	Herring/shad	57	6.99%	28
<i>Micropterus</i>	Largemouth bass	5	0.61%	2
<i>Lepisosteus osseus</i>	Longnose gar	7	0.86%	4
Percidae	Perch	9	1.10%	5
Perciforme	Perch-like	118	14.46%	1
<i>Lepomis auritus</i>	redbreast sunfish	1	0.12%	2
<i>Ambloplites rupestris</i>	Rock Bass	2	0.25%	2
<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>	Short nosed sturgeon	1	0.12%	1
<i>Morone</i>	Striped bass	13	1.59%	9
Catostomidae	Sucker	1	0.12%	1
<i>Lepomis sp.</i>	Sunfish	35	4.29%	15
Centrarchidae	Sunfish, blackbass, crappies	99	12.13%	41
<i>Lepomis gulosus</i>	Warmouth	1	0.12%	1

Table 6.4 Ethnobotanical Results Showing Plant Remains Recovered From Antebellum Contexts at Cabin Site 1.

Common Name	Taxonomic Name	State	Count
Fruits			
Bramble	<i>Rubus</i> sp.	charred	4
Bramble	<i>Rubus</i> sp.	uncharred	5
Cherry genus	<i>Prunus</i> sp.	charred	1
Grape	<i>Vitis</i> sp.	uncharred	3
Hawthorn/Crabapple	<i>Crataegus/Malus</i>	charred	22
Crops			
Corn cupule	<i>Zea mays</i>	charred	6
Corn kernel	<i>Zea mays</i>	charred	2
Oat	<i>Avena sativa</i>	charred	3
Peanut cf.	<i>Arachis hypogaea</i> cf.	charred	1
Rice	<i>Oryza</i> sp.	charred	7
Legume, cultivated	Common Bean or Black-eyed Pea	charred	2
Cereal		charred	8
Miscellaneous			
Copperleaf	<i>Acalypha virginica</i>	charred	1
Grass family	Panicoideae	uncharred	2
Spurge	<i>Euphorbia</i> sp.	charred	1
Unidentifiable seed		charred	55
Unidentifiable		charred	6
Unidentified seed		charred	20
Unidentified			7

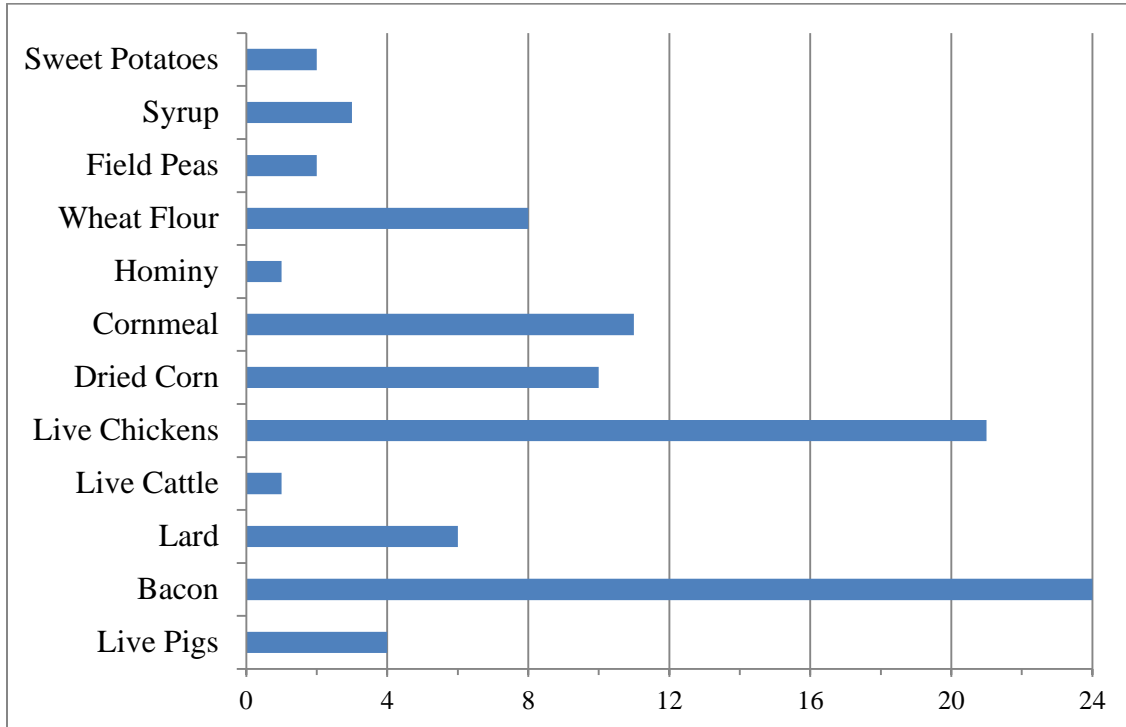


Figure 6.1 Survey of Food-Related Property Belonging to Former Marlboro District Slaves from All Claim Files (n=24) - Values Reflect the Total Number of Instances Where Certain Foodstuffs Were Claimed (Marlboro County, SC, SCC, National Archives).

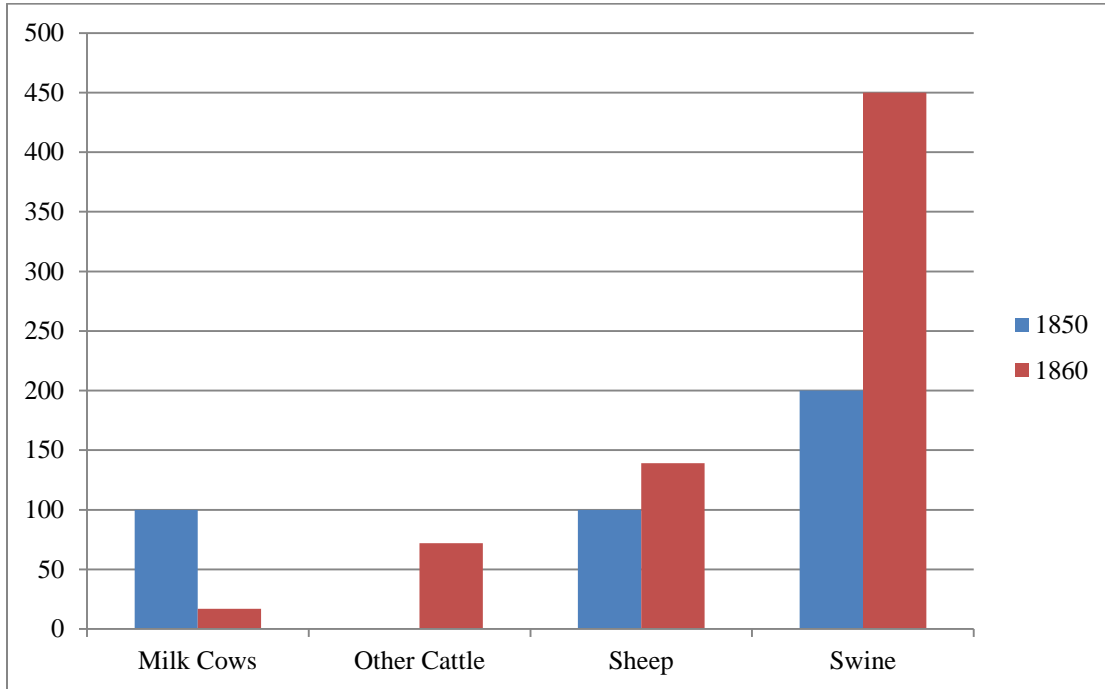


Figure 6.2 Number of Livestock Raised on Witherspoon Island Plantation in 1850 and 1860 based on Federal Census Data (U.S. Federal Census 1850, 1860).

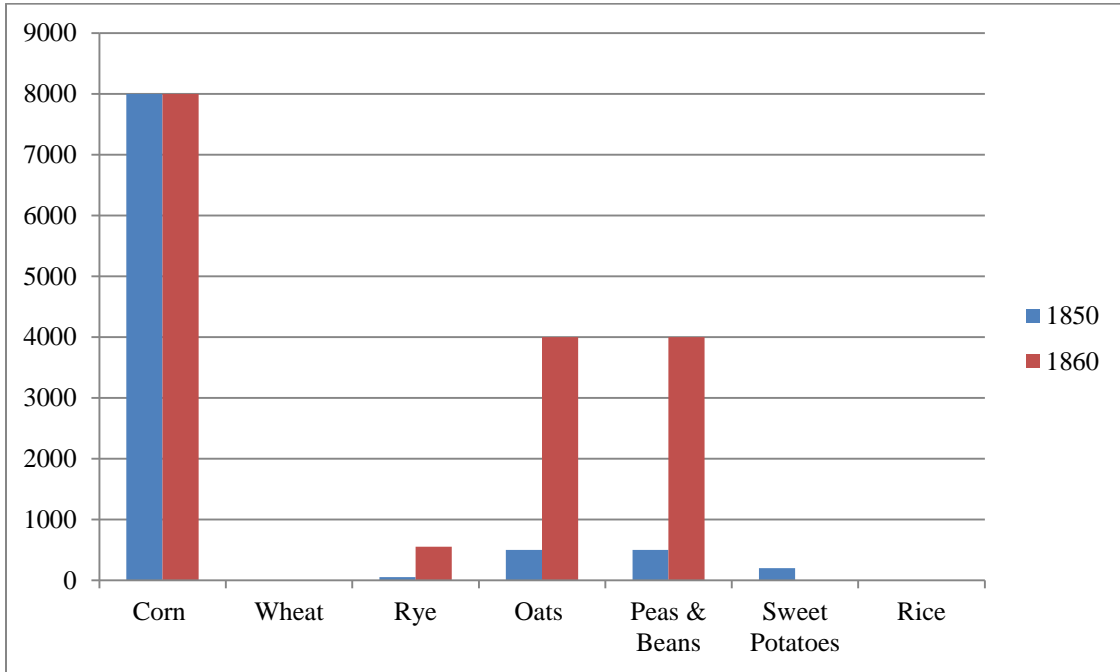


Figure 6.3 Food Crops (by Bushel) Witherspoon Island Plantation based on Federal Census Data (U.S. Federal Census 1850, 1860).

CHAPTER 7

CHRISTIAN ENLIGHTENMENT AND MORAL REFORMS

Encouraging Christian worship in enslaved populations was another core principal of the nineteenth-century proslavery reform discourse. While some advocates for moral reforms may have genuinely been concerned with the spiritual salvation of their bondsmen; many planters attempted to use religion as an instrument of social control to keep their slaves obedient and out of trouble (Berlin 2003:206; Daly 2002:31). Many reform treatises suggested that:

Religious instruction would lead them to respect each other more, to pay greater regard to mutual character and rights; the strong would not so much oppress the weak; family relations would be less liable to rupture; in short, all the social virtues would be more honored and cultivated. Their *work* would be *more faithfully done*; their *obedience* more universal and more cheerfully rendered [emphasis in original] (Jones 1842:209).

From a strictly archaeological perspective, moral reforms are difficult to examine at the site level. Unlike changes to slave housing, diet, and sanitation, the moral facets of the reform discourse would have left few discrete material manifestations on the houseyard landscape. That being said, when examined through a lens of self-discipline, I argue that moral reforms may have significantly reinforced and influenced enslaved

behaviors shaping households and their associated landscapes on Witherspoon Island plantation. Self-discipline or watchful care was a driving principal of the nineteenth-century Baptist churches attended by Witherspoon slaves which actively encouraged church members to help keep their brethren on a proper moral and behavioral path.

Moral reforms also provide an important line of historic evidence for the overall adoption of pro-slavery reforms by the Witherspoon plantation ownership. Membership rolls and meeting minutes from three churches attended by Witherspoon plantation and household slaves luckily survived because they were transcribed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s. These detailed records help to illustrate diachronic fluctuations in church membership, detail cases of disciplinary infractions, and provide a fragmentary glimpse at the ways in which some slaves and their masters both attempted to take advantage of religious instruction and church institutions.

Proslavery moral reforms did not develop in isolation. The encouragement of religious worship among bondsmen is enmeshed in the fiery religious climate of the Second Great Awakening, a broad evangelical revival in the United States that held sway between the late 1790s and the first five decades of the nineteenth century (Boles 1988; Morris 2005:76-77). The Second Great Awakening refers to an intermittent series of evangelical Protestant revivals that spread a theology of social change based on the belief that Christians had a moral charge to help purify society. The movement carried an egalitarian message which suggested that “living a moral life or sinful one was an individual’s choice” and that salvation was open to all social classes, genders, and races (Kruczek-Aaron 2015:15-16). This populist revival was characterized by outdoor camp

meetings led by charismatic preachers whose audiences were often moved by the Holy Spirit in both voice and body (Boles 1977; Boles 1988; Kruczek-Aaron 2015).

In the North, this influential revival spawned a moral crusade that attempted to challenge many sinful aspects of modern society - leading to the rise of nineteenth-century temperance societies and helping to popularize widespread antislavery sentiments. In a circuitous way, it was the influence of Second Great Awakening that drove Northern abolitionist movements whose vocal criticisms inspired Southern planters to develop and promote the “benevolent” antebellum plantation reform discourse examined in this dissertation.

The critiques of North abolitionists helped drive the development of an evangelical branch of proslavery ideology in late 1820s and early 1830s leading to the inclusion of moral recommendations within the broad plantation reform literature. Specifically, moral reforms were an attempt to defuse abolitionist charges that slavery was a sin and the argument that slaveholders were guilty of suppressing Christian worship amongst their slaves (Daly 2002:3; Oakes 1982:108). Working to counter these powerful claims, a wide array of proslavery adherents including southern pastors, missionaries and planters all argued that the bible ordained slavery as an acceptable institution and maintained that all slaveholders had a moral obligation to enlighten their mentally inferior bondsmen (Boles 1988:8; Daly 2002; Finkelman 2007:108; Touchstone 1988).

The very real concern over the moral abolitionist arguments can be seen in an 1848 review of South Carolina’s slave statutes sponsored by the progressive State Agricultural Society of South Carolina. The agricultural society suggested that early

nineteenth-century prohibitions on religious meetings be immediately repealed because the antiquated laws “operate as a reproach upon us in the mouths of our enemies, in that we do not afford our slaves that free worship of God” (O’Neill 1848:24).

Opposition to Enslaved Religious Instruction

The evangelical defense of slavery marked a shift away from prevalent late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century sentiments among planters who were often suspicious about the relationship between their slaves and Christianity. Their suspicions were largely rooted in concerns about the antislavery leanings of many evangelical denominations. This was especially true for the first two decades of the Second Great Awakening where Baptist and Methodist ministers in the South regularly preached an abstract antislavery message that attempted to gently derided slaveholders (Boles 1988:8). Planters also were worried by speculative connections between the religious involvement of slaves and highly visible uprisings like the Denmark Vesey plot in the Charleston area (Genovese 1974:186; Montgomery 1993:31; Touchstone 1988:99-100).

An 1855 newspaper column from the nearby city of Camden discussed the origins of the religious mission to slaves in South Carolina and suggested that the earliest missionaries faced significant pushback from slaveholders well into the late 1820s. “It was not only considered questionable policy to give the gospel to the Slave population, but the work was sternly opposed by some. This opposition was based upon considerations both of economy - and the probable tendency of the measure upon the slave” (Camden Journal 1855:1).

As a large slave holder, J.D. Witherspoon may have had good reason to be suspicious about the influence of religion on his household and plantation slaves. In 1843, William, one of J.D. Witherspoon's slaves and Ennis, a slave owned by his son John, ran away together. A letter written by Witherspoon's eldest son Boykin details the search and eventual capture of William in Gaston, North Carolina located in the very northeastern part of the state against the border with Virginia. A reward notice for Ennis posted in Richmond (Figure 7.1) suggests that the two slaves were attempting to travel to either Ohio or New York (Richmond Whig 1843:3). In the letter to his wife, Boykin tells his family that he believes a certain Mr. Burke likely instigated the escape of the two slaves and that he "certainly aided and counseled them to that end, directed their course by his own experience in travelling through the route by Richmond would suit them best as the Rail Road would be a sure guide to travel the road by night." (B. Witherspoon to E.E. Witherspoon, Letter, 22 June 1843, Witherspoon Papers, Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, SC).

It is unclear exactly who the named Mr. Burke was. The most likely candidate was a Rev. John Burke, the rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Society Hill, the church that J.D. Witherspoon and his children regularly attended (Protestant Episcopal Church 1840). Reverend Burke is the only individual that census records can place in Darlington District in the late 1830s and early 1840s. If the suspect was indeed a former rector of his church, J.D. Witherspoon could have been rightly concerned about religious instruction and the various individuals that attempted to carry the Christian message to his bondsmen.

Rise of Moral Reforms

During the last three decades before the Civil War, both evangelical missions to slaves and enslaved church membership increased (Cornelius 1998:21; Oakes 1982:107; Touchstone 1988:100). This concerted effort by churches and missionaries could not have succeeded without a reversal in planter attitudes regarding slaves and religion. This change in planter attitude can partially be attributed to a major change in the southern evangelical movement during the 1820s and 1830s (McCurry 1997:137).

In the South, the Second Great Awakening is often referred to as the Great Revival because earlier eighteenth-century religious awakenings had gone largely unheeded in the southern colonies (Boles 1972). In the Pee Dee region, the evangelical revival movement took hold in the early nineteenth century with annual camp meetings being held from at least 1805 onwards in Darlington District (Massebeau 1919:9-17).

The first decades of the evangelical revival in South Carolina primarily drew its new converts from poor and middle class white families attracted by the egalitarian message being preached (McCurry 1997). Because of longstanding concerns on the part of planters, many slaves were likely prohibited or discouraged from joining local Baptist and Methodist churches during this period. The late 1820s brought a major reversal of this trend as wealthy South Carolina planters and political elites gradually became involved in evangelical churches. This change of attitude within elite circles was tied to a developing schism in many southern evangelical denominations related to shifting religious positions on the issue of slavery. The gentle antislavery position once held in

southern evangelism was left behind, as clergy in many churches took up a full-throated defense of slavery as a morally beneficial institution (Boles 1988; McCurry 1997:136-140; Touchstone 1988).

Clergy and proslavery reformers touted the benefits of Christian instruction and argued that to avoid past issues, planters had to become more involved in the religious lives of their slaves. Planters, missionaries and ministers had to work together to accommodate and emphasize proper messages for their sermons and lessons (Montgomery 1993:31). These approved messages, they felt, would help counter the revolutionary influence of unsanctioned black preachers and private worship within the quarters (Berlin 2003:206; Seabrook 1834). The content of these sermons were “designed to instill in slaves their Christian duty to accept their appointed station in life” and to “obey their worldly and heavenly masters” (Montgomery 1993:31-32).

In 1845, a group of reformist planters mailed a survey to slaveholders throughout South Carolina to gauge the efficacy of Christian instruction among their bondsmen. A report on the survey was published and contained accounts from around the state including Darlington District, the location of Witherspoon Island and from surrounding districts (Huger 1845). In Darlington, planter J.D. Wilson responded to the survey with the following summary of conditions in the Society Hill area saying that of the “7,560 negroes in this District: 800 of them attend the several churches at Society Hill. The Welsh Neck Baptist church has 359 coloured members; the two other churches, the Epis. and Meth. about 150... The negroes take great interest in these meetings, and the attendance is prompt and good” (Huger 1845:27). Wilson’s numbers of enslaved church attendees only speaks to slaves attending the three churches in Society Hill, not the

churches in the other more populous areas of Darlington District including the towns of Darlington, Hartville and in other outlying communities like Mechanicsville.

As part of the same survey, a planter from Marlborough District, immediately across the river from Witherspoon Island discussed the positive impact of religious worship on slaves from his district saying:

They have so improved that they seem to be almost another set of beings. Their improvement has been in proportion to their instruction. They are orderly, well-behaved, and seem to strive to fulfil [sic] the relative duties of life. They are faithful in their marriage relations. Immorality is discountenanced. They generally attend the house of God on the Sabbath. We scarcely hear of depredations upon stock, &c. They are more obedient and more to be depended on; — indeed, there has been an astonishing improvement within ten years past. We have few or no runaways; and corporeal punishment is but seldom resorted to. (Huger 1845:38)

Reformers suggested slaves could receive religious instruction in several ways: on the plantation itself, at local churches where they were welcome, or preferably, a combination of both. Plantation-based instruction was to be led either by the planter or overseer reading passages from the bible or from a visiting preacher or missionary. To assist planters with these matters, a number of volumes for religious instruction on plantations were published that contained simplified sermons with messages specifically tailored to their bondsmen. Titles like “A Catechism to Be Used by the Teachers in the

Religious Instruction of Persons of Colour” from 1837 worked to reinforce reform-minded messages with memorable question and answer formats like this:

Whom else are you to submit to?

My Master.

Does the Bible tell you so?

Yes: God says, Servants be obedient to your masters, according to the flesh.

(Episcopal Church, Diocese of South Carolina 1837:64)

Church-based instruction fell into two broad categories: integrated sermons or separate services for black and white congregations on the Sabbath (Berlin 2003; Daly 2002; Genovese 1974; Jones 1842). Mary Scott, a former slave from the Darlington area recalls that she “went to white church and set down till white people go out and de old man dat tend to de church and open up de church and say come in, can't stay outside” (Federal Writers’ Project 1941c). For slaves who attended a joint sermon, they would be typically seated either in a balcony or the rear of the church and a portion of the main sermon would be directed to them.

Religious Instruction at Witherspoon Island

It is not known if Witherspoon slaves were instructed in the Gospel either by the overseer or by the planter during his weekly visit. It is clear that Christian morals were enforced by J.D. Witherspoon, according to a memoir written by a grandson of the

planter. One account details Witherspoon giving a large number of slaves to his daughter as part of her inheritance before she moved to the Alabama frontier in 1850 with her husband and family. The memoir suggests that among the slaves to be gifted, Witherspoon intentionally selected all of the unmarried mothers on the plantation as a punishment for their moral transgressions (Dubose 1910). Families and relationships unsanctioned by the planter were ripped apart because of their moral indiscretions and fear of these serious consequences was “to serve as an example to those left behind” on the plantation (Dubose 1910:19).

Baptist, Methodist and Episcopal missionaries were active on the Pee Dee River area from the 1820s onward (and likely much earlier). Missionaries would have given sermons on large plantations or hosted central meetings for slaves on several small nearby plantations. To access these plantations, missionaries had to get permission from planters (Harrison 1893:241-246). No records have been identified that can pinpoint J.D. Witherspoon as a patron of the slave missions or can confirm that Witherspoon Island Plantation hosted missionaries for religious instruction. Based on known missionary activity at surrounding Pee Dee plantations and among J.D. Witherspoon’s peers and relatives, like the influential Williams family, it seems very likely that the enslaved population at Witherspoon may have received occasional visits from these traveling preachers (Harrison 1893:241-246).

Slaves from the Witherspoon plantation primarily attended a Baptist church located in the small community of Mechanicsville four and half miles from the island. Neither J.D. Witherspoon nor any of his known overseers were affiliated with the Mechanicsville Baptist Church. Witherspoon, his family, and their household servants were members of

churches near their homes in Society Hill: the planter and his family attended Trinity Episcopal Church and many of their household slaves attended Welsh Neck Baptist Church (Dubose 1910; Welsh Neck Baptist Church 1737-2010).

From the late eighteenth century until the 1860s, Mechanicsville Baptist Church and its previous incarnations maintained a large enslaved congregation. The church covenant at Mechanicsville directly addressed their position regarding the institution of slavery stating:

While we would be taught by the wisest of men not to raise our servants in delicacy and indolence, and would recollect that obedience is due from them to us; we feel bound to avoid acts of cruelty towards them – point out to them the course of duty – open the way for them to receive instruction from a preached gospel and supply them with food and raiment becoming their station, and worthy of the Christian character which we sustain. (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1857:8)

This covenant echoes the proslavery evangelical rhetoric that defends slavery as a morally sound enterprise. At Mechanicsville, the enslaved membership was so large that it outnumbered the white members during the entire first half of the nineteenth century. Over 600 slaves were baptized in the church by 1860, heavily outnumbering the nearly 250 whites that were baptized during the same period, according to membership rolls (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1857).

Most Baptist churches in Darlington District including the Mechanicsville Baptist Church held separate services and meetings for their enslaved members in the nineteenth

century. The services for the black members usually occurred before or after the services for white members. Typically a slave deacon or exhorter approved by the church would preach while several white members attended to both supervise and provide readings and explanations for the black congregation (Huger 1845:27-28).

Richard Brockington, a planter living near Witherspoon Island, owned a slave named Adam who was licensed to preach by Mechanicsville Baptist Church in 1804 (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1803-1829). Adam was a fixture at the church providing sermons for enslaved congregations until his death in 1854 (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867). The content of Adam's sermons or those any of the black deacons would likely have had to conform to a church approved message that avoided certain controversial topics such as spiritual liberation and instead focused on the central message of servants obeying their masters. His obituary noted that "for 50 odd years, he ceased not day and night to instruct, to rebuke, to warn, to entreat his fellow servants in relation to the interests of their souls" (The Sumter Banner 1854)

In theory, the services and associated meetings for the black congregation would have always been overseen by white members. However, according to the Mechanicsville church minutes, it was a common occurrence for slave services to be held with no white supervision. Every few years the church took white members to task for not attending the black services, suggesting that this was an ongoing issue (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867). These unsupervised gatherings were probably a welcome respite for the enslaved congregation, offering a rare chance to truly worship amongst themselves.

As a Baptist church, Mechanicsville practiced a believer's baptism and did not baptize infants and children (McGrath 2006:271). Only adults who professed "faith in

Christ” and provided “satisfactory evidence” of this faith could be received for the rite of baptism and immersed in the murky waters of the Great Pee Dee River (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867:3-4). This meant that Witherspoon slave children were not baptized until they reached late adolescence or full adulthood.

This does not mean that children were overlooked in moral reform literature. Advocates argued that the best moral progress occurred when slaves were indoctrinated as children making them more obedient and pious in adulthood (Clay 1833:8). Children were also targeted to make inroads with their parents. Advocates suggested that slave parents upon “seeing their children better than themselves, they will make an effort not to hinder their progress in virtue by their own corrupt example, and will become ashamed of faults which a child may reprove” (Clay 1833:8).

The 1845 survey results from Darlington and Marlborough Districts only reported a single youth catechism class suggesting that the organized instruction classes, as seen in the South Carolina Lowcountry, were not being undertaken in this region (Huger 1845:27-28). This does not mean that Witherspoon children were not being exposed to religion, many would have attended church with their parents and private instruction may have occurred on the plantation either by the overseer, the planter’s family or by visiting religious instructors.

At the home of Sally Witherspoon Williams, a daughter of J.D. Witherspoon, there is evidence of a catechism class being taught by Sally’s daughter Serena in 1852. Ruth Hastings a live-in tutor in the Williams household in the early 1850s noted that “Serena teaches the Negro children, 18 or 20 of them, catechisms, and hymns orally - they have very sweet voices most of them. I hear them singing all the evening and after I

am in bed on Sundays” (R. Hastings to M. A. Hastings, Letter, 20 June 1852, Ruth Hastings Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan). The situation at the Williams house was quite different from the Witherspoon plantation, where a great number of the Williams’s field and house slaves were quartered near the main house, unlike the absentee setting of Witherspoon Island. Hastings also noted that Sally Williams maintained strong feelings about which churches her slaves attended. The tutor writes that Williams felt the Episcopal church was the best fit her bondsmen, claiming that “Baptist preaching makes them too independent and saucy” (R. Hastings to M. A. Hastings, Letter, 29 October 1852, Ruth Hastings Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan).

When Witherspoon slave baptisms at Mechanicsville Baptist Church are plotted by decade, it shows a trend that may reflect the adoption of religious reforms by the planter (Table 7.1). Even though Witherspoon Island Plantation was actively producing crops by 1809, the first two Witherspoon slaves were not baptized at Mechanicsville until the mid-1820s. The 1830s and 1840s witnessed a slow increase in new members followed by a surge in Witherspoon slave membership in the 1850s which included many slave couples like Lucretia and Hooper. In total 57 slaves from Witherspoon Island were counted as members of the church (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867).

By 1860, 12 of the 57 members had died, been excommunicated or had been removed from the plantation, leaving 45 active members, which meant that 39.1 percent of the adult / adolescent Witherspoon slaves were on the Mechanicsville church rolls (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867). Of the 36 slave families identified on the 1860 inventory, 24 are confirmed to have one or more church members meaning that 67

percent of households had church members present (12 had 2 or more members) (Darlington District Sales and Appraisal Book 1860, Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina). It is also likely that children and non-member spouses or others attended both meetings and sermons on a semi-regular basis meaning that the sphere of influence extended well beyond the listed church members (Sparks 1988:62-63). Church membership amongst Witherspoon plantation slaves was also highly gendered with woman totaling 65% of those baptized (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867).

A cornerstone of the Baptist faith and other southern evangelical denominations in the nineteenth century was the regulation of church member's personal behavior (Cornelius 1999:36-37). Baptists felt that "it was the serious responsibility of the congregation as a whole and of each member as well, to keep watchful care over the daily activities of the brothers and sisters" (Raboteau 1978:180). This meant the personal lives of church members and their families were constantly being observed and monitored by other members.

Disciplinary violations by slaves were brought to the attention of the church by white members, enslaved members, unaffiliated planters, and occasionally by the individual transgressors themselves (Cornelius 1999:37). At Mechanicsville Baptist Church, meetings were held by white discipline committees once or twice a month to deal with cases of disorder amongst the black members and to evaluate new members. For discipline cases, the committee investigated the charges, heard testimony of the accused, consulted the black congregation or deacon, and set punishments that ranged

from admonishment before the church to full excommunication (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867).

For bondsmen, discipline went beyond basic moral tenants and sought to control member's behavior on their plantation by enforcing elements of the slave code dealing with issues such as running away, disobeying their masters, and stealing food and other goods (Sparks 1988:75-76). Reformers saw this as an advantage and argued that "Much unpleasant discipline will be saved to the churches. The offences of colored communicants against Christian character and church order are numerous, and frequently heinous; the discipline of delinquents is wearisome, difficult, and unpleasant" (Jones 1842:218-219).

Minutes from Mechanicsville Baptist Church show that five to six slave discipline cases were typically heard most months throughout the nineteenth century. This figure does not include the numerous lesser infractions that likely would have been settled directly by black deacons and slave member committees which were never reported to the white congregation. This internal system may have offered black members flexibility to deal with a wide range of disciplinary infractions on their own terms. Local churches in the Darlington region were quite concerned with the abuse of power by their black discipline committees and enslaved deacons. These fears prompted some churches to regularly disband these committees only to reinstate them when they became tired of handling the details of every small transgression (Salem Baptist Church 1797-1930).

Recorded discipline cases for Witherspoon slaves included charges of adultery, non-attendance, improper language, manifesting improper spirit, and theft (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867). Because the planter, his family, and his

overseers were unaffiliated with Mechanicsville Baptist Church, it is likely that most transgressions were reported by Witherspoon slaves about Witherspoon slaves.

A good example of the disciplinary process at Mechanicsville Baptist Church is the case against Hannah, a J.D. Witherspoon plantation slave, who was first baptized and admitted to the church on March 2, 1834. The meeting minutes for January 19th 1839, state that “the case of Hannah belonging to Mr. Witherspoon was brought to the notice of the church, who having been separated from her husband by his being carried out of reach of her, & having in the mean time taken another was guilty of cohabitating with the first upon his return to this country”. Additionally, “a charge also was brought against Mary belonging to Majr. Brown for having taken up with the second husband of the above named after his being driven away by the first”. This case reveals several intimate details of Hannah’s relationships. Her first marriage appears to have been an inter-plantation relationship with an unnamed male who was relocated by his master in the mid to late 1830s. With her husband’s forced departure, Hannah found a second husband named Anthony who she kept until her first husband unexpectedly returned sometime in 1838 (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867).

The case of Hannah and Mary was likely passed from the black deacons to the white leadership of the church who met to consider the charges. To investigate the charges, church members were sent to the respective plantations to interview both the accused and possible witnesses and then report back. When “the case of Mary belonging to Majr. Brown was taken up” in front of the gathered church in March 1839, Mary offered “a profession of repentance... satisfying the church that she had given up all connection with Anthony and was restored to the fellowship of the church”. Hannah was

placed under censure of the church for her behavior sometime in early 1839 and her case was not resolved until 1843 when she was restored to full fellowship (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867). The church's intervention, likely on behalf of a concerned black member, worked to shape the demographic makeup of households on the Brown and Witherspoon plantations. Imagine the full impact of the many small disciplinary actions that were handled internally by the black members and thus not recorded in the church minutes.

The Witherspoon's household slaves may have faced a different experience at Welsh Neck Baptist Church in Society Hill compared to their fellow plantation slaves at Mechanicsville. The disciplinary process at Welsh Neck seems to have been more strictly supervised by the white membership. For example, on June 18th 1848, Hamlet, a Witherspoon household servant, "came forward & acknowledged that he had been drunk that he felt ashamed of his conduct & sincerely repented of the sin against God, & the disgrace brought on religion & that by the Grace of God he would never so transgress again" and he was restored to full fellowship until he was excluded again for drinking in the 1850s. Compared to Mechanicsville Baptist Church, the meeting minutes from Welsh Neck document numerous small infractions like Hamlet's drunkenness, slaves breaking Sabbath, or fighting that were regularly brought before the white church leadership (Welsh Neck Baptist Church 1737-2010:278). The lack of lesser infractions at Mechanicsville may suggest that the black deacons and enslaved membership had more control in dealing with day to day cases at Mechanicsville, only sending the most visible and pressing issues to white membership.

The strong emphasis on watchful care amongst the church members worked to shape household behavior and landscapes on Witherspoon Island both through self-discipline and surveillance. This vigilant environment meant that households with enslaved church members may have been watching for infractions and trying to avoid unwanted attention by conforming to rules regarding their personal behavior and that of their families. With respect to the households and their associated landscapes, this system of surveillance likely worked to reinforce accepted behaviors associated with sanitation, health and maintenance in the yards and dwellings with material ramifications that have been observed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this dissertation.

Not only did the watchfulness of church members help to maintain plantation discipline, it also may have served as a venue to air personal grievances among slaves of the same plantation or within the larger enslaved community. Certain enslaved church members, like their white counterparts, may have been more inclined reported violations of moral and plantation discipline codes against individuals they had existing issues with or even resorted to placing fraudulent charges. Several cases of false reports brought by slaves are noted in the recorded minutes from Salem Baptist Church in Marlboro District like case of Cate who was excluded from the church for “raising false reports on one of the church members” (Salem Baptist Church 1797-1930).

I do not mean to suggest that all church-going Witherspoon slaves would have actively participated in this cycle of church discipline. Many slaves on the plantation were non-members, and some members would have ignored or not participated in this aspect of church life. Evidence from the Mechanicsville Baptist Church minutes clearly

show that at least some Witherspoon slaves worked to create a disciplining landscape through moral surveillance and adherence to both plantation and church rules.

The archaeological record at Witherspoon Island offers some evidence of potential enslaved resistance to evangelical social reforms preached in the church. With 67% of the plantation households on Witherspoon Island having at least one church member present (See Table 7.1), it seems likely that Cabin Site 1 and/or Cabin Site 2 would have been inhabited by at least one congregation member. If there were members present at either cabin site, the material record suggests that these residents were flouting some of the basic lifestyle principals espoused by the Baptist church regarding abstinence from tobacco and alcohol. Based on the presence of liquor bottles and dozens of tobacco pipes at recovered at both dwellings it seems clear that cabin residents were either ignoring these Baptist precepts or completely shunning them.

Moral reforms also worked to regulate free time and any activities that took place during Sundays, the traditional day off for slaves in South Carolina. Reformers argued that:

If they go not to the house of God, as multitudes do not, they spend the day in visiting, in idleness and sleep, or in hunting, fishing, or, sometimes, in thieving or working for their own convenience and profit... The labor which the overwhelming mass of the Negroes perform in the South, especially in the cotton growing districts, leaves them abundant time for their own domestic affairs, if they have any disposition to improve it. Hence the general fact that the Negroes who keep the Sabbath, are the most thrifty and well-to-live (Jones 1842:138).

Accounts from former slaves in the general Pee-Dee region also speak to planters and their agents enforcing the Sabbath. Hester Hunter a former slave from Darlington area spoke about the Sabbath on her plantation saying that “my old Missus was a dear old soul en she would see to it dat all her niggers wash en iron en cook on Saturday cause she never allow no work gwine on round whe’ she was when Sunday came, be dat she know bout it” (Federal Writers’ Project 1941b).

Just the act of attending church may have been enough to limit activities on the plantation if their place of worship was several miles away. For Witherspoon slaves on the plantation, the trip to the Mechanicville would have involved walking nearly a mile to Lowther’s Lake from their settlement on the island, canoeing across the water, and then walking another four and a half miles to the church. After the services and meetings were completed, members would then have to retrace their steps meaning that a significant portion of their free day was consumed by church attendance and travel.

Slaves were not oblivious to the flagrant “Servant, obey your masters” indoctrination that official church sermons attempted to convey (Berlin 2003:207). Della Bess Hilyard a former slave from Darlington District described it this way “slaves were not told about heaven; they were told to honor their masters and mistresses and of the damnation that awaited them for disobedience” (Federal Writers’ Project:1941a). Outside of the bondsmen who were forced to attend religious services, many slaves may have been drawn to the church on their own accord. Historians have suggested that the evangelical revivals of the nineteenth century may have been attractive to slaves with their energetic worship style popularized in the Second Great Awakening. This physical

form of worship that featured emotional sermons and audience participation may have meshed well with diverse West African religious traditions familiar to many slaves (Forret 2006:66-67).

Many slaves attended church for variety reasons beyond a sincere concern for their own spiritual enlightenment or because their master's required it. These vibrant religious communities likely offered significant advantages for bondsmen. In the simplest sense, the trip to church may have been seen as a break in the monotony of everyday plantation life. Services, meetings and other church activities offered slaves a chance to network, socialize, and form relationships with other slaves from the broader region in an environment well outside the purview of their individual owners or overseers (Berlin 2003). Additionally, the evangelical egalitarian message of spiritual redemption may have motivated slaves to join churches where they could find some limited sense of equality in their segregated world. By actively participating in religious congregations made up of both black and white members, slaves were able to hold leadership roles and potentially achieve a degree of social influence outside of the plantation (Boles 1988:14).

Churches too may have provided enslaved deacons and exhorters with additional freedoms regularly denied their brothers and sisters. At Mechanicsville, long established enslaved preacher Adam traveled quite extensively to preach to the black congregations at prayer meetings and churches throughout the Pee Dee region. A serious debate arose amongst the Mechanicsville membership in 1831 about whether Adam should be provided a horse. In response, the church formed "a committee to see Mr. Brockington [Adam's owner] and ascertain whether he will keep the horse or whether he is willing for Adam to keep the horse or to not". The committee reported later that Mr. Brockington

would allow Adam to keep his own horse which would have been a significant and uncommon resource for a bondsman (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867).

Within the first years of emancipation, most black church members in the Darlington region had been dismissed from their old church congregations (Salem Baptist Church Minutes 1797-1930). Formerly enslaved church members joined new black churches that sprung up quickly after the war often organized by former deacons and preachers drawing on their experience and training from their time in antebellum churches (Cornelius 1998). Stephen Presley, a former Witherspoon slave who was taken to Louisiana by Boykin Witherspoon in 1855 is said to have founded three churches in that state after emancipation, one named Mechanicsville Baptist Church in Caspiana, Louisiana presumably after the Mechanicville Baptist Church in Darlington District that he had been a part of before his forced relocation (Welsh Neck Baptist Church 1737-2010; Karen Burney, personal communication 2012).

For Witherspoon fields slaves living on the Lowther's Lake plantation, their exposure to the spiritual reform discourse came from their planter's moral plantation rules, various religious instruction on the plantation (J.D. Witherspoon himself, his wife, the overseers, and / or visiting missionaries), and the involvement of certain slaves and their families in the local Baptist church. Slaves and their families who challenged or ignored the moral order J.D. Witherspoon imposed on the plantation faced potentially serious and long-term consequences depending on the severity of the transgression like the group of unwed mothers being forced to relocate to Alabama tearing apart their extended families and numerous fathers from their young children (Dubose 1910).

Table 7.1 Mechanicsville Baptist Church Membership Among Witherspoon Island Slaves (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1803-1867).

Decade	Adult Slaves (Age 11+)	Baptisms	Church Members*	Church Members in Population
1800-1809	No Data (1810 Census)	0	0	0%
1810-1819	57 (1820 Census)	0	0	0%
1820-1829	118 (1830 Census)	2	2	1.50%
1830-1839	103 (1840 Census)	12	14	17%
1840-1849	115 (1850 Census)	8	14	12.20%
1850-1859	153 (1860 Census)	35	48	31.40%
*Membership Numbers Reflect Recorded Deaths and Relocations by Decade				

\$100 REWARD.

I WILL give one hundred dollars for the delivery of ENNIS, to any Jail in the State. Ennis is from South Carolina, and his companion who was arrested at Gaston, N. C., says they were on their way to Fredericksburg, and from there they were going either to Ohio or New York. Ennis is 25 years old; 5 feet 7 inches high; slender; black; and has a large mouth.

JOHN WITHERSPOON,
Society Hill, South Carolina.

Richmond, June 23d, 1843.

je 24—c3v*

Figure 7.1 1843 Runaway Notice for Ennis and William (Richmond Whig 1843:3)

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

This dissertation sought to follow the multifaceted antebellum reform discourse like one thread woven through a complex cultural landscape by examining the varied material markers left behind in the form of chimney bases, stratified middens, concealed pits and the material culture within these unplowed yard and dwelling deposits. The contextual household methodology implemented in this study at the houseyard scale was able to fruitfully examine several critical recommendations of the plantation reform discourse by drawing on the unexpected rich archaeological, historical and ethno-historical records associated with the owners and inhabitants of Witherspoon Island. Evidence relating to economic controls, dietary regime, architectural design, sanitation, health care, and religious instruction all suggest that planter J.D. Witherspoon did indeed implement many aspects of the late antebellum reform recommendations, either wholly or partially, on his large cotton plantation in Darlington District.

At the household level, the lives of enslaved inhabitants became less private and more restricted with the adoption of reforms reliant on an increasingly paternalistic approach from the planter. Watchfulness by neighbors and regular inspections by overseers and drivers meant that at Witherspoon Island, slave quarters and their yards were no longer semi-sheltered landscapes separate from the slaves' daily labors on the plantation. The nineteenth-century reform discourse attempted to create a duplicitous

landscape that projected humanitarian and moralistic ideals, while in reality, the core of reform discourse attempted to develop a better means to control slaves, protect the planters' investment, and increase the overall productivity of the plantation.

An 1862 letter written by John Witherspoon about the breakup of the plantation after his mother's murder helps to illustrate J.D. Witherspoon's motivations regarding reforms and his bondsmen. "Molly and Sam are at the new quarters I had built in the pine thicket near the public road at Hunt's Bluff. The water is good and the houses large and new as I think they will have a better chance for health than in the swamp" (J. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 2 March 1862, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). If the actual motivation behind the reforms had been humanitarian goals as was claimed by proslavery advocates, J.D. Witherspoon would not have knowingly kept his slaves in "the swamp" a place both he and his son often claimed was an unhealthy environment. Even with the improvements to housing, hygiene and sanitation documented on Witherspoon Island, the health conditions were so poor that J.D. Witherspoon's slaves faced constant illness. In an 1855 correspondence Witherspoon once described the health of the plantation as "very distressing" facing late summer cases of "dysentery among the grown people & whooping cough & dysentery & diarrhea & fever among the children. We have lost 8 children already, no grown person yet" (J.D. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 11 August 1855, Private Witherspoon Family Collection). To successfully grow cotton on his property, J.D. Witherspoon needed his work force to live on the island, no matter the sickly conditions that may have prevailed there. For Witherspoon and all planters, progressive or not, it was usually profit and

productivity that outweighed the most basic concerns for the wellbeing of their human property.

Witherspoon slaves, like their fellow bondsmen on many late antebellum plantations, did not passively accept the obvious attempts by their planters to gain increased control over their actions, dwellings, and landscapes. The true nature of the reform discourse was recognized by enslaved laborers, who took what advantages they could from improved environments, while attempting to resist their planters' ulterior motives wherever possible (Vlach 1995:126–127). The actual response to reforms by slaves varied based on the individual practices being implemented and the degree of potential disruption those practices may have had on their established routines and any possible infringements on the traditional rights slaves had accumulated by the nineteenth century.

To slaves, most reforms would not have been worth the promised benefits which led to both overt and surreptitious resistance. Evidence uncovered in this dissertation points to systematic resistance by Witherspoon slaves as they circumvented economic controls through theft and illicit trade; challenged dietary regimes through the use of homegrown crops or wild plants / animals in their meals; or attempted to bypass planter mandated health care when slaves either attempted to conceal or fake illnesses.

One example of a potentially unacceptable reform that went unimplemented is the development of a central kitchen system on Witherspoon Island. Highly touted in reform literature, central kitchens were recommended as an ideal way to ensure foods were cooked properly and correctly proportioned according to age, gender, and occupation (Breedon 1980:89-90). With a dietary system in place that matched many reform ideals,

the absence of a central kitchen could be evidence of vocal enslaved opposition to a particular reform that would have significantly curtailed their ability to serve and preparation foods in a manner of their own choosing.

In some instances, examples of enslaved resistance to reforms may be less obvious or invisible to researchers. The rigid sanitation regime observed at both cabin sites suggests that J.D. Witherspoon and the plantation management he employed were actively ensuring yards were regularly swept clear and policed for visible debris. While there was no evidence of resistance to these particular sanitation reforms in the Witherspoon archaeological record, it does not mean slaves were simply complying with the wishes of their planter. Resistance relating to reforms and general plantation conditions in many cases left no material traces such as work slowdowns, temporary abscondence by slaves, and permanent escape attempts by bondsmen throughout the nineteenth century (McKee 1999; Vlach 1995). Witherspoon family letters are filled with examples of slaves running away for various reasons including the case of Alick, the footman at the Witherspoon house in Society Hill who in 1859 was caught illicitly baking cakes for sale and ran away to avoid punishment (E.B. Witherspoon to B. Witherspoon, Letter, 20 May 1859, Private Witherspoon Family Collection).

From the evidence presented in this study, it is clear that many aspects of the late antebellum reform discourse were adopted and gradually implemented on Witherspoon Island. Not quite the high ideals proposed by some grandiose reform activists, the changes made by Witherspoon represent the middle ground between best practices and the reforms slaves were forced or willing to accede. The question remains how influential was the reform discourse on other plantations and farms throughout the South? Did

slaves on all late antebellum plantations face circumstances similar to the Witherspoon slaves - where planters attempted to control every aspect of their daily lives from the foods they ate to their bodily hygiene? This is not a question that my research is well positioned to answer. Undoubtedly, the adoption of reforms on a remote absentee plantation like Witherspoon Island suggests that to some planters the implementation of reforms was more than a status symbol, to show how progressive or modern a planter viewed himself or wanted to be viewed. Instead, planters like J.D. Witherspoon appear to have been quite deeply invested in their beliefs regarding the claimed financial, disciplinary, and health benefits of the reform discourse even considering the significant costs, both monetarily and in terms of possible enslaved resistance, they may have incurred during implementation.

Like Chappell (1999), McKee (1992, 1999), and Vlach (1993, 1995), I believe the reform discourse was quite influential on a number of antebellum plantations. While not dealing with reforms in the antebellum South, Chapman's study of an earlier plantation reform movement in the Danish West Indies offers some important parallels regarding the influential nature of a similar reform discourse in the Caribbean (2010).

Starting in the 1790s, a plantation reform movement in the Danish West Indies sprung up to counter growing abolitionist pressure that threatened the sugar plantation economy on the islands (Chapman 2010:112-114). Drawing on British agrarian reforms popularized several decades before, planters in the Danish West Indies championed changes to architecture and sanitation in slave dwellings, especially focusing on a shift from wattle and daub construction to permanent structures that followed modern hygienic designs (Chapman 2010:109-111). Chapman, like many other reform researchers,

examined architecture as the key marker of reform implementation. On the three Danish islands, Chapman found that nearly every late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century sugar plantation had implemented new architectural designs in an attempt to modernize slave dwellings (2010:107). What makes Chapman's work unique was his ability to examine nearly all of the 180 sugar plantations on these three islands illustrating the powerful influence that a reform movement can have in reshaping the plantation landscape. While such an extensive study like Chapman's would be both impractical and impossible to undertake in the antebellum south, his work identifies some strong links between the two reform movements that were driven by similar motivations on the part of planters.

The diversity of the agricultural system in the antebellum south, meant that reforms were certainly not implemented on all plantations or farms no matter their size or crop (Oakes 1982). It was likely that the owners of large plantations had the most to benefit from proslavery agricultural reforms that were touted to increase productivity and health through close paternalistic involvement in every detail of enslaved lives. Small planters who owned less than ten slaves made up the majority of slaveholders in the antebellum era and had less motivation to adopt reforms aimed at controlling their bondsmen. Slaveholders with few slaves knew every slave quite intimately as they did not have overseers acting as middlemen or live in locations far removed from their plantations. The ideals espoused in the reform discourse did not fit their system of agriculture making these practices both impractical and expensive (Oakes 1982:166-167). For example, small planters did not necessarily need central kitchens or well-designed slave housing when in many cases their slaves were sleeping under their owner's roofs

and eating food prepared in their kitchens. This suggests that a large percentage, even a majority of slaves in the late antebellum period, were not directly impacted by planter-implemented reforms simply because they were held captive on small farms.

Even on plantations with significant communities of slaves, not all planters would have been proponents of the antebellum plantation reforms. Unlike J.D. Witherspoon, some planters may not have been as actively involved in the scientific agricultural movement suggesting a lack of interest in the reform discourse that was popularized in the mass media of the South and in local agricultural networks.

Even with the limited scope of planter-implemented reforms discussed above, I do not mean to suggest that certain core concepts of the reform discourse were not influencing a wider set of slaves both on large plantations and small farms. For example, several reform recommendations became legal statutes in South Carolina including laws regarding trade with slaves (Henry 1914) and restrictions related to the timing and supervision of enslaved religious gatherings (Mechanicsville Baptist Church 1829-1867). Additionally, some of the ideals which reformers codified came from successful practices already found on some agricultural operations throughout the South. This is especially true for some proposed reforms like the makeup of the rations provided to slaves - many of which were not new food sources for bondsmen. In the case of rationing recommendations, it was the pseudo-scientific / biological rationales and the specific implementation of the practices that were newly being framed by reform advocates. In contrast, others reform recommendations, such as hygienic dwelling designs, were something quite novel to planters of the antebellum period according to studies of late

eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century slave housing (Chappell 1999; McKee 1992; Vlach 1993).

Future Directions

This dissertation project presents many opportunities for further research related to Witherspoon Island Plantation. One potential study with high rewards would be an archaeological examination of the slave households at the Witherspoon residence in Society Hill. Such a study offers an amazing opportunity to compare the impact of the reform discourse between field hands and household servants all owned by a reform-minded master.

The involvement of Witherspoon descendants and the families of their former slaves represents a unique strength of this dissertation project and is also an area that can benefit from further research. Several descendants of enslaved Witherspoon families are actively involved in the growing field of genetic-based genealogy working to establish a wide network of related individuals. Detailed conversations with these newly identified families can offer entirely new perspectives on the lives of their ancestors helping to strengthen and challenge archaeological interpretations.

My dissertation should not be the last word by archaeologists regarding the antebellum plantation reform movement. The subject matter is too important to be relegated to studies of extant architecture or singular examinations of plantation records. Historical archaeologists are well equipped to study numerous aspects of these reforms in far greater detail than I have covered in this dissertation. Archaeologists need to examine

other plantations from the same late antebellum timeframe investigating the variable implementation of reforms at both small farms and large plantations and on estates where planters and slave resided together.

Comparative work by the larger archaeological community has the ability to study how widespread and exactly how influential this discourse was throughout the South. With increased reform research, there will also be a growing need for studies of geographic variation within the reform movement looking at the implementation of regional recommendations regarding diet or architecture that were intended for specific environments such as coastal plantations or urban contexts. One challenge that future researchers face is the need for plantation sites that have exceptional archaeological, historical, and ethno-historical resources to be able to offer new insights into reforms and their impact on enslaved communities. Luckily in many cases, this is research that can be completed by re-examining existing archaeological collections from chronologically appropriate antebellum plantation sites that are known to be rich in historical documentation. Such a collections-based approach would help facilitate needed large scale analyses (with a less funding and field time required) to help to build a more nuanced understanding around the spread and influence of this reform movement in the antebellum period.

As this dissertation has revealed, social control was the true intent of the reform discourse, not the benevolent paternalistic narrative that progressive planters attempted to convey to their critics, the general public, and their slaves. Exposing the controlling core of the reform movement helps to dispel a mythic plantation past populated with compassionate planters and their contented nameless slaves. This study not only

uncovered the multifaceted influence of the antebellum reform discourse on Witherspoon Island, it also opened a small window into the motivations and struggles of enslaved individuals and families like Lucretia, Hooper and their many children who inhabited, created, and reshaped these contested intimate spaces.

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