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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation is a study of the intersections of slavery, daily practice, and consumerism of enslaved laborers at antebellum Poplar Forest plantation in Central Virginia. Key developments in the antebellum period, including expanded transportation options, industrialization, and increased slave leasing shaped the enslaved laborer's lives. These factors resulted in increased access to the market economy for many enslaved laborers, which transformed social and economic relationships between whites and African Americans and among African Americans as well. The conditions that shaped this process varied according to regional differences, the forms of labor in which the enslaved were engaged, and the individual practices of slave owners. My work centers itself within the growing field of consumerism studies, which have been useful to scholars of slavery and post-emancipation African American communities, but have not been applied to slavery in the antebellum period of Central Virginia. By employing consumer strategies to negotiate the experiences of slavery and craft identities that resisted the imposed definition of "slave," enslaved laborers gained a measure of control over their daily lives and degrees of personal empowerment. Enslaved men and women adapted to the uncertain realities of antebellum slavery by acquiring and using goods to shape their identities and to promote and maintain health and well-being for themselves and their families. This study demonstrates that control and empowerment were situational for enslaved laborers and they came with costs and benefits.

CONSUMERISM, SOCIAL PRACTICE, AND SLAVERY:  
CONSUMER PRACTICES AMONG ENSLAVED LABORERS AT POPLAR FOREST  
PLANTATION (1828-1861)

by

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Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology.

Syracuse University  
August 2016

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Archaeological analysis is interdisciplinary and it involves a great deal of teamwork. I am thankful to Walter Klippel for his thorough and fascinating analysis of the faunal material from the site. Kathryn Lamzik analyzed eggshell samples, which provided insights into diet and

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## *Chapter 1*

### **Introduction: Antebellum Slavery in Virginia**

Some of his [a Virginia slaveholder] best hands he now rented out, to work at a furnace, and for the best of these he had been offered, for next year, two hundred dollars. He did not know whether he ought to let them go, though. They were hard worked, and had too much liberty, and were acquiring bad habits. They earned money by overwork, and spent it for whisky, and got a habit of roaming about and taking care of themselves; because when they were not at work in the furnace, nobody looked after them. I begin to suspect that the great trouble and anxiety of Southern gentlemen is:--How, without quite destroying the capabilities of the negro for any work at all, to prevent him from learning to take care of himself (Olmsted 1856: 48).

Frederick Law Olmsted visited Virginia in December 1852 prior to becoming a renowned American landscape architect. Spurred by a debate among some abolitionists in the North concerning gradual versus immediate emancipation, he set out to tour the Southern United States to investigate slave labor and consider how it could be transitioned to free labor.<sup>1</sup> As he traveled across the South, he documented his experiences and sent them to a newspaper publisher so readers could follow his journey. His observations provide insight into the lives of enslaved African Americans, their consumer practices, benefits and costs of engaging in consumerism, and pivotal antebellum developments that framed and constrained their consumer practices.

Over the course of fourteen months of travel, from 1852 to 54, Olmsted traveled across the South by foot, horse, stagecoach, boat, and train. On his journey he observed free and enslaved laborers at work on farms, plantations, and in industrial labor, which was a growing labor niche. He visited slave quarters and witnessed housing, gardens, and animal pens that were simultaneously the location of independent production and inadequate living conditions that contributed to poor health. Olmsted ended his travels with a journey through Piedmont Virginia,

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<sup>1</sup> Although Olmsted never explicitly called himself an abolitionist, he found slavery to be morally unacceptable. His opposition to slavery was strengthened by his experiences during his travels throughout the southern United States.

making a stop in Lynchburg on July 24, 1854 (McFarland 2006:9). What he saw there allowed him to create a brief sketch of life in a local place based on short-term observations and chance encounters. By weaving together historical documents, archaeological evidence, and interviews with former slaves, my goal is to construct a case study of the consumerism and daily practices of enslaved people who lived at Poplar Forest plantation in Central Virginia.

In his writings about his travels, Olmsted described the significance of corn and wheat cultivation in Virginia, the staple crops at Poplar Forest in the antebellum era. He recorded various scenarios of slave hiring and the intrastate slave trade. Interspersed with these descriptions, Olmsted documented several ways that enslaved laborers obtained money and some of the things on which they spent it (Olmsted 1856: 86-87; 89-91). Most significantly, Olmsted spoke directly to enslaved laborers about their circumstances and he documented some of those interactions.

Olmsted's observations capture the transitional nature of the antebellum era, when increasing numbers of enslaved laborers were hired out to institutions and people who were not their owners. Some of these hired slaves had increased access to money and time off. How did this impact their daily lives? What other goods, besides the whiskey Olmsted (1856:58), documented did enslaved laborers purchase with the money they earned? A slaveholder in Petersburg told Olmsted (1856:58) that he hired out his best enslaved laborers to furnaces hazardous work that involved intense physical labor, and consequently, men were selected for this type of labor. This raises the question of how gender intersected with labor and consumerism. Finally, the Petersburg slaveholder lamented the degree of relative independence hired slaves enjoyed after they finished their tasks at the furnace (Olmsted 1856:58). This degree of independence was contingent on their hired status. What happened when these hired enslaved

laborers returned to their home farms and plantations to restrictions on what they could spend their time doing? I discuss the answers to this question in chapter two.

Inspired by Olmsted's observations, Work Project Administration (WPA) interviews that recorded first-hand experiences of antebellum slavery, and the work of historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists engaged in consumerism studies, I initiated this study to investigate enslaved laborers' consumer behavior in the decades immediately before the Civil War. I became interested in this time period in 1995 when I volunteered with the archaeology staff at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage in Nashville, Tennessee. That summer, under the direction of Larry McKee, we excavated part of a site that contained former field slave quarters. I returned to the Hermitage in 1997 as an archaeology intern to participate in the excavation of the interior of an antebellum slave cabin located directly across the yard from Andrew Jackson's first home on the property. During both of these excavations the team found a broad array of artifacts that challenged my perspective of the material culture of slavery. When I returned to work at Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest for a second time in 2002, members of the archaeology staff were excavating an antebellum slave cabin. Yet again, the material record of slavery in this time period proved distinctive and intriguing. Artifacts revealed that enslaved people had guns, gilded jewelry, and access to new technologies like rubber buttons.

After examining the antebellum artifact assemblage from Poplar Forest I needed to seek the answers to the questions the objects provoked in my mind. What dynamics of change resulted in abundantly varied material assemblages at slave sites in the antebellum period? How did enslaved laborers acquire these goods? What did these objects reveal about the lives of enslaved laborers? How did enslaved people use them, and what meanings did they hold for their users?

Was Poplar Forest the right place to answer these questions, and could I answer them using archaeological methods?

I sought to answer these questions when I began this study. Because these questions relate to acquisition of, access to, and use and meaning of objects, I decided to use consumerism as the framework for this analysis. Many factors, including timeframe, region, and idiosyncratic practices of slaveholders and enslaved laborers, impacted the ability of enslaved laborers to engage in consumerism. For this reason, I decided to focus on consumerism at local and regional scales. Although written documents like Olmsted's provide limited insight into how some enslaved people may have experienced their circumstances, I chose to conduct archaeological analysis to search for more complete answers to my research questions than documents alone could provide. Because the experiences of enslaved people were shaped by daily practices, I incorporated practice theory into my research as well.

My theoretical framework draws from Miller (1987) and Bourdieu (1977, 1990), and will be explained in more detail in chapter three. In brief, I find Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* useful for understanding the relationship between structure and agency among enslaved laborers. He defined habitus as the sense of cultural and normative order (the structure) that people develop through experiences and everyday action (agency) (1977, 1990). People use this structural sense of cultural order to impart meaning to new experiences. Bourdieu's concept of habitus is also significant because it recognizes that peoples' understanding of their cultural structure is shaped by their own personal experiences and historical situation (Wilkie 2000:11).

I am interested in how the habitus of enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest was shaped through their personal experiences as enslaved persons. I am also concerned with how labor practices, industrialization, and social and ideological changes of the antebellum timeframe

influenced how enslaved people understood and interacted with their environment and other people. One has to consider the tension between the racialized social structure and the agency of individuals to understand nineteenth-century consumer practices in the United States. Bourdieu's concept of habitus is also useful for this purpose.

While Bourdieu's work is useful for considering the tension between agency and structure, I found Daniel Miller's complementary work useful for explicating uses of objects and for considering how people use objects to mediate between themselves and other individuals and groups. Miller's (1987) theory of consumption emphasizes the roles and meanings of material culture and the relationships between individuals, social groups, and objects in the context of consumer practices (Miller 1987). Because a deep understanding of relationships is important to apply Miller's ideas, chapter four of my dissertation focuses on establishing the social relationships of whites and blacks at Poplar Forest and their social ties in the immediate neighborhood.

In addition to exploring how people use objects to mediate relationships, Miller (1987: 215) emphasizes how people use objects for self-definition and defining others. Additionally, he analyzes peoples' recontextualization of objects into ". . . expressive environments, daily routines and often cosmological ideals: that is, ideas about order, morality and family, and their relationships with wider society" (1987:8). Through recontextualization, people give objects new meanings. Miller's emphasis on daily routines makes his work particularly compatible with Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Miller's work focuses on objects and their meanings within social relations in modern cultures. Successfully applying this framework in an archaeological study requires research to understand the historical framework that shaped daily routines and ideologies in the past. I spend most of the rest of this chapter developing this historic



background. Before I return to the historical background, I address the questions I initially posed and briefly explain how I answered them.

*What dynamics of change resulted in richly diverse material assemblages at slave sites in the antebellum period?* To answer this question, I focused on historical research to understand how industrialization and new transportation options transformed the kinds of goods available to people in the antebellum period. These topics are discussed in this chapter and in chapter six. *Among these kinds of goods, which goods were accessible to enslaved laborers?* I examined merchant account books and archaeological evidence to answer this question, and this topic is discussed in chapter six. *How were these goods obtained?* Macrobotanical evidence, faunal evidence, plantation records, and other historical documents provide clues about the production activities that enslaved laborers engaged in to earn money. This information is discussed in chapter five. Merchant account books and plantation records provide clues about how enslaved laborers paid for goods—sometimes through individual or collective cash payments and sometimes by bartering crops, crafts, or labor. Plantation stores sometimes also extended credit to enslaved laborers. *What did these objects reveal about the lives of enslaved laborers? How were these objects used, and what meanings did they hold for their users?* I used plantation records, ceramic analysis, glass analysis, analysis of personal adornment objects, and WPA narratives to answer these questions as discussed in chapters seven and eight. I am interested in the multivalence of these objects—what they meant to people in their everyday use and more broadly how they can, as McCracken (1988:135) notes, be used as instruments of change by helping groups create a new self-definition through revising the cultural category to which the group belonged. Finally, *Why archaeology? Why Virginia? and why Poplar Forest?*

Archaeologists researching slavery have undertaken many projects in Virginia, particularly on plantations, as is discussed in chapter three. Historically, the political and economic structure of antebellum Virginia was organized around plantations and therefore archaeological investigation of plantations is an important part of understanding the development and history of the state and region. Further, through the domestic slave trade and migrations of enslaved laborers with their owners from 1820 to 1850, enslaved Virginians and their descendants comprised a sizeable percentage of the slave populations in Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Louisiana (Berlin 1998: 265; Fischer and Kelly 2000: 229-236; W. Johnson 1999). Thus the considerable attention devoted to slavery in Virginia is warranted.

Most archaeological studies of slavery in Virginia have concentrated on seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and early-nineteenth-century sites. Many of these sites are located in the Tidewater and northern Piedmont regions of Virginia. Archaeological and historical publications about slavery in Virginia share this bias. Consequently, archaeological investigation of how complex changes, including the transportation revolution, migration, and slave leasing in nineteenth-century Virginia, impacted the lives of enslaved workers is currently limited (although see Cressey 1985; Sanford 2012; Zaborney 2012). I will discuss these factors further in chapter three.

Olmsted's first-hand accounts of his interactions with and observations of whites and blacks in the Southern United States provide ethnographic data about daily life in antebellum Virginia. His experiences there were framed by the era of his visit. Olmsted traveled by train—a novel mode of transportation when he began his travels. Some types of work that enslaved laborers and free blacks performed, like railroad construction, tobacco factory labor, and canal work were new to this time. The daily routines of whites and blacks, and the perspectives of each

social group were shaped by the antebellum era in the southern United States. To comprehend Olmsted's observations, it is necessary to understand the elements that defined this era.

### **Defining Antebellum**

Despite its distinctiveness as an epoch, historians are in disagreement about the specific timeframe that constitutes the antebellum period.<sup>2</sup> Translated from Latin, antebellum means “before the war.” Within the United States, *the* war is the Civil War. Some historians argue that the antebellum period began with the War of 1812 (Hart and Penman 2012; Hickey 2012; Walters 1978). Others argue that it began with the Missouri Compromise of 1820 (Copeland 2003:1; Forbes 2009; W. Johnson 1999:6) or as late as 1830 (Stampp 1956:28). I support the timeframe beginning with the Missouri Compromise because this pivotal event highlights the tension between the North and the South over slavery and the political negotiations that were enacted to assuage the tension. Sectional divisiveness was fundamental to the antebellum period and ultimately ended in the civil war that gave this period its name.

### *Sectional Divisiveness among North and South*

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 that arguably began the antebellum period was notably the first instance of U.S. Congressional exclusion of slavery from a public territory. Through this act, pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions in Congress negotiated the boundaries of the intersection of westward expansion and slavery. Specifically, the act outlawed slavery in the northern part of the former Louisiana Territory, with the exception of Missouri.

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<sup>2</sup> Frustratingly, most historians fail to explicitly define the antebellum period in their work.

When the United States acquired additional territory during the Mexican-American War in the late 1840s, tensions again arose between the North and South over whether these new territories would become slave states. The Compromise of 1850 granted free state status to California but allowed for the possibility of slavery in the remaining Southwest territory. The Compromise of 1850 also included the Fugitive Slave Act, which further exacerbated tension between the North and South.

The next legal battle between the North and South came when the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise when popular sovereignty was introduced to allow voters to decide whether the new territories would allow slavery. Finally, the Missouri Compromise was deemed unconstitutional in 1857 through the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case, which found that Congress had no authority to prohibit slavery because blacks and mulattoes were not U.S. citizens. This decision delineated the racial boundaries of U.S. citizenship and made slavery permissible in all of the country's territories. Some historians argue that the Dred Scott decision indirectly led to civil war.

Within antebellum Virginia, slaveholders monopolized political power, controlled the economy, and shaped the social structure of Virginia. The history of nineteenth-century communities in Central Virginia was defined by the social and political setting of the region as a slave society. A slave society, according to Berlin, is one in which "slavery stood at the center of economic production, and the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations . . ." (Berlin 1998:8). In 1860, Virginia was home to more enslaved laborers and slaveholders than any other state. Slavery permeated Virginia's social, economic, and political institutions. In the antebellum era, Virginia was becoming increasingly aligned with the Southern

region of the United States and more distant from the unified American nation that Virginians were so central in establishing.

However, not all white Virginians were supportive of slavery and the majority did not own enslaved laborers. High concentrations of enslaved people east of the Blue Ridge Mountains and low concentrations west of the Blue Ridge Mountains were the norm since the early 18th century (Link 2003:13). This trend continued throughout the antebellum era. Migration of non-slaveholding whites across the Blue Ridge further altered racial demographics in the early decades of the nineteenth century. By 1860, four-fifths of the African-American population in the state resided in eastern Virginia and three-fifths of the white population resided in the western part (Link 2003:30). In 1860 forty to fifty-nine percent of white families owned slaves in the majority of all western Piedmont and Tidewater counties (Link 2003:40).

As the nineteenth century progressed, factions within the state became increasingly polarized by issues of slavery, abolition, enfranchisement, and political control. The 1831-1832 debates concerning abolition of slavery were narrowly won by the traditional powerbrokers—Tidewater and Piedmont planters. The issue was more complex than whether or not, and how, slavery would be ended. It also incorporated broader political struggles between aristocratic conservatives and democratic reformers. Conservatives were interested in maintaining power and directing government revenues toward interests that supported the slave society that existed east of the Blue Ridge. Reformers were interested in enfranchisement that would increase their political control so they could direct government funds toward internal improvements to expand settlement and commerce (Freehling 1982: 53; Link 2003:13). With political power at risk and abolition at stake, the debates were contentious and conservatives won by a small margin. This narrow win was evidence of a diminishing power structure among planters and inversely

reflected the growing number of the middling class, not all of whom were slaveholders or supportive of slavery (Freehling 1982: 53; Schwartz 2001:12).

Vigorous political debates in 1850-1851 resulted in a new state constitution (Link 2003:7-27). In 1851, Virginia adopted universal white male suffrage, which further diminished the political power of slaveholders. The major geographical, economic, demographic and cultural differences within Virginia deepened political divisions (Link 2003:3). A series of events in Virginia in the 1850s—a slave in Richmond killed an overseer in 1852, slaveholder James Parsons was unsuccessful in 1856 in retrieving a runaway slave from Pennsylvania, and John Brown's raid in 1859—brought an increased focus to slave defiance, the disloyalty of many white western Virginians to the slave system, and the anxieties of slaveholders (Link 2003:7). The power struggle within Virginia ultimately led to the creation of West Virginia in 1863 when white male voters could not agree upon the issue of secession from the Union. Secession of southern states resulted in the Civil War, that ultimately ended the legal institution of slavery which had been so central to Virginia's economy, social structure, and identity.

In addition to regional tensions negotiated through political maneuvering, the antebellum period had other defining elements that impacted African Americans. Pivotal events and processes, such as urbanization, transportation growth, industrialization, and migration transformed physical, social, and mental landscapes. The labor system of slavery in Central Virginia expanded into new niches created by industrialization, urbanization, and the intensified shift from mono-crop tobacco cultivation to a more diversified form of mixed grain agriculture. Changing economic, political, and social circumstances created new conditions for enslaved laborers and discernable change in the institution of slavery, plantation economies, and African American culture.

### *Migration and Transportation*

Populations and density of settlement grew quickly in the Northern and Middle Atlantic states from 1820 to 1850, while Virginia remained relatively constant throughout this period with a population density of 20 people or less per square mile (Cressey 1999: 4; Majewski 2000). These changes reflect the increased industrial nature of the Northern and Middle Atlantic states and Virginia's persistent reliance on agriculture. The population stasis in Virginia masks two significant, dynamic processes: migration and the domestic slave trade. By 1850, nearly 400,000 native Virginians had migrated to other states (Majewski 2000:20). By the early decades of the nineteenth century, exhausted soils, declining plantations and farms, a larger population, and waning fortunes inspired young men to seek their prosperity elsewhere. These related factors resulted in the transformation of Virginia in the nineteenth century. In the 1850s these migrations were facilitated by the boom in transportation systems and internal developments throughout the south.

Virginia experienced the same advances in transportation that impacted the rest of the country in the antebellum period: the development of canals, railroads, and an increased number of local and regional roads, toll bridges, and turnpikes. By 1840, transportation via the James River and Kanawha Canal provided economic growth in Central Virginia as it facilitated daily access to Richmond and the Atlantic seaboard (Tripp 1997:7). Railroads further increased access to markets in the 1850s. These advances were, however, encumbered by Virginia's commitment to slavery. Politically powerful landowners relegated most track lines to the service of large plantations and market towns (Majewski 2000:114). By 1860 three railroads intersected in Lynchburg, enabling access to markets as far south as Tennessee and into the urban North via

northern Virginia. Most of the construction and maintenance of Virginia's railroads was executed by hired slaves (Daniel 1985:110). Slaves also worked as blacksmiths, porters, carpenters, and mechanics for the railroad (Daniel 1985:110; Marrs 2009: 53-83).

Changes in transportation generated local, regional, and national cultural change. Long-distance travel became increasingly available to the general public. Some areas that were previously isolated became accessible, and entire towns developed around train depots in areas which were previously unpopulated (Marrs 2009:55). Increased regional and national interaction of Virginians with inhabitants of the Northern states and opportunities to visit Northern locations certainly altered the cultural perspective of both groups to some degree, as expressed in the travel writings of the period (Adams 1854: 15, 21; Ingraham 1968; McKivigan 1996; Olmsted 1953). On a broader scale, railroad development impacted ideology by strengthening confidence in humanity's ability to control nature and overcome previously intractable physical barriers (Link 2003:34). Adversely, transportation development facilitated the growth and intensity of the domestic slave trade (W. Johnson 1999; Marrs 2009:112, 154). The expansion of the domestic slave trade played a formative role in the establishment and maintenance of slave societies in new territories.

Although illicit slave importation continued, the institution of slavery in the United States was altered by the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in the early nineteenth century (W. Johnson 1999:5; Thomas 1997). Despite this change, the institution adapted through growth in the domestic trade to meet the strong demand for slaves as slavery expanded into new states and cotton production in the Deep South rapidly increased (Deyle 2005; W. Johnson 1999). The domestic trade was facilitated by the change in labor demands associated with the decline of tobacco plantation agriculture in the Upper South. In Virginia the shift from tobacco cultivation



to wheat production, in the mid-eighteenth century in the east and slightly later in the west, resulted in a surplus of enslaved laborers which could be sold or leased for profit (Zaborney 2012:11-12). Hiring intensified in the early and mid-nineteenth century when urbanization and industrialization created additional labor niches in the South (Zaborney 2012:12-20). Most slaves who were sold in the domestic trade, and many who were forced to migrate with their masters, were uprooted from families and communities that were established in the eighteenth century when tobacco plantation agriculture expanded from the Tidewater into the Piedmont (Deyle 2005:15). This migration expanded beyond Virginia in the late eighteenth century with the demand for cotton (W. Johnson 1999:5). This relocation of enslaved Virginians throughout the South created a broad network of African Americans with kinship ties and cultural affinities.

### *Slave Hiring*

Hiring out slaves in Virginia first became common in the Tidewater around 1750 when planters in this region shifted from tobacco cultivation to less labor-intensive grain cultivation (Kulikoff 1986:405). During this time period, most hired slaves were engaged in agricultural work and most hired slaves were men. The delay in popularity of leasing slaves in the Piedmont was partially due to the delay of the transition from mono-crop tobacco cultivation to multiple cash crops in that region in the last decades of the eighteenth century (Neiman 2008:174). When leasing did become common in the Piedmont in the early nineteenth century, the tasks undertaken by leased slaves were less likely to be agricultural than industrial, civil, or domestic (Crofts 1999:259; Nicholls 1991:16; Zaborney 2012:20). The latter, domestic labor, was largely the work of enslaved women. The regularity with which enslaved women were hired out was new to the nineteenth century. As urbanization created a demand for domestic help in the towns,

African American slaves and free blacks were sought to meet the demand. White women shunned this sort of work because of the racial stigma associated with domestic work and servitude (Tripp 1997:17). As the price of slaves rose and the availability of land declined in the nineteenth century, middling farmers in rural areas hired slaves to increase their social status without having to purchase labor.

The increase in hiring out of enslaved laborers was one of the most significant changes impacting piedmont Virginia slavery in the nineteenth century. Slave leasing was a common practice in Virginia in the 1840s and it increased in the 1850s (Eaton 1960; Goldfield 1991, Martin 2004; Morgan 1992:57-76; Wade 1964; Zaborney 2012). Leasing became common enough by 1860 that national census data reflected this practice for the first time. Beginning in this year, slaves who were hired out were listed in the census under the name of the hirer, followed by the name and location of the owner. Significantly, the slave was the only person to remain unnamed in these transactions.

As traditional labor-intensive tobacco-based plantation agriculture declined and mixed crops were adopted, slaveholders had a labor surplus. They reacted to this by either selling slaves in the domestic trade or by hiring them out to other growing sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing and transportation (Link 2003:6). One consequence of this practice was a growing population of slaves who existed in a quasi-autonomous status, outside the master's immediate control (Link 2003:6). Most hired slaves widened their connections with other African Americans. These connections were created at the expense of proximity to family members and shared resources, such as garden plots, on the home plantation.

Slaves hired to factories and railroads lived in camps and garrets near their place of work (Tripp 1997:149). Consequently, many slaveholders expressed concern that hiring out offered

too much freedom for slaves (Link 2003:149). A southern planter expressed the following position about the hired slave in 1841: “Changing his place gives him a degree of independence incompatible with necessary subordination” (quoted in Bushman 2002:85). Hiring out is frequently discussed as a byproduct of urbanization and is linked with urban life (e.g. Wade 1964:54). The diverse practice of leasing slaves at Poplar Forest in the late antebellum era, discussed in detail in chapter four, illustrates that this phenomenon occurred in rural areas too, although industrialization and increased ties to urban areas facilitated by transportation developments certainly shaped these labor practices and hiring opportunities.

#### *Social Relations between Slaves and Slaveholders*

The increased zeal of northern abolitionist movements further impacted the institution of slavery in the antebellum era. National media coverage of fugitive slaves heightened slaveholders’ concerns about runaways, particularly in the border states of the Upper South (Link 2003: 97-119). These fears resulted in increased antebellum regulations that attempted to tighten control over the activities of slaves and free blacks (Franklin and Schweninger 1999:151; Schwarz 2001:49-55). Within Virginia, differences between slaveholders in eastern Virginia and non-slaveholders in the west and their struggle over political power also threatened the legitimacy of the slave system (Link 2003:149-176). The life experiences of slaveholders and slaves were changing, and the master-slave relationship that was the foundation of Southern culture was becoming more complex.

### *Antebellum Regulations, Restrictions, and Reform*

The Fugitive Slave Act, part of the Compromise of 1850, was one of a number of tighter restrictions placed on slaves and free blacks in the late antebellum era in Virginia. These racialized restrictions included increased surveillance by larger slave patrols and local police and bans on hired slaves boarding out (Green 1984). Following Nat Turner's rebellion, laws were enacted in 1832 that made it illegal for enslaved laborers and free blacks to attend meetings or religious services without white supervision, to possess or carry any firearm, to own or acquire slaves aside from one's children, to conduct any religious service, and to write or print anything that could be perceived to promote rebellion (Delaney and Rhodes 2001:22). Although runaways were a concern from the initiation of slavery, a study of runaways found that slaveholders were particularly concerned about this issue in the late antebellum era (Franklin and Schweninger 1999). This increasing concern was aroused by the increased number of newspapers and the growth of the abolitionist movement that created heightened public awareness about fugitive slaves from Virginia including George Latimer (1842), Henry "Box" Brown (1849), Shadrach Minkins (1851), and Anthony Burns (1854) (Schwarz 2001:49-55). The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 politicized the issue and further polarized the North and the South (Link 2003:107). Virginia bordered the free North and these racial regulations increased exponentially as the social distance increased between the North and South.

Sporadic attempts to restrict slave marketing activities were also made in the 1840s and 1850s (Penningroth 2003:68). The periodic nature of these attempts reveals the ambivalence of whites to slaves as consumers. Restricting marketing activities was a means of controlling slave behavior and limiting access to resources, which benefited slave holders. However, the

purchasing power of slaves was critical for market growth and success where slaves comprised as much as forty percent of the population, which benefited merchants.

New slave regulations and increased supervision likely resulted from the enslaved testing the boundaries of the institution of slavery, from slaveholders' anxiety that resulted from late antebellum rebellions in Virginia, and from increased opportunities to flee created by railroads and canals (Link 2003). The boundaries of the institution of slavery gained a bit of fluidity in the late antebellum era as practices such as slave hiring and industrial slavery became more common (Zaborney 2012). However, planters were reluctant to relinquish control and made concerted attempts to further institutionalize slavery through agricultural reform, as well as economic diversification, in the antebellum era (Link 2003:37). The degree to which slavery was embedded in the agricultural system of the South is expressed by the frequency of discussions of slave management in antebellum southern agricultural societies, agricultural periodicals and newspapers.

Many local and state agricultural organizations were formed in the early antebellum period (Genovese 1967:125-9). In the 1830s a loosely organized plantation reform movement was initiated to standardize slave housing, provisions and health on plantations (Breedon 1980; McKee 1992; Samford 2007:91; Singleton 2015:106; Vlach 1993:107, 1995). Planter periodicals, such as *Farmers' Register* (1833-1842), *Southern Agriculturalist* (1828-1846), *Southern Cultivator* (1843-1861), and *Southern Planter* (1841-1861), also emerged in this timeframe (Breedon 1980). However, an 1836 survey by the *Southern Agriculturalist* found that nine of ten planters who subscribed to any journal subscribed to a political one (Genovese 1967:129). Therefore, local and regional newspapers, magazines, and plantation handbooks

played an equally substantial and vocal role in promoting change in agricultural practices and emphasizing the significance of slavery for Southern society.

Transportation developments that were mutually necessitated by industrialization and urbanization increased ties between plantations and farms and local and regional markets. These internal developments were the source of extensive political maneuvering with each town vying to maximize its trade opportunities, often at the expense of its neighbors (Link 2003:35-36; Majewski 2000). The expansion of the market economy facilitated by transportation growth diffused slavery outside of the plantations and farms and into towns, commercial centers, factories, mines and other service-oriented places (Link 2003:37). This diffusion, and the concomitant quasi-free status of the increasing number of hired slaves who filled these niches, had the largest impact on the institution of slavery in antebellum Virginia. While the legal definition of “slave” did not change in this era, the life experiences of those thus defined certainly did. Yet, in what ways? The antebellum slave community at Poplar Forest provides a case study to consider the impact of these processes on the daily lives of enslaved laborers in this time period through the lens of consumerism. The consumer practices of enslaved laborers in antebellum Virginia empowered them through directing their labor for their own benefit and providing material goods that they used to meet self-defined needs and desires.

Prior to emancipation, enslaved people were engaged in a significant informal economy of property ownership and trade throughout the American South, particularly in the nineteenth century (Penningroth 2003). Property in this context refers to personal property such as animals, clothing, jewelry, cooking implements, and furniture rather than land or real estate, which is legally known as real property. The ability of enslaved laborers to earn, own, and trade property augmented the formal economy of the plantation by shifting part of the burden of subsistence to

the enslaved. The benefit of economic alleviation made these practices acceptable to many slave owners. Therefore, the consumer activities many enslaved folks engaged in had become customary rights by the antebellum period (Campbell 1993; Heath 1997, 2004; Hudson 1994; McDonald 1993; Martin 2008; Olwell 1994).

### **Outlining this Study**

The next three chapters of this dissertation establish the background of antebellum slavery and the framework of this research project. Chapter two situates this dissertation within the body of scholarship that has been written on consumerism at African American sites. The concepts of consumption and consumerism are defined. Archaeological investigations of consumer behavior are discussed according to their primary focus. Early consumerism studies in archaeology focused on economic behaviors, cost ratios, and expense patterns. Later scholars approached consumerism as a series of strategies and daily practices within and between social groups. Each of these approaches is explored before I offer a discussion of my own approach to consumerism.

Chapter three discusses the archaeology of nineteenth-century slavery in Virginia. I begin with an overview of comparable antebellum slavery sites. This discussion is followed by my research methodology. I then define my research project area and explain field methods, archival research, and artifact analysis methods.

Chapter four narrows the focus of the study to a local scale. The chapter begins with a discussion of the historical and cultural framework of antebellum slavery in Bedford County, Virginia. The history of Poplar Forest plantation is detailed and key members of the

Cobbs/Hutter family and all members of the enslaved community at Poplar Forest are introduced to define the social relations functioning within the plantation.

Chapters five through eight are organized according the stages of the consumer process: production, acquisition, use, and meaning. Although I do not isolate discard as a separate chapter, I discuss aspects of discard when I talk about site formation processes and discard is implicit in the creation of the archaeological assemblage that I analyze. Chapter five begins this analysis with a focus on production. Emphasis is placed on the experience of the site as a locus of economic production. This chapter begins with a discussion of plantation work relations and the power hierarchy on the plantation. Then I shift to a focus on economic production, particularly production of food crops, that enslaved laborers engaged in for the planter family. This section is followed by a discussion of food provisions based on plantation records, macrobotanical remains, and faunal remains. This detailed discussion is necessary to attempt to understand which foods Hutter provided to enslaved laborers and which ones they grew, trapped, fished, hunted, and gathered on their own. At the household scale, enslaved laborers produced goods and services for their own benefit (nutrition and otherwise) within and around their homes. I end this chapter with a discussion of other means of production—sewing, craft production, and additional labor—that enslaved laborers engaged in to participate in the internal economy.

Chapter six focuses on the ways enslaved laborers accessed material goods. Gender, life cycle, and social networks played a role in determining who had access to goods. Within the circumstances of enslavement, supply and access constrained consumer choice at multiple scales. In this chapter, I synthesize historical and archaeological evidence to consider how supply and access impacted which goods were available to enslaved laborers who were able to purchase or barter for them. I discuss provisioned goods to provide a baseline for understanding what goods



were supplied to enslaved laborers by slaveholders. Account books from Poplar Forest, Buffalo Forge in Rockbridge County, Hardaway's account book from Nottoway County, and B. Rousseau's account book from Fairfax County are analyzed to investigate the purchases made by enslaved laborers in Virginia in the antebellum period. Their choices among available goods indicate that they considered provisions inadequate in quantity or quality.

In chapter seven, I use a contextual approach that emphasizes the meaning of personal adornment objects with the particular historical and cultural background of enslavement at Poplar Forest plantation. The artifact assemblage from Poplar Forest is relatively rich in personal adornment items, and these were high priority purchase items for enslaved laborers in the antebellum period. I analyze folklore, WPA narratives, and archaeological contexts to consider how these objects were used by enslaved laborers in the antebellum period. This discussion includes issues of self-definition and costly signaling, but goes beyond these issues to consider the multivalence of personal adornment objects. The potential use of some items for health and well-being are discussed briefly and then elaborated on in the following chapter.

Chapter eight focuses on consumer and social practices used by whites and blacks to promote and maintain physical and mental health and well-being at Poplar Forest. I analyze faunal remains, macrobotanical remains, material culture, and historical documents to assess and interpret health and well-being practices. Poor health was shared across racial lines at Poplar Forest and attempts to promote or improve health sometimes united whites and blacks in practice and divided them at others. Whites and blacks held disparate yet intersecting conceptions of health and they practiced divergent, but overlapping methods of healing. These intersections are the result of generations of living entangled lives.

Chapter nine is a summary of the main points of the dissertation. It provides answers to the research questions laid out in this chapter. I make suggestions for future research at Poplar Forest. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of how my work contributes to the framework of consumer studies and consider how it might be useful for others engaged in consumer studies in different time periods and regions.

## Chapter 2

### Archaeological Interpretation of Consumerism at African American Sites

*Understanding that a person was a slave is not the end of the story but the beginning, for the slaves' history was derived from experiences that differed from place to place and time to time.* Ira Berlin 1998

Several historians, anthropologists, and historical archaeologists have written about the economy of enslaved laborers and the role of this economy within the broader political economy<sup>3</sup> within slave societies (Berlin 1998; Berlin and Morgan 1991; Bushman 2002; Fogel and Engerman 1974; Genovese 1967, 1973; Hauser 2001, 2008; Heath 1988, 1997, 1999a, 2004; Hilliard 2014; Howson 1995; Hudson 1994; McDonald 1993; McDonnell 1993; Mandle 1973; Mintz 1995; Mintz and Hall 1960; Morgan 1983; Olwell 1994; Penningroth 2003; Schlotterbeck 1991, Stamp 1956; Wright 1978). Anthropologist Sidney Mintz and historian Douglas Hall engaged in pioneering work on the internal economy of enslaved laborers in Jamaica when they investigated Jamaican marketing practices (Mintz 1955; Mintz and Hall 1960). Berlin and Morgan compiled a series of Caribbean and mainland North American studies of the internal economy in their important work *The Slaves' Economy* (Berlin and Morgan 1991). A few years later Hudson put together another significant volume of essays exploring the domestic economy of slavery in the southern United States (Hudson 1994). Decades later, the internal economy continues to be an important research focus in history and archaeology (e.g. see Bates 2015; Hauser 2008; Hilliard 2014; Mullins 2011).

Historians have developed local, regional, and global approaches to the economy of slavery, although regional and global studies are the most abundant. Most regional historical

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<sup>3</sup> Political economy is here considered to consist of the analysis of production, distribution, acquisition, and consumption of goods, services, and value (Preucel and Hodder 1996: 99).

studies focus on the divergent economies of the North and South within the United States (for example, see Majewski 2000). Many of these analyses are broad-scale, with a focus on the difference between market and domestic economies, and they are frequently written in the discourse of internal and external economies. While these arguments and discussions are effective for general analyses, they are more limiting in their application to a specific location. Enslaved people, and slaveholders as well, were frequently engaged in both domestic and market economies, internal and external economies, as their situations required or permitted. Thus the internal/external approach is simplistic, if not a false dichotomy, in practice (Hudson 1994:35). However, in this study I define internal economy in the conventional way—as the independent production, sale, and purchase of goods and services by enslaved people (Berlin and Morgan 1991:1). I made this decision because I do not have sufficient documentation or archaeological evidence to determine how goods were acquired definitely. I will discuss aspects of the internal economy in more detail in chapter five.

Rather than focusing solely on the production, sale, and purchase of goods as studies of the internal economy tend to do, consumerism approaches also investigate how procured goods and services were used and how and when they were discarded. Consumption encompasses four phases: production, acquisition, use, and discard of goods (Mullins 2011:2). Consumerism frameworks have been applied to numerous kinds of archaeological sites. Mullins (2011) analysis of the archaeology of consumption takes a broad approach, summarizing themes in historical archaeology scholarship on consumption. These themes include status, class, ideology, identity politics, domesticity, and the forces that generate consumer choices (Mullins 2011). My project focuses on consumer practices of enslaved laborers. Consequently, I will limit my

discussion of archaeological studies of consumerism primarily to those that focus on enslaved laborers.

Archaeological studies of slave consumerism are typically local in scale, though many situate the local expression within a global framework (for example, see Fennell 2003; Hauser 2001, 2008; Howson 1995). I will begin my discussion of archaeological studies of slave consumerism with John Otto's pioneering work that applied an economic approach to social status. Next I will consider how his ideas were expanded upon by other archaeologists studying consumer behavior within the political economy of slavery. I will discuss these case studies chronologically to demonstrate how consumption studies have changed over time as a result of shifting theoretical frameworks. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the theoretical framework for my research project at antebellum plantation Poplar Forest.

Consumption studies were not initiated by archaeologists and the study of consumerism has never been exclusive to anthropology (Jensen 1972; Jones 1984; Katona 1975; Maynes 1976; Simmel 1904; Veblen 1899). Consequently, the definitions of consumerism and consumption have changed over time to reflect the contemporary anthropological understanding of what these terms mean. These changes also reflect the shifting theoretical paradigm of researchers. This issue is complicated by the reality that scholars define and use the terms consumerism and consumption differently and there is disagreement on what each term means.

Early consumerism studies in archaeology approached consumerism in terms of economic behaviors, cost ratios, and expense patterns. Social groups were ranked according to economic criteria, yet the social relationships between them were not equally explored (Adams and Smith 1985; Lewis 1985; Moore 1985; Miller 1980, 1991; Miller and Hurry 1983; Miller et al. 1995; Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987). Later scholars approached consumerism as a

series of strategies and daily practices within and between social groups (Breen 2013; Galle 2010; Heath 1999a; 2004; Howson 1995; Mullins 1999; Thomas 1995; Wilkie 2000). The latter studies provide a richer understanding of the relationships within and between social groups as mediated by consumer practices and material culture.

In the late 1970s and 1980s key theories of material culture were developed that demonstrated that social worlds and materiality are reciprocally constituted (Miller 1987:3; Appadurai 1986; Baudrillard 1975; Bourdieu 1977; Douglas and Isherwood 1978; McCracken 1988; Miller 1987; Sahlins 1976). Studies of consumption focus on the ways that individuals and groups make consumer decisions, how they acquire, use, and discard commodities. These studies are undertaken by specialists in many disciplines, including economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and material culture studies. The ubiquity of these studies across disciplines demonstrates the significance of consumer behavior for understanding people and their relationships with material culture.

Within anthropology, consumption studies have typically focused on non-Western, non-market economies (Appadurai 1986; Gell 1986:110-140, 1992:142-191; Ferme 2001; Henry 1991:4; Kopytoff 1986; Mintz 1985; Thomas 1991). However, the increasing popularity of consumption studies in historical archaeology and material culture studies since the late 1980s is changing this focus (Mackay 1997; Miller 1995, 1998, 2005, 2010; Mullins 1999, 2011). Anthropological archaeologists primarily focus on the social aspects of consumption, particularly the movement of material goods and how people used goods and services to reproduce and transform culture and identities (Galle 2010; Heath 1997, 1999c, 2004; Howson 1990; Martin 2008; Mullins 1999, 2011:11; Wilkie 2000). The pioneering work that inspired archaeological studies of consumer behavior began in the 1970s.

In the late 1970s Stanley South developed an innovative method of identifying artifact patterns associated with historical-period activities, such as food preparation in the household (South 1977a, 1977b). Subsequent archaeologists refined and extended these patterns and applied them to sites associated with enslaved laborers (e.g. Armstrong 1990; Handler and Lange 1978; Lewis 1985; Moore 1985; Otto 1977). These artifact pattern studies typically examine consumption processes (Majewski and Schiffer 2001:30). Early work focused on consumerism was also influenced by the price scaling studies of George Miller (1980, 1991). Miller analyzed the contemporary prices of various types of refined earthenwares throughout the nineteenth century. The influence of South and Miller is evident in most early archaeological studies of consumer behavior.

Archaeologists used Miller's methodological framework to find correlations between various artifacts and/or artifact patterns and socioeconomic status. Since the early-1990s, however, many archaeologists researching consumption have given priority to the communicative and symbolic nature of objects (Howson 1995; Martin 2000, 2001, 2008; Orser 1996; Sanford 1994; Shackel 2000). The latter studies were impacted by Marxist theory (see Leone 2005) and the work of Arjun Appadurai (1986), Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1979); Ian Hodder (1986), Christopher Tilley (1989), and Grant McCracken (1988).

By the end of the 1990s, the degree of growth in consumption studies prompted Wurst and McGuire (1999:191) to state: "Consumer behavior and choice models have assumed a major role in historical archaeology." They identified three basic tenets shared by these studies: 1) they all emphasize gender and the household, 2) most use the autonomous individual as the basic unit of analysis; and 3) they focus on choice of consumer goods as symbolically meaningful action (Wurst and McGuire 1999:192). Since that time, consumption studies have continued to

incorporate these basic elements and they have become increasingly interwoven with documents, secondary historical resources, and oral histories (Fennell 2003; Galle 2006; Mullins 1999; Wilkie 2000).

Although the various approaches to consumption tend to share some basic tenets, scholars are still in disagreement about the definitions of consumption and consumerism and precisely what studies of consumerism should entail is still debatable. This ambiguity is partially due to the complex nature of consumer practices and commodities as simultaneously economic, social, and symbolic. Definitions of consumption and consumerism are contingent upon which of these facets are prioritized. The fact that studies of consumption and consumerism are conducted across multiple disciplines further complicates this issue. Dietler (2010:209) defines consumption as individual and group actions of acquiring and using goods. Majewski and Schiffer make the case that consumerism is something that goes beyond consumption (2001). Their definition of consumerism draws upon the work of Ann Smart Martin (1993). Whereas consumption focuses on production, marketing, distribution, and acquisition of goods and services, consumerism expands beyond these processes to include the cultural relationship between humans and consumer goods and services, including behaviors, institutions, and ideas (Majewski and Schiffer 2001 31 based on Martin 1993:142-3). This holistic approach to consumption and consumerism is the approach I will use in this study.

### **Economics and Status**

Ascher and Fairbanks (1971), in their seminal article on the excavation of a slave cabin in Georgia, discussed the ceramics found at the cabin site and where they may have been manufactured. They concluded that the same assemblage could have been found at other



contemporary non-slave sites, though likely in higher quantity and better condition (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971:11). Deetz (1977:20) echoed this conclusion in his statement concerning the correlation between status and artifacts: “Depending on an individual’s place within the socioeconomic scale, the artifacts with which he furnishes his household will vary in quantity and quality.” This concept of equating quantity and quality with status is the basis of the status patterning studies initiated by John Otto.

John Otto’s work (1984) was one of the initial, and most influential, archaeological studies of household consumption within a plantation context. His research focus was to determine how status differences are reflected in the archaeological record (Otto 1984:11). Otto (1977, 1984) applied an economic approach to analyze status patterning between enslaved laborers, overseers, and planters in the archaeological record at Cannon’s Point Plantation. His research demonstrated that status has material correlates as a consequence of differential access to resources. Through analysis of different categories of material culture, he determined that white dominance, hierarchical, and wealth-poverty status patterning simultaneously existed at the site (1984:160-161). Thus, depending on which artifact class was analyzed (for example, ceramics or glass), the overseer’s material assemblages at times were more similar to enslaved laborers’ assemblages and at other times more similar to the planter’s assemblages.

Otto’s study highlighted the complexities of searching for social status in the archaeological record and recognized that if searches for status patterns are to be at all successful, they require comparative data from all contemporary groups that lived on plantations (1984:178; for a critique of Otto see Howson 1990). Otto recognized that differential access to resources and power mediated consumer behavior. Social distance is an additional factor that mediates economic and political relationships between different groups. Social distance is

created by socially constructed boundaries. Gender, race, and ethnicity are examples of some variables of social distance. Archaeologists have critiqued Otto for oversimplifying the social organization of plantations into planter/overseer/ enslaved laborers and failing to recognize that the social distance between planter and overseer was highly variable and had an impact on social status (Orser 1988; Howson 1990).

Adams and Smith's analysis of postbellum tenant farmers explored two variables of social distance: race and class (1985). They produced the earliest study of consumerism in African American archaeology that explicitly focused on consumer behavior (1985). The objective of their research was to analyze race and class through examining consumption practices within households on a Mississippi plantation in the late nineteenth century. They compared tenant farmer purchases recorded in a local general store ledger in 1877-79 with the archaeological record for two corresponding households. Tenants spent most of their income on food and clothing at the general store (Adams and Smith 1985:330). Both of these elements were under-represented in the archaeological record. Conversely, the archaeological record documented incidental purchases that were underrepresented in the store ledgers (Adams and Smith 1985:330). Overall the image of tenant life that emerged from this research was one of life with minimal material comforts due to poverty, which translates into minimal archaeological visibility in the present as later corroborated by Barile (2004b).

The work of Adams and Smith (1985) was included in an edited volume focusing on the archaeology of African American life. All of the authors in that volume used research strategies based on the methods and techniques proposed by South (1977). South's artifact pattern recognition method, which quantifies artifacts into functional categories to reveal behavioral patterns, was modified to fit plantation settings (Singleton 1985:4).

Lynne Lewis (1985), like Otto, examined percentages of artifact types and forms within assemblages to determine the socioeconomic status of enslaved laborer, overseer, and planter groups. Rather than focusing principally on price indexes to determine status, Lewis looked at function. She argued that the presence of non-utilitarian ceramic vessels reflected status (Lewis 1985:136). She made the same case for glass vessels (Lewis 1985:132) and stated that high quantities of architectural debris reflect high social standing (Lewis 1985:138).

Lewis argued that a high percentage of personal adornment objects are an index of social status when there are a variety of forms (Lewis 1985:133, 138). Therefore, variety, rather than quantity or percentage, was determined to be more significant in determining social status. Thus, while Lewis' work focused on quantification and function to elicit behavioral patterns, she acknowledged that other factors, such as variability of form, were also important in assessing social status. Lewis's work foreshadowed the work of Alison Bell by observing that wealth that could have been channeled into material goods may have instead been diverted into land and the production of crops (Lewis 1985:138; Bell 2000). Her focus on artifact variety is also similar to the concept of artifact richness used by archaeologists working with the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery and others. They adopted this concept from paleobotanical (Burnham 1993) and faunal studies (Seagle and Shugart 1985).

### **Consumer Choice, Race, and Status Patterns**

Although Otto, Lewis, and others analyzed consumer behavior at a household level, their explicit goal was the study of status, rather than consumption (Otto 1977; Lewis 1985; Moore 1985). Spencer-Wood brought together a body of research centered on consumerism in her edited volume *Consumer Choice in Historical Archaeology* (1987). The articles in the Spencer-Wood

volume share the focus of investigating status. These articles were also influenced by the recent development of models for investigating socioeconomic status in archaeological assemblages (Miller 1980, 1991; Schulz and Gust 1983). Because of the ubiquity of ceramics on historical archaeology sites, Miller's economic index of ceramics was particularly influential on this work (1980, 1991). Within the volume, Spencer and Heberling and Orser's work examined assemblages associated with enslaved laborers and consequently will be discussed in more detail.

Spencer-Wood and Heberling employed the Miller ceramic index to investigate its ability to predict socioeconomic status (1987). First they analyzed a whiteware assemblage from the site of an elite Vermont merchant, Isaac Green, and his family as a control group. Extensive historical documentation independently established the elite socioeconomic status of the Green family. The archaeological ceramic index calculated using Miller's price-scale corresponded to the elite status of the family, as predicted (Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987:64). Next, index values were calculated for ten additional early nineteenth-century sites occupied by individuals and families of known occupational status, including enslaved laborers, planters, and overseers (Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987:64-79). Index values were calculated for cups, saucers, plates, and bowls for each assemblage.

Spencer-Wood and Heberling determined that the ceramic indices for the assemblages as a whole generally corresponded with occupational status rankings. The enslaved laborer, overseer, and planter assemblages from Cannon's Point plantation proved the exception, which the scholars interpreted to be a result of the exchange relationships between the planter (as the giver) and the overseer and enslaved (as receivers). "Some disenfranchised groups, such as slaves, did not directly purchase ceramics but were supplied with ceramics by the planter, who may have handed down old ceramics and/or purchased new ones for the slaves" (Spencer-Wood

and Heberling 1987:70). The high cup and saucer index exhibited in the Cannon's Point Plantation assemblage from a slave household is noted to be due to ceramics that were handed down from the planter to the enslaved; thus they do not represent ceramics chosen from the market. They removed the Cannon's Point slave site from the index value rank based on cups and saucers because of "non-status-related methods of ceramic acquisition" (Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987:70).

Even if the objects were handed down from the planter, the method of acquisition is directly related to status if the social aspect of status is considered over the economic aspect. The items may or may not have been purchased by the enslaved family, but receiving ceramics from the planter was a direct consequence of the racialized slave status of the occupants and the social relationship between slave and master.<sup>4</sup> The point is that using a ceramic index to determine social status is problematic because the status determined by this method is purely economic, which is a better index of class.<sup>5</sup> Social status also incorporates non-economic elements of social position such as race and gender. While the latter variables certainly entail constraints on economic practices, they do not do so in an unproblematic or uniform way.

Spencer-Wood and Heberling note that ethnicity and market access are related to occupational status and consumer behavior (Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987:73). Sites with African American occupants were determined to have low occupational status and ceramic index values. Spencer-Wood and Heberling concluded that socioeconomic status rather than market access accounted for the most variation among site ceramic index values (Spencer-Wood and Heberling 1987:73). They further determined that relative socioeconomic status can be

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<sup>4</sup> In this case status refers to the racialized status of being enslaved rather than ranked economic position.

<sup>5</sup> Although this too is certainly problematic, class is not a simple index of economic status although it does refer to a rank associated with relative wealth.

successfully indicated by using Miller's price-scaling ceramic index to calculate value for cups and saucers because of their high display function, which corresponds to status. These findings are problematic. They removed the Cannon's Point slave site from the index value rank based on cups and saucers because of the real or perceived acquisition method. By not questioning whether the ceramics had a similar display or other status-related function in the homes of the enslaved, the authors missed the opportunity to further consider the assemblage beyond the acquisition method. This kind of meaning-centered approach was not the goal of these researchers, but became central to consumption related studies in the following decade.

Orser developed an historical materialist perspective to analyze the relationship between plantation status and consumer choice (1987). This framework was selected for its appropriateness for the analysis of capitalist societies (Orser 1987:123). He applied this dialectical approach to southern cotton plantations occupied from 1800 to 1930. Despite Orser's more recent focus on the significance of race for plantation studies (2004; 2007), in this article he criticized historians and other archaeologists who use a racialized caste model to understand the organization of plantations (1987:124). He argued that the attention devoted to race masks the primary economic function of southern plantations, within which status was determined by occupation and its associated status rather than by skin color (1987:125). However, it is important to realize that the conflation of race and occupation is historically situated. While economics was the primary reason behind initiating use of African/African American labor on plantations, over time the system became racialized and occupation *was* influenced by skin color.

## **Consumer Behavior Studies: Context and Meaning**

A few years after the publication of Spencer-Wood's volume, Klein and LeeDecker edited a special issue of *Historical Archaeology* that emphasized general consumer patterns and methodologies for researching these patterns (1991). The stated goal of this research was to create a broad framework for studying consumer behavior that was not linked to a specific commodity or segment of the population (Henry 1991:3). These scholars included in the Klein and LeeDecker volume refer to their work as "consumer behavior studies."

LeeDecker stated: "Narrowly defined, consumer behavior pertains to the patterns of individual, household, or group expenditures, and specifically to the acquisition and use of material items" (1991:30). The studies in the Spencer-Wood volume used models that assume a simple correlation between the relative cost of goods acquired by a particular household and the economic status of that household. Klein (1991), LeeDecker (1991, 1994), and Miller and Hurry (1983) critiqued this assumption as problematic because other factors, such as historic and geographic context, income strategies, and life cycle of the household and of various kinds of material culture can impact expense patterns. LeeDecker also critiqued studies that use South's artifact patterning, and variants of it, because they focused on the function of objects and did not differentiate their materials and styles, which can be sensitive indicators of status (1991:33). The latter assertion falls short in the case of Lewis and Spencer-Wood and Heberling's work because both argued that other variables aside from function (non-utilitarian vessels and cups and saucers, respectively) seem to index social status better than ratios generated by function.

Klein emphasized the importance of the historical framework for explaining consumer behavior (Klein 1991). As supporting evidence, he noted Miller and Hurry's archaeological study of a large landholder's cabin in Ohio (Miller and Hurry 1983). Although the landholder

had substantial material resources, the ceramic assemblage associated with his house produced a low score on the Miller ceramic index scale. They interpreted these findings as a consequence of physical isolation that resulted in limited access to urban markets (Klein 1991:77). Klein argued against the accessibility model as a heuristic device because several factors determine degree of access and these factors change over time (1991:85-6). Although he did not mention it explicitly, race was certainly one of these factors. Although the work of Klein and LeeDecker was an attempt to create models for getting at general consumer patterns, their work was unfortunately not broadly influential upon later consumer studies.

A second critique of earlier consumer studies was put forth by Cook, Yamin, and McCarthy (1996). These authors argued that many of the earlier studies approached consumption as a means to an end, to study a consequence of consumption such as status, rather than focusing on the processes of consumption itself (Cook, Yamin, and McCarthy 1996:50). They proposed (1996:50) that shopping as the meaningful act of agency was at the core of consumption—why consumers made particular choices—and should be the emphasis of consumption studies (see also Miller 2013).

These critiques of artifact and status patterning studies and the call for a renewed focus on context, agency, and meaning reflected a broader change impacting archaeological research by the early 1990s. The artifact patterning studies and economic models that were popular in the late 1970s and 1980s were an outcome of the growth of processual studies in archaeology since the 1960s. Processual studies, in a general sense, are driven by theories that focus on societal adaptations to the physical and social environment. The central goal of processual research is to generate universal laws of human behavior. Many scholars began to move away from the



statistical, scientific models influenced by processualism by the 1990s and post-processual studies have increased since that time.<sup>6</sup>

Post-processual studies, although characterized by very divergent approaches, tend to share a number of characteristics. These studies are meaning-centered, focus on individuals as agents rather than passive members of culture, and emphasize historical and temporal frameworks (M. Johnson 1999). Post-processual archaeologists who investigate the relationships between people and goods most frequently rely upon the theoretical developments of social scientists Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, Arjun Appadurai, Daniel Miller, and Grant McCracken.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas and her colleague Baron Isherwood, an economist, explored the connections between material culture, meaning, and consumption (1979). They interpreted the primary social functions of consumer goods as communication, creating and maintaining relationships, and marking and defining the categories of culture. According to Douglas and Isherwood (1979), commodities are to be understood as a medium rather than an end; their uses rather than their physical forms are what are of primary significance to their users. In discussing the social uses of material culture, Douglas and Isherwood (1979) made the analogy between material culture and fences and bridges. Goods are a means of inclusion and exclusion in relationships of both material and social exchange.

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<sup>17</sup> Classifying archaeological approaches as processual and post-processual is problematic and creates a false dichotomy between two “types” that are really heuristic constructs. With that acknowledgment, there has been a change in theoretical approach since the 1960s that can be more easily understood by distinguishing between processual approaches that are positivist and influenced by systems theory and post-processual approaches that are more relativist and interpretive in nature. The former tend to share the goal of elucidating general laws of human behavior (though some processualists do study small-scale changes) while the latter focus on a smaller scale of change at the level of social groups (though some post-processualists use small scale changes to understand global processes).

Arjun Appadurai emphasized the social, relational, and active nature of consumption (1986:31). Appadurai discussed the meaning of commodity and examined the various roles of commodities in societies (Appadurai 1986). He further argued that consumption is an important mechanism for receiving messages and sending them to others (Appadurai 1986). These ideas are also central to the work of Douglas and Isherwood (1979) and Daniel Miller (1987).

Miller developed a theory of consumption that emphasizes the roles and meanings of material culture and the relationships between individuals, social groups, and objects in consumer practices (Miller 1987). His work has been important in shifting the focus of research from the role of production in shaping culture and identities to the role of consumption toward the same goals. Miller understands consumption as an active process of objectification that shapes identity and social practice; objects play a significant role in self-definition and defining others (Miller 1987:215). Miller is interested in how individuals and groups recontextualize objects, purchased and acquired by other means, into daily routines, ideas about order, and to negotiate relationships (1987:8). The influence of Bourdieu's concept of habitus is apparent in Miller's work (Miller 1987:106).

Grant McCracken's work has also been influential in shaping consumer studies. He analyzed the relationship between culture and consumption in a series of essays. He looked at how cultural goods, or commodities, are used in particular situations—to express gender, to serve as bridges to displaced meaning, and to create and respond to social change (McCracken 1988). McCracken noted: “Goods serve in the first capacity [as an instrument of change] when they help a group create a new definition of itself and a revision of the cultural category to which it belongs . . . . Goods are a means with which the group can rethink itself” (1988: 135

parentheses added). Consequently, McCracken argues that material culture is central to creating, maintaining, and transforming identity.

These theoretical approaches provided a corresponding impetus for archaeological investigations of socioeconomic status, personal and social identity, and the uses of commodities in creating meaning. Each study influenced future work in various ways. Within historical archaeology, Miller's work is applied most frequently to studies of identity (for example see Potter 1999; Wilkie 2000). The critical role of material culture for (re)construction of identity has been a focus of historical archaeology since the early 1990s. The use of objects as status markers, beginning with the work of Otto, and for signaling information to others are recurrent themes in archaeological studies of consumerism (Otto 1984; Neiman 1998; Galle 2006). These theoretical frameworks influenced archaeologists working in the late 1980s and continue to influence archaeological research in the present. Jean Howson's dissertation is a useful case study for understanding the impact of post-processual ideas and new theoretical approaches on consumer behavior studies.

Jean Howson's dissertation *Colonial Goods and the Plantation Village* analyzed the internal economy and consumer choices of the plantation laborer population on Montserrat (Howson 1995). More specifically, she examined "how plantation laborers' participation in the internal economies and consumption habits affected the struggles which took place over land, labor, and housing in each colony, and in fact on each estate, upon emancipation" (1995:11). She chose consumption because it is central to both the internal economy of the enslaved and colonial discourse concerning emancipation. Howson argued that, from an etic perspective, consumption was perceived as an index of progress and acculturation while emically it was

perceived as a means of self-expression since consumer choices were used by African West Indians to symbolize collective identity.

Howson used a local approach by focusing on the case studies of two particular plantations. She argued that her study differed from others in her approach to the interpretation of material culture, specifically ceramics and clothing. Rather than equating quantity and quality of ceramics with status, as was done by earlier researchers using artifact patterning and ceramics ratios, Howson focused on the distribution systems of commodities (for example, how goods were acquired, by whom, for whom, and from whom) and the meanings of these objects in particular historical, cultural, and personal frameworks. Identity was an important referent of clothing and ceramics. Howson contended: “Cultural identity could be constructed through material culture at a mundane level, with pots, pans, plates and bowls” (Howson 1995: 218). She challenged the traditional functional categories of archaeology typologies, and suggested that in the case of clothing and ceramics that style, usually an independent category, *is* the function.

Howson claimed that meanings of clothing and ceramics were linked to their means of acquisition and use patterns. Commodities could be acquired in a number of ways. They could be provisioned and in this case the source was the British Empire via merchants who brought goods to planters and warehouse retailers. Alternatively, goods could be obtained by barter or purchase. Supplies were sold by merchants and retail marketers. Hucksters, street vendors, and market vendors, who were usually enslaved or free blacks, were also important. The British salespeople perceived of bartering as an index of undeveloped economics among the enslaved.

Howson argued that the meanings of objects were transformed by their distribution systems. Articles that were provisioned, such as particular kinds of osnaburg clothing, retained an association with slave labor. Articles that were acquired in the market, through barter or

purchase, such as transfer printed ceramic plates, came to signify individuality, personal status, and collective African-West Indian identity. Howson claimed that “styles” resulting from provisioning policies were rejected by former slaves after emancipation, but styles that resulted from agency were maintained because of their reference to African-West Indian identity (Howson 1995:163).

Howson wove together threads of archaeological, historical, and ethnographical evidence to support her interpretations. Her goal was to interpret the *meaning* of clothing and ceramics for plantation laborers. She also argued for the primacy of context for determining meaning. These contexts, within her study, included the internal economy, plantation policies, and the plantation village. She made a case for the importance of understanding the local historical and cultural situation to understand the broader processes of which the local is a part. She particularly emphasized how differing distribution systems transformed meanings of ceramics and clothing and how the recontextualization of imported objects in the plantation village changed their practical and symbolic meanings. Howson’s focus on “the meanings which commodities accrue along their paths” (p.10) was influenced by Appadurai’s notion of “the social life of things” (Appadurai 1986). Although it is not explicit in her work, Howson’s understanding of consumption also seems to be influenced by Miller and McCracken (Miller 1987; McCracken 1988).

Barbara Heath is another archaeologist who has analyzed the role of enslaved laborers as active consumers and considered the implications of consumer behavior for the archaeological record (Heath 1988, 1997:2, 1999d). Heath examined the account books of John Hook in Bedford (1771-1776) and Franklin (1800-1810) counties to analyze the economic activities enslaved laborers engaged in outside of the plantation (Heath 1997:2). Hook recorded 51 or 52

enslaved laborers among his customers, including Will of Poplar Forest. Most of these customers paid for goods through exchange of agricultural produce, but some exchanged other goods or services and some paid in cash. Cloth, sewing supplies, accessories, alcohol and sweeteners were the most common purchases of the sixteen customers in Bedford County (Heath 1997:1; Martin 2008).

Heath's study is significant because it documents enslaved consumers' agency and demonstrates that the archaeological record of slavery includes specific goods chosen and purchased by the enslaved rather than primarily objects provisioned and handed down by slaveholders and their families. These objects were sometimes purchased through shared payments, which demonstrate pooling of resources among the enslaved (Heath 1997:3).

Enslaved workers obtained other items through economic ties with free citizens who purchased items for some enslaved people in exchange for services, such as coal production and hauling. These relationships provide insight into the network of relationships that extended the economy of the enslaved beyond plantations and farms. Heath's study also documents the particular kinds of activities people engaged in to create goods, offer services, and earn money for exchange. Thus the production aspect that is missing from some other consumer studies of slavery is clarified.

From an archaeological perspective, Heath's analysis suggests that looking at assemblages rather than individual artifacts may be the key to differentiating between which articles were acquired actively and passively by the enslaved. Artifacts related to production, such as tools, are also indicative of independent economic activities (Heath 1997:4, 2004). In terms of space, yards hold the best potential to identify the location of work spaces, gardens, enclosures, and storage areas relating to agricultural and other economic activities (Heath

1997:4). Heath concluded that it is important not to assume that slave status within the work regime of the plantation, proximity to the planter's house, or size of the slave population should prescribe the economic activity of particular individuals. Later research undertaken by Heath found that the number of young children in the home is the most sensitive causal factor for hampered economic activity among women. Young single males and elderly males were the most productive in the study population (Heath 2004a).

Wurst and McGuire found fault with two particular issues shared by consumer behavior studies conducted through the late 1990s. First, they were concerned that these studies reify and universalize both the individual and choice (Wurst and McGuire 1999:192). They argued that focus on the individual obscures the social relations, particularly relationships of power and control, which inform each individual's choices. Further, choice is contingent upon social class, which makes it necessary to determine and explicate the constraints placed upon an individual or groups' choices, rather than to treat each choice as equivalent. Because of the social relations in which it is enmeshed, a particular choice does not have the same significance for all consumers (Little 1994:194).

The second issue raised by Wurst and McGuire is concern with a false separation of consumption and production, which they argued are two expressions of the same thing—social (re)production (Wurst and McGuire 1999:195). These scholars argue that isolating consumption emphasizes the importance of what people acquire, rather than the social relations of dominance and subordination that facilitate and restrict what they buy (Wurst and McGuire 1999:196). They provide the following example: “The female head of a nineteenth-century middle-class household can choose the dishes her family will dine from, while her domestic servant has no choice but to use what she is given” (Wurst and McGuire 1999:193). Later, they state: “To put

all of this perhaps too simply, choice is a privilege of the powerful and well to do.” This statement is on the mark; the concept of choice has been explained a bit too simply. In order to make the point that individual choices are not autonomous, however, Wurst and McGuire went too far in removing all autonomy from the servant in the above example. While servants’ choices were certainly circumscribed, and indeed some would have had no other choice, archaeological data prove that domestic servants, enslaved and otherwise, often did have some choice in what dishes their families would use. It is just as problematic to remove all agency from individuals as it is to assume equal autonomy for all.

The same year that McGuire and Wurst published their critique, Paul Mullins published *The Archaeology of African American and Consumer Culture* (Mullins 1999). This book addressed their criticism that many studies fail to address the social relations of dominance and subordination that assist and constrain consumer choices. The social and economic position of African Americans in the antebellum Southern United States was defined by race. Although each of the studies already discussed address race either directly or indirectly, none forefront the complex relationship between race and consumerism as Mullins does. Mullins used archaeological, historical, and oral historical evidence to interpret the experience between African Americans and consumer culture in Annapolis, Maryland from 1850 to 1930.

Mullins’ analysis included racialized consumption, African American consumer spaces, racialized labor, and “consumer tactics.” Consumer tactics are “systematic, but consciously unplanned or unstructured, consumption patterns” (Mullins 1999: vii). Mullins explored how individuals marked by race confront, contest, and cohabit with capitalist materialism through consumer tactics. He concluded that consumer tactics were not used simplistically for either



resistance *or* accommodation to the racialized economic system, but rather consumer decisions were made situationally and reflect both resistance *and* accommodation, at times simultaneously.

Mullins (1999:60) demonstrated that material culture could simultaneously signify resistance and accommodation through analysis of a metal hair straightening comb. Upon excavation of the comb, its function was unclear to the archaeologists. A female African American resident of Gott's Court in Maryland revealed the function of hair straightening to the group of white archaeologists. Neither its practical function nor its implied symbolism of white domination were what was significant for her about the object. For the African American woman, it symbolized cultural solidarity and distinction, as it may have for its original owner (Mullins 1999:60). Mullins explained the multivalence of many such objects and "consumption tactics" that were read by whites in one way and African Americans in another. These different interpretations resulted from the different mental landscapes or ideologies of contemporary (and present, in the case of the hair comb) whites and African Americans, which overlapped in some instances and not in others.

Mullins' emphasis on the centrality of desire and his statement that consumerism and the use of material culture to define identity articulates "not what we are, but who we *wish* to be" (1999:29) is quite significant, and it has implications for archaeological studies of identity. It indicates that what we may be referencing with material indices of identity is ideals rather than realities. McCracken also discusses this, though using different terms. McCracken, drawing from Douglas and Isherwood, suggested that people use goods as bridges to displaced ideals or to each other (Douglas and Isherwood 1979; McCracken 1988). African Americans were faced with the complex situation of making consumer choices within a consumer economy structured to reproduce inequality. African Americans desired equality, independence, and affluence and they

negotiated the system through consumer tactics to acquire material goods that embodied these ideals.

It was not only the goods themselves that were significant, but equally the act or practice of consumption itself. Participation in the market economy, albeit under racial constraints, was also a means of reaching toward ideals. However, as Mullins stated: “consumption distances consumers from marginalization, though the distance is more perceived than real” (1999:28). Thus an individual, group, or community’s consumerism was not always able to bridge the gap between what was and what could never be in terms of social realities, though it did provide a real sense of moving toward the ideal which was the goal of the struggle.

In a study similar to Mullins’ research, Laurie Wilkie analyzed four households from an antebellum/post-emancipation tenant community (1840-1950) in Louisiana (Wilkie 2000). Wilkie’s goal was to analyze identity construction, maintenance, and the transition from slavery to freedom through consumer practices. Wilkie used Bourdieu’s practice theory and his concept of *habitus* as the theoretical framework for her analysis. She found this work particularly suited for her study because she conceived the physical manifestation of habitus to be the household, which was her unit of analysis (2000:134, 226). She considered identity to be a construct created and manifested through daily practice, which is also consistent with Bourdieu’s ideas.

Bourdieu defined habitus as the sense of cultural and normative order that an individual develops through experiences and everyday practice or action (1977, 1990). This structural sense of cultural order is then used by the individual to impart meaning to new experiences.

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of the conductor” (1990:53). [cf Wilkie 2000:11]

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is significant because it recognizes that individuals' comprehension of their cultural structure is situated within their own personal experiences and historical setting (Wilkie 2000:11). Within this theoretical framework, the mundane artifacts of everyday existence are prioritized. Bourdieu's framework has been criticized for minimizing the agency of individuals (Wilkie 2000). Archaeologists concerned with agency have circumvented this problem in different ways. Shackel hybridized Bourdieu's concepts with Giddens' structuration theory to create a theory of agency based on social practice (Shackel 2000; see below). Wilkie expanded upon Bourdieu's idea that the relationship between practice and structure is unconscious by explicitly acknowledging and including use of material culture that is conscious and expressive of the relationship between practice and cultural structure in her analysis (Wilkie 2000:13).

Although Wilkie's work is less explicitly politicized than Mullins' work (though certainly not apolitical), both analyzed the use of everyday consumer practices. In contrast to Mullins' study, which prioritized race, Wilkie's study focused equally on multiple aspects of identity including gender, ethnicity, and race. Her study also used consumerism to understand identity (trans)formation and interpreted material culture as evidence of group and individual identity rather than as evidence of ideals. Wilkie concluded that the early postbellum period witnessed a revival of African-based traditional practices, medicinal practices, and foodways, and the incipience of ethnic preferences in personal adornment (2000:234). The postbellum and Reconstruction periods were times of rapid change in the lives of African Americans. Wilkie argued that the rise in traditional practices and the initial demonstration of ethnic preferences in material culture reflect a re-definition of self and group that was a consequence of this change.

Through consumerism and daily practice, African Americans were able to actively maintain a sense of community and group identity and adapt to a new cultural environment in the face of complex changes.

The work of Mullins and Wilkie, influenced by Bourdieu and Giddens, conceived of Africans and African Americans as agents in the consumer enterprise. Although research that uses theories of agency became popular in the 1990s, there is not a cross-cultural, cross-temporal definition of agency or agreement on how it should be used to interpret the archaeological record. Broadly, theories of agency acknowledge that humans make choices and that they act, or choose not to act, with intention; though they are not necessarily aware of the consequences of their actions. The use of agency theories has facilitated a shift in focus, from large-scale structural analyses, to local-scale studies of individuals and groups. Although it is not a study focused on plantations, Shackel's (2000) analysis of domestic consumption at industrial-era domestic sites is directly relevant to the study of enslaved laborers working at industrial-era plantations. Shackel's conception of agency is drawn from Giddens and Bourdieu. He combined and interpreted their ideas as follows:

Actors know the way society operates, and individuals act within a pre-existing structure. They make sense of cultural practices that become routine in their daily activities within this structure. Actors think and act in a certain way, they interact with each other, and they may reproduce the existing structure. During this interaction, agents may also express power relations through material consumption and the production of goods. The choices they make are made with reference to others, and their actions, pursued within the parameters of social structures, may lead to tension and conflict. These differences require some sort of resolution, which may mean conformity, or change, depending upon one's position in the social order (Shackel 2000:232).

Shackel's method for discerning agency archaeologically was to look for "subtle variations in the archaeological record and [place] them within a historic and social context" (Shackel 2000:232). He found that while all individuals in the study participated in the "new consumer ethic," the variation in the material culture assemblages of managers and workers reflected agency.

Orser's (2004, 2007) work that explores consumerism and race also drew upon Bourdieu, among multiple other theoretical frameworks. Orser argued against local-scale studies that focus on individuals and households and in favor of broad-scale structural analysis, unlike many other scholars who employ agency (Orser 2007: 51). He narrowed the definition of agency by focusing on the tension between human agency and structural constraints.

Orser argued that agency is constrained by epochal structures and social networks, which he also perceived as structural (2007:52-55). Orser's concept of epochal structures and his definition of agency is based on the work of Donham and Braudel (Orser 2007:52-3, Donham 1999, Braudel 1967). Epochal structures include social structures, economic structures, racial structures, and politico-legal structures (Orser 2007:52, 68). These structures are created by the dominant power group, which naturalizes them. Agency struggles against these structures. Orser borrowed Donham's terms to differentiate two kinds of agency, historical and epochal (Orser 2007:53). Historical agency, which is temporally and spatially contingent, entails the struggles of various unequal social groups. Epochal agency is based on "patterns of individual action that reproduce the broad structures of inequality" (Orser 2007:53). Orser argued that conceptualizing agency in this way, as struggle within structures of inequality, means: "agency is not simply the ability of a person to accomplish something or have complete freedom of action; it implies that people struggle for freedom of action within systems of inequality not of their making" (Orser 2007:53).

While I appreciate that Orser has made the structural underpinnings of social, economic, politico-legal, and historical contexts more explicit and brings a focus to the inequality of systems comprising the social structure, I do not think that his ideas are fundamentally distinctive (although his terminology is different) from Bourdieu's conceptions of habitus and

practice theory. Both of these structural approaches consider how the actions of individuals are shaped by structures both when their actions result in maintaining these structures and when their actions struggle against these constraining structures, sometimes resulting in change (Orser 2004: 173-179, 2007: 53, 58-9). I do agree with Orser that some archaeologists who focus on agency have failed to recognize, or at least to explicitly comment on, the determinant influence of epochal structures.

Orser's approach to consumption is based in social relations, following Douglas and Isherwood (Orser 2007:66; Douglas and Isherwood 1979). He argued that consumption is "part of the cultural production of social relations" (Slater quoted in Orser 2007:67). He stated that individuals and households manipulate consumer networks within the boundaries of their habitus in ways that both challenge and reproduce the existing social order (Orser 2007:67). Given that social networks, socio-spatial dialectic, social situation, and the locus of interaction are central to Orser's structural approach (Orser 2007:54-71), it seems unfitting that he is critical of microhistorical, particularist approaches (Orser 2007:50-51, 64). Orser argued that these types of studies run the risk of making racism seem like personal and situational experiences rather than an expression of racialized structures (Orser 2004:158-195, 2007:51, 64). He stated that the goal of archaeologists should be to provide insight into the structural nature of the effects of racialization, rather than overcontextualizing racism as personal and circumstantial (Orser 2007:51). While I agree that archeologists must work to emphasize the structural nature of inequality, I do not agree that small-scale, local approaches are incapable of doing that. I think that microhistorical studies are a means of demonstrating the impact of structural inequality on individuals and households. Demonstrating the personal impacts of structural racism does not

make racism seem idiosyncratic, rather it concretizes tacit structural concepts into something tangible. Tangible and personal need not be antithetical to the structural.

In summary, archaeology is a critical method for understanding the past of groups, such as enslaved laborers, who left few primary documents written from their vantage point about their daily lives. Historically, the whole political and economic structure of antebellum Virginia was organized around plantations and therefore archaeological investigation of plantations is an important part of understanding the development of the United States and its racialized social structure.

Plantation archaeology had an early goal of giving voice to the African-American past. This goal emerged in a broader sociopolitical climate in which African-Americans spoke up for their rights in the contemporary present. Subsequent changes in archaeological approaches and interpretations of slavery have paralleled similar changes in the sociopolitical/cultural environment. As theories change, the interpretations of plantation landscapes and their inhabitants become re-cognized. To some degree artifacts have become multivalent commodities (Miller 1987), status relations have become power struggles (Wurst and McGuire 1999), economy has become consumption (Spencer-Wood 1987; Klein and LeeDecker 1991), and the significance of function has been subjugated to a focus on meaning (Mullins 1999; Wilkie 2000). The results of the research as a whole have satisfied a goal common to all; they have provided deeper insights into African American/African Caribbean pasts. With that goal in mind, my own research adds to the anthropological knowledge of the African diaspora in the United States through exploration of consumerism and social practice in a time period and region that is understudied.

## **Antebellum Consumerism at Poplar Forest: Theoretical Framework**

My theoretical framework draws upon Miller's conception of consumption and Bourdieu's ideas about social practice (Miller 1987; Bourdieu 1977). I use these ideas to explore the social relations within and between blacks and whites at Poplar Forest in the antebellum period as expressed through domestic consumption and social practice. I apply Miller's concept of recontextualization to consider the meanings of various kinds of mass-produced European and American objects used by enslaved African Americans in the antebellum era. Bourdieu's idea of habitus is useful to consider the social structure or, to borrow Orser's term, epochal structures of antebellum slave society. This social structure was a bricolage of political, social, cultural, and economic threads that formed the habitus. I consider how enslaved laborers reproduced and challenged this habitus through engaging in consumer practices. Consequently, my work will be similar in some ways to the consumerism research undertaken by Heath (1997, 1999a, 2004a), Mullins (1999), and Wilkie (2000, 2003).

My work differs from their work in a number of ways. Significantly, the time period that I am investigating is unique among studies of consumerism of enslaved laborers in Virginia and, with notable exceptions (Howson 1990; Lewis 1985; Otto 1984), beyond it. While both Mullins and Wilkie include the late antebellum period in their studies, the African Americans that Mullins examined in this timeframe were free. Wilkie was able to isolate a small assemblage associated with enslaved laborers in the 1840s at Oakley plantation. However, this assemblage was fairly small (less than 800 non-metal artifacts, most of the metal artifacts were architectural: Wilkie 2000:94-95). She interpreted the cabin associated with this assemblage as a cabin for domestic enslaved laborers /servants. The cabin was intermittently occupied until the mid-1930s. Wilkie compared the antebellum deposit with two other occupations of the house, the first dating



from the late 1880s to ca. 1900 and the second from the 1920s through the 1930s (Wilkie 2000: 85-104). She concludes: “The later periods are represented by greater numbers of artifacts. This circumstance is not surprising given the greater availability of consumer goods produced in the late nineteenth century and changes in the economic opportunities available to African Americans after the abolition of slavery” (Wilkie 2000: 93-94). I challenge this assumption. While more consumer goods were available in the late nineteenth century and economic opportunities available to African Americans did change after emancipation, this change was not uniformly in a positive direction and greater availability of goods was not always synonymous with greater access. Some enslaved laborers had greater access to goods prior to emancipation due to changing labor dynamics and social relationships.

My research focuses on investigating three stages of consumption: production, access, and use through an historical archaeological analysis of the archaeological record of antebellum domestic sites at Poplar Forest. Domestic production, investment, and consumption were integral factors in the lives of the enslaved at Poplar Forest. Enslaved laborers made consumer choices that are reflected in the archaeological record and they can be interpreted as integral factors of internal social change as well as alternative modes of self-expression.

I am also interested in power dynamics on the plantation, the methods of empowerment and disenfranchisement through consumerism, and the costs and benefits of engaging in consumerism for enslaved laborers. Social relations within a plantation were fraught with tension because of the need to assert, maintain, and negotiate power through social interaction. On a broad scale, if the boundaries of slavery (the power structure) were transitioning in the antebellum period, this should be reflected in the archaeological record. On a smaller, more

personal scale evidence of greater or lesser social distance can also provide clues about shifting power dynamics.

My analytical framework was designed to assess four main questions about African Americans at Poplar Forest in the antebellum period: (1) How did the enslaved people at Poplar Forest engage in consumerism? (2) What goods did they acquire? (3) How were these objects used? and (4) What costs and benefits did consumerism entail? These questions require a deep understanding of the changes that were taking place on a local and regional level. Primary and secondary historical documents and archaeological data provided these data.

Determining how enslaved people engaged in consumerism necessitates understanding how social relations, labor practices, legal restrictions, gender, and life cycle enabled and constrained their abilities to be consumers. To understand which goods were available to enslaved laborers and which goods enslaved people were buying, I examined merchant account books at the Lynchburg Museum and Virginia Historical Society to search for evidence of spending patterns. I assessed the spending patterns for the planter family through Edward Hutter's farm journal (HFJ 1844-1854) and his income and expense journal (HIEJ 1856-1862). Those records, and archaeological data, provide evidence of provisions which established a baseline of goods consumed by enslaved laborers that were not acquired independently.

Assessing how goods were used required a multifaceted approach that incorporated WPA narratives, historical documents, and data from comparative archaeological sites. These sources suggest that enslaved laborers recontextualized goods that they acquired into Miller's "expressive routines" that reflected their self and group identities, cosmologies, desires, and concerns. Considering the costs and benefits of consumer practices involved assessing the short-term and long-term implications of these practices, the risks they entailed, and their roles in

maintaining and shaping the habitus of Virginia's antebellum slave society. It is important to note that although the plantation is the unit of analysis, the archaeological record from the plantation reflects social relations that extend into the neighborhood and community. Situating the archaeological evidence within a historical framework integrates the site-specific evidence into the broader frame of analysis.

The antebellum period was a time of rapid social change. The consumer choices made by African Americans influenced, and were impacted by, this social change. Exploring the intersection of consumer behavior and slavery in the antebellum period provides insight into how social, cultural, and economic changes impacted the lives of enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest. Consumer practices at Poplar Forest are microlevel dynamics taking place within macrohistorical processes. By examining consumption as social practice and articulating it with historical data, a context-sensitive analysis of enslaved laborers' consumerism in the final phase of slavery in the United States emerges.

### **Archaeology of Nineteenth-Century Slavery in Piedmont Virginia**

I chose to research antebellum Virginia for several reasons. Virginia was home to more slaves and slaveholders than any other state in 1860, thus it is an ideal place to investigate a slave society in its final decades of existence. By the antebellum period, enslaved laborers had been living and working in Virginia for more than three centuries. This meant that in some locations enslaved laborers had family members and other social networks that had existed, albeit only partially intact, for many generations. Within the framework of consumerism, these networks were significant for pooling resources. Finally, I was interested in macrohistorical processes taking in place in Virginia—revolutions in transportation technology, the economics of mass distribution, changes in the economy of slave ownership, new medical paradigms, and strengthening political rifts. These processes affected the kinds of labor in which enslaved laborers were engaged and impacted their health and social networks.

Although archaeologists and historians have undertaken a considerable amount of work in the study of African and African American life in Virginia, much of it has focused on seventeenth and eighteenth-century plantations (Agbe-Davies 2004, 2015; Barile 2004a; Berlin 1998; Franklin 1997; Fesler 2000, 2004; Hudgins 1981; Kelso 1984, 1997; Kulikoff 1983; Morgan 1998; Morgan and Nicholls 1989; Neiman 1980; Nicholls 1991; Pogue 1988, 1990, 1991, 1994; Sanford 1994, 1995; Stevenson 1996a; Upton 1988; Walsh 1993). Within the nineteenth century, most archaeological research in Virginia focuses on the early nineteenth century (Heath 1999a). Research interest in the archaeology of antebellum Virginia is of

relatively recent origin (Boroughs 2007, 2013; Sipe 2009; Trickett 2013, 2014). Site-specific historical questions were investigated through limited excavations across the state from the mid-1950s through the early 1980s (Pi-Sunyer 1957; Markotic 1958; Reinhart 1984; Rockwell 1974; Troup and Taylor 1980; Troup 1981). Since that time, research bias has changed as a result of several consequences including an increase in cultural resource management projects that include nineteenth century components and an increased interest in nineteenth century studies and plantation archaeology (Boroughs 2007, 2013; Eddins and Griffiths 2000; Greer 2014; Heath 1999b:53, 2012a; Heath and Breen 2009; Monroe and Lewes 2006; Monroe 2007; Mouer 1991, 1992; Neiman 2008; Ryder 1990; Ryder et al. 1991; Samford 2004: 151-175; Sipe 2009; Trickett 2013, 2014).

### **The Archaeology of Nineteenth Century Virginia**

The archaeology of nineteenth-century piedmont Virginia is still an underexplored terrain. Ongoing archaeological work at Poplar Forest, Monticello, and Montpelier and a growing number of CRM projects are expanding our knowledge of the nineteenth century piedmont (Boroughs 2007, 2013; Eddins and Griffiths 2000; Galle 2006, 2010; Heath 1999b:53; Heath 2012a; Monroe and Lewes 2006; Monroe 2007; Mouer 1991, 1992; Neiman 2008; Ryder 1990; Ryder et al. 1991; Sipe 2009; Trickett 2013, 2014). Aside from this work, most of the archaeological investigation of nineteenth-century plantation life in Virginia was conducted in the Tidewater region as part of larger projects that included the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Arendt, Galle, and Neiman 2003; Deetz 1993; Franklin 1997; Goode et al. 2009; Hatch 2009; Heath 2008:126, 2012b; Leavitt 1984; McKee 1987, 1992; Pogue 1990; Samford 2007; Sanford 1994, 1995, 2003). Because of the regional and temporal diversity of slavery, this

discussion will be limited to archaeological investigations of nineteenth-century slavery in piedmont Virginia due to their direct relevance to this research project. The following discussion is arranged in order of distance of the archaeological sites from Poplar Forest, beginning with the most distant. These sites are reviewed as a brief overview of previous archaeological work that explores nineteenth-century slavery in piedmont Virginia.

### *Pohoke/Portici*

The Pohoke and Portici plantations (the latter plantation arising from a former middling farm at the same location) were investigated by Kathleen Parker and Jacqueline Hernigle in 1990 as part of a National Park Service project. The purpose of their project was to investigate historic plantations within the boundaries of Manassas National Battlefield Park. Portions of seven antebellum plantations lie within the park boundaries (Parker and Hernigle 1990:3).

Archaeologists excavating the Portici mansion house encountered a deposit of antebellum domestic fill below the clay floor that was produced by the cellar quarter occupants, who were likely domestic enslaved laborers (Parker and Hernigle 1990:34). This fill dates from circa 1820 to 1861. Excavations at Pohoke revealed portions of two slave quarters. Less than ten percent of the living area associated with these structures was excavated (Parker and Hernigle 1990:96).

This site provides comparative data with the material from Poplar Forest because both sites were antebellum sites occupied by enslaved laborers in approximately the same timeframe. Using these data as a comparative dataset could provide a sense of the ways regional diversity impacted the lives of enslaved laborers.

## *Montpelier*

Montpelier, the former home of President James Madison, was built in the 1760s in Orange County, Virginia. Montpelier was occupied by Madison's descendants until 1844 and then passed through the hands of four additional owners, until it was acquired by Thomas and Frank Carson in 1857. The Carson family owned the property for the remainder of the antebellum period through 1881. The final years of Madison ownership were poorly managed by Madison's stepson, Payne Todd, to the detriment of the enslaved community at Montpelier (<http://www.montpelier.org/research-and-collections/people/montpelier-owners>, Accessed June 5, 2005).

Archaeological investigations over the last decade have revealed three slave quarter locations at Montpelier (Reeves 2005, 2010; Trickett 2013, 2014). Archaeological investigation of one of these, a site designated "Tobacco Barn Quarter," began in 2003 (Reeves 2004). This quarter was occupied from the 1770s into the early 1840s (Reeves 2005:3). When the site was abandoned, it was allowed to decay in place and subsequently—remarkably — it was never plowed. A second quarter, known as the "Stable Quarter," was occupied ca. 1790 to 1830s (Marshall 2011; Reeves 2010; Trickett 2013). Finally, two duplex slave cabins have been excavated in a work complex known as the "South Yard" (Reeves 2010; Trickett 2014). Although analysis of this site is incomplete, many of the recovered artifacts date from the 1810s to the 1840s (Trickett 2014).

Several enslaved laborers were sold from Montpelier during the early 1840s to pay off debts, and mismanagement ultimately resulted in the sale of the plantation. At this time, the agricultural complex, including field slave quarters, was moved to a different area of the property

(Reeves 2005). According to contemporary maps, the area of the latter quarter, which was occupied from the mid-1840s until emancipation or into the tenancy period, is near the location of administrative and work buildings (Reeves 2005:2). Survey and testing of the area in 1987, prior to construction of those buildings, did not reveal evidence of the later period quarter (occupied after the mid-1840s). It was assumed that early twentieth-century property development eradicated much of the archaeological record associated with it (Reeves 2005: personal communication). Subsequent archaeological survey and excavations have revealed evidence of slave cabins occupied into the 1840s in the South Yard, the Stable Quarter (Marshall 2011: 11-17) and the Field Quarter/Tobacco Barn Quarter (Reeves 2010). Domestic sites that were likely occupied by enslaved laborers from the late 1840s through the mid-1860s have also recently been identified and subjected to limited archaeological testing (Reeves 2014:151-154; Reeves et al. 2014:55-60).

Most of the archaeological investigation and analysis of nineteenth-century enslaved laborer's dwellings at Montpelier began after I initiated this research project, and is still ongoing. Archaeologists only recently located cabins occupied by enslaved laborers in the 1850s through the beginning of the Civil War (Reeves 2014: 151-154; Reeves et al. 2014: 55-60). Stefan Woehlke is currently continuing excavations and analysis of some of this material for a doctoral dissertation through University of Maryland. I hope to eventually compare some of the Montpelier data with Poplar Forest data from the same timeframe.

### *Monticello*

Archaeological investigation at Monticello of areas historically associated with African Americans began when late eighteenth-century work buildings were excavated in the late 1950s



(Pi-Sunyer 1957; Markotic 1958). William Kelso subsequently began an ongoing archaeology program at Monticello in 1979 (Kelso 1997:51). Since 1979 numerous slave quarters have been identified and archaeologically tested at Monticello (Neiman 2008). Among these, three slave dwellings at Mulberry Row are the most extensively excavated (Kelso 1997). These dwellings were occupied from circa 1770 to 1826. However, an additional building of interest, identified by Kelso as the “brick pier building” was located during the Mulberry Row excavations.

The brick pier building was excavated in 1983. The architectural remains defined the structure as a 12 ft. x 20 ft. frame structure that rested on six brick piers with an enclosed rectangular yard (Kelso 1985:42-3). The associated artifacts and photographic evidence from the Levy period of ownership (1834-1923) demonstrate that this was a domestic structure occupied from circa 1820 into the early twentieth century (Kelso 1985:44). To date, this material has not been analyzed as a discrete occupation and thus limited information is available concerning how this building was used and by whom.<sup>7</sup>

### *Sweet Briar*

Sweet Briar plantation was located in Amherst County, Virginia. This land was purchased in 1830 by Elijah Fletcher. Fletcher was a businessman, newspaper publisher, and former mayor of neighboring Lynchburg. He built a thriving plantation, and upon his death in 1858 he owned 110 enslaved laborers, both African Americans and Native Americans from the Monacan confederacy. Archaeological survey and shovel testing were conducted on the Sweet Briar property and over 350 sites from the eighteenth into the late twentieth century were

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<sup>7</sup> This material has been catalogued into the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery system, but not in a useful way if one is interested in investigating this particular building. The data associated with this building, and the features of the building itself, are divided between Building R and Building S in the current DAACS database (<http://www.daacs.org/sites/building-r/#section-3>, Accessed November 1, 2012).

identified. Artifact processing from the shovel tests is incomplete and to date no results have been published (Rainville: personal communication 2005).

### *Burroughs Plantation*

The birthplace of Booker T. Washington is located in Franklin County, Virginia. Washington was born in 1856 in a cabin on a small tobacco farm (207 acres) owned by the Burroughs family. John Griffin excavated the disturbed remains of a kitchen cabin in 1959 (Bennett 1999). In the late 1980s and 1990s some limited archaeological excavation was undertaken to look for evidence of the Burroughs' home and other historic structures (Baber 1999; Bennett 1999). Bennett recovered minimal material remains associated with a slave quarter as well as the foundation of the Burroughs' home and associated artifacts (Bennett 1999; Troutman 2001a, 2001b). Because Bennett found few artifacts associated with antebellum slavery, this site was not useful for comparative purposes.

### **Poplar Forest**

Archaeologists have been investigating the lives of individuals who lived at Poplar Forest plantation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries since 1986 (Adams 1995, 1996, 1999; Bowes 2009, 2011; Gary 2012; Heath 1997, 1999a, 1999c, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2012b; Heath and Gary 2012; Heath and Lee 2010; Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004, Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams, Lee and Paull 2005; Heath, Breen et al. 2015; Kelso et al. 1986, 1991; Lee 2008, 2012a, 2012b; Proebsting 2012; Proebsting and Lee 2012; Raymer 2003; Strutt and Trussell 1998). Their first investigations of enslaved laborers took place in the wing of offices in the 1980s (Kelso et al. 1986). Archaeologists also investigated an extant brick slave quarter

known as the South Tenant House from 1989 to 1990 (Strutt and Trussell 1998). During renovations of this building, archaeologists removed the interior floor and then discovered and excavated a subfloor pit. They catalogued the recovered objects using a database with very limited data entry fields due to contemporary technological limitations. This made comparison with later artifacts based solely on artifact records infeasible. I re-catalogued the artifacts from the west half of the feature for comparison.<sup>8</sup> Archaeologists excavated the western half of the subfloor pit based on visual stratigraphic layers (Strutt and Trussell 1998:19). Because these layers were large, based on natural stratigraphy, and the original field notes were lost, Strutt deemed the dates assigned to these layers insufficient for understanding when the feature was filled in. He excavated the eastern half of the subfloor pit using different methodology, based on arbitrary and natural stratigraphy, to get a better sense of the date ranges of each feature layer (Strutt and Trussell 1998:18-24).

Although the subfloor pit contained some objects post-dating the antebellum period, as expected from the dates of occupation (from around 1857 into the 1970s), it also contained a significant antebellum component with many types of artifacts similar and identical to those recovered during the Site A excavations. These artifacts include three flow blue transfer-printed patterns: Amoy (1844-1887), Scinde (1840-1861), and Aster and Grapeshot (1840-1864). Archaeologists also found yellow ware with white slip bands and blue sponged whiteware at both sites. Goodyear rubber hair comb fragments, and similar button types (though fewer)—bone, Prosser pressed ceramic, shell, and metal. The *terminus post quem* (date after which; hereafter *tpq*) dates for most of the layers in the subfloor pit of the south tenant house range from

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<sup>8</sup> I did not re-catalogue the artifacts from the east half of the subfloor pit at this time because they were temporarily misplaced during a lab reorganization. They were relocated after the period of time I had available for artifact analysis. Because the material recovered from the east half of the feature have a tighter provenience, this data would be very useful for future comparative analysis.

1840 to 1850. The data suggest that the primary use of the subfloor pit in the south tenant house was in the late antebellum period, contemporary with the nearby cabin at Site A.

During testing in 1993, archaeologists encountered a late eighteenth-to-early nineteenth-century slave quarter and excavated it (Heath 1999a, 2004b). Heath named this site the Quarter Site. This site was occupied from circa 1790 to 1812. Archaeologists also located and excavated the remains of an earlier quarter (occupied in the late eighteenth century) immediately north of the Quarter Site, which Heath (2004c) named the North Hill. That site was occupied from the 1770s to 1780s. A third site, known as Wingo's, was excavated on land that was formerly part of the Poplar Forest tract from 2000-2012. It was occupied in the 1770s or 1780s (Heath, Breen et al. 2015).



Figure 3.1 Artist depiction of Poplar Forest main house and dependency wing circa 1818, based on archaeological excavations. L. Diane Johnson reproduction. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest and L. Diane Johnson.

In 1813 Jefferson had a row of dependences which he called the Wing of Offices constructed on the east of the main house (Figure 3.1). The dependency wing contained a storage space, a cooks' room, a kitchen, and a smokehouse/dairy. As in Jefferson's time, this area continued in use as an area operated by enslaved laborers in the Cobbs/Hutter period. Archaeologists excavated thousands of artifacts from this area, established the layout of the dependency wing and uses of the various rooms, and determined how the configuration of the structure changed over time (Kelso et al. 1991). In the early 1840s, part of Jefferson's original Wing of Offices was torn down, or collapsed, and was then rebuilt. During reconstruction the dependency wing was detached from the house, indicating that the Cobbs and Hutter families may have preferred greater physical and social distance from enslaved laborers (Kelso et al. 1991).<sup>9</sup>

### *Research Area*

My dissertation project is based on the analysis of artifacts and features recovered through previous excavations at Poplar Forest in the area immediately east of the main house. This area, located on Jefferson's Southeast Terrace, includes two sub-sites: Site A and Site B (Figure 3.4). A brief discussion will illustrate the relationship of these areas to each other and clarify why these particular sub-sites were chosen for further research.

The Southeast Terrace is located to the southeast of the octagonal main house and immediately south of the North Tenant House and South Tenant House (Figure 3.4). The construction date of these cabins is estimated to be 1857, based on Hutter's documented payment

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<sup>9</sup> This may have been for racial reasons, but it may have been for the practical purpose of privacy as well. Edward and Emma Hutter lived in the basement of the main house beginning in 1842, which was originally attached to the Wing. It is likely that they continued to live there until at least 1852, when William Cobbs died, if not afterward. Marian Cobbs outlived both Edward, Emily, and several of their children. She passed away in 1877.

to S. H. McGhee for making brick and building cabins (HIEJ April 6, 1857). Based on oral traditions of whites and blacks who lived at Poplar Forest in the late-nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, the North Tenant House was constructed for an overseer and the South Tenant House was built as a home for enslaved laborers (Heath and Lee 2010). Although there are distinctive differences between the two structures, both may have originally served as quarters for enslaved laborers. An overseer's log cabin was purportedly lost to arson at Poplar Forest in 1867 (CSH November 10, 1909; Marmon 1991, Part 1:85). The northern brick cabin may have been repurposed at that time. The Southeast Terrace is bounded to the east and south by a modern fence line, and the brick wall of a mid-twentieth century rose garden provides a boundary to the west (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004). The area is 1.12 acres in size. Upon the terrace, immediately south of the South Tenant House, excavations revealed the remains of the Site A antebellum cabin.

#### *Site A*

In 2001, testing within the core area of the property revealed two features, a chimney base and subfloor pit, associated with an antebellum cabin that was occupied from circa 1833 to 1858 (Figure 3.2). Excavations conducted from 2001 to 2003 focused on this area (designated Site A) (Figure 3.3 & 3.4). In addition to the features and plow zones associated with the antebellum cabin, this site also contained yard and garden features created by post-Emancipation tenants, a thick layer of fill that seems to have been used to create a terrace prior to 1820, and a cultural layer beneath the fill that tentatively dates to the early-nineteenth century Jefferson occupation (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams, Lee and Paull 2005:1). Domestic artifacts from the features associated with the site and the surrounding plow zones are predominantly from the

1840s and 1850s (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams, Lee and Paull 2005:11). To date archaeologists have identified and catalogued 37,085 artifacts from Site A. Artifact analysis indicated that this site was occupied after 1833 and abandoned after 1858.



Figure 3.2 Site A Chimney Base and Subfloor Pit. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest. Photograph by Barbara Heath.

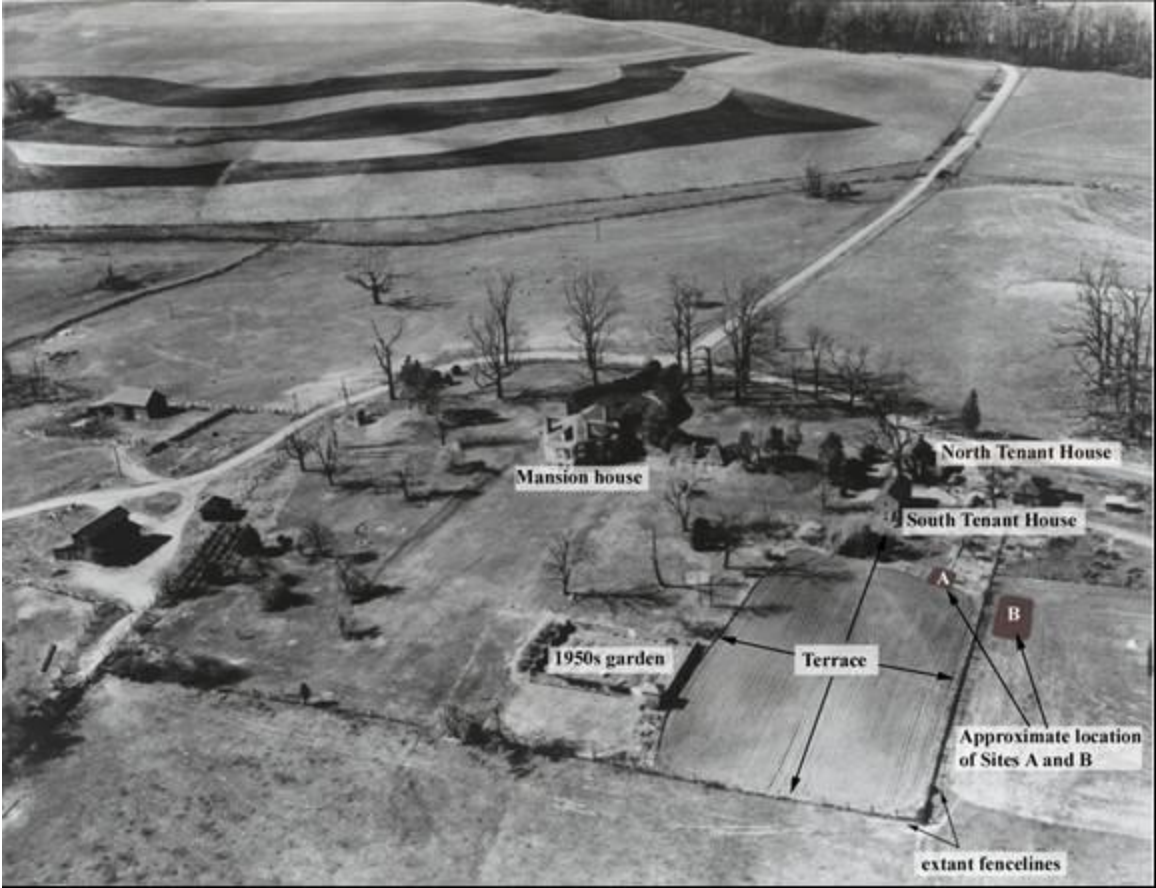


Figure 3.3 1955 Aerial view of Poplar Forest. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest. Labels added by Barbara Heath.



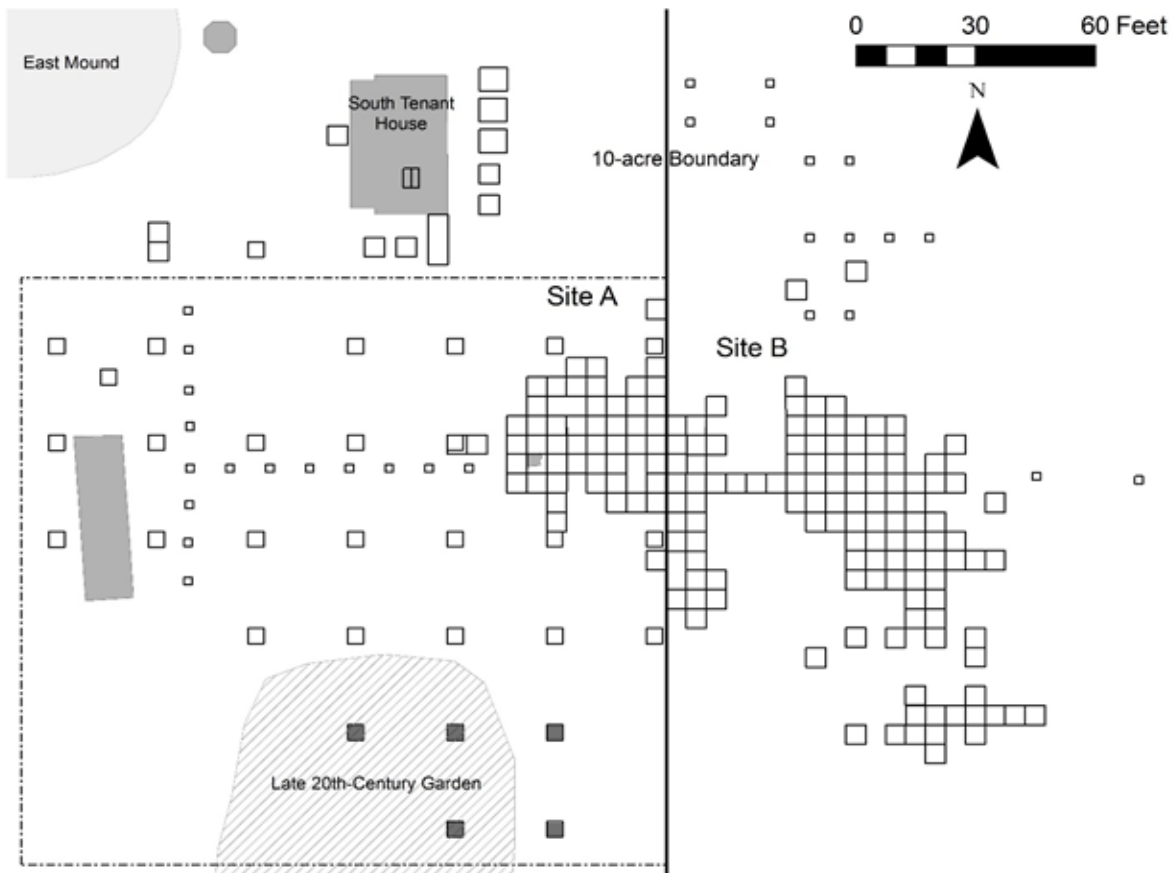


Figure 3.4 Site Map showing excavation units and shovel tests as of July 2013. Site A is the location of an antebellum cabin. Site B was Thomas Jefferson’s nursery. The area where they intersect includes eighteenth- through twentieth-century deposits. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest. Map by Eric Proebsting and Barbara Heath.

Recent archaeological work at Poplar Forest (2004-2013) focused on an area immediately adjacent to Site A, which was designated Site B (Figure 3.4). This site was the location of Thomas Jefferson’s nursery (Gary and Paull 2008; Gary, Proebsting and Lee 2010). Beginning in 2008, excavations were reopened at Site A to explore the remains of Jefferson-period buildings and activities below the antebellum cabin that were identified in previous excavations. Once Site B was identified as Jefferson’s nursery, this area became an important focus because Jefferson’s nursery at Poplar Forest was situated near plantation outbuildings and housing for some enslaved laborers. Because this research is ongoing, my dissertation focuses on the material culture

generated from the excavation of Site A from 2001 to 2009 and includes a small number of antebellum artifacts recovered from the nursery site.

*Archaeological Investigation of Antebellum Slavery at Poplar Forest: 1828-1865*

Poplar Forest was chosen as the focus of this research project because it has a nearly continuous archaeological record of African/African American life from the 1770s into the twentieth century. Further, the location of slave dwellings changed over time. Consequently, there are discrete locations associated with enslaved laborers, which mitigates the difficulty presented by the multiple plow zones present at the site. The property and most, if not all, of the enslaved community that lived at Poplar Forest prior to William Cobbs' ownership were sold by Jefferson's estate managers in 1826 or in 1828 by Francis Eppes. Because of this discontinuity of individuals in the enslaved community, and because the field slave quarters that were in use from 1812 to 1828 have not been conclusively identified through archaeological investigation, I chose to focus on slavery during the Cobbs/Hutter period from 1828 to 1865. This time period coincides with the occupation of Site A (ca. 1833-1858), the location of one of eight antebellum slave cabins at Poplar Forest. This time period is underrepresented in plantation archaeology in the Virginia Piedmont.

Additional archaeological testing was undertaken in an adjacent area that was used as a garden in the 1980s. The gardener unearthed a significant number of artifacts that are consistent with an antebellum occupation. Given the proximity to Site A, it is possible that this location was the site of another antebellum slave cabin. A considerable number of antebellum artifacts were also excavated at Site B (the nursery). I analyzed the antebellum material culture and features from Site B (through cross-mending and artifact distribution maps) to determine if this material

was thrown as trash over a historic fence between the two sites, or, whether an antebellum slave cabin or outbuildings were built on top of the destruction of early-nineteenth-century work buildings and/or slave houses that were originally in this area of the site.

Trash disposal from the Site A cabin seems to have resulted in most of the antebellum material at Site B. Excavation of the area in 2011 at the interface between Site A and Site B revealed an intriguing destruction layer and a burned area. Additional excavation and analysis is ongoing to determine whether these features are related to a different structure, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Preliminary analysis of the artifacts recovered in 2011 indicates that many of these artifacts were most likely used by the people who lived in the antebellum cabin at Site A (Proebsting and Lee 2012).

## **Project Focus**

### *Methodology: My Research Project Area*

Barbara Heath directed staff archaeologists from 2001 to 2002 in the excavation of twenty-seven 4 ft. squares at Site A (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004:10). Heath noted that a shallow berm running across the site, approximately 60 feet from the South Tenant House, suggested the edge of an abandoned garden (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004:10). Historic photographs reveal that most of the terrace, from the berm to the fencelines, was plowed in 1955 (Figure 3.3). Early twentieth-century features and layers associated with the occupation of the South Tenant house were found north of the berm (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004:10). Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century layers and features were found underlying the plowzone in some excavation units. Based on high artifact densities and concentrated stone rubble found near the eastern terrace boundary, archaeologists expanded the

project into a block excavation comprised of 21 contiguous 5 ft. square excavation units by the end of 2003. The complex strata in this area contained well-preserved archaeological deposits (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004:11).

Following the removal of two plowzones and several additional features, archaeologists exposed a thick re-deposited clay layer. This artificial layer was likely placed here in the early-nineteenth century as a result of soil removal projects initiated at the nearby Wing of Offices and on the South Lawn (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004:15). A 3 ft. x 3 ft. subfloor pit and the nearby remnants of a stone chimney intrude the layer of clay fill and the layer beneath it. These are the remaining features of the antebellum slave cabin. Based on *tpq* dates for artifacts in the layers and features at the site, this cabin was occupied by 1833 and was abandoned after 1858 (based on jasper marbles in the top layer of the subfloor pit) on the eve of, or during, the Civil War.

Archaeological work at Poplar Forest from 2003 to 2014 focused on Site B—the nursery site. Site B was located during a property-wide survey by Adams in 1995 (Adams 1995, 1996). In 2003 archaeologists opened eight 5 ft. by 5 ft. units to further investigate the area (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004:38). Each of these units contained assemblages of domestic artifacts ranging from the late eighteenth through the twentieth century. Archaeologists later expanded these excavations into a large open block excavation which now immediately adjoins the Site A excavation units in a few places (Figure 3.5).

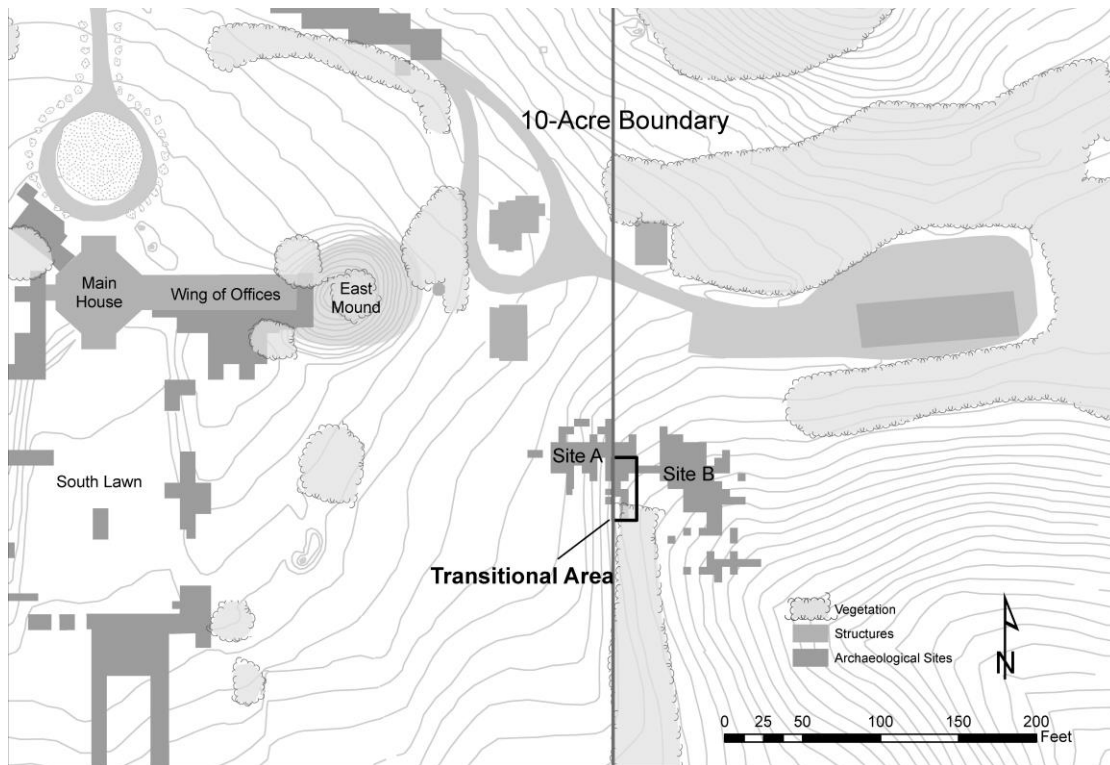


Figure 3.5 Site A and Site B Boundaries in 2011. Map by Eric Proebsting. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest

Archaeological analysis of Site B is incomplete, but the area was clearly used predominantly during the early nineteenth century and may include Jefferson-period outbuildings and/or slave houses that are known through documents but have yet to be identified by archaeologists (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams, Lee, Paull 2005). Gary and Proebsting determined that Site B was the location of Jefferson’s stable/nursery/garden complex which was located near the homes of at least some enslaved laborers (Gary 2008; Gary 2012; Proebsting 2012). Significantly, Site B also has a sizeable deposit of antebellum artifacts, particularly in the area in Figure 3.5 designated as the transitional area. The latter materials were likely trash deposits and runoff from the antebellum slave quarters and post-emancipation tenant houses immediately to the west and upslope on the Southeast Terrace (Proebsting and Lee 2012).

Edward Hutter reported eight slave cabins on his property in 1860 (1860 Campbell County Census). Settlement patterns for slave housing in that time period typically called for close, organized spacing of cabins near the main house. Given that this area of the Poplar Forest property (east of where the main house currently sits) has been associated with African American labor and housing since the inception of agriculture (Lee and Heath 2006), it is likely that additional cabins were located in close proximity to Site A.

When the Corporation for Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest purchased Poplar Forest in 1984, one of the board members planted a garden on the Southeast Terrace south of Site A. Gardening activities generated an abundance of archaeological remains. He collected some of these remains and he gave them to the archaeology department. In 2001 and 2002 some archaeological testing was done in this area and two particular shovel tests yielded high antebellum artifact densities.

I conducted additional testing in 2008 by placing five additional units near those test units to attempt to locate features associated with a second antebellum cabin (the five shaded units in the two rows immediately above and below the label "Late 20th-Century Garden" in Figure 3.4). I hypothesized that since this area is located further south of the South Tenant House, the complex stratigraphy that resulted from continual use of the adjacent area where Site A is located should be absent. I directed a weeklong field school for Archeology Society of Virginia certification students and volunteers from November 10 to 16, 2008. The complex stratigraphy found at Site A was absent in the area we tested, but it was also heavily disturbed. The artifacts we recovered consisted primarily of evidence of the late twentieth-century garden, suggesting that gardening activities impacted the archaeological integrity of the site. Unfortunately, we did

not find evidence of an additional cabin. Future research in the area south of Site A and immediately east of the South Tenant House may reveal the other cabins.

### *Fieldwork Methods*

Archaeologists at Poplar Forest follow standard excavation and laboratory methods and procedures (Heath , Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004; Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams, Lee and Paull 2005). All artifacts are placed in permanent storage in the on-site archaeology laboratory. Cataloguing is done with the database management system Visual Re:discovery. All field and artifact records, as well as related images, objects, and documentary records are catalogued according to standard protocols (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004; Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams, Lee and Paull 2005). All excavated soil was screened through 0.25 inch wire mesh.

Standardized soil samples were collected from designated layers and features for phytolith, pollen, and chemical analyses off-site. Flotation samples for collecting macrobotanical specimens, small faunal remains, and small artifacts were collected in 2.5 liter increments from appropriate features. All of the fill of the Site A subfloor pit was floated, and flotation samples were also processed from an adjacent stone-filled feature interpreted as a dismantled chimney. Soil samples collected for flotation were processed using a 100-gallon capacity Model A Flote-Tech Flotation Machine through 1.0 mm mesh screen.

### *Archival Research*

Several of the archival materials that I used for this study are housed in the special collections of Poplar Forest. In particular, I analyzed the Hutter Farm Journal (1844-1854) and the Hutter

Income and Expense Journal (1856-1861) to assess consumer practices of the Cobbs/Hutter family and between the planter family and the enslaved in the antebellum period. I also analyzed Cobbs and Hutter family letters and oral histories. Copies of many of these letters are located in the special collections at Poplar Forest. I located additional letters at the Virginia Historical Society and in Freedman's Bureau Records at the National Archive. I supplemented these historical documents with merchant account books located at the Virginia Historical Society and the Library of Virginia to shed light on consumer practices of enslaved laborers in the antebellum period.

### *Artifact Analysis*

The artifacts were catalogued using a customized version of Visual Re:discovery. The customized version used at Poplar Forest was designed to capture many layers of diagnostic data for analytical purposes and later modified to be consistent with DAACS (Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery) data although not as comprehensive. I catalogued almost all of the artifacts from Site A and Site B with some cataloguing done by Heather Olson and Barbara Heath. The data used in this dissertation include all materials from Site A excavated prior to 2008, all artifacts excavated at Site B prior to 2008, and selective material excavated at both sites from 2009 to 2012.

The materials from Site B were assessed to determine if antebellum deposits could be differentiated from earlier deposits. Because Site B was heavily plowed, I hypothesized that this differentiation would be difficult. However, cross-mending analysis and minimum vessel counts provided insight into antebellum activities at the site. Based on this analysis, it became clear that at least some of the antebellum materials at Site B were trash deposits from Site A residents



(Proebsting and Lee 2012). A historic fence line existed between these two sites and artifact analysis provided evidence of this fence line based on artifact distributions and depositional practices.

Once the artifacts were processed, catalogued, and in some cases, reassessed, I evaluated the assemblages according to my research objectives. Several consumerism studies have directed their analyses toward the study of ceramics (e.g. Wilkie and Farnsworth 2010). This is a logical pursuit given the ubiquitous nature of ceramics on historic sites and their multiple practical and symbolic uses. Ceramics played a role in my analysis as well because they speak to daily practice among enslaved laborers and between enslaved laborers and slave owners. However, ceramics frequently play a pragmatic role in everyday activities. Even forms typically classified as non-utilitarian had simple, practical uses. I use ceramics to assess the impacts of sociocultural changes of the antebellum period on African-American lives in chapter six. However, my analysis of ceramics is somewhat limited in scope by choice. My decision does not reflect a devaluation of the important symbolic roles and meanings of ceramics, rather I wanted to emphasize that although multiple kinds of questions can be directed at one object category, it may not be the best category to answer each question (Martin 2001). Ceramics are not the best object category to assess enslaved laborers' consumer practices at Poplar Forest because many of the ceramics they used were provided by slaveholders rather than self-selected. Therefore traditional historic ceramic analyses, such as Miller's (1980, 1991) cream colored ware index values are of limited use because of the complex, indeterminate means of acquisition. My analysis of ceramics is targeted at unique ceramics that may have been self-selected, at considering what the quality, type, and quantity of the provisioned ceramics suggests about

relationships between slaveholders and enslaved laborers, and interpreting why fashionable ceramics and recent ceramic technologies are found in the archaeological assemblage.

The examination of personal adornment objects and personal possessions provided a primary analytical lens for self-expression. Although the term “self” implies a singular person, my focus on self-expression is investigated at the household level, differentiated by gender and life cycle when possible. I considered the quantity and variety of adornment goods in chapter seven to assess the relative significance of these items to enslaved laborers. Finally, I evaluated the archaeological assemblage to assess health and well-being practices in chapter eight. The analysis of diverse datasets provided a more multifaceted interpretation of daily life and the limits of enslaved laborers’ consumerism than consideration of any one category alone could reveal. My analysis is framed through an exploration of the various stages of consumption: production, distribution and access, meaning, and discard. Before turning to my analysis of consumerism, it is necessary to consider the social relationships and historical framework that shaped the consumer practices of enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest.

## Chapter 4

### Slavery at Antebellum Poplar Forest (1828-1861)

On a cold day in February, 1850, Frederika Amalia Hutter Reeder sat down at her home in Easton, Pennsylvania to write a letter to her younger brother Edward Sixtus Hutter in Forest, Virginia. Although E. S. Hutter had lived in Forest, at Poplar Forest plantation for nearly a decade, the two were still close and corresponded frequently. In this particular letter Mrs. Reeder reflected on a trip she had made to Forest to visit her brother a year or two before. Her memories shifted to Edward Hutter's enslaved laborers: "I could live in Virginia and never think of the slave population. I often think of them now that I am away from them. How is Ella, Matilda, Susan, Kate and Dump<sup>10</sup> oh Elisa. I forgot her does the latter like fruitcake and dried raspberries yet? Dump must have grown considerable since I saw her . . ." (FAHR to ESH, February 13, 1850). This letter contains several implicit and explicit insights into slavery at Poplar Forest plantation, relations between whites and blacks within a plantation household, and the social relationships of whites in the slaveholding class that extended beyond the bounds of the plantation. This chapter examines the history of Poplar Forest. Because understanding social relationships is central to understanding aspects of consumerism, such as access, this chapter also establishes who lived at Poplar Forest and their social networks that extended beyond it.

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<sup>10</sup> Dump was a nickname, most likely for Maria. Maria went to Hot Springs in 1857. In a series of three letters that mentions her presence at the springs, the third refers to her as Dump rather than Maria (EWCH to ESH July 31, 1857; EWCH to MSC August 3, 1857; ESH to EWCH August 10, 1857). The first two letters are written by Emma Hutter. The third was written by Edward Hutter, suggesting that this was his (and/or Amalia's) nickname for her. Maria was Ellen's daughter and she was born ca. 1835. Maria was a house servant beginning in 1845 when she was moved from the 'Children' category in Hutter's annual farm journal census of slaves on the plantation.

Poplar Forest is an historic plantation home that was built in Bedford County, Virginia beginning in 1806 under the direction of Thomas Jefferson on land inherited from John Wayles, his father-in-law. It was an absentee quarter farm established by Wayles in 1773, occupied by an unknown number of enslaved laborers and overseers.<sup>11</sup> When Thomas Jefferson inherited the Poplar Forest property, it consisted of 4,819 acres of land (Chambers 1993: 4) (Figure 4.1).

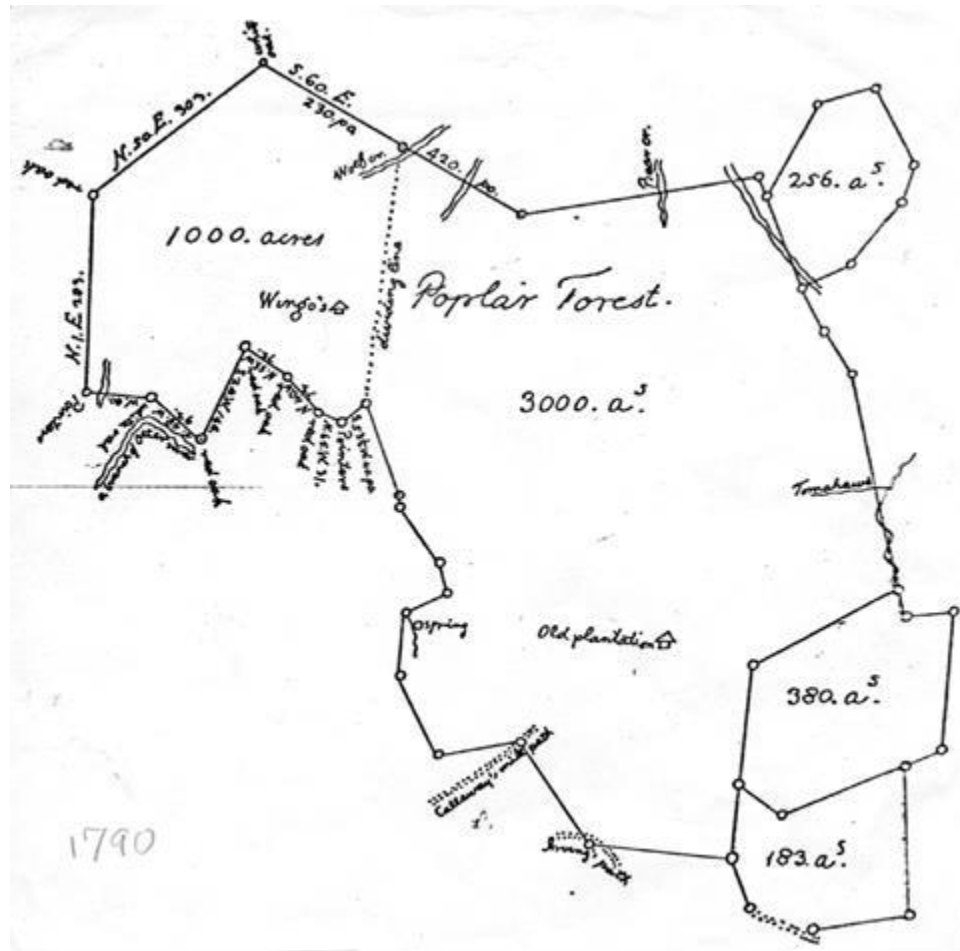


Figure 4.1 1790 plat map of Poplar Forest. Library of Virginia.

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Jefferson transformed the plantation by designing a home that was built by enslaved and hired laborers which he used as a periodic

<sup>11</sup> We don't know the actual number of enslaved laborers present during the Wayles period of ownership, but there were twelve enslaved people present at Poplar Forest when Thomas Jefferson inherited it in 1774 (Betts 1953: 11).

retreat. The third decade of the nineteenth century brought additional change. Jefferson died in 1826 and left part of the estate to his grandson Frances Eppes. The tract that Eppes inherited contained 1074  $\frac{3}{4}$  acres and included the main house (Chambers 1993:167) (Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2 1925-26 Image of the front of Poplar Forest, looking South.  
Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest.

Most of the rest of the original Poplar Forest tract was sold to decrease the substantial debt left by Jefferson. After five difficult agricultural years, Eppes and his wife left for Florida, where his agricultural and political pursuits met with better success. When he sold Poplar Forest to William Cobbs in 1828, Eppes ended the Jefferson family residency at Poplar Forest and began the 118-year period of the Cobbs/Hutter residency.



Figure 4.3 Emma Cobbs Hutter and Edward Hutter mid-nineteenth century.  
Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest.

William and Marian Cobbs' only child, Emma, married Edward Sixtus Hutter in 1840 (Marmon 1991, Part 2:61; Figure 4.3). Hutter was a naval officer from Pennsylvania. He was introduced to Emma Cobbs through his brother, George C. Hutter, who resided near Poplar Forest plantation, at Sandusky Estate (Chambers 1993:7; Marmon 1991, Part 2:61; Figure 4.4). Both George and Edward Hutter held a significant number of African Americans in bondage on their agricultural plantations in Virginia. Although they were raised in Pennsylvania by a Moravian father who opposed slavery (Marmon 1991, Part 2:61), there is no evidence that the ideology or reality of slavery caused any mental dissonance for either brother.<sup>12</sup> A series of

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<sup>12</sup> Pennsylvania was not always a free state. Gradual emancipation was enacted there in 1780. No enslaved person born prior to 1780 was freed and the children of slaves born after this date were to remain slaves until they reached the age of 28. Full emancipation was not achieved in Pennsylvania until 1847 (Berlin 1998: 232-3). Therefore, when George and Edward Hutter were growing up, Pennsylvania was a society with slaves although not a slave society (Berlin 1998:8).

letters written by each brother to various family members still exists and none directly mention or allude to any moral or ethical conflict with slavery (HFM). Silence concerning the institution of slavery speaks to the conceptualization of the racialized social structure of the South as something natural enough that it did not bear reflection or comment. The personal naturalization process was influenced by military careers in Southern states and the West Indies (HFM). The broader structural naturalization process that made slavery seem so normal to some had its roots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Berlin 1998; Epperson 1999:159-172; Epperson 2001:54-70; Morgan 1998).



Figure 4.4 Sandusky Estate ca. 1952, facing North.  
Courtesy of Historic Sandusky

The land associated with historic Poplar Forest plantation is presently located in Bedford and Campbell counties and the city of Lynchburg in the town of Forest, Virginia. When it was first patented in 1745, Poplar Forest was in Albemarle County. When Bedford County was created in 1754, Poplar Forest became part of Bedford County (Chambers 1993:3-4). Although the property was split between Bedford and Campbell counties when the latter was created from

the former in 1782, most historical documents continued to locate it within Bedford County. Given its rural nature, visitors from other regions have also associated the plantation with Lynchburg itself, although downtown Lynchburg lies eight miles to the north.

Nearly ninety-five percent of the antebellum population of Bedford County lived on farms and approximately seventy percent of white families in the county owned land in 1850 (Daniel 1985:81). Eighty percent of these families cultivated small farms, consisting of less than two hundred acres and eighteen percent cultivated farms containing two hundred to seven hundred acres. Of the remaining two percent, eighteen families cultivated seven hundred to one thousand acres and only seven estates comprised more than one thousand acres each (Daniel 1985:81).

In 1860, there were 10,176 enslaved laborers and 1,537 slaveholders among 25,086 inhabitants in Bedford County (Daniel 1985:127). Eighty-one slaveholders owned twenty-seven percent, or 2,820 of these enslaved people. The remaining seventy-three percent of the enslaved persons residing in the county were owned by 1,456 people. Around sixty-five percent of the latter group of slaveholders owned less than five enslaved laborers (Daniel 1985:127). These figures indicate an expected correlation between the size of farms and number of enslaved laborers owned by each slaveholder.

Prior to 1840, Bedford County, Virginia, was relatively isolated. The Lynchburg and Salem Turnpike was the primary non-local road in the county (Daniel 1985:99). The James River, which formed the northeast border of the county, provided the other principle means of access to travel and market goods for county residents. By 1860, the James River and Kanawha Canal, three railroads, county roads and several turnpikes supplemented local roads to comprise



a broad transportation network that impacted the daily lives, fortunes, and misfortunes of Bedford County citizens, including those who were enslaved.

Turnpikes, roads, railroads, and canals were all internal developments related to industrialization and urbanization. These transportation developments facilitated market flows between rural and urban areas and simultaneously forged new and strengthened old regional ties. They also provided new and expanded niches of labor for hired enslaved laborers and free blacks, which impacted the institution of slavery as hired enslaved laborers broadened social networks, increased their economic opportunities, and gained a greater degree of autonomy outside the surveillance of their owners. The Lynchburg and Salem Turnpike owned enslaved laborers until 1846 and employed an overseer to maintain the road with enslaved labor (Daniel 1985:105). In 1846 the company sold its enslaved laborers and hired enslaved labor to maintain the road instead because it was cheaper to hire enslaved laborers seasonally and employ an overseer part-time than to provide for the needs of enslaved laborers and pay an overseer year-round (Daniel 1985:105).

Poplar Forest plantation benefited directly from the development of Lynchburg's first railway, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. A depot was built adjacent to Edward Hutter's property, on land that was part of Thomas Jefferson's original Poplar Forest tract, increasing Hutter's land value (Chambers 1993:193). The depot was named Forest Depot after the property (Figure 4.5).



Figure 4.5 1856 map of Forest Depot.  
W.W. Blackford Map and Profile of the Virginia and Tennessee Rail Road.  
Library of Congress.

The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad line from Lynchburg to Bristol was completed to Liberty in 1852, then to Bristol in 1856 (Daniel 1985:110). This line connected to others that stretched to major urban centers and markets in Petersburg, Richmond, Alexandria, and Baltimore by the end of the 1850s (Link 2003:30). Depots served not only as media of transport for goods and people, but also as markets, post offices, and places to meet and socialize. Forest Depot was occasionally the site of slave auctions as well (Daniel 1985:138).<sup>13</sup> Railroad construction offered an opportunity for slave leasing, and many slaveholders, including E.S. Hutter, took advantage of this prospect.

Aside from expanding markets outside the local area and creating a market for leased enslaved laborers, the railroad provided an additional tie to Lynchburg, which was the primary market for Bedford County cash crops prior to railroad development. This link became increasingly important as Lynchburg began to industrialize and became a major urban center in Virginia. Industrialization changed the social and economic landscapes of central Virginia in the nineteenth century. By 1859 Lynchburg was the second wealthiest town in the country per

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<sup>13</sup> Two slave auctions were held at Forest Depot in 1855, there may have been others as well (Daniel 1985:138). The slaves sold at these auctions were not from Poplar Forest, they were sold by administrators of other estates.

capita, principally as a result of its profitable tobacco trade (Tripp 1997:8). Manufactured plug tobacco was the basis of the town's economy and enslaved workers were central to tobacco production and processing.

In 1860, 6,853 people resided in Lynchburg: 3,802 whites, 357 free blacks, and 2,694 enslaved blacks (Tripp 1997:258). In the mid-nineteenth century, approximately half of the enslaved people in Lynchburg worked in tobacco factories and others worked in households or for artisans. As many as forty percent of all white Lynchburg households hired or owned at least one enslaved laborer (Tripp 1997:12). Many enslaved factory workers negotiated their own contracts and were allowed to keep part of their hiring cost as well as earn cash for overwork (Tripp 1997:12). The town's congested spatial organization necessitated daily interaction between whites, free blacks, and enslaved laborers in diverse settings. Race and class relations were mediated through altered work relationships and frequent contact in tobacco factories, on railroads, in canals, on the streets, and in the marketplace. This shaped the habitus of whites and blacks. Many of the enslaved laborers who worked in Lynchburg's tobacco factories and on the railroads and canals to and from Lynchburg came from plantations in Lynchburg and surrounding areas, including Bedford County.

At Poplar Forest, William Cobbs and Edward Hutter engaged enslaved workers in mixed grain agriculture, raising livestock, and dairy production. Thomas Jefferson established this pattern of production although he also grew tobacco. Wheat was the primary market crop at Poplar Forest throughout the antebellum period. Although the shift to wheat production began in the eighteenth century, commercial wheat production expanded rapidly in the southern United States during the 1840s and 1850s (Wright 2003:7). Large slaveholders (defined as those owning twenty or more enslaved laborers) in the Virginia Piedmont tended to be more specialized in

wheat production than smaller farms in the area, particularly those without enslaved labor, during the antebellum period (Irwin 1988). Growing wheat required engaging in a diverse number of tasks that were not necessary for tobacco production (Morgan 1998: 172). The switch from hoe to plow was a significant change necessitated by the need to prepare and maintain fields for wheat production. Livestock was needed to operate the plow and to provide manure, which required many activities associated with raising and maintaining draft animals. This created new labor niches for enslaved laborers who became responsible for the care of these animals.

Wheat cultivation also affected settlement patterns. Tobacco cultivation required a dispersed settlement pattern (Walsh 1993:172). This settlement pattern was required because good soil for tobacco production typically occurred in small, scattered plots in the Chesapeake and Piedmont (Walsh 1993:172). This was not necessary for antebellum wheat cultivation and thus enslaved workers could live in larger groups for more extended time periods than had been practical previously. Housing could consequently be more permanent as well, because temporary quarters that were optimally suited to rotating crop fields were no longer necessary. By 1820, plantation management practices shifted from rotating fields to rotating crops, adding clover and turnips into crop rotation, and using soil additives such as manure and lime to replenish depleted soils (Walsh 1993:193). Brick slave cabins were built in the antebellum period at a number of plantations, including at least one at Poplar Forest (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 1989 Historic American Buildings Survey image of the South Tenant House. This house was built for use as a slave cabin circa 1857. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest

Gendered division of labor became more common under wheat cultivation, whereas it was relatively rare for tobacco cultivation (Berlin 1998: 135, 270; Morgan 1998: 173). Within this division of labor, men typically performed the skilled tasks and women performed the less desirable unskilled labor (Walsh 1993:186). Enslaved men were allotted labor such as sowing grain, harrowing, ditching, plowing and milling. Enslaved women were assigned to perform unskilled manual field labor such as weeding, cleaning grain, hand hoeing, and spreading manure (Walsh 1993:186-7). During harvest, enslaved men would scythe and cradle, women would rake and bind, and women and children would stack wheat (Wright 2003:16).

## **Enslaved Laborers**

By the time William Cobbs acquired Poplar Forest in 1828, he already owned at least fifteen enslaved laborers. By 1829 Cobbs was listed as owner of nineteen enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest, yet how many of these were previously owned by Jefferson or Eppes, if any, is unclear (Marmon 1991). Oral tradition, substantiated by meager historical documentation, holds that Cobbs purchased “Aunt Katie” who was purported to be a former enslaved laborer of Thomas Jefferson (Carter 1937). No other records suggest any continuity of the enslaved community in the transition from the Eppes to Cobbs residencies.

In 1840, Cobbs owned 29 enslaved laborers (BCC 1840). Eleven of these people were children: five girls and six boys, under the age of ten. Nine young people, three males and six females, were between the ages of 10 and 23 (Table 4.1; Table 4.2). Four women were aged 24 to 35 and two were aged 36 to 54. Three elderly enslaved people, one man and two women, were between the ages of 55 and 99 (BCC 1840). The gender ratio was nearly 2:1, consisting of 19 females and 10 males. According to Hutter’s farm journal, by 1850 the number of enslaved people at Poplar Forest had risen to 41, despite numerous deaths and the sale of at least 5 people (HFJ, January 1, 1850). However, the 1850 Bedford County Slave Census only records 32 enslaved laborers owned by William Cobbs—19 females and 13 males. The census data suggest that the gender disparity continued. Yet the contrasting farm journal statistics reveal that the gender ratio had actually become more equal; there were now 23 females and 18 males. According to census data, by 1860 the gender ratio was exactly 1:1, 19 males and 19 females among 38 enslaved laborers (BCC 1860). However, the disparity between the farm journal data and census data reveals that actual numbers of enslaved laborers were not always reflected in the census.

|             | <10 | 10-23 | 24-35 | 36-54 | 55-99 | AGE |
|-------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| <b>1840</b> | 6   | 3     |       |       | 1     |     |
| <b>1850</b> | 6   | 2     | 3     | 2     |       |     |
| <b>1860</b> | 10  | 3     | 2     | 2     | 2     |     |
| <b>YEAR</b> |     |       |       |       |       |     |

Table 4.1 Enslaved Males at Poplar Forest based on Bedford County Census Data.

|             | <10 | 10-23 | 24-35 | 36-54 | 55-99 | AGE |
|-------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| <b>1840</b> | 5   | 6     | 4     | 2     | 2     |     |
| <b>1850</b> | 10  | 3     | 2     |       | 4     |     |
| <b>1860</b> | 5   | 6     | 4     | 2     | 2     |     |
| <b>YEAR</b> |     |       |       |       |       |     |

Table 4.2 Enslaved Females at Poplar Forest based on Bedford County Census Data.

The total number of enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest recorded in the farm journal between 1844 and 1854 ranged from approximately 35 to 45. These numbers do not correspond precisely with either the census data or the actual number of enslaved laborers owned by William Cobbs and Edward Hutter in any given year for two reasons. First, enslaved laborers who were hired out are difficult to track and were not always listed consistently in the slave census records, particularly before 1860. The 1850 census recorded 32 enslaved laborers for William Cobbs, yet the farm journal named 41. Eight were hired out that year, likely resulting in the discrepancy. Second, it seems that elderly enslaved people who could not perform labor, or perhaps those who were not taxable because they were elderly, were not listed in the slave census records. This

practice becomes apparent when records of deaths of enslaved laborers on the property are compared with names from the slave census records, and some names do not correspond. After 1854, Hutter no longer recorded names of enslaved laborers on the property in a farm journal, but some information about the growth and decline among the slave population is available in the 1860 census and the Bedford County Birth and Death Registers that were initiated in 1853.

William Cobbs kept separate title to his enslaved laborers until his death in 1852, although by 1842 effective management of all Poplar Forest enslaved laborers had been assumed by Edward Hutter (Marmon 1991, Part 3:84). Cobbs seems to have suffered from a physical and/or mental illness that limited his capacity to manage the plantation (Marmon 1991, Part 2: 60). He left Poplar Forest to his daughter when he died in 1852 and Edward Hutter served as executor of the estate. The complex social dynamics that exist between slaveholders, overseers, and the enslaved were further complicated at Poplar Forest in the antebellum period because of the presence of two slaveholders on one plantation. This was additionally convoluted by the periodic engagement of overseers on the property and the strong-willed nature of the family matriarch, Marian Cobbs. Negotiating between the Cobbses, Edward Hutter, and overseers was likely a challenging prospect for enslaved laborers.

The Cobbs-Hutter slave community was organized like many antebellum slave settlements; the workforce was divided into field and house workers (Berry 2007:13-51; Harper 1978; Kaye 2007:83-90; Stevenson 1996b:173). Individuals listed as house servants may have included artisans as well as personal staff. However, inconsistent with the traditional conception of house and field laborers, these statuses were not permanent or even, in most cases, long-term.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Jefferson's slaves also performed multiple roles, serving as both house and field slaves as needed, or artisans and field slaves (Heath 1999a:16).



In the period 1844-54, the years that Hutter kept a farm journal, the number of domestic workers ranged from seven to eleven. The total number was dependent upon the size of the overall labor force, the needs of the Cobbs and Hutter families, and the economic status of Poplar Forest. Africa was head house servant from 1844 to 1850 (until his death), then George Hutter served as head house servant from 1850 to at least 1854. Only Mima remained a house servant throughout the entire period 1844-1854. The other house servants died, were transferred to the fields, or were leased away from Poplar Forest.

The number of Cobbs-Hutter field hands ranged from eleven to nineteen, with consistently low numbers after 1848. Aaron was the field headman by 1844 to 1848 (until his death), followed by Billy from 1848 to at least 1857. The gender ratio in the fields was usually one male to one female. This ratio seems to contradict the idea that gendered division of labor under wheat production resulted in more women in the field as men were engaged in more skilled labor (Walsh 1993: 186-187). However, it may have been the case that skilled labor included some aspects of field labor. For example, women were more frequently engaged in stacking wheat, while men were engaged in cutting it. Cobbs and Hutter occasionally employed white overseers as well, though not continuously.<sup>15</sup>

The 1860 census recorded the number of slave houses for the first time, although unfortunately this information was not recorded for all slaveholders. Ninety-eight slave holders reported 512 slave houses for 2,452 slaves in Bedford County. The average was approximately one house for 4.7 enslaved laborers (Daniel 1985: 127). Among those owners who held more

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<sup>15</sup> From November 1846 until approximately November 1848, Mr. Davenport served as overseer (Marmon 1991, Part 2:70). He was likely hired to assist with overseeing tobacco production. He was replaced by Charles Gwatkins, who left the property in November, 1850. Richard Roberts was hired in September, 1853 and worked until at least December 1854. B. Franklin Creasy was hired as overseer by 1860 and worked at Poplar Forest until 1866 (Marmon 1991, Part 2:75).

than 20 enslaved laborers, the average slave household had 4.9 occupants (Daniel 1985: 127). Thirty-eight enslaved laborers lived in eight houses at Poplar Forest in 1860, averaging 4.8 inhabitants per house, when none were hired out to or from other locations or resided in other buildings.<sup>16</sup>

### **Social Relations within the Plantation Household**

When William Cobbs purchased Poplar Forest from Frances Eppes in 1828, he brought in a new group of enslaved laborers to replace those that Eppes took with him to Florida and those he sold to alleviate family debt. Thus, in this initial period of Cobbs' residency, neither the Cobbs family nor the slave community had ties to the physical land or social landscapes at Poplar Forest and the move was a transition for both groups. Nevertheless, many did have ties to each other and additional people in the local area prior to moving to Poplar Forest, connections which will be discussed shortly. The negotiation of the form that slavery took at antebellum Poplar Forest was framed by the social, legal, and political structures of antebellum Virginia. Slavery was enacted through daily interaction among enslaved laborers and between enslaved laborers and the planter family and occasional overseers. The form of these interactions was, in some cases, based on pre-existing relationships. Because of the significance of these relationships for shaping daily practice and flows of material goods among enslaved laborers and between enslaved laborers and slave owners, I will detail the known relationships within white families and black families and their descendants that resided at Poplar Forest from 1828-1861.

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<sup>16</sup> These are statistical averages and the intent is not to conflate slave houses with slave households, rather the goal is to give an idea of how many individuals lived in each house if people were equally distributed among the houses. Certainly this was not likely the case. There is no documentary evidence that enslaved workers were housed in family units during the Hutter period of ownership, but at least some were during the Jefferson period (Heath 2012b: 112-117).

During the transition from Eppes to Cobbs ownership in 1828 and again during the shift from Cobbs to Hutter management in 1840, the social relations between the enslaved and the planter family were likely to have been more fluid, as members of each group negotiated their definitions of what it meant to be an enslaved laborer and what it meant to be slaveholders at Poplar Forest, than in the following years when social relationships and work practices were established and routinized. The external social networks that both the planter family and the enslaved had established in the greater Lynchburg area and beyond, prior to arrival at Poplar Forest, were also significant in mediating this transition. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the social networks that were brought together, maintained, or torn apart, when the Cobbs/Hutter residency was established at Poplar Forest.

### *Cobbs Family*

William Cobbs and Marian Scott Cobbs both came from prominent Virginia families with a history of military service and plantation agriculture dependent on enslaved labor. William Cobbs was the fourth son among the nine children of Robert Cobbs and Anne Gizzage Poindexter (Early 1927:719-727). She may have been related to the Poindexter family living on former Jefferson land adjacent to Poplar Forest.

Robert Cobbs, William's father, owned "Plain Dealing" estate in Campbell County. Two of his other sons, John Cobbs and Charles Lewis also owned estates, "Mont Rouge" plantation in Nelson County and "Glen Alpine" estate in Bedford County, respectively (Early 1927:719-727). Therefore, William knew what it meant to be a planter before he purchased Poplar Forest. In terms of education, William and two of his brothers, John and Meriwether, attended Hampden-Sydney College. William was also an army officer and he served in the War of 1812.

### *Scott Family*

Marian Scott Cobbs was the daughter of Major Samuel Scott and Ann Roy Scott. Major Scott owned “Locust Thicket” plantation in Lynchburg. Like Robert Cobbs, he was a veteran of the Revolutionary War. Major Scott and Ann Roy Scott had seven children (Marmon 1991, Part 2:54-55). Marian remained close to her sisters after her marriage and they visited Poplar Forest regularly along with their families. One sister, Aphire Beverly Scott Rose separated from her husband, William Rose, and lived at Poplar Forest by the late 1840s until her death in 1856 (Marmon 1991, Part 2:55-56). William and Marian Cobbs named their only child after another one of Marian’s sisters, Emily Williams (Marmon 1991, Part 2:56). They referred to their daughter by her nickname, “Emma.” Marian Cobbs also maintained at least moderately close relationships with her brothers. When their home at Poplar Forest burned in 1845, Mr. and Mrs. Cobbs went to stay at Marian’s birthplace, Locust Thicket, with her brother Samuel Scott. Edward Hutter remained at Poplar Forest to manage the house repairs while he lived in an empty overseer’s cabin (CJH to ESH April 17, 1846).

### *Hutter Family*

William and Marian Cobbs’ only child, Emma, married Edward Sixtus Hutter on October 7, 1840 (ESH to FAHR, October 3, 1840; Fig 4.3). Emma was just a few weeks away from her eighteenth birthday and Edward was twenty-eight when they married (Marmon 1991, Part 2:66). Hutter was a naval officer from Pennsylvania (Marmon 1991, Part 2: 64). He met Emma Cobbs while visiting his brother, George C. Hutter at Sandusky Estate (GCH to ESH April 6, 1838; Marmon 1991, Part 2:66). George and Edward were two of Christian Jacob Hutter’s ten children.

Christian Hutter was born in New Deitendorf in Saxe Gotha, Germany (Heller 1920: 33). The Moravians sent him to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He eventually settled in Easton, Pennsylvania and established a successful newspaper (Marmon 1991, Part 2:62).

Among his many siblings, Edward Hutter was closest to his sister Fredericka Amalia Hutter Reeder<sup>17</sup> and his half-brother George Christian Hutter (HFM), who was a career army officer. He purchased Sandusky plantation in Lynchburg after he married Harriett James Risque, who was from Lynchburg (Marmon 1991, Part 2:62-63). Amalia Reeder and Christian Jacob Hutter visited Poplar Forest and information about the lives of enslaved laborers is found in some of their surviving letters.

Although Edward Hutter was a successful naval officer when he married Emma, William and Marian Cobbs strongly encouraged him to retire to manage Poplar Forest (EWCH to ESH September 8, 1841; ESH to MSC September 19, 1841). He resigned from the navy in late 1841 to begin full-time management of the plantation (ESH to MSC September 19, 1841). Edward and Emily had ten children over the course of their marriage. Four of their daughters died in infancy and childhood in the antebellum period (EWCH and MSC to ESH May 13, 1842; HFJ). With Mr. and Mrs. Cobbs, Aunt Aphire Rose, and the Hutters and their children in residence, the main house at Poplar Forest was a lively place. In addition to these residents, there were other people living and working at Poplar Forest plantation, both free and enslaved.

Occasional overseers, governesses, and boarders intermittently lived and worked at Poplar Forest. It is unclear where the governesses stayed, but there was a separate cabin and kitchen for the overseer and his family (HFM). By 1850, Mrs. Cobbs took in boarders who may

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<sup>17</sup> Fredericka Amalia Hutter Reeder was known to family and friends as Amalia and consequently I will use Amalia Reeder when I refer to her hereafter.

have stayed in the large attic space that was renovated into a living area after an 1845 fire that damaged the interior infrastructure of the house (ESH to EWCH, July 14, 1850).

Several of the Hutter's extended family members lived close to Poplar Forest. In addition to members of the Scott, Cobbs, and Hutter families already discussed, Reverend Nicholas Hamner Cobbs requires mention because of his significance in the social networks of the Cobbs/Hutter family. Reverend Cobbs was William Cobbs' cousin. He reintroduced Episcopalianism to the region and established St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, near Forest, and Trinity Church, near Lynchburg, in 1824 (Patterson 1983:9). Nicholas Cobbs was a slaveholder and did not seem to feel that Christianity and slavery were incompatible. William and Marian Cobbs and Edward and Emma Hutter and their family were all active members of the church (Patterson 1983). Emma was the first person baptized at St. Stephens. Through the church the Cobbs and Hutter families established and reinforced social and economic relationships with other members of the community. They also shaped relationships with some of their enslaved laborers through the church. Some enslaved laborers from Poplar Forest had marriage and funeral services performed by officials from St. Stephens.

### *Neighbors*

In addition to family members, neighbors were an important part of the social networks established by the Cobbs/Hutter family. Immediate neighbors included the Clay family, the Cox family, the Poindexter family, and the Smith family. Significant neighbors living close by, but not bordering Poplar Forest plantation, included the Radfords, the Walkers, Elizabeth Watts Scott, the Harrisons, Dr. Nelson, and Dr. Speece. These families, and more importantly for this study, their enslaved laborers, interacted through a variety of social events, activities, and

economic ventures. Some enslaved persons at Poplar Forest were married to enslaved persons living and working at some of these neighbors' homes and plantations. Some folks from Poplar Forest were hired out to these neighboring plantations for brief and extended periods of time and they also ventured back and forth among neighbors delivering gifts and messages. Local physicians were sometimes called to treat enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest when home remedies failed or to undertake medical examinations required for bonds for hired laborers or, in one case, to perform an autopsy for Letitia. One enslaved servant, Israel Anderson, who was owned by Dr. Nelson, eventually married Matilda, who was owned by Edward Hutter. They had several children and were finally able to live together after emancipation. Because these white families had social networks, reverberations in the form of opportunities and hardships resulted in the social networks of enslaved laborers (Kaye 2007:23). Among people with limited resources and power, social networks are critical for economic success. It is important to understand the distinctive and overlapping social networks that existed among and between whites and blacks in the Poplar Forest neighborhood for these reasons.

### **Enslaved Individuals and Families at Poplar Forest**

Many of the enslaved individuals that William and Marian Cobbs brought to Poplar Forest probably had ancestors who were born and raised in Virginia. Several of these enslaved laborers had family ties among the various plantations owned by members of the Scott and Cobbs families and beyond. These ties were maintained, expanded, or renewed when various Cobbs, Scott, and Hutter family members loaned, hired out, and purchased enslaved laborers to and from each other (HFJ January 1844; CJH to ESH 1842).

*Slavery in the Cobbs/Hutter Early Period 1828-1840*

Relatively little is known about which enslaved laborers lived at Poplar Forest and what they were doing prior to 1840, after which time letters to and from Edward Hutter, his farm journal, and account book provide more detailed information about their lives. Court records, and particularly documentary evidence used in these cases, do provide some information. A series of sixteen letters written between William Cobbs and William Cox provides insight into how Cobbs engaged some enslaved laborers from 1827-1841, immediately prior to and after his purchase of Poplar Forest (Cobbs-Cox letters 1827-1841, LVA).

William R. Cox was a plantation owner in Kanawha, Virginia. He also seemed to have been a slave-hiring agent.<sup>18</sup> His brother was John Cox, possibly the same John Cox who owned a plantation adjoining Poplar Forest on land that was part of the initial Poplar Forest tract. The enslaved laborers Cobbs placed in Kanawha were all male. Slave hiring agents solicited men because they were sought to perform various physically demanding tasks associated with industrial salt production: working in coal pits, coopering to create barrels, and working in salt furnaces. Letters between Cobbs and Cox revealed that Cobbs sent at least seven enslaved men—Moses, Stephen, Ned, Tom, Harry, George, and Peter, to work in Kanawha on hiring contracts.

How did these men adjust to working in the Kanawha salt mines? Ned and Tom ran away in 1827 (Putney to WC, August 15, 1827). Moses died in Kanawha in 1829 (WRC to WC, February 8, 1829). Stephen was sold (January 28, 1840). George was injured in a scalding accident, yet he stayed in Kanawha to recover and eventually returned to work. Peter became too

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<sup>18</sup> This may be William Radford Cox, who was born on March 5, 1788 in Amherst County to Jacob Cox and his wife, whose maiden name was Radford. He died on September 8, 1843 in Kanawha County, Virginia. (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~maudenna/f1134.htm>).



feeble to be hired out and he eventually returned to Poplar Forest (WC to WRC December 31, 1835; WRC to WC January 7, 1841).

Thus only two of the men hired out to the Kanawha salt mines returned to Poplar Forest, Peter and Harry, and they returned under very different circumstances. In a letter Cobbs wrote to Cox in 1835, he stated “You wished me to inform you what to do with Peter and George. I think they would not like this country if they were to return ...” (WC to WRC, December 31, 1835). Cobbs’ reflection on how Peter and George would perceive working at a Bedford County plantation after growing accustomed to different working conditions in Kanawha probably reflects less concern about their well-being than concern about what sort of influence they might have within the slave community at Poplar Forest and whether or not they would run away. This exchange suggests that their social status, although not their legal status, was changed some way through the experience of being hired out. Through daily practice their experience of what it meant to be an enslaved laborer was shaped by different labor practices in a new environment. Consequently, they could not be reintegrated easily into their former status as enslaved laborers on the home plantation.

Peter’s experience upon his return to Poplar Forest reveals that leasing offered a medium for negotiation of social relationships between enslaved workers and their masters, even if the former had less control over the final outcome of such relationships than the latter. In 1842 Edward Hutter offered Peter for hire to his brother, George, at nearby Sandusky plantation (CJH to ESH 1842). Peter refused to go, and Hutter did not force the issue. Peter had a say in where he would or would not go to work outside of the Poplar Forest property. This small measure of control was extended to some hirees as an incentive to promote compliance and deter the risk of running away, particularly among enslaved artisans.

Enslaved laborers who were hired out experienced a sense of liminality (Turner 1995:95). Drawing on the work of Arnold Van Gennep (1960), Turner developed a theory of liminality that defined liminal as a social status or position that is socially and structurally ambiguous (Turner 1995:95). Hired enslaved laborers' positions in the social structure were somewhat ambiguous because they were owned by one slaveholder yet hired out to someone else. The ambiguity of their status is emphasized by the fact that some individuals were allowed to engage in behaviors that were not tolerated on home plantations, such as running away for extended periods of time without punishment.

Some individuals who were hired out together, typically to railroads, salt works, and in other industrial settings, were able to maintain some elements of their social networks. Most hired enslaved laborers were physically separated from families and communities on their home plantations and in their neighborhoods. Physical removal from social networks limited or negated access to resources that those relations entailed. In their new locations hired laborers were subjected to all the dangers that liminality implies. Slave hirers had little vested interest in the well-being of their temporary charges beyond the hire period. Narratives of formerly enslaved Virginians contain many reminiscences of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of temporary masters (Perdue et al. 1992). Slaveholders sometimes attempted to mediate this abuse by hiring out their laborers to family or friends. Hutter, as mentioned above, sometimes engaged in this practice.

#### *Slavery in the Cobbs/Hutter Antebellum and Civil War Period 1840-1865*

A majority of the enslaved community that resided at Poplar Forest from 1840 through the end of the antebellum period and the Civil War were descendants of an enslaved woman

named Mary. Marian Scott Cobbs inherited Mary from her father in the early 1820s. Mary was possibly born in 1786, although the exact year of her birth is unknown, and she died or was sold by 1843 (Marmon 1991, Part 2:95). Mary had six children and four grandchildren at Poplar Forest (Table 4.3). Mary's oldest daughter, Ellen, had nine children. Mary's second daughter, Lucy, had four children and one grandchild. Lucy's husband lived at Poplar Forest, but it is unclear who he was (ESH to EWCH, April 29, 1846).

Mary's daughter, Matilda, had six children at Poplar Forest (Marmon, Part 3:97-8). Her husband was Israel Anderson. They were married by an official of St. Stephens Episcopal Church on December 24, 1837 (Patterson 1983: 208). Israel Anderson lived on a nearby plantation, probably Dr. Nelson's plantation about eight miles away, near St. Stephens Episcopal Church (EWCH to daughter Dec. 1865; HIEJ). Dr. Nelson was one of the physicians used by the Cobbs and Hutters and he was also a personal friend. Mary's youngest daughter, Rose, was sold in 1841 with Mary's granddaughter, Mary Jane (Marmon 1991, Part 2:83).

It is uncertain if Mary's sons, Smith and Sam, had any children prior to emancipation or if they had wives at Poplar Forest or outside of the plantation (Marmon 1991, Part 3:98). The 1870 census of Bedford County reveals a Sam Hutter married to Dorcas Hutter. All of their children that have been located in historical records were born after emancipation.

In addition to her children, Mary also had several great-grandchildren at Poplar Forest, although she was not around to know them. Ellen's daughter Letitia (also known as Letia and Lishy) married Jacob on December 27, 1843 (Patterson 1983). They had two sons (HFJ; Marmon 1991, Part 3:95-6). Sadly, but not atypically, neither child lived long. Both were two years old when they died.

| Table 4.3 Mary's Descendants                |             |                      |               |                    |                    |                      |                  |                   |
|---|-------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Mother:                                     | <b>Mary</b> | <b>1.Ellen</b>       | <b>2.Lucy</b> | <b>3.Matilda</b>   | <b>1a. Letitia</b> | <b>1d. Catherine</b> | <b>1e. Maria</b> | <b>2c. Martha</b> |
| Children:                                   | 1.Ellen     | 1a.Letitia           | 2a.Ned        | 3a.John Echols     | 1aa. Daniel        | 1da. Sandy           | 1ea. Doctor      | 2ca.Tom           |
|   | 2.Lucy      | 1b.Doctor            | 2b.Rhoda      | 3b.Judy            | 1ab.Sandy          |                      |                  |                   |
|   | 3.Matilda   | 1c.Mary Jane         | 2c.Martha     | 3c.Izreal Anderson |                    |                      |                  |                   |
|   | 4.Smith     | 1d.Catherine         | 2d.Victorine  | 3d.James           |                    |                      |                  |                   |
|   | 5.Sam       | 1e.Maria             |               | 3e.Margaret        |                    |                      |                  |                   |
|   | 6.Rose      | 1f.William Armistead |               | 3f.Phil Anderson   |                    |                      |                  |                   |
|   |             | 1g.George Hutter     |               | 3g.Beverly         |                    |                      |                  |                   |
|   |             | 1h.Ada Byron         |               |                    |                    |                      |                  |                   |
|   |             | 1i.Ellenor           |               |                    |                    |                      |                  |                   |
| Based on Marmon 1991 Part 3, BCBDR, and HFJ |             |                      |               |                    |                    |                      |                  |                   |

The social ties between Mary's descendants and the Cobbs/Hutter family seem to have been especially strong because the former were often selected as house servants. Three of her descendants had marriage services, and two had funeral services, performed by St. Stephens church officials (Patterson 1983:208, 261). After emancipation, Emma Hutter was particularly despondent that one of Mary's daughters, Matilda Anderson, was leaving the property (EWCH to FAHR Dec. 3 1865). Matilda promised to leave behind two of her children, Margaret (age 13) and Phil (age 11), until Emma could engage other servants (EWCH to FAHR Dec. 3 1865). Matilda's niece, Ellen (age 21) also agreed to stay at Poplar Forest until Emma could find someone to replace her (EWCH to FAHR Dec. 3 1865).

Marian Cobbs also inherited an enslaved girl named Gabriella from her father, but no other historical documents indicate what happened to her after the settlement of the inheritance and her name does not appear in any records associated with Poplar Forest (Burton et al. vs. Scott July 15, 1823, JML). Samuel Scott's will was contested by several of his heirs, so it is possible that Gabriella never came to Poplar Forest (Burton et al. vs. Scott July 15, 1823, JML).

William Cobbs also received enslaved laborers through inheritance upon the death of his father Robert Cobbs in 1822. Cobbs inherited Viney and her daughter Lydia, Mary Ann, Aaron, Betsey, Jack, Mima, and Old Souse. Viney was about sixteen when she was inherited by William Cobbs and her daughter, Lydia, was an infant (Marmon 1991, Part 2:99). Lydia gave birth to ten children at Poplar Forest before emancipation (Henry, Mildred, Ida Reeder, Essex, Joseph, Peggy, Lucy, Maria, Richard, and Charlotte). By 1870 Lydia was married to Richard Johnson. Some, if not all, of her children were a result of their relationship. At least four of Lydia's children, Henry, Mildred, Essex, and Margaret, died before emancipation. All four of these children were infants or toddlers when they died.

The family relationships between Mary Ann, Aaron, Betsey, Jack, Old Souse, and other enslaved people at Poplar Forest and neighboring plantations is unknown. Aaron was a headman at Poplar Forest and a few Hutter family letters document sorrow at his passing in 1848 at the age of forty-one. One of these letters indicates that Aaron had children at Poplar Forest (CJH to ESH December 16, 1848). Jack preceded Aaron in death in 1847 and Betsey died in 1857 (Marmon 1991, Part 2:98). Jack was about twenty-seven years old when he died and Betsey was about forty-five (Marmon 1991, Part 2:98; BCBDR).

William Cobbs also inherited Mary Ann and Mima from his father's estate. Mary Ann was about ten years old and Mima was about fifty-four when they were moved to Poplar Forest or William Cobb's home in Lynchburg. Mary Ann died in 1848 and Mima died in 1855 (Marmon 1991, Part 2:99; BCBDR). Their kinship ties to other enslaved laborers, if any, at Poplar Forest are uncertain. However, Mima may have been Lydia Johnson's grandmother. When Lydia's son Essex was killed in a cabin fire at age two, a letter from Amalia to her brother Edward Hutter expressed sympathy for Mima and Lydia (FAHR to ESH July 3, 1854). This

suggests that Mima was also in the cabin at the time of the fire, perhaps taking care of him while Lydia was working in the fields.

Oral tradition in the Hutter family recalls that Cate, or “Aunt Katie,” an enslaved woman owned by William Cobbs, was a former slave of Thomas Jefferson (CSH 1909; Marmon 1991, Part 2: 80). This is unverified, but Jefferson did have multiple slaves named Cate, including Suckey’s daughter Cate, who was born at Poplar Forest by 1788 and was still at Poplar Forest as late as 1818 (<http://plantationdb.monticello.org/>; Marmon 1991, Part 2:80-83). Cate had a son named Solomon in 1814 and a son named Beverly in 1819 (<http://plantationdb.monticello.org/>). These naming traditions continued at Poplar Forest. The only Cate owned by William Cobbs was a woman documented as Kitty Davis in the 1870 census (BCC 1870). At that time, she was living with Beverly Brown and his family. Solomon Davis, Kitty’s grandson, was also living in this household. Solomon was the son of Harriet (Kitty’s daughter) and Aaron Howe. Beverly Brown’s household is the first listed after Edward Hutter’s household in the 1870 census, suggesting that Beverly Brown’s house was located on Hutter’s Poplar Forest property.

Beverly Brown, Harriet Howe, and Solomon Davis were all formerly enslaved at Poplar Forest. Aaron Howe, however, was enslaved at an unknown location outside of Poplar Forest. He ended up in North Carolina by 1866, possibly as a result of migrating with his former master’s family. He may have left Virginia at some point between 1849 and 1857 because his last child with Harriet was born in 1850. She later had two more children with someone else; the first of these children, a daughter, was born in 1857. Harriet named this daughter Caty, possibly after her mother.

Aaron Howe wrote to Edward Hutter after emancipation requesting that his children, Eliza, Solomon, and Hunter, be sent to live with him in Wilmington, North Carolina (Aaron

Howe to ESH 1866). This letter and a partial reply from Edward Hutter were located in the Freedman's Bureau records (Aaron Howe to ESH 1866). Hutter replied that he had heard that Aaron's daughter, sixteen-year-old Eliza, was working for William Branch, the mayor of Lynchburg. Hutter stated that he had made it clear to Solomon and Hunter, who were twelve and thirteen, that if they left they must take their grandmother, Kitty Davis, who was over ninety years old. It is unknown if these children ever went to North Carolina. The 1870 census indicates, as already stated, that Solomon was living with his grandmother in Beverly Brown's home. Therefore, Solomon probably remained at Poplar Forest to take care of his grandmother in her final years.

Beverly Brown's wife, Jane, and their son Tom resided on another plantation during the era of slavery, although where they lived is unknown. As Harriett Howe's relationship indicates, men were not the only ones among the Poplar Forest slave community to seek abroad marriages. Susan was married to Sawney on December 26, 1847 (Patterson 1983:208). His owner is unknown, but Susan and her children (who were likely also Sawney's children) Agnes, Elizabeth, Coleman, and Frank lived at Poplar Forest. Only two of these children survived slavery.

Washington Brown may have been related to Beverly Brown. Washington was born at Poplar Forest around 1831. His wife Julia and their children resided at a different plantation. They had eight children prior to emancipation that were still living when the 1870 census of Bedford County was recorded (BCC 1870).

There were several other enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest during the 1828 to 1861 period (Marmon 1991, Part 2). Some of them probably had kinship ties to Mary, Viney, or Cate's families, some were members of other families, and others likely had no family relations within

the Poplar Forest enslaved community. Although some enslaved people may have had no biological kin, they were doubtless incorporated into existing social networks in various ways.

Whites and blacks residing on an antebellum plantation lived entangled lives. The actions of individuals in each group impacted the other group, although not in equal ways. The unequal power dynamics are revealed in the letter excerpt at the beginning of this chapter. Amalia Hutter Reeder, writing from her home in Pennsylvania to her slave-owning brother at his plantation in Virginia, commented: “I could live in Virginia and never think of the slave population,” (FAHR to ESH February 13, 1850, HFM). Slavery had been carefully constructed through social practice over time so that by 1850 it seemed natural in Virginia. Apparently it was perceived as so natural that enslaved people became anonymous or invisible to free people in some ways. Yet that façade was rendered transparent through geographic, social, and cultural distance when Mrs. Reeder returned to everyday life in antebellum Pennsylvania. There she reflected on some of the enslaved women and children working as house servants at her brother’s Virginia residence. She remembered their names. She remembered their personalities and unique characteristics. A visiting Virginian may not have noticed these unique aspects, or considered them noteworthy, as many historical documents demonstrate.

Amalia Reeder offered some reflections about her brother’s female enslaved house servants and their children. I wonder what these enslaved women and girls might have thought of Mrs. Reeder. She had come to visit by train from a state where slavery was abolished. Yet she was not unfamiliar with servants. Amalia Reeder hired an Irish woman, Nancy, to assist her in taking care of her children and household. Mrs. Reeder’s letters reveal that she was a formidable woman, yet she was also a thoughtful person. Ellen, Matilda, Susan, Kate, Dump, and Elisa may have experienced or perceived this kindness. A letter written from Hutter’s father to Mrs. Reeder



on June 7, following her trip to Lynchburg, noted: “We had a delightful trip to the Forest. You were spoken of often and seem to be as great a favourite with them all as ever. All the servants even enquired after you and are anxious for your return” (CJH to FAHR, ND: HFM). Edward Hutter’s family connections in Pennsylvania brought several Northern visitors to Poplar Forest over time and necessitated trips by the Cobbs and Hutter families to the North. These trips and the social networks that engendered them resulted in material goods flowing in both directions, in exposure to different ideas and lifestyles, and in creating, maintaining, strengthening, and straining social relationships.

## Chapter 5

### **Production and Power: “*Planted gardens & negroes patches*”**

Within a plantation economy, planter families, overseers, and enslaved laborers produced goods and services for use on the home plantation and to sell in the market economy. Enslaved labor was the foundation of this system. Slaveholders appropriated most of the goods and services created by enslaved laborers. On some plantations and farms, however, enslaved laborers were allowed to labor for themselves in the evenings, on holidays, and on Sundays. Susan, Billy, and George were members of the enslaved community at Poplar Forest in the 1840s-1860s. When Susan taught William Hutter the alphabet, Billy created brooms, or George made shoes for the Hutter family, they earned money from Edward Hutter (HIEJ; MSC to ESH June 18, 1844; ESH to EWCH June 27, 1844). In these and many similar ways, enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest sold services or crafts to the Cobbs-Hutter family and others. This chapter focuses on two aspects of production engaged in by enslaved laborers: production for the slaveholder and production for self and family. The social relations enacted and negotiated through labor practices are also discussed. These social relations are invested in the goods that resulted from production, shaping their meanings. Therefore, production is an integral part of consumerism at multiple scales.

Focusing solely on acquisition is limiting because it examines one stage in the multifaceted process of consumerism. Including production in the analysis enables insight into the significance of forces that enable and constrain consumer choices. Broadening the focus to include other phases of consumption—production, access, and use, provides the necessary background for understanding consumer choices and the social relations of dominance and

subordination that shape them through social practices. Using that approach, my analysis begins with a focus on production.

To understand the entanglement of social relations and slavery, it is necessary to explore the labor practices and relations involved in production. In this chapter, I investigate plantation work relations, goods that enslaved laborers produced for the slaveholder, and goods they produced for themselves, their families, and other community members. Because garden plots and fowl raising were central to production, analysis of microbotanical remains and faunal remains are central to this chapter. I use historical documents to investigate plantation work relations. Analysis of historical documents, faunal and macrobotanical remains, and artifacts from Sites A and B clarify the production strategies that enslaved workers engaged in to produce goods for the Cobbs and Hutter families and for themselves.

### **Plantation Work Relations**

The labor relations at Poplar Forest in the antebellum period were complex and the answer to the question of who was in charge was variable. William Cobbs was the patriarch of Poplar Forest and he owned the plantation until his death in 1852, with the exception of seventy acres he gave to Emma Hutter in 1844. From the time of William Cobbs' mental and physical decline in the 1830s (Marmon 1991, Part 1:60) until Edward Hutter married into the family in 1840, Marian Scott Cobbs seems to have assisted her husband in running the plantation with the support of periodic overseers. After Hutter resigned from the Navy in 1841, he was in charge of plantation affairs (EWCH and MSC to ESH September 14, 1841; J.L. Simms to ESH September 22, 1841). Family letters indicate, however, that his mother-in-law continued to assert her influence, which sometimes caused family conflict (MSC to EWCH August 15, 1852).

## *Overseers*

Overseers were typically white male supervisors hired by planters to oversee plantation management, crop production, and to supervise and regulate slave labor. Large plantations often employed overseers on a regular basis. Overseers were a diverse group of individuals with varying levels of education, literacy, agricultural experience, and socioeconomic status (Wiethoff 2006). They were contracted wage laborers with the unfortunate structural position of moderating between planters and enslaved laborers. Given the stressful nature of this endeavor, this occupation had a high turnover rate due to overseers being fired by planters and overseers leaving of their own volition (Wiethoff 2006:75-104). Yet many overseers also renewed their contracts, as was the case during Jefferson's ownership of Poplar Forest (Chambers 1993:90; Wiethoff 2006:105-129). This practice was an exception during the Cobbs/Hutter occupation.

Overseers were frequently employed at Poplar Forest in the antebellum period (Table 5.1). How often they were present from 1828 to 1840 is unknown.

| Name:              | Occupation Dates:     |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Edmund Mills       | 1840-1842             |
| Davenport          | 1842-1844             |
| Elliot             | 1846-1848             |
| Charles Gwatkins   | 1848-1850             |
| W. Drummond        | July 1853-August 1853 |
| Richard Roberts    | Sept. 1853- ?         |
| William Creasy     | By 1857-1858          |
| B. Franklin Creasy | 1858-1860             |
| Mitchell           | 1861-?                |
| Creasy             | post-1861-1866        |

Based on HFJ, HFM, Marmon 1991 Part 1

Hutter seems to have preferred to hire overseers on two-year contracts. A review of the list of overseers he employed reveals frequent turnover. Overseers were known, or perceived, as a

transient group (Wiethoff 2006:32-53). It is surely significant that no one aside from Creasy chose to renew his contract, or extend his employment beyond a two-year period. It is also compelling that some left before their two-year terms expired. Perhaps Hutter was difficult to work for or maybe he was excessively frugal and unwilling to pay a competitive wage. He may have been intolerant and unwilling to abide overseer's plantation management techniques or interpersonal relations with the planter family or enslaved laborers. Family letters provide no evidence of dissonance between Hutter and the overseers he employed, aside from Mills. In fact, Hutter employed Davenport's wife and mother-in-law for small sewing jobs even after Davenport was no longer overseer (HIEJ August 27, 1856; December 23, 1857; May 12, 1858; July 30, 1858; October 23, 1858; November 4, 1858; December 9, 1858; February 1, 1859; April 4, 1860; December 20, 1860; March 7, 1861). Consequently, the reasons for high turnover among overseers are largely speculative. Whatever the reason, it is clear that labor relations were complex at Poplar Forest, power at the middling level changed hands frequently, and the overseer position was not deemed a desirable one by those who occupied it.

### *Headmen*

Overseers were only one dimension in the social hierarchy of plantation management at Poplar Forest. Hutter simultaneously assigned the role of headman to an enslaved male field laborer, even when overseers were also employed.<sup>19</sup> Headmen, also known as drivers and foremen, were enslaved supervisors who worked under a white overseer or directly under the planter (Berlin and Morgan 1993:17). Negotiating between the interests of enslaved laborers and

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<sup>19</sup> The term headman is equivalent to the more commonly used 'driver' or 'foreman', referring to an enslaved laborer with the responsibilities of an overseer (Wiethoff 2006:xvi). Headman was the title Hutter used for this position. It may have been a regional term because Jefferson also used it.

those of the planter and overseer was even more complex for headmen. They could not leave their jobs and had much more to lose if they refused to promote the interests of either planter or overseer. They sometimes also had to engage in behaviors, such as directing and disciplining enslaved laborers who may have been friends or family, that created tension with other community members and potentially interpersonal conflict (Wiethoff 2006:54-61). Headmen were typically rewarded with better quality housing, clothing, and food (Berlin and Morgan 1993:17). Yet these material indulgences likely had little value when they came at the cost of fractured family or community relations. Using enslaved laborers as headmen was another means of exploiting slave labor because the power dynamic it entailed pitted the headman against the other enslaved laborers, wittingly or not.

Aaron was the field headman at Poplar Forest by 1844 (when this information was first recorded) until his death in 1848 (HFJ January 1, 1844; January 1, 1848). Billy took over the role next and was headman until at least 1853, after which there are no records that consistently document field laborer roles at Poplar Forest (HFJ January 1, 1849; January 1, 1850; January 1, 1851; January 1, 1852, January 1, 1853). Aaron was inherited by William Cobbs from his father. As someone he knew and potentially trusted, Aaron's status as headman may have been established by William Cobbs before Edward Hutter came to Poplar Forest. Aaron had children at Poplar Forest, though it is unclear who they were (CJH to ESH December 16, 1848). This meant his wife also lived at Poplar Forest, until she died or was sold. Having a family was both an asset and a liability to a headman navigating the power dynamics at Poplar Forest.

Family letters indicate that Hutter relied on his overseers and headmen to manage plantation production, particularly in his absence (EWCH to ESH September 1, 1841; EWCH to ESH September 8, 1841; MSC to ESH September 14, 1841; EWCH to ESH June 10, 1844; MSC

to ESH June 18, 1844; MSC to EWCH August 15, 1852; MSC to EWCH April 16, 1854; EWCH to ESH July 31, 1857). The discontinuous and overlapping streams of overseers and headmen meant additional authority figures in the power struggle over labor practices and relations. Enslaved laborers were certainly astute observers of this shifting social hierarchy because so much depended upon their understanding of it.

In 1841, Emma wrote to her husband while he was away serving in the Navy, to inform him of recent events on the plantation.

. . . This morning Mr. Mills spoke to Smith who answered very impertinently. He gave him a slap across the face. Smith immediately rebelled, caught fast hold of Mr. Mills, tried to throw him down. Mr. Mills did not whip him but came over to the house to ask Father what he should do. Father had rode out and before Mr. Mills got back he had run and we have not heard of him yet. A pretty high move don't you think it was? Mother says she hopes you will sell all that do not behave themselves . . . (EWCH to ESH September 1, 1841).

One week later, Emma wrote: "Martha took a notion to walk off and spend a day and a night. No one knew where. I began to think we were beset with runaways . . . (EWCH to ESH September 8, 1841). The following week, Emma reported:

" . . . Mr. Mills has just let me know someone has been trespassing on his sheep . . . You wished to know if Mr. Mills would be kept another year, I think nothing more has passed between Mr. Cobbs and him on the subject since you left, I think it is Mills calculation to stay . . . I have put your man Ned out to work with Mills until you get home. He would not obey me. I thought it best not to have anything to do with him but put him to steady work (EWCH to ESH September 14, 1841).

This series of letters offers insight into the complexity of plantation authority at Poplar Forest, and the reaction of enslaved laborers to it. Cobbs owned and was in charge of the plantation, although he was eager to hand over or share that authority with Edward Hutter as soon as Hutter could procure his resignation from the Navy. Mills sought Cobbs' advice about punishment when Smith, a twenty-one-year-old field laborer, responded to a slap with physical force, indicating that Mills deferred to the authority of Cobbs. Smith's immediate response suggests that he did not respect the authority of Mills, though his decision to run away indicates that he

did respect or fear the authority of Cobbs or Hutter. Cobbs deeded twenty-four enslaved laborers to Hutter just one week before this incident, including Smith, Ned, and Martha<sup>20</sup> (Bedford County Deed Book 29, August 24, 1841, pp.177-8). Therefore, Hutter's legal authority over them was quite recent. Smith may have decided to test this authority in Hutter's absence.

### *Family Authority and Gender*

Deferring to Hutter's authority, although hoping to influence it, Mrs. Cobbs shared her opinion that he should sell enslaved laborers who did not behave according to the expected norms of enslaved laborers (EWCH to ESH September 1, 1841). Meanwhile Mrs. Hutter indicated that Ned did not recognize her authority, thus she sent him from the house to work in the fields under the authority of Mills (EWCH to ESH September 14, 1841). Edward Hutter's question regarding the future employment of Mills suggests that he may not have approved of Mills. Stolen sheep suggest that at least some other enslaved laborers besides Smith may not have respected Mills' authority, as does Martha's bold decision to leave the plantation for a day and a half. Martha was Smith's niece, so her absence may have been related to his. Although Mills was gone from Poplar Forest by 1842 if not sooner, Smith returned by 1847 and remained at Poplar Forest through at least December 1861 (HFJ January 1, 1847; HIEJ December 5, 1861). Although records do not indicate where he was from late 1841 until January 1, 1847, his absence in the yearly census in Hutter's farm journal suggests that he may have been hired out to avoid selling him while maintaining the power hierarchy on the plantation.

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<sup>20</sup> Ned was Smith's thirteen-year-old nephew and Martha was Smith's twelve-year-old niece; both were his sister Lucy's children. Lucy was a house servant who later served as a wet nurse for at least one of the Hutter's children.



### *Crops and Labor Relations*

In addition to power hierarchies, the kinds of crops being produced also impacted labor relations. Gendered division of labor became more common under wheat cultivation, whereas it was relatively rare for tobacco cultivation (Berlin 1998: 135, 270; Morgan 1998: 173). Within this division of labor, men typically performed the skilled tasks and women performed the less desirable unskilled labor (Walsh 1993:186).

Hutter had eleven enslaved field hands (six men and five women), seven enslaved house servants (one man and six women and girls) and six enslaved children (three girls and three boys) in 1854 to perform the various tasks associated with production and daily needs on an antebellum mixed economy plantation. His enslaved workforce exceeded his crop demands that year, thus he hired out ten workers, eight men and two young women, to supplement his income (HFJ).

In 1854 Hutter also hired out two additional women—with their infant children. This practice, not uncommon in the antebellum period, simultaneously earned him a small bit of money and alleviated the financial burden of caring for unproductive infants and women engaged in their frequent care. Although enslaved African American women served as wet nurses in the antebellum period, it does not seem that Hutter hired them out for that purpose because he received very little compensation for their labor. This demonstrates that not only gender, but life cycle also impacted labor relations and labor practices.

The practice of hiring out enslaved laborers also added another dimension to the complex social hierarchy and system of labor relations in place at Poplar Forest. The lessee had certain rights in regard to the enslaved laborers that he/she hired, particularly in regard to labor expectations (Stealey 1978: 349). Therefore, the productive labor of the enslaved was directed

toward the goals of the lessee. For enslaved people, this often meant removal from access to sites of production for themselves (e.g. garden plots on their home plantation), but it sometimes also meant access to other means of production, such as extra work, and the compensation it provided. I will develop these ideas following the discussion of what enslaved laborers produced for the Cobbs and Hutter families.

### **Production for the Slaveholder**

Although he had no prior agricultural experience, Edward Hutter proved to be a skillful and successful planter and stockman once he married Emma Cobbs Hutter and settled at Poplar Forest. He surely benefitted from the guidance of William and Marian Cobbs, who were both raised on agricultural plantations, and his brother George C. Hutter at Sandusky. He received further guidance from other Cobbs and Scott family members, neighbors, overseers, and enslaved laborers. In addition to these kin and community networks, Hutter was influenced by additional social networks including the local agricultural society and his church community.

Hutter and several of his planter neighbors were members of the New London Agricultural Society. The purpose of the society, founded in 1833, was to “promote the interests of agriculture” through exchanging information on farming methods, sponsoring fairs and exhibitions, and inviting speakers to share information on trends and innovations in agriculture (Daniel 1985: 82). Hutter may have attended the New London Agricultural Society meeting on November 15, 1844 when Bedford lawyer, planter, and politician William L. Goggin addressed the society about scientific agriculture (Daniel 1985:83). Scientific agriculture, based on incorporating soil chemistry into agriculture, livestock breeding, hybridization, crop rotation, and improved technology was a current trend by the time of this address and it continued throughout the nineteenth century (Wilson 1942). Goggin advised society members to construct ditches to

drain fields, urged the rotation of clover, timothy, and orchard grass to prevent erosion, promoted the use of fertilizers and manure, lobbied for intensive agriculture and crop rotation, and discussed new plowing methods and improved varieties of seeds and grains (Wilson 1942). Whether or not Hutter was present at the meeting, he was certainly aware of the ideas proposed by Goggin. He knew Goggin personally and engaged him as his lawyer on at least one occasion (January 27, 1857, HIEJ). If he did not hear Goggin's ideas directly, Hutter was exposed to them in the agricultural society meetings and in the agricultural journals and Virginia newspapers to which he subscribed (February 17, 1857; August 18, 1858; July 7, 1860; January 8, 1861; September 3, 1861, HIEJ). Evidence that Hutter embraced scientific agriculture in his plantation management is indicated by his farm journal (HFJ 1844-1854) and account book (HIEJ mid-1856 through 1861). The similarity of his farm journal entries—what he chose to include, and what he did not think it was necessary to mention, with other Virginia farm journals kept by plantation owners from 1840-1862, suggests that both his approach to agricultural production and his ideology were shaped by these multiple sources (McKee 1999).

In Hutter's farm journal the daily entries are concise and rarely bear personal reflection on daily activities. Yet they aptly describe the daily work routines of field laborers and labor practices. Enslaved field laborers worked six days a week at Poplar Forest. Sundays and holidays were considered their time. Having Sunday as a day off was a labor concession that was common among enslaved African Americans by the antebellum period, although this practice was initiated much earlier (McKee 1999; Schlotterbeck 1991:172). Hutter documented that enslaved field workers were engaged in planting, tending, preparing fields, and harvesting crops on a regular basis. This work included numerous tasks, such as tilling fields, digging ditches, planting, and taking crops to the market (HFJ). Enslaved workers were also frequently engaged in building

and repair of their own houses, construction of plantation outbuildings, and, occasionally, they were involved in public works projects, such as building roads (HFJ). Like customary time off, these labor practices were also in place by at least the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

This tremendous amount of year-round labor resulted in the production of cash crops that yielded a significant income for the Cobbs/Hutter family. From 1845 to 1854, Hutter made brief annual assessments of plantation production in his farm journal. Following is his assessment for 1845:

During 1845. Done 229 days plowing-Made (say) 70 barrels of corn. 11 bushels oats-484 bushels wheat-20 loads clover 45 ditto grass-Total 65 loads hay. Applied 704 loads manure to crop-blinded 445 yards ditch-hauled 97 loads rocks. Sheared 205 lbs wool off 51 sheep.-Sent to market 818 1/4 lbs butter \$128.64c- 157 bushels. wheat \$134.45-2 lbs flour \$8.-Oats \$14.37-Beef \$43.02-Skins \$3.90 4 calves \$15-8 Lambs \$12.50-11 mutton, \$22.50-8 pigs \$4.eggs 25c-Silk \$43.00 (HFJ).

The amount of work necessary to plant, produce, harvest, and transport this volume of crops, to raise and process livestock, and the extensive labor entailed in digging extensive ditches, hauling rocks, clearing land, and fencing, was astounding. Six enslaved men and eight enslaved women performed all of this work. The annual summaries capture only part of the work routine of these men and women—the end products and their economic yield. Hutter’s nearly daily entries capture the labor practices in greater detail.

The following typical annual work routine is based on Hutter’s farm journal entries for 1844-1854 (HFJ). In winter, when the weather was clear, field laborers spent their time hauling wood, leaves, manure, ice, rock, rails, and chaff, clearing land, mauling, cutting briars, plowing, fallowing, and blinding ditches. On rainy or extremely cold or windy winter days, field laborers were engaged in sharpening stakes, cleaning stables, thrashing oats, and hanging meat.

In the spring, on clear days, field laborers sowed oats and clover, fallowed orchards, cleared land, cut briars, hauled rocks, manure, leaves, straw, and rails, blinded ditches, grafted fruit trees and flowering bushes, coultured land, dressed clover with manure, planted corn,

watermelon, and sweet potatoes, hoed corn, made fodder, made fences, weeded oats, and plowed. On rainy spring days, enslaved laborers cleaned stables, cleaned and thrashed oats, seeded clover, made baskets, and hauled wood, fodder, leaves, and rocks.

Field laborers spent the summer cultivating and weeding corn, plowing, cutting wheat, stacking hay, weeding crops, pulling flax, hauling oats, weeds, wood, wheat, and hay, clearing land, and clearing ditches. The fall was spent seeding wheat, thrashing wheat, fallowing, burning brush and cleaning up, digging potatoes, clearing land, harrowing, hauling wood, manure, and rails, cutting hay, clearing wheat, sowing wheat, fanning wheat, shucking corn, hauling wheat to the mill, sowing rye grass seed, and cleaning the ice house.

Certain tasks were not relegated to particular seasons, but were undertaken on an as-needed basis. These tasks included tending livestock, building projects, repair projects, and sending crops and goods to the market. Although building and repair tasks were not precisely related to seasons, they were undertaken more frequently when crop demands were low.

In the period 1844-1854 there was little deviation in the kinds of crops produced at Poplar Forest, except for a brief period from 1846 to 1849 when Hutter attempted to grow tobacco to make quick cash to alleviate the financial strain of rebuilding the main house after it was badly damaged by a fire in November 1845 (HFJ November 21, 1845). In addition to the intensive agriculture associated with tobacco cultivation, this fire resulted in further tasks for the enslaved workers who were engaged in clearing the debris from the destruction, hauling surviving furniture and housewares to temporary locations while the house was repaired, and extensive repair work.

These detailed farm journal entries reveal that William Cobbs and Edward Hutter engaged enslaved workers in mixed grain agriculture, raising livestock, and dairy production.

Enslaved workers were continually occupied with land modification, planting, farming, and building construction and repair. Hutter instituted innovative agricultural practices, such as the use of guano imported from South America to improve the clay-rich soils of Bedford County, Virginia (August 15, 1856; October 20, 1857; September 14, 1858; October 31, 1859; November 5, 1859; September 4, 1860 HIEJ). He also purchased new agricultural technologies, such as the Atkins self-raking reaping machine (September 4, 1860 HIEJ). This reaper was one of many labor-saving devices increasingly available to planters as a result of industrialization and more readily accessible to planters due to expanding transportation options in the antebellum period.

In a letter to an agricultural implements manufacturer in Pennsylvania, Hutter remarked “Since I have written you I must write Arthur Watts of Ohio who is very interested in Agricultural matters. He says that he is one of a committee last year who examined nine reapers and they gave preference to Seymour Morgan’s but that I fear is too complicated to be worked by Negroes” (ESH to W.O. Hickok Esq. June 27, 1855).<sup>21</sup> This letter reveals that Hutter sought Northern technology and agricultural advice even if he questioned its application in a Southern location. The latter judgment provides insight into Hutter’s views on race, clearly indicating that Hutter felt African Americans were intellectually inferior to whites. Perhaps this is one justification he used to exploit their labor.

### *Cash Crops: Wheat Production*

Production of cash crops was the main goal of a successful planter. Wheat was the primary market crop at Poplar Forest throughout the antebellum period. The transition from tobacco to grain cultivation began in Virginia in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, when Piedmont planters

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<sup>21</sup> The Ohio Board of Agriculture arranged for this public test of reapers and mowing machines in 1853 to test their abilities for their intended purposes (McCormick 1853:174-5).

developed it as a cash crop in the decades following the Revolution. Commercial wheat production expanded rapidly in the southern United States during the 1840s and 1850s (Wright 2003: 7). Large slaveholders in the Virginia Piedmont, defined as those owning twenty or more enslaved laborers, tended to be more specialized in wheat production than smaller farms in the area, particularly those without enslaved laborers (Irwin 1988).

*Cash Crops: Other Crops and Animal Byproducts*

In addition to wheat production, Hutter had his enslaved workers grow oats for market and he had a dairy where they produced a considerable quantity of butter as well. Hutter made additional cash by selling corn, meat, animal skins, wool, beef, calves, pigs, sheep, timber, fruit, butter, and eggs produced by slave labor (HFJ). Enslaved laborers tended livestock and gathered eggs. They also cultivated orchards, gardens, and fields to grow food and fodder for consumption on the plantation and for the market. Corn, peas, “Irish” potatoes, watermelons, pumpkins, peaches, pears, apricots, plums, sweet potatoes, clover, hay, and rye were all grown by enslaved laborers in kitchen gardens, orchards, and fields to support the people and animals who lived at Poplar Forest (HFJ). Surplus from these activities was also sold at market and all the proceeds went to Hutter (HIEJ). These agricultural products sold well in Lynchburg and neighboring markets (HIEJ).

Aside from grains and fruits, most other food crops grown for use on the plantation were grown in the kitchen garden. Enslaved laborers worked in these kitchen gardens to produce food for the Cobbs and Hutter families and to produce provisions for the enslaved community. These workers were periodically directed by a white gardener. Buchanan was employed as a gardener from 1854-1856 (Marmon 1991, Part 2:71; FAHR to ESH, March 5, 1856). His services were

valued by the Cobbs/Hutter family and his departure was considered a great loss. Amalia Reeder, Hutter's sister who had visited Poplar Forest in 1855, was disappointed to hear about the end of his employment: "I feel quite vexed that you should have lost Buchanan's services as a gardener. It seems to me you cannot do without him. Poor old fellow I feel sorry for him" (FAHR to ESH March 5, 1856).

Documents indicate that at least two enslaved men, George and Bob, were involved in kitchen gardening for the Hutter family. In a reflection on Bob's illness at Poplar Forest, Amalia Reeder wrote that if Bob died then "Mr. Buchanan will miss [him] in his operations" (FAHR to ESH and EWCH, November 24, 1855). A few years later, Emma Cobbs complained to her husband that George was "lazy in the garden" (EWCH to ESH, July 21, 1857).

### **Provisioning**

Typical antebellum plantation provisions included a peck of corn meal, two to five pounds of pork, and sometimes, a quart of molasses per week for each person (Breedon 1980:20; Dew 1994:111; McKivigan 1996:125, 136; Schlesinger 1996:447). Yet plantation owners developed their own variations of food allowances. Redpath met an enslaved laborer in Savannah, Georgia in 1854 who told him that he received a peck of corn meal a week and was expected to raise vegetables and chickens to eat and sell to satisfy the rest of his nutritional needs (McKivigan 1996:75). This practice was not uncommon in the antebellum period, although the amount of food provisioned was variable. Whether the food they ate was grown in plantation kitchen gardens, in their own plots, resulted from domestic livestock, or was hunted, trapped, or fished, much of it was a direct result of enslaved labor.



When thinking about production, it is necessary to consider provisions. Knowing what food was provisioned creates the foundation for analyzing what kinds of crops enslaved people were producing in their own gardens, and why. The dietary deficits created by lack of quantity or quality of provisions required enslaved laborers to create strategies to offset these deficits when they existed (Crader 1990; Fogel and Engerman 1974:109-115; Genovese 1967:44; McKee 1999; Reitz et al. 1985:185-186; Savitt 2002:90-102; Stamp 1956:282). These strategies speak to degrees of autonomy because they were means that enslaved people were producing or acquiring food for themselves. Provisioning food, a critical resource, was also a form of social control (McKee 1999). Consequently, this practice provides insight into the negotiation of power dynamics between Hutter and the enslaved (Bowes 2011:90; McKee 1999:219).

How do we know what food provisions Hutter gave to enslaved laborers? Frustratingly, he does not consistently or clearly record food provisions in his plantation records. In fact, he only rarely provides unequivocal documentation of food provisions for enslaved laborers. I initially thought this might suggest that he kept a separate book to document expenditures for enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest. But this conspicuous absence of food provisions is a pattern in farm journals, expense books, and letters of Virginia slaveholders in the antebellum period (McKee 1999:224-5). In a study of the plantation records from 1840-1862 of four Virginia slaveholders in the tidewater region, McKee (1999) found that slave provisioning was only rarely mentioned. He concluded:

Perhaps feeding the hands was so routine and standardized on all these plantations that it did not require a careful accounting. It is curious that in their obsession with production measurement and cost recording, the planters did not keep a running tally of the flow of food to the quarter. It may represent a distancing in the minds of the planters of the slave community from the rest of the agricultural enterprise (McKee 1999:225).

It is unfortunate that, unlike Jefferson, Hutter did not record food provisions at Poplar Forest more adequately. On a plantation where food for the planter family and the enslaved was grown

together, provisions clearly marked which foods were considered “ours” (shared by both groups), “yours” (specifically for the enslaved), and “mine” (specifically for the planter family) from the perspective of the slaveholder.

Fortunately, some slaveholders did document food allowances for enslaved laborers. McKee’s review of antebellum period plantation management essays from southern agricultural journals confirmed that slave owners typically provided pork, meal, and vegetables as the staple provisions for enslaved laborers (McKee 1999:222-3). Yet the practice of provisioning pork and meal as the two main staples was not new to the antebellum period nor was it a local or regional practice (Crader 1990: 690). This practice had been in place for centuries across the South (Savitt 2002:102).

Subtle changes, like substituting wheat flour for corn meal, did occur in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries because of increased wheat production (Savitt 2002:96). Urbanization and industrialization also impacted food provisioning practices in the antebellum period. Savitt (2002:98-100) notes that urban industrialists had access to sufficient quantities and kinds of food because markets were situated in towns. Food in towns was expensive, however, and some slave owners and slave hirers preferred to pay enslaved laborers a stipend for food. This practice forced them to meet their own nutritional needs on a restricted budget, but it also enabled them to choose which foods they consumed within those economic restraints (Savitt 2002:99). Antebellum hiring practices inversely impacted the health of hired slaves in particular rural environments such as canal and railroad labor camps, iron forges, furnaces, and mines (Savitt 2002:98). Access to adequate food was less certain and contingent on local availability and transportation options. For example, Ross and Weaver documented food shortages several

times at their Buffalo Forge ironworks in Rockbridge County, Virginia (Dew 1994; Savitt 2002: 99).

Changing work environments and labor practices impacted food provisioning practices in the antebellum period in urban and industrial settings, but had a modest influence on provisioning practices on plantations and farms. The degree of consistency of pork and meal as staple provisions at farms and plantations across the South suggests that food provisioning was homogenized, reflecting a pan-Southern approach. Although available by boat in the eighteenth century, the increased accessibility to salt fish and preserved pork through railroads and canals was a significant change that may have influenced provisioning practices. But localized food production, tweaked through scientific agricultural and livestock improvement practices, continued to dominate on southern farms and plantations into the antebellum era. This is what we know from historical documents, which represent ideals. How does this fit with the archaeological evidence?

### *Macrobotanical Remains*

Macrobotanical evidence indicates the kind of plants the enslaved people who lived in the slave cabin at Site A used and provides clues about the strategies used to obtain them (Bowes 2009; Bowes and Trigg 2009; Bowes 2011). Distinguishing which plants were provisioned by Hutter from those that were grown or independently procured by the enslaved is complex and, in some cases, impossible to resolve with certainty. Further, subsistence strategies (production, provisioning, and gathering) were probably not mutually exclusive, partly because they were contingent on so many factors like availability, weather, access, and time restrictions.

Jessica Bowes, under the guidance of Heather Trigg at the Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research at the University of Massachusetts Boston, investigated some of the macrobotanical remains recovered from the Site A subfloor pit (Bowes and Trigg 2009; Bowes 2009). Nearly 300 liters of soil that archaeologists removed from the subfloor pit resulted in 123 light fraction samples. Among these samples, Bowes and Trigg selected 61 for the analysis of charred plant and wood remains (Bowes and Trigg 2009). They collected and analyzed a total of 2,316 seed remains, 455 plant remains, and 1,525 pieces of charred wood from these samples (Bowes and Trigg 2009). Analysis of the macrobotanical remains was limited to charred plant remains and charred wood, because charred plant remains are typically the result of past human activity (Bowes and Trigg 2009:6). The analysis revealed that enslaved laborers used local plants for food, fuel, and possibly medicines (Bowes and Trigg 2009:39-40). Health practices are discussed in more detail in chapter eight. Here, I focus on plant remains as food resources. Macrobotanicals from a variety of fruits, grains, and nuts were recovered from the subfloor pit at Site A; these provide insight into the diet of the cabin's residents (Table 5.2).

| Table 5.2 Macrobotanical Remains in the Subfloor Pit                          |   |  |   |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| Grains  | Nuts                                    | Fruits   | Other                                     | Wood  |
| Millet<br><i>Panicum miliaceum</i> L./<br><i>Setaria italica</i> (L.)P.Veauv. | Hazlenut<br><i>Corylus</i> sp.          | Watermelon<br><i>Citrullus lanatus</i> (Thunb.)<br>Matsum. & Nakai | Jimsonweed<br><i>Datura stramonium</i> L. | Maple<br><i>Acer</i> sp.                          |
| Sorghum<br><i>Sorghum</i> sp.   | Black Walnut<br><i>Juglans nigra</i> L. | Cherry<br><i>Prunus</i> sp.  | Mint<br><i>Mentha</i> sp.                 | Birch<br><i>Betula</i> sp.                        |
| Wheat<br><i>Triticum</i> sp.  | Acorn<br><i>Quercus</i> sp.             | Peach<br><i>Prunus persica</i> (L.) Batsch                         | Sorrel<br><i>Oxalis</i> sp.               | Hickory<br><i>Carya</i> sp.                       |
| Corn<br><i>Zea mays</i> L.  |   | Raspberry<br><i>Rubus</i> sp.                                      | Ground Cherry<br><i>Physalis</i> sp.      | Chestnut<br><i>Castanea</i> sp.                   |
|   |   | Elderberry<br><i>Sambucus</i> sp.                                  | Plantain<br><i>Plantago</i> sp.           | Ash<br><i>Fraxinus</i> sp.                        |
|   |   | Blueberry<br><i>Vaccinium</i> sp.                                  | Knotweed<br><i>Polygonum</i> sp.          | Black Walnut<br><i>Juglans nigra</i> L.           |
|   |   | Grape<br><i>Vitis</i> sp.  | Purslane<br><i>Portulaca</i> sp.          | Tulip Poplar<br><i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> L. |
|   |   |  | Cinquefoil<br><i>Potentilla</i> sp.       | Red Mulberry<br><i>Morus rubra</i> L.             |
|   |   |  | Nightshade<br><i>Solanum</i> sp.          | Pine<br><i>Pinus</i> sp.                          |
|   |   |  |   | Oak<br><i>Quercus</i> spp.                        |
|   |   |  |   | Black Locust<br><i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> L.    |
|   |   |  |   | Elm<br><i>Ulmus</i> sp.                           |

Bowes 2011:96.

Bowes' analysis of the macrobotanical remains focused on differentiating the ways that enslaved laborers obtained food, other useful plants, and wood. She examined three subsistence strategies: provisioning by slaveholders, procurement (or gathering) by enslaved laborers, and production by enslaved laborers (Bowes 2011). After Bowes (2011:97) found remains of potatoes, sweet potatoes, watermelon, peaches, and wheat in the macrobotanical assemblage, she concluded that Hutter may have provided these crops to enslaved laborers as part of their food allowance because Hutter documented growing each of these crops in his farm journal, income and expense journal, or family letters (Bowes 2011:97).

Among the typical antebellum provisions noted by McKee (1999)—pork, corn, and vegetables—corn remains were found throughout the subfloor pit. Bowes (2011:98) concluded that enslaved laborers produced their own corn because some enslaved laborers grew it in their garden plots and Hutter sold the excess corn at market for them. I agree with Bowes' conclusion that enslaved laborers were producing corn in Hutter's fields and at least some were possibly producing it in their own garden plots. However, I think that Hutter probably provisioned corn or cornmeal to enslaved laborers who were unable to grow it for themselves. Not all enslaved laborers had the same potential to grow crops because of life cycle, time constraints, physical challenges, and the degree of support available to them through social networks. Hutter documented planting corn once each year, yet he only documented selling corn on behalf of enslaved laborers two times in a sixteen-year period. (HFJ, May 12, 1847; HIEJ May 28, 1857). Given the lack of similar entries in his expense journal, it seems unlikely that all enslaved laborers were growing their own corn for consumption or for market.

A starchy substance, which Bowes determined as likely to be the remains of charred potato, was also found in every layer within the pit. Bowes argues that potatoes were provisioned (2011:97). If so, they may represent part of his selection of vegetables found in typical provisions. Hutter's enslaved laborers grew potatoes and sweet potatoes in the kitchen garden or fields at Poplar Forest every year, usually planting them in April and May (HFJ). Enslaved laborers may have cultivated these in their own gardens as well.

Bowes (2011:97) also argues that wheat was provisioned by Hutter. This seems likely because documents suggest it is unlikely that they grew it themselves. Unlike corn and oats, Hutter never documented selling wheat on behalf of his enslaved laborers. Hutter may have restricted enslaved laborers from growing wheat because it was his primary cash crop.

Restricting the production of cash crops was a deterrent used by some planters to prevent enslaved laborers from pilfering a part of the cash crop and claiming they grew it in their own gardens. Many slave owners restricted enslaved laborers from growing staple crops (Berlin 1993: 27; Breeden 1980). Thomas Jefferson restricted tobacco cultivation near slave quarters at his plantations (Hatch 2012:65; Heath 2001). Commenting on this ban to his son-in-law, he stated: “I have ever found it necessary to confine them [slaves] to such articles as are not raised on the farm, there is no other way of drawing a line between what is theirs and mine” (quoted in Hatch 2012:65). Alternatively, if wheat was not provisioned, it may have made its way into the archaeological record when laborers working in the fields inadvertently brought it in on their clothes at the end of the day.

Bowes (2011:97) argues that two fruits, peaches and watermelon, may have been provisioned. She documented the prevalence of peaches in the Poplar Forest orchards and suggested that Hutter may have provisioned these or that they may have been stolen by enslaved laborers. She based the latter interpretation on oral history from Levi Pollard, who recalled to a WPA interviewer that he used to steal peaches, apples, and pears from the plantation orchards of his former owner in Virginia (quoted in Bowes 2011:97). Emma Hutter implied that theft of peaches was indeed an issue at Poplar Forest. In a letter to her husband in 1841, she stated: “About the Georgia peaches they are all gone now but there are some Heath peaches. I will try to save some for you if the negroes don’t steal them” (EWCH to ESH September 21, 1841). This evidence suggests that peaches were not provisioned, rather they were taken by enslaved laborers. If that was the case, this act of agency demonstrates that enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest did not agree with the planter family’s conception of which foods were to be shared and those that should be exclusive.

Bowes also suggests that Hutter may have given watermelon to enslaved laborers as part of their food allotment. This argument is based on Hutter's documentation of growing watermelon during the occupation of the cabin (Bowes 2011:97). Hutter did document planting watermelon for three consecutive years (HFJ April 12, 1845; May 13, 1846; May 15, 1847). Therefore, it may have been provided to enslaved laborers. McKee (1999:223) found that many planters used special rations as part of a rewards system for conforming to sanctioned behavior. That rewards system also included garden plots, small gifts, and time off from work (McKee 1999:223-4). Because Hutter employed garden plots and small gifts as rewards, it would be reasonable to conclude that he also used special rations to incentivize behavior that he approved. However, Peter Hatch (2012:65) noted that enslaved laborers at Monticello grew watermelon, among a wide variety of crops, in their own gardens. Given that Hutter only grew it for three years in a documented ten-year timespan, unless he was growing it as a form of special rations, I think it is more likely that enslaved laborers grew it for themselves.

### *Livestock and Fowl*

Vegetables, fruits, and grains were significant for nutrition, but carbohydrates and, to a lesser extent, protein sources, provided the bulk of calories coming from provisioned foods. Documents and the archaeological record provide considerable information about the livestock and fowl on the property and meat provisions. Cobbs and Hutter owned cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, mules, and goats in the antebellum period. These animals were typical livestock on farms and plantations throughout Bedford County in this era (Daniel 1985; McKee 1999). Hutter was interested in animal husbandry and he differentiated "improved" (bred in a scientific way purportedly to produce a superior animal) sheep and rams from others in his journal (HFJ). He named each of



his mature cows and pigs and numbered their offspring. The number of animals on the property varied from year to year. In 1846, he owned 59 sheep, 8 horses, 49 hogs and 25 cattle (HFJ January 1, 1846). Most of the names of the enslaved laborers who took care of these animals, were less carefully recorded than those of his livestock. Only one name of a stockman was recorded. Through a letter to his wife, Hutter reminded Aaron to take care of the hogs in 1841 (ESH to EWCH September 8, 1841). Whether or not that was part of Aaron's regular duties or if he delegated that task to someone else through his role as headman is unknown.

The Cobbs/Hutter family also raised chickens and a few turkeys. Hutter documented building a henhouse in 1847 (HFJ January 13, 1847). He also occasionally mentioned the sale of eggs, but otherwise there is little mention of fowl in his farm journal (HFJ December 31, 1845). This is likely because raising fowl was generally considered women's work among whites on antebellum plantations. In two letters written to his wife in the summer of 1850, Hutter referred to "*your chickens*" (ESH to EWCH June 30, 1850; ESH to EWCH July 7, 1850; emphasis added). In the first letter, he elaborated: "Your chickens are as far as I know well attended to, your mother has just turned a brood out of the coop—which have hatched since you left (ESH to EWCH, June 30, 1850)." This statement suggests that he did not have direct knowledge of the welfare of the chickens and, further, that his mother-in-law and one or more enslaved laborers did. Marian Cobbs sometimes sold eggs to her son-in-law, indicating that these were considered her property (September 20, 1856, HIEJ).

Raising fowl was also a common practice of enslaved men and women (Dew 1994:110, 327; McKee 1999; McKivigan 1996:89; Schlesinger 1996:447; Schlotterbeck 1991:173). Existing records fail to indicate the role of particular enslaved folks in raising fowl at Poplar Forest during the antebellum period, aside from Hutter's purchases of small numbers of fowl

documented in his account book. Archaeological evidence indicates that enslaved people were raising fowl for eggs (Lamzik 2013) in addition to supplementing the meat provided by Hutter.

### *Faunal Remains*

Walter Klippel and Jennifer Synstelien of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville analyzed the small faunal remains recovered through flotation of all of the soil from inside the subfloor pit at the slave cabin site. Analysis of material from outside of the pit is incomplete; therefore, the focus here will be on material recovered from inside of the pit. Slightly more than 35,000 animal bone fragments were found in the subfloor pit. Most of this faunal material came from mammals (64%), followed by birds (21%), fish (15%) and reptiles (1%) (Klippel, Synstelien, and Heath 2011: 29) The number of individual specimens (NISP) Klippel and his colleagues (2011:29) identified at the site is 2,379 (Table 5.3).

| Table 5.3 Vertebrate Remains from the Subfloor Pit (NISP) |              |
|---|--------------|
| Taxa  | NISP         |
| Osteichthyes  |              |
| marine fish   |              |
| <i>Clupea harengus</i> (Atlantic herring)                 | 3            |
| <i>Opisthonema oglinum</i> (Atlantic thread herring)      | 1            |
| <i>Clupeidae</i> (herring)                                | 47           |
| <i>Scomber scombrus</i> (Atlantic mackerel)               | 70           |
| Scombridae  | 1            |
| freshwater fish   |              |
| <i>Anguilla rostrata</i> (American eel)                   | 5            |
| <i>Semotilus atromaculatus</i> (creek chub)               | 1            |
| <i>Nocomis raneyi</i> (bull chub)                         | 1            |
| <i>Nocomis sp.</i> (chub)                                 | 1            |
| <i>Compostoma anomalum</i> (central stoneroller)          | 1            |
| <i>Luxilus sp.</i> (shiner)                               | 1            |
| Cyprinidae (minnow)                                       | 23           |
| <i>Ameiurus natalis</i> (yellow bullhead)                 | 2            |
| <i>Ameiurus platycephalus</i> (flat bullhead)             | 1            |
| <i>Ameiurus sp.</i> (bullhead)                            | 16           |
| <i>Noturus insignis</i> (margined madtom)                 | 7            |
| <i>Noturus sp.</i> (madtom)                               | 3            |
| <i>Ictaluridae</i> (catfish)                              | 1            |
| Total fish  | 186          |
| Amphibia  |              |
| frogs/toads/salamanders                                   | 18           |
| Reptilia  |              |
| turtles/lizards/skinks                                    | 14           |
| Aves  |              |
| domestic birds  | 255          |
| native birds  | 47           |
| Total birds   | 302          |
| Mammalia  |              |
| domestic mammals  | 226          |
| native mammals  | 706          |
| Old World rats/mice                                       | 927          |
| Total mammals   | 1,859        |
| <b>TOTAL IDENTIFIED SPECIMENS</b>                         | <b>2,379</b> |
| Klippel et al. 2011: 29                                   |              |

Comparative faunal data from Flowerdew Hundred, located in Prince George County, Virginia, has a similar pattern (McKee 1999:228-231, 236-237). The faunal data that McKee analyzed from Flowerdew Hundred came from a midden associated with a slave cabin that was built in the 1830s (1999:228). The total faunal assemblage (1,095 fragments) is smaller than the assemblage of identified specimens from Poplar Forest. But the data reveal some interesting similarities between the sites. Mammals dominated the Flowerdew assemblage (74%), followed by birds (10%), and fish (16%) (McKee 1999:236-7). Shellfish (112 oyster, 88 freshwater mussel, 12 marine clam, and 6 unidentified) were also recovered from the midden (McKee 1999: 237). To compare these data sets, I will discuss provisioned meat and then I will pick up the discussion of non-provisioned meat when I turn to the internal economy.

### *Mammals*

Typical plantation provisions included pork and beef as the dominant source of meat (McKee 1999, 2000). Cows, pigs, and other domestic livestock, were typically raised and cared for by enslaved laborers. At Site A, domestic species (29%) make up a significantly smaller proportion of the faunal assemblage than wild species (71%) (Table 5.4). Pig was the dominant domestic mammal (*Sus scrofa*) (15%), followed by a similar quantity of sheep/goat (*Ovis aries* or *Capra hircus*) (13%) and much smaller percentages of cattle (*Bos taurus*) (0.7%), and squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) (0.5%) (Klippel 2010).

| Table 5.4<br>Mammal Remains in Subfloor Pit<br>(64% of NISP)  |   |     |
|---|---|-----|
| Domestic  | Wild  | %   |
|   | Rabbit<br>( <i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i> )  | 68  |
| Pig<br>( <i>Sus scrofa</i> )                                  |   | 15  |
| Sheep/Goat<br>( <i>Ovis aries</i> or<br><i>Capra hircus</i> ) |   | 13  |
|   | Opossum<br>( <i>Didelphis virginiana</i> )  | 2   |
|   | Woodchuck<br>( <i>Marmota monax</i> )       | 1   |
| Cattle<br>( <i>Bos taurus</i> )                               |   | 0.7 |
|   | Squirrel<br>( <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i> ) | 0.5 |
| Klippel 2010  |   |     |

This evidence clearly suggests that enslaved laborers independently obtained wild sources to supplement their diet. A low percentage of domestic animals is also noted by McKee in the Flowerdew faunal assemblage (McKee 1999:231). At Flowerdew, pig remains represent 11% of the mammal assemblage, followed by cattle (1.2%) and sheep/goat (.7%) (McKee 1999:236). Notably 13.4% of medium-sized mammal bones were unidentified, which might increase the proportion of domestic mammal remains recovered from Flowerdew (McKee 1999:236). Even if some of the unidentified remains are added to the identified domestic mammals, the total percentage of all of the domestic faunal remains recovered would range somewhere between 12.9% and 26.4%. This low number is similar to the findings from Poplar Forest (29%). The shift in abundance of wild sources over domestic sources is reflected in a number of other antebellum archaeological assemblages across the south such as Cannon's Point, Kingsmill, Kings Bay, and Duckworth Farm (Crader 1990; McKee 1999; Otto 1984; Peres 2008; Reitz 1985). Peres (2008:98) and Bowes and Trigg (2012:165) argue that an increase in diversity in

diet (indicated by floral and faunal richness) may indicate food insecurity. Bowes and Trigg (2012:165), however, note that a diverse diet may reflect the ability of enslaved people to obtain their own food. This ability could have been driven by necessity, choice, or both.

When analyzing faunal remains, McKee warns that low numbers of pig bones in an assemblage can be deceiving because they may mask the use of boneless salt pork rations (McKee 1999 231). Fortunately, records of meat slaughtered for use at Poplar Forest provide independent data about relative percentages of domestic meat sources. An examination of Hutter’s farm journal reveals the amount of meat produced for plantation use each year from 1844-1854 (HFJ). Although his daily and yearly records were inconsistent, incomplete, and contradictory in some cases, when considered as a group they provide a useful picture of domestic meat production on the plantation (Table 5.5). Hutter produced an average of 6,249 pounds of meat per year for plantation use over this ten-year period.<sup>22</sup>

| Year | Animal | No. slaughtered | Total lbs. | Avg. lbs./animal |
|------|--------|-----------------|------------|------------------|
| 1844 | Calf   | 10              |            |                  |
|      | Cow    | 6               |            |                  |
|      | Lamb   | 15              |            |                  |
|      | Mutton | 16              |            |                  |
|      | Wether | 1               |            |                  |
|      | Ram    | 2               |            |                  |
|      | Ewe    | 5               |            |                  |
|      | Hog    | 40              | 4255       | 106.38           |
| 1845 | Calf   | 9               |            |                  |
|      | Cow    | 6               |            |                  |
|      | Mutton | 6               |            |                  |
|      | Lamb   | 11              |            |                  |
|      | Hog    | 41              |            |                  |
|      |        |                 |            |                  |

<sup>22</sup> This number was calculated based on the six years that Hutter recorded total pounds of meat per year. These numbers were added and divided by six to produce the average.

|      |        |    |        |        |
|------|--------|----|--------|--------|
| 1846 | Calf   | 9  |        |        |
|      | Cow    | 1  |        |        |
|      | Lamb   | 10 |        |        |
|      | Mutton | 4  |        |        |
|      | Hog    | 41 | 4185   | 102.1  |
|      | Total  |    | 5805   |        |
|      |        |    |        |        |
| 1847 | Hog    | 32 | 3336   | 104.25 |
|      |        |    |        |        |
| 1848 | Calf   | 5  |        |        |
|      | Cow    | 3  |        |        |
|      | Lamb   | 10 |        |        |
|      | Mutton | 8  |        |        |
|      | Hog    | 14 | 4708   | 336.29 |
|      |        |    |        |        |
| 1849 | Calf   | 3  |        |        |
|      | Cow    | 3  |        |        |
|      | Lamb   | 13 |        |        |
|      | Mutton | 15 |        |        |
|      | Hog    | 27 |        |        |
|      | Total  |    | 6637.5 |        |
|      |        |    |        |        |
| 1850 | Calf   |    |        |        |
|      | Cow    |    |        |        |
|      | Lamb   |    |        |        |
|      | Mutton |    |        |        |
|      | Hog    | 41 |        |        |
|      | Total  |    | 6852   |        |
|      |        |    |        |        |
| 1851 | Calf   | 4  |        |        |
|      | Cow    | 5  |        |        |
|      | Lamb   | 6  |        |        |
|      | Mutton | 18 |        |        |
|      | Hog    | 31 |        |        |
|      | Total  |    | 5668   |        |
|      |        |    |        |        |
| 1852 | Calf   | 2  |        |        |
|      | Cow    | 8  |        |        |
|      | Lamb   | 21 |        |        |
|      | Mutton | 16 |        |        |
|      | Hog    | 24 |        |        |
|      | Total  |    | 6404   |        |
|      |        |    |        |        |
| 1853 | Calf   | 3  |        |        |
|      | Cow    | 5  |        |        |

|      |        |    |       |                      |
|------|--------|----|-------|----------------------|
|      | Lamb   | 11 |       |                      |
|      | Mutton | 2  |       |                      |
|      | Hog    | 28 | 3569+ | Note: 25 hogs = 3569 |
|      |        |    |       |                      |
| 1854 | Calf   | 2  |       |                      |
|      | Cow    | ?  |       |                      |
|      | Lamb   | 19 |       |                      |
|      | Mutton | 8  |       |                      |
|      | Hog    | 24 |       |                      |
|      | Total  |    | 6127  |                      |

Each year, Hutter slaughtered cattle, sheep, and pigs to produce meat for plantation use. The first year he kept a farm journal, 1844, he used eight categories to differentiate the kind of animal, sex, and maturity (HIEJ 1844). The following year he subsumed these data into five categories prioritizing kind of animal and state of maturity, which he continued to use throughout the journal: calf, cow, mutton, lamb, and hog (HIEJ 1845). Table 5.5 is a conglomeration of daily entries and year end tallies (HIEJ 1844-1854). When these two figures were inconsistent, the larger number was used. The totals come from year end summaries where all the meat is grouped together into one total sum.

When Hutter slaughtered hogs, he often recorded the total poundage, the average, and sometimes the weight of the smallest and largest animal (HIEJ December 10, 1845). He also often recorded the amount of meat produced by each slaughtered cow and calf (HIEJ). In the spring and summer, Hutter typically slaughtered a sheep or lamb every five to seven days (HIEJ 1844). Cows and hogs were typically slaughtered in the fall and early winter (HIEJ 1844). Meat was hung in a smokehouse to preserve it when it was not needed for immediate use and, at least sometimes, salted to create bacon or salt pork (HIEJ January 18, 1845; HFJ April 15, 1854).

To consider if domestic meat production was sufficient for plantation needs, I analyzed meat production in 1846. I chose 1846 because Hutter recorded the total amount of meat from



animals “killed for plantation use” (HIEJ December 26, 1848), the total number of livestock for the year, the number of enslaved laborers, and the number of people in his own family. I included data from all eleven years that Hutter kept a farm journal in table 5.5 to show fluctuations in meat production and recording practices.

On January 1, 1846, there were 45 enslaved laborers (30 adults and 15 children) at Poplar Forest. Livestock consisted of 25 cattle, 59 sheep and 49 pigs (HIEJ January 1, 1846). Nineteen adults were assigned to field work and 11 were assigned to housework (HIEJ January 1, 1846). Among the group of enslaved children, 4 were infants (defined in this timeframe as less than two years old). The remaining 11 children were likely less than ten years old because that was the age that Hutter moved people out of the children category and began assigning them to fieldwork or housework (HFJ; BCBDR).

The planter family consisted of five adults, William and Marian Cobbs, Edward and Emma Hutter, and Marian Cobbs’s sister, Aphire Rose. Edward and Emma had two infants. There was no overseer on the property until November of 1846, consequently the overseer and his family were not included in calculation of plantation resources for that year. In sum, on the plantation there were 52 people: 35 adults, 11 children, and 6 infants. Hutter noted in his end of year summary: “Killed 9 calves 10 lambs 4 muttoms 1 beef & 38 hogs making 5805 lbs. meat” (HFJ December 31, 1846).

Even if meat was divided equally among these people, which was certainly not the case, each person would have received 111.6 pounds of meat for the year or just over 2 pounds per week. If infants are removed from the equation and children are assigned half-portions in relation to the adults, each adult would receive 143.3 pounds and each child would receive 71.6 pounds of meat per year. This raises weekly meat provisions to 2.75 pounds per adult and 1.37 pounds

per child. These values reduce to .39 pounds of meat per day per adult and .20 pounds per child. These numbers do not compare favorably with the average meat consumption per adult male on farms and plantations of slaveholders in 1850 in 10 counties in Virginia, including Campbell County where Poplar Forest was located (Bodenhorn 1999:989). Bodenhorn estimated that the average daily consumption of meat and dairy per adult male in 1850 in the counties that he assessed was 0.60 lbs (Bodenhorn 1999:989). Dairy only accounts for 0.02% of this total, so the absence of dairy in the calculations for Poplar Forest does not significantly impact the comparison.

The slaughter weight of the meat may have included inedible animal parts (if Hutter did not account for this in his calculations), reducing the actual pounds of edible meat produced. Further, this calculation of meat per person does not account for people who visited Poplar Forest, where visitors were frequent. Even when it is assumed that infants and children did not receive the same amount of meat as adults, the meat supply was not adequate to meet the needs of everyone on the plantation. Field workers and pregnant and nursing mothers, for example, needed much greater daily caloric intake than others who were not engaged in much demanding physical labor. It is also very unlikely that enslaved adults received the same proportions of meat that white adults received.

Faunal evidence from the yard area surrounding Hutter's kitchen revealed a diet with significantly higher percentages of pig and cattle in comparison to the faunal assemblage from the enslaved laborers' cabin at Site A (15% pig, 1% cattle, 13% sheep/goat). The Hutter kitchen assemblage from circa 1830-1840 consisted of 41% pig and 22% cattle (Crader in Kelso et al. 1991: 151). From circa 1840-1865, the faunal assemblage from the Hutter kitchen consisted of 29% pig, 20% cattle, and 15% sheep/goat (Crader in Kelso et al. 1991:153). Although the faunal

assemblage from Hutter's kitchen yard was much smaller than the assemblage recovered at the cabin and recovery methods were different at the sites, this data still suggests that the Hutter and Cobbs family were consuming more pig and cattle than enslaved laborers in the same timeframe.

Hutter partially made up for this discrepancy in provisioned protein through provisioning mackerel and herring. Klippel and his colleagues noted that preserved fish were frequently documented as part of the diet of enslaved African Americans in the antebellum period, including specific mention of both herring and mackerel (Klippel et al. 2011:30). The accessibility of preserved fish and meat through industrialization and increased transportation options certainly influenced this provisioning practice. Based on the size of the fish and distinctive cut marks from unique processing methods, Klippel determined that the mackerel and herring recovered at the antebellum slave cabin were the specific type of each fish sold cheaply as provisions for enslaved people (Klippel et al. 2011:30-33). Significant quantities of mackerel and herring, both North Atlantic fish, were recovered in the Site A assemblage (Klippel et al. 2011:30).

Mid-nineteenth century newspapers in Lynchburg advertised barreled herring and mackerel; some of these advertisements were placed by merchants that Hutter frequented (Daily Virginian; HIEJ). Hutter documented the purchase of mackerel in 1856 and 1858 (HIEJ November 11, 1856; April 21, 1858). Based on these multiple lines of evidence, it is likely that Hutter provided herring and mackerel to his enslaved workers as provisions. While Hutter's farm journal indicated that he did provide enslaved laborers with meat as part of their provisions, it also suggested that what he provided was not adequate. This meant enslaved laborers had to devise their own strategies for augmenting their diets. These strategies included theft and independent production.

On several occasions Hutter noted in his plantation records that his sheep, goats, and pigs were stolen (HFJ December 12, 1846; August 1, 1848; May 18, 1848; June 2, 1848; June 4, 1849; January 4, 1850; March 28, 1850; April 30, 1850; May 6, 1850; May 20, 1850; June 17, 1850; November 28, 1850; April 19, 1852). Once he stated that the sheep were stolen by enslaved laborers owned by Mr. Radford, a neighboring planter (HFJ November 17, 1844). He did not indicate who he thought was responsible for taking the other animals, but since he once documented finding the remains of stolen sheep, it seems likely they were on his property (December 12, 1846). If the sheep remains were on his property and they were stolen, it seems likely they were stolen by his enslaved laborers. Theft was probably a small part of the internal economy compared to independent food production and acquisition.

### **Internal Economy: Food Production for Self and Family**

Aside from production of agricultural crops for the Cobbs/Hutter family, enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest cultivated and stored their own crops. They worked their garden “patches” on holidays, after regular labor hours, and on rare occasions, during regular work hours in the spring and summer when Hutter deemed it appropriate (HFJ).<sup>23</sup> Enslaved laborers could choose to cultivate garden patches on Sundays and holidays. These patches provided foods to supplement diet, medicinal plants, and, for at least some enslaved laborers, they also provided a means of engaging in the internal economy through the production of goods to be bartered or sold with each other, with members of the Cobbs/Hutter family, and for market exchange

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<sup>23</sup> HFJ April 8, 1844; April 20, 1847; April 8, 1848; May 4, 1849; June 9, 1849; May 20, 1850; April 21, 1851; May 3, 1851; May 7, 1851; May 8, 1851; May 27, 1851; May 28, 1851; June 9, 1851; June 14, 1851; June 16, 1851; June 18, 1851; April 12, 1852; May 14, 1851; May 31, 1851; June 4, 1852; June 5, 1852; March 27, 1853; May 3, 1853; May 15, 1853; May 28, 1853; August 12, 1853; May 2, 1854; June 2, 1854; Jul 18, 1854; July 24, 1854.

(Bowes 2011; Bowes and Trigg 2009; Edwards-Ingram 2001, Franklin 1997; Heath 2004a; Mrozowski et al. 2008; Penningroth 2003: 47-51).

Auxiliary production of crops and crafts, and activities such as hunting, fishing, and foraging on their own time, provided the enslaved with a degree of autonomy because they were not completely dependent upon the slaveholder for all of their dietary needs. The complexity of the interdependence of slaveholder and enslaved laborer is revealed through auxiliary production, where the slaveholder depended on the enslaved laborer to produce his or her own food (McKee 1999). This system was acceptable to some enslaved laborers because they were able to direct their labor toward their own goals. These goals were somewhat divergent for each person, family, or group who contributed labor toward a purpose. However, many enslaved laborers shared one fundamental goal in growing crops—obtaining food to stave off hunger and enhance nutrition and health (Heath and Bennett 2000; Heath 2001; Mrozowski et al. 2008).

In his farm journal, Edward Hutter documented that enslaved laborers “planted gardens and negroes patches” (HFJ May 1-6, 1854; June 3, 1854). Although he mentioned “negro patches” thirty-one times, this statement that incorporated gardens and patches together was used only twice (HFJ).<sup>24</sup> His differentiation between gardens and patches indicated his perception of some sort of difference between the two. “Garden” may refer to the kitchen garden or it could refer to house-yard gardens near cabins (Pulsipher 1994). The plural “patches” may suggest that these were non-contiguous, personal plots that were located away from the house and yard. The distinction between gardens and patches may reflect a difference in size, the difference in ownership, or both as suggested by literature on slave gardening (Hatch 2012:64-65, 69; Heath

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<sup>24</sup> HFJ April 8, 1844; April 20, 1847; April 8, 1848; May 4, 1849; June 9, 1849; May 20, 1850; April 21, 1851; May 3, 1851; May 7, 1851; May 8, 1851; May 27, 1851; May 28, 1851; June 9, 1851; June 14, 1851; June 16, 1851; June 18, 1851; April 12, 1852; May 14, 1851; May 31, 1851; June 4, 1852; June 5, 1852; March 27, 1853; May 3, 1853; May 15, 1853; May 28, 1853; August 12, 1853; May 2, 1854; June 2, 1854; Jul 18, 1854; July 24, 1854.

and Bennett 2000; Penningroth 2003:47-49; Pulsipher 1994; Schlotterbeck 1991; Westmacott 1992:16-25). Regarding size, Olmsted noted in his tour of the South that the garden plots of enslaved laborers consisted of about half an acre (Hatch 2012:69).

Hutter's description of these plots as "negroes patches" indicates that these gardens, and the produce eventually grown there, belonged to the enslaved individuals and families who worked them. In contrast, the produce grown in the kitchen garden belonged to the planter family, although some of it may have been grown for use across the plantation. Patches were a primary locus of production where enslaved laborers worked for themselves (Heath 1999, 2004a; Morgan 1983:414; Penningroth 2003:47-51; Schlotterbeck 1991). They played an important role in the independent economy of the enslaved in many parts of the antebellum south, including Poplar Forest (Morgan 1983:414; Penningroth 2003:47-51).

#### *Archaeological Evidence of Independent Production*

Archaeological evidence relating to the diet and health of enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest provides direct and indirect evidence of food production. Several sources provide insight into the diet and health practices of enslaved laborers including carbonized macrobotanical remains recovered from the subfloor pit within the antebellum slave cabin, faunal evidence found within the subfloor pit and in other excavation units inside the cabin and in the yard space surrounding it, faunal evidence from the antebellum kitchen and smokehouse, and artifacts associated with the antebellum slave cabin (Bowes 2009; Bowes and Trigg 2009; Klippel, Synsteliën, and Heath 2011; Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams, Lee and Paull 2005; Kelso 1991). Clues from Edward Hutter's farm journal and income and expense journal provide additional evidence (HFJ; HIEJ).

### *Macrobotanical Evidence*

Enslaved laborers living at Poplar Forest were responsible for producing a significant amount of their own food. This included the plant-based elements of their diet (Bowes 2011; Bowes and Trigg 2012:166-7). When Bowes (2011:96) analyzed plant-based subsistence strategies, she determined that the enslaved laborers who inhabited the cabin were likely growing corn, millet, and sorghum in their own gardens. Millet and sorghum, crops originating in Africa, were most often used as fodder on antebellum plantations (Bowes 2011:98; Carney and Rosomoff 2009:125, 145, 149). Enslaved laborers may have grown these grains in their gardens because they preferred them. However, since wheat and oats were readily available on the plantation for consumption, millet and sorghum may also have entered the archaeological record when parts of these plants were brushed off the clothing of enslaved field laborers who collected and processed them for animal fodder for Hutter's livestock or fowl or their own fowl (Bowes 2011:98).

Documents indicate that some enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest, notably all men, grew corn and oats in their gardens to barter or sell at the market in Lynchburg and possibly for personal consumption (HIEJ October 18, 1856; November 19, 1856; December 16, 1856; January 1, 1857; January 10, 1857; May 28, 1857; December 11, 1857; November 26, 1858; December 21-24, 1858; February 7, 1859; November 14, 1860). In 1847, Hutter noted "Sent Negroes corn to market" (HFJ, May 12, 1847). A decade later, he documented paying \$2.67 to Sam for corn (HIEJ May 28, 1857). That payment amount indicates that Sam produced nearly three bushels, nearly 210 pounds, of corn

(<http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/008/00800600ZZ9998bR.html>; Accessed February 2, 2015).

Aside from corn, information on other crops that enslaved laborers produced for sale comes from Hutter's income and expense journal (HIEJ). In the journal he recorded payments to Woodson, Washington, Sam, Jesse, Jake, John, and Billy for the oats that they produced. Other enslaved laborers may have also been involved in the production of oats because sometimes Hutter simply recorded payments for "Negroes Oats" (HIEJ October 18, 1856; November 19, 1856; December 16, 1856; January 1, 1857; January 10, 1857; December 11, 1857; November 26, 1858; December 21-24, 1858; February 7, 1859; November 14, 1860). Hutter also noted that he purchased apples from Robert. He also noted purchases of small quantities of crops, such as cabbages, potatoes, yam potatoes, and watermelons (HIEJ April 25, 1858; September 10, 1858; March 6, 1859; April 29, 1861; September 3, 1861). The small size of these purchases, the method of their documentation (which were not listed among items purchased on trips to Lynchburg stores, but rather are recorded individually or among documentation of money loaned or paid to enslaved workers or Hutter's children), and the fact that the name of the person supplying the goods is not recorded, suggests that Hutter purchased these items from enslaved workers at Poplar Forest. Presumably they were growing these crops in their own gardens.

These kinds of crops are consistent with crops grown by other enslaved laborers in their own gardens in Central Virginia. Hatch and Heath documented a variety of crops grown by enslaved laborers in garden plots at Monticello and Poplar Forest (Hatch 2012; Heath 1999, 2004a, 2010; Heath and Bennett 2000). The agricultural products they sold included a diverse array of fruits, vegetable, root crops, and some grains (Hatch 2012:63- 67; Heath 2004a:23). Among 23 species of fruits and vegetables, these crops included cucumbers, cabbages, onions,



potatoes, squash, beans, watermelons, and peaches (Hatch 2012:63; Heath 2004a:23). The presence of watermelon and peaches among goods sold by enslaved laborers at Monticello suggests that the watermelon and peaches produced at Poplar Forest may have originated from the gardens of enslaved laborers rather than as provisions, as already mentioned. Cherry, raspberry, elderberry, blueberry, and grape are the other fruits that Bowes identified among the macrobotanical remains at the Site A cabin (Bowes 2011:96). She argues that these fruits were likely procured by enslaved laborers from forest margins and fields at Poplar Forest (Bowes 2011:99). Although these goods were likely used to supplement diet, they may have also been sold or bartered by enslaved laborers. Although none of these items were sold by enslaved laborers at Monticello, other foods that were gathered, like walnuts, were sold. This suggests that some wild foods that were independently procured may have been recognized by slaveholders as belonging to the enslaved laborers who gathered them.

### *Raising Fowl, Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing*

Small purchases of chickens, ducks, and rabbits are documented in Hutter's farm journal in the same way that small purchases of crops were documented. This suggests that raising fowl and trapping rabbits was another means for enslaved laborers to acquire money through independent production (HIEJ April 21, 1857; May 27, 1857; June 7, 1857; September 1, 1857; February 6, 1858; April 22, 1858; September 9, 1858; November 20, 1858; February 16, 1859; February 26, 1859; July 24, 1860; March 16, 1861; November 12, 1861; December 6, 1861). Hunting, trapping, and fishing were all means enslaved people used to acquire food for themselves and their owners (Schlesinger 1996:448). The inhabitants of the antebellum cabin

acquired a significant amount of wild species independently. Faunal remains, documents, and artifacts provide evidence of this independent acquisition.

### *Faunal Remains*

Wild species represent 71% of the mammal faunal assemblage from the subfloor pit. Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) dominates the wild species (68%), followed by opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) (2%), woodchuck (*Marmota monax*) (1%), and squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) (0.5%) (Table 5.4; Klippel 2010). Slaveholders did not typically provision meat from these animals and there is no documentary evidence that they were provisioned at Poplar Forest. On the contrary, Hutter documented in his income and expense journal that some enslaved men hunted or trapped wild game and sold it to him (HIEJ December 6, 1861; December 7, 1861; March 6, 1861). A sear lock from a rifle, percussion caps, lead shot, and lead sprue were recovered at the antebellum cabin site. This evidence further suggests that someone living in the household hunted. In addition to hunting, residents of the site, or someone who supplied food to them, trapped rabbits. Trapping was an efficient form of capturing food. Traps could be set before people set out for work and rabbits could be retrieved when they returned. Klippel stated that some passerine birds from the assemblage were likely also trapped (Klippel 2011: personal communication). Cumulatively this evidence indicates that the people who lived in the cabin supplemented their own diets and the food consumed by the Cobbs and Hutter families through hunting or trapping. Faunal remains recovered from the yard outside of Hutter's kitchen provides additional supporting evidence. Two faunal assemblages contemporary with the occupation of the antebellum cabin (circa 1830-1840 and 1840-1865) are dominated by pig and

cattle remains, yet they also include small numbers of rabbit, opossum, squirrel, and turtle (Crader in Kelso 1991: 151-155).

### *Birds*

Bird remains comprised 21% of the NISP associated with the cabin (Klippel et al. 2011: 29). Among 302 bird bones that were identified to species level, birds were represented by 11 species. Eighty-four percent of the avian remains came from domestic birds and sixteen percent came from wild birds (Klippel et al. 2011:26). Chicken (*Gallus gallus*) comprised 80% of the total identified avian assemblage (Klippel 2010). Turkey (*Meleagris gallopava*), Guinea fowl (*Numida melagris*), and Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) remains were also found in small numbers (Klippel 2010; Lamzik 2013:78). Goose was represented by three bones (Anserinae) (Klippel 2010; Lamzik 2013:22). Four types of perching bird were discovered: Red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), Common grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*), Eastern kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), and White-throated sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) (Klippel 2010; Lamzik 2013:78). Mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*) was also present in the faunal assemblage (Klippel 2010; Lamzik 2013:78).

Kathryn Lamzik analyzed samples of eggshell recovered from the Site A subfloor pit, providing additional dietary evidence (Lamzik 2013). Her study was undertaken to test the effectiveness of eggshell analysis for identifying taxa that are underrepresented in archaeological assemblages due to the fragile nature of bird remains and to consider selective consumer practices (Lamzik 2013). Lamzik selected a sample of 1,026 eggshell fragments from 9,291 fragments recovered from the subfloor pit for this analysis (Lamzik 2013:73). Of the 1,026 eggshell fragments tested for variation in thickness, 90% appear to fall within the range of

chicken (or duck), 8% turkey, 1% goose or guinea fowl, and 1% quail, and <1% passerine (Lamzik 2013:72). These results corroborate and expand upon Klippel's analysis.

Lamzik's study is also significant because she was able to determine which eggshells had been hatched and which had not (Lamzik 2013:73-81). This finding suggests which eggs were consumed before they were allowed to hatch. Less than 23% of the eggshell sample that she tested came from hatched eggs (Lamzik 2013:73-81). Lamzik concluded that this may be evidence that enslaved laborers were engaged in selective avian management practices to raise chickens and eggs for their own consumption and to create eggs and/or chickens that could be sold (Lamzik 2013:84). Hutter recorded small purchases of eggs in his account book (HIEJ). Since he did not record where he purchased these, it seems that they may have been purchased from his enslaved laborers. Most of the quail and passerine eggshell fragments that Lamzik analyzed came from unhatched eggs. She interpreted this as evidence that enslaved laborers may have opportunistically collected these eggs from the nests of wild birds to augment their diet (Lamzik 2013:801).

The high percentage of both chicken bones and chicken eggs among the faunal remains in the subfloor pit suggests that enslaved laborers were engaged in raising poultry and collecting domestic and wild eggs for their own consumption and as part of their economic strategies. This practice continued at Poplar Forest at least into the 1920s where it is documented in an image of Amanda Robinson, an African American woman, feeding geese in the kitchen yard.

### *Fish*

Fish comprised 15% of the faunal remains from the subfloor pit (Klippel et al. 2011:29). Fish remains consisted of marine fish: mackerel (Scombridae) (37%) and herring (Clupeidae)

(30%), and freshwater fish: catfish (Ictaluridae) (16%), minnow (Cyprinidae) (15%), and eels (Anguillidae) (5%) (Klippel et al. 2011:30) (Table 5.6). Some of these fish were provisioned, as already discussed, and some were caught locally. Hutter purchased fishing lines and hooks in 1858 and 1860. Thus Hutter was likely aware of, and actively supported, the fishing/netting activities of the enslaved community as it lessened the amount of food he needed to purchase for his enslaved laborers.

| Fish Remains from Subfloor Pit (15% of total meat) |                  |
|--|------------------|
|  | Percent of Total |
| Marine Species                                     |                  |
| Mackerel   | 38.2             |
| Herring  | 27.4             |
| Freshwater Species                                 |                  |
| Catfish  | 16.1             |
| Minnow   | 15.6             |
| Eel  | 2.7              |
| Total  | 100              |

Table 5.6 (Klippel et al. 2011:30)

Catfish and eel were found in local rivers and streams, while minnows were probably from the creeks and streams on and around Poplar Forest plantation (Klippel et al. 2011 34). Enslaved laborers likely obtained these freshwater fish on their own. Robert Williams, formerly enslaved, who lived on Clay’s plantation adjacent to Poplar Forest, recalled fishing with Wyatt Steptoe and George Martin during slavery (Perdue Jr. et al. 1992:325). The latter two men were enslaved on other nearby plantations, suggesting that at least sometimes fishing was undertaken with friends and neighbors.

The production of goods from provision plots, hunting, and fishing were not only used to supplement diet and maintain health, but sometimes also directed toward the goal of raising or

creating surplus goods to trade or sell directly to others or in the market. One antebellum period Bedford County resident claimed: “it is the practice of a great many slaveholders to allow their slaves to raise something for sale and allow them to take it to market” (Ellyson 1851). Enslaved vendors were a common sight in the Lynchburg market located on Ninth Street in the antebellum period (Tripp 1997).

#### *Artifacts: Evidence of Production*

In addition to macrobotanical and faunal evidence, artifacts recovered from the antebellum cabin site provide evidence of production in the form of assemblages of work-related tools, evidence of hunting, and other tasks. Sewing tools, files, and a folding knife indicate work activities taking place within the home. A count of complete pins and headed pin fragments yielded a minimum of 277 brass pins for the subfloor pit feature alone (Heath and Lee 2008). Three hundred fifty-five buttons and partial buttons were recovered from Site A. The sheer number of buttons, in conjunction with four thimbles, scissors, an abundance of straight pins, needle shanks, fasteners, and a bone needle case cap, suggests that a seamstress lived in the antebellum cabin (Figure 5.1). One of the thimbles was a child’s thimble, indicating that the woman living in the cabin was also teaching a child, probably her daughter(s), to sew.



Figure 5.1 Sewing artifacts and fasteners from Site A. Photograph by Lori Lee

Hutter documented that he paid female relatives of some of his overseers and one of his female neighbors to sew for his family and to make some work garments for the enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest (HIEJ). Enslaved women and girls were also sewing for the Cobbs-Hutter family in addition to sewing for themselves and their families (HFJ; MSC to EWCH, April 18, 1854). Hutter documented paying cash to a few enslaved men and women on a few occasions in lieu of providing them with work shirts (HIEJ). These men and women were accordingly obtaining clothing on their own, making it themselves or buying or trading with others who could do so. These clothes were most likely made by women within the Poplar Forest slave community or possibly by enslaved mothers, sisters, or wives on other plantations or farms. Enslaved people were commonly required to manufacture and dye their own clothing in the nineteenth century (White and White 1995:165-173).

Sewing skills were a valuable asset for enslaved women because these skills provided a potential means of obtaining goods, services, and cash for themselves and their families. Seamstresses and their clients within the enslaved community did not have a simple provider to client relationship. Rather these economic relationships were often entangled in social relationships with kin, neighbors, and co-workers. Therefore, needles, pins, buttons, and fasteners as sewing objects also provide evidence of the practices that women and girls engaged in which simultaneously served practical needs, possibly economic needs, and established and maintained social networks within and beyond the community at Poplar Forest (Heath and Lee 2008).

Sewing a shirt for a husband or brother strengthened family relationships. Repayment for this task, perhaps in the form of ribbon and beads purchased at the market, served the same purpose (Lee 2008). Earning a quarter for teaching young William Hutter the alphabet, as Susan did, solidified a different kind of social relationship, that between paternalistic master and slave (MSC to ESH June 18, 1844). At the same time it reinforced another kind of relationship, that between child and caregiver.

In addition to raising crops, and possibly sewing, some enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest also created crafts to generate income (HIEJ). Billy and Jesse sold brooms to Edward Hutter and George crafted shoes for the Hutter family and the enslaved (HIEJ). Hutter also purchased baskets and foot mats from his enslaved laborers and sometimes paid them for small repairs, services, or working on holidays (HIEJ). With their earnings, enslaved laborers participated in the informal and market economies.



*Documents: Evidence of Production*

Documents suggest another means by which some Poplar Forest enslaved laborers turned the critical resource of time, in combination with hard work, into money. This opportunity came through the practice of “overwork,” or compensated extra work, to hired enslaved laborers who worked in industrial environments (Morgan 1992:65). The increase in hiring out of enslaved laborers was one of the most significant changes impacting piedmont Virginia slavery in the nineteenth century. Industries that used the task system, such as ironworks, furnaces, tobacco factories, and lumbering sites often offered incentives to hired enslaved laborers for production that exceeded the expected tasks (Morgan 1992:65). These incentives were usually cash payments but could also be extra time off (Morgan 1992:65).

Ned and Tom were among the enslaved men Cobbs hired out to proprietors in the Kanawha salt mines through hiring agent William Cox. On a Thursday evening in August 1827, Ned and Tom borrowed a canoe to go to the James River to get some melons. They promised to return on Sunday, but instead they ran away. In a letter to Cobbs notifying him of the missing men, Cox stated: “Although they did not return on Sunday no suspicion was excited of their intention to run off, as it is very common for slaves to employ themselves about their little affairs—after performing their duties to their owners” (R.E. Putney to WC, August 1, 1827). Teasing apart this statement, we are struck by the lack of initial concern at their extended absence. This suggests that Ned and Tom had earned extra time off. Their stated purpose of the trip—to obtain melons, suggests that they also earned the money they would need to acquire melons.

Morgan (1983) investigated the economy of time that enslaved laborers working under the task system used to their advantage in mid-nineteenth century South Carolina and Georgia. Under this system enslaved workers used the remaining time, after their tasks were completed, to produce alienable goods, accumulate property, and gain a degree of autonomy (Morgan 1983:399). Industrial slavery, such as the salt mining undertaken by Cobbs' enslaved men in Kanawha County, offered a similar opportunity. Work undertaken on the plantation, in garden plots, in cabins, in the woods, and along creeks, on Sundays and after long hours spent working for the slaveholder also offered some enslaved people the bittersweet opportunity to work for themselves.

Performing additional labor, when one was legally a commodity and exploited as embodied labor, was daunting for enslaved laborers. Although it was challenging, it could also be rewarding. Laboring for one's self meant taking control of that which was stolen on a daily basis, labor and the fruits of that labor. It was also an opportunity to redefine other elements of daily life that slaveholders defined in daily labor routines, such as gender and work roles. Families who were separated during the day, some in the field and some in the house, may have come together in the evenings and on Sundays to work together in groups they defined themselves. By day, enslaved men may have been required to work in the field, but in the quarter tending crops may have become women's work while men trapped rabbits and fished or vice versa. It is unknown who performed what kinds of labor in the garden patches, woods, or streams at antebellum Poplar Forest, but the point is, on their own time the enslaved controlled labor relations and they controlled their own labor to some degree. This measure of control over production, this limited degree of autonomy, was a form of empowerment for some enslaved African Americans.

## Chapter 6

### **The Goods (and Bads) of Southern Shops: Consumer Practices and Enslaved Laborers in Nineteenth-Century Virginia**

As for my shopping, the goods or rather ‘bads’, at which I used to grumble, in your village Emporium in Lenox, are what may be termed ‘first rate’, both in excellence and elegance, compared with the vile products of every sort which we wretched Southerners are expected to accept as the conveniences of life in exchange for current coin of the realm. I regret to say, moreover, that all these infamous articles are Yankee made—expressly for this market, where every species of thing (to use the most general term I can think of), from list shoes to pianofortes, is procured from the North—almost always New England, utterly worthless of its kind, and dearer than the most perfect specimens of the same articles would be anywhere else. The incredible variety and ludicrous combinations of goods to be met with in one of these southern shops beats the stock of your village omnium-gatherum hollow to be sure, one class of articles, and that probably the most in demand here, is not sold over any counter in Massachusetts—cow-hides, and man-traps, of which a large assortment enters necessarily into the furniture of every southern shop (Kemble 1984:151).

In the 1830s, English actress Fannie Kemble married Pierce Butler, a wealthy resident of Philadelphia who derived part of his largesse from family plantations on the Sea Islands of Georgia. Kemble lived at one of these plantations for a few months in the late 1830s and documented her observations about daily life. The excerpt of her letter to her friend that opens this chapter described a shopping excursion in Darien, Georgia.

Kemble’s observations reveal the perspective of an English woman who had recently arrived in the southern United States after living in Philadelphia for a few years. She also broadly indicates where many goods in Southern stores were coming from—largely from the northern United States. Her bewilderment at the variety of goods indicates the diversity of selections available. Finally, she made the significant point that Southern shops sold rawhide whips and man-traps alongside their other merchandise, clarifying that the available goods were adapted to local demands. Entering similar shops in Virginia, enslaved laborers encountered these tangible reminders of their status. Yet because of their differential access to the variety of other goods

available, they likely appreciated those additional goods in a way that Kemble could not, just as their experiences as enslaved laborers gave them an understanding of the whips and traps that she could not conceive. To understand consumerism among enslaved laborers, it is necessary to know what was available in the markets and shops to which they had access. It is equally important to know what factors determined who did, and who did not, have access to available goods.

This chapter is based on an articulation of account books, newspapers, slave codes, and travelers' accounts that describe the supply of Southern goods and differential access of enslaved laborers to these various goods. Supply and access constrained enslaved laborers' individual expression and consumer choice at varying scales. On a plantation, supply took the form of provisions selected by the master for the enslaved, self-provisioning, pilfering, and bartering. At the scale of local markets and stores, supply and variable adherence to laws constrained which goods were available to enslaved laborers who were able to purchase or trade for them. In this chapter, I synthesize historical and archaeological evidence to consider how supply and access impacted which goods were available to enslaved laborers in nineteenth-century Virginia, particularly in the region surrounding Poplar Forest. Then I consider what choices among these goods reveal about the needs, desires, prospects, and risks of enslaved consumers.

The week of Christmas in 1855, plantation owner Elijah Fletcher wrote a letter to his brother describing Christmas preparations at Sweet Briar plantation in Amherst County, Virginia:

We are not doing much except preparing for a happy Christmas for our Servants. They [his enslaved laborers] have all to sell their crops, which consists principally of corn and it takes many wagon loads and each wants to go with it and lay in their finery and small comforts. Your Friends would many of them be surprised to see their return cargoes, many of the women with fine Black silk dresses, costing \$10 to \$15, and some nice thing for every child. It gives me much pleasure to aid them in all these things, to make them comfortable. Those that have had back luck with their crops or been improvident are assisted by *Master*. None have fear that they will suffer or have any little want which will not be gratified (Dec 20, 1855).

This letter provides insight into many aspects of consumerism in Central Virginia, including the internal economy and the market economy and how the master/slave relationship mediated participation in both.

The internal economy encompasses independent production, buying, and selling of goods and services by enslaved laborers for themselves (Schlotterbeck 1991:170; Berlin and Morgan 1991:1). The form of the internal economy was contingent upon location, time period, labor management, kind of crops being grown, and idiosyncracies of slaveholders. The most typical internal economy of enslaved laborers was based on the production of surplus garden produce, fowl, and livestock that could be sold to planters, other enslaved laborers, or people outside of the plantation (Schlotterbeck 1991:170). It also included objects made by enslaved laborers, services rendered, overpay when hired out, and stolen goods. Schlotterbeck (1991:173) argues that the internal economy in Virginia developed from widely acknowledged customary rights of enslaved laborers to garden plots, hunting and gathering, and time off at night, on holidays, and Sundays. Enslaved laborers were also sometimes paid to work during what was considered their personal time. Enslaved consumers made choices about what to buy with the money they earned in these various ways, but these choices were restricted to what goods and services they could access.

Because their finances were meager, it is first necessary to consider what goods they were provisioned to understand what unmet needs and desires remained to be fulfilled by consumer choices. Just as understanding what gaps were left in the diet based on inadequate provisioned foods, considering the gaps left in clothing and mundane household needs provides insight into the consumer choices made by enslaved laborers.

## **Provisioned Goods**

Not surprisingly, as Fletcher's letter indicates, slaveholders played a crucial role in controlling enslaved laborers' access to goods. Although it was not a part of the internal economy, the provisions the slaveholder selected for enslaved laborers were a critical form of supply. Typical provisions included food, cloth or clothing, housing, and usually shoes. Some slaveholders also provided alcohol for special occasions. Other kinds of material goods, such as plates, utensils, pots, and bedding were also often obtained from slaveholders. Yet the type, quality, and quantity of provisioned items reflected characteristics deemed appropriate by slaveholders (Hilliard 2006:74). Archaeological evidence and purchases made by enslaved laborers suggest that these characteristics were not the same as those deemed desirable by enslaved laborers.

At Poplar Forest, Hutter provisioned enslaved workers with food, shoes, cloth and clothing and sometimes gave them small monetary or material "gifts." Although Hutter kept a detailed account of his income and expenses from July, 1856 through December, 1861, he did not keep a consistent account of the provisions he gave to his enslaved laborers. A close inspection of the account book suggests that he did record several purchases of cloth, food, and clothing that were likely bought for enslaved workers. However, he did not often specifically state that these were purchases for enslaved laborers, particularly, it seems, when the objects purchased were items that he considered provisions.

### *Clothing*

Work clothing, or the materials to make it, was provided by slaveholders throughout the southern United States. In the antebellum period, enslaved adults were typically provided with a set of

summer clothes, a set of winter clothes, some kind of head covering, and a pair of shoes every year. For men, summer clothes consisted of lightweight shirts and trousers. Women received dresses. In the winter, woolen coats or jackets were given to men and women (Gruber 2014). Children received simple shifts, sometimes with buttons on the sides as a poor attempt to protect against cold weather (Griebel 1994:161). Sometimes, but not always, enslaved laborers received undergarments as well (Griebel 1994:127; Perdue et al 1992:79-80). Domestic servants often received better quality clothing than field servants (Gruber 2014).

In the nineteenth century, industrialization made ready-made clothing affordable enough that it was sometimes given to enslaved laborers rather than producing their clothing on site (Gruber 2014). However, the shift to diversified agriculture in the late-eighteenth century resulted in a surplus of the materials necessary to manufacture clothing (White and White 1995:166). Many nineteenth-century slave owners chose to engage laborers in manufacturing their work clothing rather than purchasing imported fabrics or ready-made clothes. It was left to the slaveholder's discretion whether to provide cloth and sewing materials, to have cloth and clothing made on site, to provide clothing that was already made, or whether to provide anything at all, although the latter decision carried social if not legal sanctions. Hutter did not systematically document what cloth, clothing, or shoes he provided for enslaved laborers, but his account book includes enough notations to detect a broad pattern as follows.

On May 26, 1857 Hutter purchased 23 yards of osnaburg and 16 yards of calico. The following day he purchased an additional 46 yards of osnaburg, jeans, and 15 yards of calico (HIEJ). One year later, on May 27, 1858 Hutter purchased 35 ½ yards of striped cotton (HIEJ). On May 10, 1860, he purchased cotton pants for Smith, an enslaved man who lived and worked at Poplar Forest. The types of cloth and clothing Hutter purchased are revealing. Osnaburg is a

coarse cloth that was typically used to make clothes for enslaved people. Calico and cotton were also sometimes used for slave clothing in the summer or for domestic servants, although osnaburg, jeans, hemp, and wool blends were considered by many slaveholders to be the most appropriate textiles for slave clothing because these coarse textiles were durable (Baumgarten 1988, 1991; Shaw 2012; Saunders 2012). Since it required replacement less often, durable clothing was the most cost-effective. But the hot, humid summers of Virginia would have made these clothes uncomfortable. Perhaps that is why Hutter purchased striped cotton rather than osnaburg and jeans in 1858. Cotton production in the southern United States fed textile industries in the north. Industrialization meant cheaper cotton cloth and clothing and new varieties of fabric—like denim, in the antebellum period. This directly impacted work clothing and indirectly influenced non-work clothing of enslaved laborers.

In late December, 1857, Hutter paid Mrs. Hurt for “making seven negro coats” (HIEJ December 22, 1857). He also paid someone to make “7 negro coats” on December 24, 1860 (HIEJ). In November 1861, he paid William (an enslaved laborer) \$4 for winter clothes and, based on this amount, he paid two other enslaved workers \$8 “in lieu of negroes clothes” in the following month (HIEJ November 9, 1861, December 8, 1861). The day after the latter transaction, he paid someone for weaving 25 yards of “negro cloth” (HIEJ). Hutter probably paid someone to weave “negro cloth” when it was available at local merchants because local production was cheaper. New means of transportation had apparently not significantly altered the costs of some goods. His decision was probably influenced by the ongoing Civil War, which influenced accessibility of goods by late 1861. On December 24, 1861, Hutter paid two enslaved men, Robert and William Armistead, \$4 instead of providing them with flannel shirts (HIEJ). Perhaps money was easier to obtain than flannel shirts under these circumstances.



Hutter did not document purchases of cloth from stores in the winter, suggesting that enslaved laborers were probably expected to transform wool from Hutter's sheep into winter clothing. This practice was common in antebellum Virginia (Perdue et al. 1992:6, 70, 82, 88, 104, 141, 209). Based on all of these entries, it seems that Hutter provided enslaved laborers with work clothing, or the raw materials to produce them, twice a year—in late spring and early winter. He paid white women to sew some of these clothes and he had enslaved women sew some of them as well (HIEJ).

On January 14, 1850 and again on January 21-23, 1852 Hutter noted “women sewing” in his farm journal (HFJ). He used this journal to keep track of farm work and this designation certainly refers to enslaved women. Because these incidents took place in mid-winter, these women may have been sewing clothing for spring. It is significant that multiple completed coats were purchased in December on two occasions. January 1 was “hiring day” in antebellum Virginia, following a customary week off for enslaved laborers (Zaborney 2012). These coats may have been for enslaved laborers who worked on the plantation. Alternately, they may have been for enslaved laborers who were hired out to (or in from) other locations, and thus they were needed by January 1, unlike the clothes being sewn by women in mid-to-late January.

Hutter only documented one ready-made clothing purchase that he made specifically for an enslaved person at Poplar Forest. In the summer of 1860 he purchased a dress for one of Lydia Johnson's children (HIEJ July 21, 1860). The singularity of this act, in addition to the fact that it was purchased outside the timeframe when provisioned clothing-related items were typically purchased, suggests that the dress may have been for an exceptional occasion—perhaps a baptism or a burial (HIEJ July 21, 1860). Comprehending why Hutter would purchase a dress for one of Lydia's children requires a better understanding of the relationship between the

Cobbs/Hutter family and Lydia. Lydia named her third child Ida Reeder after Edward Hutter's niece in 1850 (HFJ July 30, 1850). Naming a child after a member of the slaveholder's family was a means of strengthening social relations and reinforcing the fictive kin ties fabricated in the patriarchal system. Although there is no evidence, the kin ties may have been real as the possibility exists that Ida was Edward Hutter's daughter. The gift of a dress and the name bestowed on a child suggest that the Cobbs/Hutter family had a relatively close relationship with Lydia that entailed reciprocal obligations.<sup>25</sup> Amy Young (2004: 139) noted that planter families employed kin terms for some enslaved laborers, particularly domestic servants, such as "mammy," "aunt," and "uncle." She argues that enslaved laborers accepted these terms to protect themselves and their children through emphasizing the expectations associated with these kinship titles. After emancipation, Lydia Johnson continued to work for the Hutter family until her death in 1919. A Hutter family member wrote "Aunt Liddy" on the back of a photograph of Mrs. Johnson taken in the 1910s. Lydia Johnson's decision to continue to work at Poplar Forest for several decades after emancipation speaks of her complex social, economic, and emotional ties to the place, to other laborers who worked on the property, and to the Cobbs/Hutter family.

Like most slaveholders, Hutter provided shoes for enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest. He distributed these at about the same time as he distributed winter clothing allotments. On December 2, 1844 he noted in his farm journal "Served out Negroes Shoes" (HFJ). Although he

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<sup>25</sup> This interpretation is based on the assumption that Lydia Johnson chose to name her daughter Ida Reeder. This may or may not be the case. Edward or Emma Hutter may have selected or suggested the name. Alternatively, Lydia may have chosen the name Ida and someone else in the slaveowning family may have appended Reeder later. This seems to be the case with an enslaved man referred to as George Hutter. He was born before Edward Hutter married Emma Cobbs Hutter. George Hutter is also the name of Edward Hutter's half-brother who lived in Lynchburg. William Armistead is also a family name from Marian Scott Cobbs' family. Consequently, among the enslaved laborers that Edward Hutter documented a second name for, most of those second names refer to members of the Cobbs/Hutter family, not to surnames of the enslaved laborers themselves. John Echols may or may not be an exception. Consequently, the name of Ida Reeder may speak more to the power and control of the slaveowning family than emotional attachment.

failed to document this practice in the farm journal again, it seems likely that he continued it. In contrast, many shoe purchases are documented in Hutter's account book. Hutter often noted whom shoes were purchased for—his wife, his children, his mother-in-law, a hired enslaved laborer, and the governess. In addition to these purchases, he also documented a number of shoe purchases that he does not associate with any name. I think these shoes were purchased for enslaved laborers, particularly when multiple pairs were purchased simultaneously (HIEJ).

In addition to buying shoes in Lynchburg, Hutter also owned an enslaved laborer named George who made and repaired shoes. Hutter may have paid Fretwell in Lynchburg to teach George how to make shoes. Fretwell trained at least one other enslaved laborer in the Lynchburg area to make shoes and Hutter had a business account with him (Perdue et al. 1992: 152; HIEJ). It is unclear when George began making shoes, but Hutter first documented paying him for shoes in 1859: "Geo 2 pr brogues \$4" (HIEJ June 14, 1859). Two months later, he paid \$8 for more brogues (HIEJ August 18, 1859). The following December, he noted: "paid George for Negroes shoes and mending \$21.70" (HIEJ December 28, 1860). Just a few months later, he paid George \$14.05 for shoes and mending (HIEJ March 2, 1861). This practice reveals two entangled economies operating side by side, one controlled by the master and the other controlled by enslaved laborers. George was paid for producing and mending shoes that were then provisioned to other enslaved laborers. Archaeologists recovered part of a leather shoe, a shoe heel, several grommets, and boot hooks at the antebellum cabin site. Not enough evidence remains to determine whether the shoes they came from would have been of the quality typically provided to enslaved laborers or were of a better quality that enslaved laborers may have purchased.

### *Alcohol*

Besides clothing and food, Hutter also provisioned whiskey to at least some enslaved laborers occasionally, typically at harvest or on holidays. He documented whiskey purchases 16 times in his account book over a five-and-a-half-year period (HIEJ). He also documented selling whiskey once (HIEJ July 11, 1856). One could question whether these purchases were for enslaved laborers or for entertaining purposes. Given that Hutter himself did not drink often if at all, and the fact that many of these purchases were made in quantity at harvest time (from June to September), suggests that these were provisions for enslaved laborers. Many slaveholders permitted enslaved laborers to drink alcohol at harvest time and supplied them with it (Meacham 2009:19). Further, Hutter documented paying Robert “for whiskey in Harvest” and paying someone cash “in lieu of whiskey”, which suggests that whiskey was provisioned, if only on occasion (HIEJ September 21, 1857; December 7, 1861).

### *Household Items*

Based on the limited purchases of these items that show up in his account book, it seems that Hutter was interested in maintaining as much production of food and goods for the plantation on the plantation as possible. In addition to provisions that met basic necessities, such as food and clothing, he also seems to have provided at least some enslaved laborers with other household objects, including some items that were particularly purchased for them and used objects that were subsequently given to them. Because Hutter did not explicitly document objects he purchased for enslaved laborers in his account book (although singular purchases not associated with anyone else are suggestive), it can be difficult to tell which mundane household objects that are found archaeologically were provided to enslaved laborers by Hutter and which

were obtained independently.<sup>26</sup> However, this distinction is an important one, because objects obtained in these two different ways probably had very different meanings for enslaved laborers.

Following the lead of Howson (1995), I argue that enslaved laborers associated provisioned articles, such as certain types of osnaburg clothing, with slave labor. Conversely, articles that were acquired in the market, through barter or purchase, such as transfer-printed ceramic plates, came to signify individuality, personal status, and collective identity. Howson claimed that styles resulting from provisioning practices were rejected after emancipation, but styles that resulted from agency were maintained because of their reference to self-defined collective identity (Howson 1995:163).

Some ceramic transfer-printed patterns from the Poplar Forest antebellum cabin, such as Amoy, Napier, and Blantyre, are the same patterns found on the ceramics associated with the main house during the antebellum Cobbs/Hutter occupation (Brooks 1995). Disdain for these seemingly provisioned ceramics is suggested at Poplar Forest by the presence of a few complete and nearly complete Amoy, Napier, and molded ironstone vessels in the subfloor pit of the antebellum cabin (Figure 6.1). These vessels appear to have been abandoned by enslaved laborers when they were whole—while they were still useable. Abandoning functional objects when living in a state of poverty suggests that need may have been subjugated to meaning. Functionality was less critical than negative associations with restricted agency. Heath (1999c) makes a similar argument about enslaved laborers' discard of buttons that were still functional. She argued that their meaning informs us about the value of fashion.

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<sup>26</sup> Aside from the dress he bought for Lydia's child, Hutter does not specify when objects he purchased were for enslaved laborers. He does often document for whom in his own family he was purchasing items, so it seems that at least some items he did not associate with anyone in his own family may have been purchases for enslaved laborers.

There were 11 layers and lenses in the subfloor pit (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004). The deposition layer that contained the plates (near the base of the pit) has a *tpq* date of 1851, and the pit was filled in after 1858 (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004:25). Heath and her colleagues (2004:26-30) analyzed site formation processes of the subfloor pit through artifact densities per layer, artifact type distributions, crossmends, and artifact counts and soil volume per layer/lens. These analyses suggested that some layers were primary deposits and others were secondary. The initial crossmend analysis looked for connections between the layers and lenses of the pit to determine which of these might be contemporaneous. Archaeologists determined that most of the layers and lenses in the bottom of the pit were contemporaneous through this method (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004:29), although the top layer of the pit seemed to be deposited at a different time.

Subsequent crossmend analysis that I undertook with Elizabeth Paull revealed that the stone chimney feature and deep layers in the pit were also contemporaneous. Further, ceramics from the bottom of the pit crossmend with upper layers of plowzone and topsoil in areas near the subfloor pit. The ceramics from the upper layers were found within fifteen feet of the subfloor pit and consequently they may have shifted when a plow encountered layers of the pit that were destroyed. Together these mends suggest that the subfloor pit was filled in fairly rapidly at some point after the cabin was abandoned post-1858. Consequently, the plates may have been abandoned around the period of emancipation when objects that once belonged to slaveholders, could have been selectively left behind when the occupants left the cabin or because Hutter demanded it.

Although it is unclear how Hutter felt about the particular enslaved people who owned the objects he provisioned, he clearly did (like many slaveholders) recognize their ownership of

at least some property. When Emma Hutter wrote to her husband on December 30, 1865 amidst the process of newly emancipated slaves deciding whether to stay at Poplar Forest or relocate, she mentioned that Matilda's husband, Israel Anderson, brought a wagon to pick up "*her* bedding, wardrobe, &tc" (EWCH to ESH December 30, 1865, emphasis added). Emma did not mention this because she contested Israel's right to do so, rather she wanted to emphasize to her husband that Matilda was reluctant to leave with Israel because she wanted to be certain that Emma had someone to take her place before she joined him. This letter indicates the complexity of the relationships between enslaved laborers/former slaves and their owners/former owners. These relationships were intricately entangled in the material culture that was used to shape, reinforce, and maintain them. Beginning to interpret this complexity necessitates an assessment of which material goods were provisioned by slaveholders and which were acquired independently by enslaved laborers.



Figure 6.1 Amoy Saucer from 2352BB/4 Subfloor Pit. Photograph by Elizabeth Paull.

*Archaeology: Ceramics and Provisioning Practices*

Determining which ceramics may have been obtained independently and which may have been provided by the Cobbs/Hutter family required a comparison of the ceramics associated with the main house and those recovered from the location of the Site A cabin. To better understand the ceramic assemblage associated with the Site A cabin, I analyzed 6,359 ceramics sherds from the assemblage, crossmended sherds, and conducted a count of the minimum number of vessels (MNV) with the assistance of Elizabeth Paull, who was a lab assistant and collections manager at Poplar Forest.<sup>27</sup> The initial MNV count was conducted with the ceramic sherds recovered from a broad area defined as Site A, which extended to the South Lawn on the west, Site B on the east, to the northernmost unit excavated before reaching the area associated with the South Tenant House on the north, and to the southernmost unit excavated to the south.

Based on the results of this analysis, which suggested that artifacts in the north and west of this area were associated with the main house rather than the antebellum cabin, we redefined our focus to the area where remains from the antebellum cabin were distributed before we engaged in a MNV count for the glass. I subsequently went back and removed vessels from our initial ceramic MNV count when those vessels consisted only of sherds recovered outside of the restricted area used for the glass MNV count.<sup>28</sup> Based on subsequent analysis I did in 2011 to begin to understand the relationship between this area and the area immediately east of Site A where ongoing excavations were unearthing considerable antebellum deposits, the area now defined as Site A extends an additional 30 ft. east into the western edge of a sub-site previously

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<sup>27</sup> Interns occasionally helped with this project as well. Hannah Moses was particularly helpful with cross-mending blue transfer prints.

<sup>28</sup> The initial minimum number of vessels count resulted in 473 vessels.



defined as Site B. Based on our redefinition of the original northern, western, and eastern boundaries of Site A, the area presently defined as Site A is 115 ft. north to south and 85 ft. east to west (It includes the area designated “Transitional Area” in Figure 4.5). Nearly half of the material from the eastern edge of the site was not catalogued, or even excavated, prior to the 2009 cut-off date I used for this project. However, because ceramics were key to interpreting the relationships between the two areas, I selectively catalogued the decorated ceramics (463 sherds) and some of these are included in the Site A MNV count and subsequent interpretations (Proebsting and Lee 2012:58-62).

We began the ceramic MNV count by dividing sherds into types based on paste, decoration, form, and glaze and then crossmending (McMillan et al. 2014:22; Orton et al. 2007; Poulain 2013; Voss and Allen 2010). Next, we examined non-mending sherds to look for variability in thickness, color, glaze, decoration, etc. We also examined sherds for redundancy in pattern, when a pattern was present. Ceramic vessels were formulated based on these attributes, resulting in a MNV count that was based on physical rather than statistical characteristics. Among these attributes, we prioritized rims over bases when these two elements could not be associated. Unique body sherds were also considered as distinct vessels. The end result was 351 ceramic vessels, not including non-food related forms, such as an inkwell, chamber pots, and flowerpots. Ceramic utensil handles were also excluded from the count. Handles and lids that could not be associated with vessels were documented as unique forms, but these are not included in the vessel count to avoid inflating the number of estimated vessels.

In the broadest category of ware type, the assemblage included 10 creamware vessels, 47 pearlware vessels, 120 whiteware vessels, 61 ironstone vessels, 20 porcelain vessels, 2 Chinese porcelain vessels, 5 basalt vessels, 5 black-glazed redware vessels, 39 stoneware vessels, 24

yellowware vessels, 14 redware vessels, and 4 vessels of an unidentified ware type. These vessels represent a wide range of forms including plates of various sizes, platters, tureens, teacups, teabowls, saucers, mugs, teapots, coffeepots, and pitchers (Table 6.1).

| Table 6.1 Food-Related Ceramics |                     |       |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Type                            | Form                | Count |
| Creamware                       | Serving Dish        | 1     |
|                                 | Unidentified Flat   | 1     |
|                                 | Unidentified Hollow | 6     |
|                                 | Unidentified        | 2     |
| Pearlware                       | Platter             | 1     |
|                                 | Plate               | 11    |
|                                 | Saucer              | 2     |
|                                 | Unidentified Flat   | 6     |
|                                 | Hollow Dish         | 4     |
|                                 | Unidentified Hollow | 15    |
|                                 | Bowl                | 3     |
|                                 | Mug                 | 1     |
|                                 | Cup                 | 1     |
|                                 | Unidentified        | 3     |
| Whiteware                       | Platter             | 1     |
|                                 | Plate               | 31    |
|                                 | Soup Plate          | 1     |
|                                 | Small Plate         | 4     |
|                                 | Saucer              | 10    |
|                                 | Large Flat          | 1     |
|                                 | Unidentified Flat   | 6     |
|                                 | Tureen              | 1     |
|                                 | Large Hollow        | 4     |
|                                 | Bowl                | 5     |
|                                 | Teabowl             | 5     |
|                                 | Mug                 | 4     |
|                                 | Cup                 | 3     |
|                                 | Jar                 | 1     |
|                                 | Unid. Hollow        | 34    |
| Knife Rest                      | 1                   |       |

|                         |                     |    |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----|
|                         | Unidentified        | 8  |
| Ironstone               | Platter             | 1  |
|                         | Plate               | 13 |
|                         | Small Plate         | 5  |
|                         | Saucer              | 5  |
|                         | Unidentified Flat   | 11 |
|                         | Tureen              | 2  |
|                         | Large Hollow        | 2  |
|                         | Serving Dish        | 1  |
|                         | Pitcher             | 1  |
|                         | Coffee/teapot       | 1  |
|                         | Bowl                | 3  |
|                         | Unidentified Hollow | 14 |
|                         | Unidentified        | 2  |
| Stoneware               | Jug                 | 8  |
|                         | Crock               | 3  |
|                         | Unidentified Hollow | 28 |
| Black-glazed Stoneware  | Coffeepot           | 1  |
| Yellowware              | Teapot              | 1  |
|                         | Pitcher             | 2  |
|                         | Bowl                | 2  |
|                         | Mug                 | 1  |
|                         | Unidentified Hollow | 11 |
|                         | Unidentified        | 6  |
| Redware                 | Unidentified Hollow | 11 |
|                         | Unidentified        | 3  |
| Black-glazed Redware    | Coffee/teapot       | 3  |
|                         | Hollow tableware    | 2  |
| Porcelain               | Plate               | 2  |
|                         | Small Plate         | 1  |
|                         | Saucer              | 2  |
|                         | Shallow Dish        | 1  |
|                         | Unidentified Flat   | 2  |
|                         | Bowl                | 1  |
|                         | Mug                 | 2  |
|                         | Cup                 | 1  |
|                         | Unidentified Hollow | 6  |
|                         | Unidentified        | 2  |
| Chinese Porcelain       | Unidentified        | 2  |
| Black Refined Stoneware | Teapot              | 1  |
|                         | Tea/coffeeware      | 2  |

|              |                     |     |
|--------------|---------------------|-----|
|              | Hollow tableware    | 1   |
| Unidentified | Unidentified Flat   | 2   |
|              | Unidentified Hollow | 2   |
|              | Total               | 351 |

Among the 351 vessels, 264 had manufacture date ranges that were useful for formulating a mean ceramic date (hereafter MCD). However, more than one-third of these vessels were whiteware, which is still manufactured into the present. This long range of manufacture would negatively impact the mean ceramic date because the cabin was not occupied into the present. However, the nearby two-story brick cabin (referred to as the South Tenant House) was also intermittently occupied into the 1970s and some ceramics that were used by occupants of that building are mixed into the plow zone deposits at Site A. Consequently, a mean ceramic date of the ceramic vessels would be ineffective to estimate the median date of occupation of the antebellum slave cabin. However, Heath calculated mean ceramic dates based on the north half of the stone chimney feature and for the subfloor pit because those features were undisturbed by the plow (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 18-20).

The *tpq* for the northern part of the chimney feature (which consisted of large field stones, brick, and mortar debris) was 1845, based on sponged whiteware, and the *tpq* was 1880, based on the absence of wire nails. The mean ceramic date, based on a small sample size of twelve sherds, was 1857 (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 16- 19). Heath noted that the *tpq* for the southern half of the chimney feature was 1833 (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 19). Notably, the southern part of the stone chimney feature consisted of smaller stones, which Heath and her staff hypothesized to be remains of stone construction materials (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 16-17). They hypothesized that the larger stones were destruction debris that resulted from dismantling the chimney when the building was

abandoned (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 17). A sherd of Napier transfer-printed whiteware provided the *tpq* for the southern part of the chimney (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 17) and Napier sherds also provided the *tpq* date of construction of the cabin based on other layers associated with cabin construction. The latter finding supports Heath's interpretation that the small stones in the southern part of the chimney feature were related to construction.

Heath and her staff calculated two mean ceramic dates (MCD) based on the ceramics from the subfloor pit (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 25-27). The first MCD calculation included the entire range of production for each ware type. The result was 1862 (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 26). The second MCD calculation truncated the end date of production to 1880, based on the absence of wire nails in the subfloor pit, because the long range of production skewed the results. The result was 1850 (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull: 26-27). She concluded that the second date was a better fit for the median occupation date for the cabin (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004: 26). My subsequent analysis of artifacts recovered from the layers within and surrounding the cabin support this conclusion. The cabin was built at some point after 1833 and abandoned at some point after 1858, consequently the 1850 mean ceramic date is a more accurate reflection of the median date of occupation than 1862.

Several types of decorated wares were found at the antebellum cabin site including transfer prints, clobbered transfer prints, molded decoration, edge decoration, hand-painted wares, gilded decoration, and sponged decoration. Among the identified transfer-printed patterns, pearlware transfer patterns include Oxford and Cambridge College Series (1814-1830), Foliage and Scroll border (1780-1820), Blue Bell Border (1780-1820), and Willow (1795-1830).

Whiteware transfer patterns include Napier (1833-1840), Blantyre (1839-1846), Palestine (1836-1864), Abbeville (1828-1859), Rousillon (1846), Chinese Birdcatchers (1820-1835), Nonpareil (1837), and Tuscan Rose (1814-1837). Ironstone decoration includes flow blue Amoy transfer print (1844-1887) and hand-painted flow blue Aster and Grapeshot (1840-1864). With the exception of the flow blue patterns, the other ceramics have early mean dates of production suggesting that they were acquired early on in the household formation or that they were out of date ceramics by the time they were acquired by enslaved laborers.

All of these patterns were also found in association with the main house dependency wing/kitchen, smokehouse and dairy complex (Brooks 1995). It seems likely that the vessels decorated with Foliage and Scroll, Oxford and Cambridge College Series, Blue Bell Border series, and some of the Willow pearlware vessels are remains of vessels used by Jefferson or his grandson, their guests, and possibly enslaved laborers during their tenure at Poplar Forest (Brooks 1995; Gary 2012). Eppes may have sold some of these ceramics to William Cobbs when the former left the property. This hypothesis is supported by the presence of sherds of Oxford and Cambridge College Series and Foliage and Scroll in two subfloor pits that post-date Eppes' occupation at Poplar Forest. Many of the transfer-printed pearlware patterns are represented by one to three vessels and a small number of sherds. Some of these may be secondary deposits, or redeposited trash from earlier occupation of the property. Some of the antebellum period patterns are only present in small quantities as well. However, two patterns from the antebellum period—Napier and Amoy, are each represented by 17 vessels of diverse forms. Together these two pattern types represent nearly 10% of the entire ceramic assemblage. These patterns are also well-represented among the assemblage associated with the kitchen, smokehouse, and dairy complex. Archaeologists also recovered a few unidentified transfer-printed patterns. Some of the

latter match patterns on vessels recovered at the main house dependency wing/kitchen, smokehouse, and dairy complex (Brooks 1995).

The comparison of Cobbs/Hutter ceramics with the ceramics assemblage recovered from the slave cabin indicates that most of the ceramics used in the cabin were likely obtained from the Cobbs/Hutter family. Some, however, are unique, such as a distinctive floral flow blue transfer printed ironstone plate. This suggests that these ceramics may have been purchased or acquired independently by enslaved laborers. Most intriguing among these unique vessel types are a few Franklin's Maxim cups. These cups display some of Benjamin Franklin's rules of conduct. One is a red transfer print that is based on the saying "He that by the plow would thrive himself must either hold or drive." Two sherds of this cup were recovered at Site A, one from the subfloor pit and another above the chimney feature. The statement on this cup seems particularly ironic given that it was found in the remains of a cabin that housed enslaved laborers. A Franklin's maxim cup was also recovered at the Courthouse site in Alexandria, Virginia, also the former location of a home inhabited by enslaved laborers (Cressey 2013: 14). Fragments of two additional Franklin's Maxim cups were recovered at Site A, but the recovered sherds do not contain enough contextual clues to decipher their original sayings. Remains of Franklin's Maxim cups were also recovered at the dependency wing (Brooks 1995). Their presence there suggests that those vessels may have originated from the Hutter household or they may have been used by an enslaved cook who worked and lived in the kitchen. Perhaps they were given to enslaved laborers to inspire appropriate behavior. Conversely they may have been self-selected and valued for the associations with literacy and education. Brock (2012: 273) noted that he found a Franklin's Maxim cup at a kitchen site at the Tipton-Haynes house in Tennessee. That kitchen is another multiple use site that may have been occupied by an enslaved laborer.

Certain types of ceramic decoration seem more prevalent at the Site A cabin than at the main house, such as sponge-decorated wares. One teabowl and one saucer with an unidentified polychrome, clobbered transfer-printed Chinoiserie pattern was also recovered at the antebellum cabin. The small number of vessels recovered at the cabin suggests that this pattern may have been self-acquired by the enslaved residents of the cabin. However, a few fragments from a small number of matching vessels were also recovered at the kitchen, smokehouse, dairy complex and in the kitchen yard. The assemblage recovered from this area was a composite of material used by people who lived in the main house and enslaved people who worked in these buildings and lived in the kitchen. Consequently, vessels with this pattern may have belonged to an enslaved person(s) or all vessels with this pattern may have belonged to the slaveholders and a few were passed on to enslaved laborers. A ceramic minimum vessel count has not been completed on the antebellum ceramics associated with the main house. This analysis began in January 2014, and will eventually provide the necessary data for a better comparison with the Site A ceramics and a better understanding of which ceramics were likely provisioned and which may have been self-acquired.

A minimum vessel count has not been conducted on the glass bottles and wares from the kitchen and main house. While determining which bottles indicated provisioned alcohol would be difficult even if this comparative data existed, partially because of bottle reuse, it is worth the attempt once that count is completed. Similarly, determining which buttons and other fasteners might indicate provisioned clothing is problematic because of reuse and because fastener use was not constrained by fastener type. I will discuss glass containers in more detail later in this chapter and I will discuss fasteners in chapter seven. It is first necessary to consider independent



acquisition of goods by enslaved laborers at markets and stores and various methods used by slaveholders and local and state government to restrict their access to these goods.

### **Mediating Access**

Provisioning was only one way that slaveholders sought to control the access of enslaved laborers to goods. Some slaveholders also chose to mediate between their enslaved laborers and the market, rather than allowing enslaved laborers to engage in the market economy on their own. At Poplar Forest, Edward Hutter preferred to retain a modicum of control in the distribution process by sending enslaved worker's corn and oats to market for them and redistributing the revenue brought by the crops (HIEJ). One could argue that in doing this, Hutter had the opportunity to cheat his enslaved laborers by not giving them the full value of their crops. However, one could also argue that by serving as middleman in the sale, Hutter prevented his enslaved laborers from being cheated out of a fair price by another purchaser. Hutter's role as distributor may have also been a practical necessity because there were state laws preventing enslaved laborers from selling certain crops in Virginia in the antebellum period, particularly grains, without a certification demonstrating how the grain was obtained (Bodenhorn 1999:977; Guild 2011:109). This law concerning grains did not extend to corn, however, so it seems that Hutter acted as a distributor for reasons in addition to, or beyond, protecting his enslaved laborers from breaking the law (or his own legal liability should they do so). Hutter sometimes also served as an intermediary between enslaved laborers and their purchases from local merchants.

### *Plantation Stores*

Enslaved laborers also engaged in the internal economy through plantation stores set up by slaveholders for the purpose of selling goods to the enslaved. Hutter did not have a store at Poplar Forest, but goods from similar stores may have entered the homes of enslaved people in abroad marriages when their family members had access to them. Plantation stores, or in this case company stores, were common at industrial sites like iron works and salt works (Dew 1994, Stealey 1993:4, 85, 120, 150). Cobbs and Hutter hired out enslaved laborers to the Kanawha salt mines, as already discussed, and future research of the records kept by proprietors of those salt works and their company stores may reveal the purchases enslaved laborers made from them.

William Weaver established stores at his two Virginia iron works—Buffalo Forge in Rockbridge County and Etna Furnace in Botetourt County (Dew 1994). He documented purchases by enslaved laborers at these stores from 1830 to the late 1850s (LVA). Weaver kept the store stocked with items like coffee, sugar, tobacco, molasses, cloth, and ready-made clothes (Dew 1994:114). Notably, alcohol was not available for purchase at the store (Dew 1994:114). Like Hutter and many of his other slave-owning contemporaries, Weaver provisioned alcohol to enslaved laborers for special circumstances, such as holidays, the end of harvest, or completing other particularly arduous or dangerous work (Dew 1994:114). Weaver's enslaved laborers spent most of their earnings on cloth, clothing, and sewing items, followed by food and household goods (Dew 1994:114-121, 189, 190, 194, 195). For example, Phil Easton purchased sugar, coffee, calico, jeans, flax, linen, cassinette, handkerchiefs, a sifter, a set of knives and forks, a set of cups and saucers, and he paid postage on a letter sent to him from a free black artisan who formerly worked at Buffalo Forge (Dew 1994:116). Enslaved laborers made purchases at Weaver's stores for themselves, but also for enslaved wives and children at the iron works and,

among hired slaves, those they visited on home plantations in Campbell County, Lynchburg, and Spottsylvania County (Dew 1994: 162, 195).

Like Weaver, Richard Eggleston Hardaway kept a slave account book from 1850 to 1864 for his Nottoway County plantation “store.” It is unclear if this was a physical store or just an account of exchanges that took place between Hardaway and his enslaved laborers, like those documented in Hutter’s account book. Enslaved people at Hardaway’s plantation earned cash or credit through bartering crops, crafts, and services. The range of items Hardway consistently offered for purchase was limited—predominantly coffee, sugar, and shoes. Other goods such as coats, “fine” shoes, and ceramics seem to have been ordered, or purchased in town and redistributed to enslaved laborers upon request (Hilliard 2006:122). Hilliard’s analysis of Hardaway’s account book revealed that of nearly \$1600.00 in debts accumulated by Hardaway, his enslaved laborers spent 14% on sugar and coffee, 3% on shoes and boots, and 4% on a variety of goods, including knives, a coat, a hat, a cravat, flour, and some ceramics (Hilliard 2006:122-23). The other 79% of debts were paid to enslaved laborers in cash payments (Hilliard 2006:122-23). By choosing cash, Hardaway’s enslaved laborers demonstrated their preference to purchase goods outside of the plantation store by engaging directly in the internal economy without mediation by the master.

### *Markets and Stores*

Engaging in the internal economy also meant directly selling and purchasing goods at markets and stores located off of the plantation. In 1875, recalling his travels throughout the South, American author and journalist Edward King described his encounter of the Lynchburg market as follows:

Finally I came into an open air market picturesque as any in Italy or Spain. On the curbing of the sidewalk and even on the stones in the middle of the square dozens of negro women were seated before baskets containing vegetables, or various goods of trivial description. . . Hosts of colored buyers, market-baskets in hand, hovered from one seller to another. . . . (King 1875: 554)

The Lynchburg Market had already been operating for nearly a century by the time King encountered it (Figure 6.2). Long before he came to Lynchburg, African Americans dominated trading at this market. By selling “goods of trivial description” men and women obtained cash to buy goods they needed or wanted from local stores.



Figure 6.2 "The Old Market at Lynchburg," King describes his visit to the marketplace (King 1975: 554-555.; Image Reference NW0256, as shown on [www.slaveryimages.org](http://www.slaveryimages.org), compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library.

Sporadic attempts to restrict slave marketing activities were made in the 1840s and 1850s (Guild 2011:109; Schwarz 2010). The periodic nature of these attempts reveals the ambivalent and

fickle nature of whites to enslaved laborers as consumers. Restricting marketing activities was a means of controlling the behavior of enslaved people and limiting their access to resources. However, the purchasing power of enslaved people was critical for market growth and success in places like Lynchburg where enslaved laborers comprised as much as forty percent of the population.

Hutter assumed an intermediary position through facilitating some market purchases for particular enslaved workers. He purchased shoes in Lynchburg stores for Matilda, Viney, Lydia, William, and Woodson and then was paid back for them by each of these women and men (HIEJ April 7, 1857; April 17, 1857; May 30, 1857; February 20, 1858; May 7, 1858). This suggests that the shoes Hutter gave them as provisions did not meet the quality or perhaps quantity of shoes they desired. Hutter was willing to make the purchase of these shoes, yet he was not willing to pay for them. This mediator role provided a practical means to reinforce the power of the master while yielding to the desires of the enslaved to access the market economy (Olwell 1994:35).

On another scale, Edward Hutter allowed enslaved laborers to engage in the informal economy when he bought crops, small animals, and craft products from them (HIEJ). Notably these products included shoes, which Hutter paid George to make each year from 1859 through 1861 (HIEJ). This practice began one year after he purchased shoes for some enslaved laborers in the market. Consequently, when a number of enslaved laborers requested and paid for additional shoes they may have signaled their unhappiness with provisioned shoes, ultimately resulting in a change in the kind of shoes Hutter provided. Whether or not enslaved laborers were happy with the shoes that George produced is unknown, but enslaved laborers may have stood a better chance of obtaining shoes that fit properly and possibly that reflected their preferences

when they were made on the plantation than when Hutter was purchasing them in town on their behalf. Alternatively, Hutter may have negatively perceived his enslaved laborers' desires to purchase shoes on their own. When he documented the type of shoes that he had George make for enslaved laborers, they are "brogues" or brogans. Brogues were typically ill-fitting work shoes, often constructed of wooden platforms with leather uppers, which most enslaved laborers despised (Foster 1997:231-237; Perdue et al. 1992). Consequently, Hutter's decision to have George produce shoes for enslaved laborers on the plantation was possibly unacceptable to them because it did not result in the shoes they desired.

Like George, the other individuals who sold crops, small animals, and craft products to Hutter were usually men (HIEJ December 1861). Hutter also paid some men and women for working on holidays (HIEJ April 24, 1858; April 17, 1860). These cash transactions were noted in his account book. Because this cash was not usually exchanged with Hutter to pay for purchases (aside from the shoe purchases), enslaved laborers were using this money elsewhere, likely at local merchants.

Merchants account records indicate what kinds of purchases enslaved laborers made. Although no merchant account books documenting purchases made by antebellum enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest have yet been found, merchant account books for Virginia demonstrate that cloth, sewing supplies, and personal adornment items were the most common purchases of enslaved laborers from the late eighteenth century through the antebellum period (Dew 1994; Heath 1997; Hilliard 2006, 2014; Martin 2008; Rousseau 1855-57).

I will focus on B. S. Rousseau's store in Fairfax, Virginia as a case study of market purchases by enslaved consumers. Rousseau's account book spans the years from 1855-1857. It contains 48 accounts for enslaved consumers, 25 men and 23 women, among accounts for white

consumers. Because this account book includes purchases by whites, it provides insight into what was available in stores that was restricted to purchase by whites.

At Rousseau's store, the majority of enslaved consumers' expenditures consisted of cloth, clothing, and sewing-related materials (59%). Yet these broad categories fail to capture the diversity of the material goods enslaved consumers purchased. Cloth and clothing acquisitions were not simply the cheapest cloth available. Significantly no enslaved person purchased osnaburg, although it was available and white consumers purchased it. Instead enslaved men and women acquired an array of cotton, muslin, flannel, gingham, velvet, and silk. Hats, caps, shawls, umbrellas, parasols, and suspenders were common purchases. Five men bought black silk gloves. One woman and two men obtained bottles of cologne.

Six enslaved consumers purchased ceramics, including one dish, two bowls, a pair of cream pitchers, and two sets of cups and saucers. Intriguingly many of these ceramics were intended to be used for tea and coffee consumption. Archaeological evidence, in the form of unique ceramic types in the Site A assemblage at Poplar Forest suggests that tea and coffee vessels may have been purchased, or at least obtained independently, by enslaved laborers there. Many of these vessel forms were also cups and saucers, including a polychrome, clobbered Chinoiserie transfer print and polychrome sponged teaware with a hand-painted peafowl.

Tea and coffee, as well as sugar to accompany them, were frequent purchases in the Rousseau accounts, Weaver accounts, and at plantation stores. Tea and coffee were not considered necessities, thus they were rarely provisioned to the enslaved, but enslaved laborers clearly perceived these items to be necessities. Given that tea and coffee drinking rituals were associated with middle and upper classes, purchasing teaware was arguably one means of buying symbols of status or power. A number of plantation owners who established plantation stores



stocked coffee (Dew 1994; Hilliard 2006:122-23). Therefore, they tacitly allowed the purchase and consumption of it, likely realizing the benefit of the stimulant for productive labor.

Archaeologists recovered slate pencils, writing slate fragments and Franklin's Maxim cups in the working and living areas of enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest, suggesting some level of literacy. Virginia legislation attempted to restrict the ability of enslaved people to obtain education and educate each other (Bodenhorn 1999: 977). Slaveholders may have sought to ban the acquisition of material goods that could be used for education or promoting literacy.

Although none of the Virginia account books that I analyzed had any evidence of enslaved consumers buying print literature, Hilliard (2014: 90) found evidence that some enslaved men in South Carolina did. Black's account books reveal that four enslaved men bought seven print items in 1825—three primers, three spelling books, and one dictionary (Hilliard 2014:90). At Black's store, materials that provided the potential to learn reading and writing—unequivocally symbols of power, were as accessible, at least to some, as food and clothing items.

Educational print items could also be acquired, by what method is unclear, by some enslaved laborers in Georgia. Redpath met an enslaved man who could read and write in Augusta, Georgia in 1854 or 1855 (McKivigan 1996:144). He indicated that he learned to read and write from white children near a schoolhouse and from a white mechanic from New Jersey. He recalled that his slaveholder found his spelling books three times and burned them (McKivigan 1996:144). Redpath noted that he encountered several literate enslaved laborers on his journeys through the south and that he never met one slave “who was not anxious to acquire the forbidden knowledge” (McKivigan 1996: 145).

Although store account books provide no proof of purchases made by enslaved Virginians to advance literacy, which suggests such purchases were restricted, the archaeological

record does reveal potential evidence. At the antebellum cabin at Site A, archaeologists recovered at least 48 fragments of writing slate, 12 slate pencil fragments, and remnants of an inkwell. Some of these objects came from the subfloor pit. This assemblage of objects and their primary contexts suggest that someone who lived at the cabin was literate. Hutter periodically employed a governess to teach his daughters in the main house when the nearby Site A cabin was occupied (HIEJ). House servants may have benefitted from the lessons taught when they were working in the house. Susan, an enslaved house servant, knew the alphabet and was offered payment to teach it to young William Hutter. This suggests that she had some level of literacy.

Print literature was not the only kind of good that was usually consumed solely by whites. A comparison of the purchases of white consumers with enslaved African American consumers at Rousseau's store reveals other conspicuous differences. Alcohol was not sold to enslaved consumers, although it was sold to a few white consumers. With the exception of two bottles of painkillers sold to enslaved people, medicines were also only sold to white consumers. The absence of alcohol was also observed in the plantation store accounts. Plantation owners frequently complained about the detrimental loss of labor due to alcohol use by enslaved laborers (Schlesinger 1996: 48, 448). Control over this aspect of their lives seemed more of a concern than what they chose to eat, what they ate it on, or what they wore, as long as they paid for these things.

| Table 6.2 Glass Minimum Vessel Count from Site A |        |         |
|--|--------|---------|
| Bottle   | Number | Percent |
| Alcohol  | 25     | 20%     |
| Proprietary Medicine                             | 4      | 3%      |
| Spring Water                                     | 2      | 1%      |
| Pharmaceutical                                   | 14     | 12%     |
| Food   | 2      | 1%      |
| Cosmetic Liquids                                 | 2      | 1%      |
| Soda   | 1      | 1%      |
| Unidentified                                     | 74     | 60%     |

It should be noted that some or many antebellum stores did sell alcohol to enslaved consumers, and it is certainly represented in the archaeological record at Poplar Forest and elsewhere. I conducted a glass minimum vessel count on the glass from Site A with Elizabeth Paull (Table 6.2). At least 20% of the 126 glass vessels recovered at the site were alcohol bottles. In Hilliard's study of six antebellum store accounts from Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and South Carolina, alcohol was available in half of the stores and alcohol sales cumulatively accounted for 8.5% of purchases by enslaved laborers (Hilliard 2006:133). Yet the absence of alcohol sales in half of these stores and in the plantation stores examined for this study indicates that some merchants conformed to legal pressures prohibiting the sale of alcohol to enslaved laborers in the late antebellum period (Bodenhorn 1999:977). This prohibition was one among a number of new restrictions placed on African Americans in Virginia in the years immediately following Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion that were selectively enforced (Bodenhorn 1999:977; Guild 2011:107; Link 2005:150). Yet the archaeological record and travelers accounts (Schlesinger 1996:48) indicate that what was not provisioned could still be obtained in other ways, although not without risk.

### **Consumer choice: needs, desires, and risks**

For enslaved consumers, consumer choice was fraught with a variety of risks. At the outset, obtaining money to engage in consumer activities entailed its own risks. For many enslaved laborers who had access to money, that money was often acquired by selling produce, fowl, and game, creating crafts, engaging in additional labor or services beyond their expected work, working in what small amount of free time they had available, or engaging in illicit activities. Participating in unlawful activities to obtain money or goods ran the risk of corporal punishment, as well as sale in the intrastate slave trade, or even death. When enslaved laborers sold sources of nutrition that they sorely needed, they risked poor health. Laboring on their own free time may have also impacted health and well-being by putting additional stress on the body and reducing limited time that could be spent with family, neighbors, and friends. Selling produce and crafts in markets also put enslaved laborers of being cheated and abused by white consumers, against whom they had no legal defense.

When Redpath encountered a free black man in Richmond, Virginia in 1854, that man told him about a recent incident in a local market (McKivigan 1996:29). A free black market woman asked a white customer a question about the produce he selected. The customer took out a warrant the next day, claiming the market woman was insolent and abusive to him. If convicted of the charge, she risked being whipped and publicly denounced in the local newspaper. Fortunately, several whites who observed the incident intervened on her behalf and she was discharged (McKivigan 1996:29-30). Yet it must have been frustrating, at minimum, that she needed white citizens to intervene on her behalf. This incident highlights the racial power dynamics that existed between black sellers and white consumers. This power dynamic extended

to black consumers and white sellers as well. It is necessary to reflect on what it meant simply to be an enslaved black consumer, because the arduous process of arriving at the point of consumer choice—production filled with risks and sacrifices to obtain the means of engaging in acquisition, began long before entering into a consumer purchase.

What do consumer choices reveal about enslaved laborers' needs, desires, and risks? Store account books reveal that, overwhelmingly, enslaved laborers chose to purchase cloth, clothing, shoes, and sewing-related objects. This is not surprising. Within an enslaved community, group- and self-definition struggled against the definitions of “slave,” “house slave,” and “field slave” that were imposed by slaveholders. As Heath has noted, the material correlates of this imposed identity were items of provisioned work clothing (Heath 1999c). When Olmsted visited antebellum Virginia, he made the following observation about enslaved laborers: “They also purchase clothing for themselves, and, I notice especially, are well supplied with handkerchiefs, which the men frequently, and the women nearly always, wear on their heads. On Sundays and holidays they usually look very smart, but when at work, very ragged and slovenly” (Schlesinger 1996:82). He also noted that there were many blacks who were dressed better than whites: “. . . the finest French cloths, embroidered waistcoats, patent-leather shoes, resplendent brooches, silk hats, kids gloves, and *eau de mille fleurs*, were quite common” (Schlesinger 1996: 37). This suggests that any sumptuary laws still on the books were not rigidly enforced.

Scrutiny of the types of cloth and clothing enslaved laborers bought confirms that many of these goods were high quality. Clothing and adornment was a means for enslaved people to define themselves and reject at least the sartorial definitions imposed by slaveholders even when they were unable to reject their legal status. Account books, newspapers, and court cases reveal how significant this was to enslaved laborers—they were willing to spend much of their hard-

earned money on clothing, and even to risk severe punishment for pilfering it, to fulfill desires and to express aesthetic preferences and ideas about self-identity.

Production of work clothing enabled nineteenth-century enslaved laborers a degree of freedom over color, fit, and design of their work clothes (White and White 1995:166-168). This freedom was not available to enslaved laborers in the eighteenth century, who instead made their appearances unique by combining ready-made clothes in unique ways (White and White 1995:165). Purchasing clothing was also a demonstration of need that was not being met. A significant portion of clothing sales were comprised of shoes and boots. Some of these purchases were statements about inadequate quality of shoes, on a practical level, as well as in terms of style. If style was prioritized in the purchase, the desire to be stylish may have been thwarted when the slaveholder served as an intermediary to make the purchase. One can only wonder what Matilda, Viney, Lydia, William, and Woodson thought of the shoes that Hutter selected for them (if they had not placed them on consignment or were not present during the exchange). Yet they were in no position to refuse to reimburse him if his choice did not satisfy their desires.

Food purchases also offer a social critique of the food choices owners offered as provisions. As discussed in chapter five, food provisions at Poplar Forest do not seem to have been adequate to meet the daily needs of enslaved laborers. Faunal and plant remains recovered at the antebellum cabin site indicate that the enslaved people who lived there supplemented their provisions with food that was hunted, gathered, fished, and trapped. They may have done this out of necessity or by choice, or both depending on situational circumstances. If by choice, they may have been trying to diversify their diets or to substitute for provisions that could then be traded or marketed. Hunting, gathering, fishing, and trapping may also have been a means to acquire

surplus food to be marketed or traded. Hutter's small purchases of fowl and game animals, such as chickens and rabbits, were likely obtained from his enslaved laborers.

Unlike food, functional ceramics do seem to have been adequately provisioned by the Cobbs and Hutter families to the enslaved people who lived in the Site A cabin. The sheer number of adults who lived in the main house (the Cobbs and Hutter families and Aunt Aphine Rose), and their associated ceramic collections, may have resulted in an overabundance of ceramics there. Consequently, hand-me-downs may have been easier to come by than if other circumstances had prevailed. Because the Site A cabin was so close to the main house and was likely occupied by a house servant(s), those persons may have been in a strategic position to acquire such goods because of frequent contact with the slaveholders. For whatever reason they were obtained, provisioned ceramics meant that the enslaved laborers who lived in the cabin did not need to purchase them. This freed their limited economic resources for other purchases. Or they could choose to purchase ceramics that they desired, such as unique tea and coffee vessels, which slaveholders may not have felt that they needed.

The needs and desires of enslaved laborers were not always understood by whites. Unlike Olmsted, Kemble was bewildered by the Sunday dress and aesthetic choices of enslaved people:

You cannot conceive anything more grotesque than the Sunday trim of the poor people, their ideality, as Mr. Combe would say, being, I should think, twice as big as any rational bump in their head. Their Sabbath toilet really presents the most ludicrous combination of incongruities that you can conceive—frills, flounces, ribbons; combs stuck in their wooly heads, as if they held up any portion of the stiff and ungovernable hair; filthy finery, every color in the rainbow, and the deepest possible shades blended in fierce companionship round one dusky visage; head handkerchiefs, that put one's very eyes out from a mile off; chintzes with sprawling patterns, that might be seen if the clouds were printed with them; beads, bugles, flaring sashes, and above all, little fanciful aprons, which finish these incongruous toilets with a sort of airy grace, which I assure you is perfectly indescribable (Kemble 1984:52).

Although she did not understand it this way, if any of the people she observed had the goal of expressing themselves in aesthetically or culturally unique ways or challenging the slaveholder's vision of the conformity of enslaved laborers, then her observation indicates that

they had achieved these goals. Her description may also unwittingly reveal a West African influenced aesthetic in a preference for bold or repetitive patterns (White and White 1995). In an assessment of Mississippi merchants' accounts from 1859-1860, Ownby concluded that the items enslaved consumers bought were notable for their "variety, their non-utilitarian quality, and their touches of the luxurious and the fantastic" (Ownby 1999:59). This corroborates Kemble's observation. Touches of variety, luxury, and fantasy or desire are perhaps best materialized in the form of personal adornment items. I discuss this point further in the following chapter.

Some consumer choices carried more risks for enslaved laborers than others. Another reason enslaved people may have elected to purchase clothing-related items and ceramics when they had money to spend is because these purchases may have been more easily acceptable (even when they were not understood from the perspective of fashion) to whites than other consumer choices. Nehemiah Adams, another Northerner who toured the Southern United States in 1854, made the following observation: "It was a pleasant paradox to find that where the colored people are not free, they have in many things the most liberty, and among them the liberty to dress handsomely, and be respected in it" (Adams 1854:31). So it seems that enslaved people were more likely to have access to clothing-related items in stores, when they were able to afford them, than some other kinds of goods. Purchasing and consuming alcohol was a more risky consumer choice. Seeking items related to education was also risky. Yet the presence of evidence of alcohol consumption (if not provisioned) and potential evidence for literacy recovered at Site A indicates that some felt these risks were worth taking. The absence of documented purchases of items such as slates and slate pencils by enslaved laborers suggests that these goods were likely obtained outside of traditional markets and stores possibly in a more clandestine way.



Enslaved laborers navigated multiple restrictions to engage in consumerism through the internal economy to acquire these goods to fulfill practical needs and personal desires.

### **Personal Adornment and Slavery**

Interpreting the use and meaning of objects requires a contextual approach that emphasizes meaning within particular historical and cultural settings (Beaudry 2006; Beaudry, Cook, and Mrozowski 1991; Brown and Cooper 1990; Leone and Fry 1999; Samford 2007; Stine et al. 1996; White 2005; White and Beaudry 2009; Wilkie 1997; Yentsch 1995). In this chapter, I move beyond production and access to assess another layer of consumption: use and meaning. Because personal adornment objects were high priority purchases for enslaved laborers in the antebellum period, although statistically they only represent 2.4% of the total artifact assemblage (891 of 37,085 artifacts), I focus on objects related to adornment practices in this chapter. WPA narratives, folklore, and archaeological contexts provide insight into how these objects were used in the antebellum period and after emancipation (Baker and Baker 1996; Davis 1941; Hornsby 1941; Sims 1941; Washington 1941; Puckett 1969; Rawick 1979). These narratives demonstrate that the uses and meanings of objects were fluid and contingent upon the cultural, historical, and idiosyncratic situations of their use.

My theoretical framework incorporates Daniel Miller's (1987:174-176) concept of recontextualization and an adaptation of James Scott's (1990:4) hidden transcripts. This process is a means of producing, maintaining, and expressing personal and social identity through creative redefinition of the symbolism of mass-produced goods (Miller 1987: 174-176; Mullins 2004:207). James Scott's ideas about hidden transcripts were developed through analysis of the relationship between power and discourse (Scott 1990). Scott defined hidden transcripts as "discourse that takes place "offstage," beyond direct observation by powerholders" (Scott 1990:4). He elaborated three characteristics of hidden transcripts: 1) they are specific to a given

social site and a particular set of social actors, 2) they contain not only speech acts, but a whole range of practices; and 3) the frontier between public and hidden transcripts is a zone of struggle (Scott 1990:14).

In his characterization of hidden transcripts, Scott extended the definition beyond discourse to include practice, indicating that hidden transcripts are, or can be, more than just verbal. Although he did not specifically address material culture in his work, his ideas are useful for illuminating nuances of recontextualization that are based on the situation(s) in which material culture is used. Scott captured situation in his first characteristic of hidden transcripts—site specific and contingent on social relations. By situation, I refer not only to a given social site and set of social actors, but also to particular circumstances that can shift the prioritization of one use or meaning of material culture over another. The situation in this sense is more immediate, at a smaller scale of analysis, than the historical or social setting. Finally, artifacts themselves can be perceived as embodying public and hidden transcripts because of their multivalence. In these cases, hidden transcripts are not necessarily “beyond direct observation by powerholders (Scott 1990:14)”, but rather outside their direct comprehension. This ambiguity was possible because the understanding and perception of the meanings of these objects was contingent (White 2005:9).

This chapter contributes to the understanding of the multivalence of mass-produced objects used by enslaved laborers in mid-nineteenth century Virginia. These objects may have been used and understood differently by enslaved African Americans than by slaveholders at antebellum Poplar Forest plantation. The creation of meaning(s) entailed the recontextualization of these objects into African American systems of thought, the historical circumstances of

enslavement in the antebellum period, and the particular situations that influenced individual choices and actions.

The archaeological assemblage from the antebellum cabin reveals the significance of small, personal items to the people who lived in the cabins (Figure 7.1). Paste jewels, agate rings, beads, brooches, and buttons are examples of the extensive array of personal adornment items found at the cabin (Table 7.1). Some of these objects were functional; some were likely worn to enhance appearance and to express personality. Other objects, such as glass beads, may have played additional roles in promoting health and well-being rather than simply serving as personal adornment items (Lee 2008; Heath and Lee 2008; Russell 1997:68-71; Wilkie 1997). Some of these objects likely served multiple purposes, situationally or simultaneously.



Figure 7.1 Select personal adornments items from Site A. At center hexagonal filigree belt buckle. From top center, moving clockwise: floral gutta percha button; alloy floral pendant with central, clear paste jewel; hollow cast alloy pendant; chalcedony brooch in alloy frame; flat, stamped alloy earring; floral rubber ovoid button. Photograph by Lori Lee.

| <b>Table 7.1 Personal Adornment Artifacts from Site A</b> |                 |                         |                      |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Clothing Fasteners</b>                                 | <b>Jewelry</b>  | <b>Hair Accessories</b> | <b>Miscellaneous</b> |
| Aiglets: 4  | Beads: 191      | Combs: 1                | Fans: 1+             |
| Buckles: 4  | Brooches: 3     |                         | Watches: 1           |
| Buttons: 355  | Earrings: 5     |                         | Parasols: 1+         |
| Hooks: 22   | Pendants: 1     |                         | Crinoline: 1         |
| Eyes: 15  | Rings: 2        |                         |                      |
| Pins: 277   | Paste Jewels: 7 |                         |                      |
| Categories created by White 2008: 21                      |                 |                         |                      |

## **Personal Adornment Objects**

### *Jewelry and Accessories*

The antebellum cabin artifact assemblage included several pieces of jewelry: 2 agate rings, 5 earrings, a chalcedony brooch, a mother of pearl brooch in an ornate alloy frame, another crushed ornate alloy frame for a brooch or pendant, 191 beads, 7 paste jewels, and a floral pendant with a paste jewel center. Five fragments of flat, purple glass with a beveled semi-circle, which seem to be the framing elements for a central jewel or decorative element, were also found. Partial elements of several jewelry fasteners were also recovered. Most of these objects (aside from most of the glass beads) were broken or crushed. This suggests that they were discarded when they were no longer usable, rather than because they were perceived as unfashionable.

In addition to the jewelry, archaeologists recovered several personal accessories: an ornate alloy and silver filigree hexagonal buckle, a pocket watch, and a partial chain for the watch or a necklace were found. Gilded and painted bone fragments from a fan, four parasol tips, crinoline fragments, and four aiglets are remnants of other accessories found at the cabin. A black rubber hair comb and mirror fragments also reflect personal care rituals and self-pride. The

relative abundance of jewelry and personal accessories recovered from a home from enslaved laborers supports journalist's and traveler's observations that some nineteenth-century enslaved laborers were adorned with these high quality goods (Kemble 1984; Olmsted 1953).

*Fasteners*

Several hook and eye fragments were recovered; one was a stamped alloy fist-shaped eye fastener which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Other fasteners include garter buckles, snaps, rivets, and 355 buttons or partial buttons. Among the buttons, 131 (37%) were recovered from the subfloor pit. Based on material, there were 139 bone, 101 Prosser ceramic buttons, 76 metal (34 alloy, 27 iron, 10 alloy/iron composite, 3 tombac, 1 iron/white metal composite, and 1 iron/shell composite), 24 shell, 7 glass/alloy two-piece buttons, 5 rubber or gutta percha, and 3 glass buttons (Table 7.2).

| Type                    | Count | Percent |
|-------------------------|-------|---------|
| Bone                    | 139   | 39      |
| Prosser pressed ceramic | 101   | 29      |
| Metal                   | 76    | 21      |
| Shell                   | 24    | 7       |
| Glass                   | 10    | 3       |
| Rubber/Gutta Percha     | 5     | 1       |

This button assemblage contains a rich diversity of types and styles. Buttons recovered from a single layer near the base of the subfloor pit (2352BB/4) are representative of the types and styles found (Figure 7.2). That assemblage contained bone, shell, alloy, iron, and Prosser ceramic buttons. The four types of bone buttons in this layer represent all the types of bone button found in the Site A button assemblage: bone ring button forms, button disks with a central hole, four

hole bone buttons, and five hole bone buttons. Ring button forms and button disks with central holes were placed inside fabric that matched the garment to which they were being attached.

In the nineteenth century, sew-through bone buttons (like the four hole and five hole buttons) were most frequently used as utilitarian buttons on work garments or on undergarments where they were not meant to be seen (Gruber 2014; Hinks 1988:92; Luscomb 1967:27; Otto 1977:250-259; Parker and Hernigle 1990:202; Rivers 1999:31; South 1964:121). Bone buttons have been manufactured for centuries, but bone buttons with four holes and five holes became common after 1800 (South 1964:128). Nearly all of the bone buttons from Site A had four or five holes. There is no indication that they were produced on site. This is true of the shell buttons as well.

Shell buttons comprise a relatively small percentage of the button assemblage. Among 24 buttons, 14 are four-hole buttons, 3 have two holes, 1 has three holes, 3 have brass shanks, and the others are broken. Based on Claasen's description, these seem to be made from nacreous shellfish species (Claasen 1994:4). Sew-through shell buttons were not produced until the nineteenth century (Claasen 1994:79). Prior to that time, pearl buttons were decorative and ornate. Shell buttons were produced primarily in Europe until the late nineteenth century, although they were sporadically produced in the United States in the eighteenth century (Claasen 1994). After 1800, shell button production expanded in the United States and the cost likely decreased (White 2005:74). From around 1825 to 1855, utilitarian shell buttons were mass produced in England and France and exported cheaply to the United States (Claasen 1994:80). The sew-through buttons from the cabin seem to be this type of utilitarian button.

Hinks (1988) and White (2005:57) argue that button size is indicative of the garment it was worn on. White divides buttons into three size groups: small (less than 12 mm), medium (12

to 18mm), and large (more than 18mm). She notes that coat buttons generally range from 18 to 35mm, waistcoat buttons from 14.5 to 19.5mm, and sleeve buttons from 13 to 17mm (White 2005:57). Following this logic, only two of the shell buttons were large enough (and just barely) to be used for coats. Nine were medium size and could have been used on waistcoats or shirts. The remaining 13 buttons were small and may have been used for sleeves, women's clothing, or undergarments. White's typology may, however, be irrelevant for use of buttons by enslaved laborers and other indigent groups. Some former slaves recounted to WPA interviewers that they fastened their clothes with thorns (Perdue et al. 1992). The abundance of fasteners associated with the Site A cabin indicates that enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest had buttons, pins, and other fasteners for their clothes, but they may have been limited in choice of what types of fasteners they used on their clothes when they did not purchase them for themselves. Consequently, they may have used buttons produced for one type of clothing for something entirely different—by choice or out of necessity.

Prosser-pressed ceramic buttons were made in cast-iron molds. Prosser patented this method in 1840 (Sprague 2002:113). Because they were mass produced, they became widely available soon after and they were inexpensive, making them more democratically accessible to people of divergent social statuses (Sprague 2002:124). These simple buttons were used on underclothing, shirts, and trousers (Luscomb 1967:76; Otto 1977:250; Seifert 1991:98; Sprague 2002:120-124). Most Prosser buttons were plain, white buttons with four holes. Some had two or three holes and some were domed, shanked buttons (Sprague 2002:112). Occasionally they were made in other solid colors, transfer printed with simple designs known as calico and gingham, inset into alloy rings ("rimmed"), or made with simple molded designs (Sprague 2002:112-116).



The Site A assemblage of Prosser buttons consisted of 92 white four-hole buttons, 3 white four-hole buttons with embossed dots adjacent to the edge, 2 rimmed Prosser buttons, 1 white three-hole button, 1 white two-hole button, 1 blue four-hole button, and 1 brown four-hole button. Of the two rimmed Prosser buttons, one is a gingham with red lines across the face. According to Sprague (2002:121), no rimmed Prosser buttons are known from archaeological contexts, so these buttons are unique archaeological finds. Although few of the Prosser buttons are decorated, the presence of decorative types is revealing. Sprague (2002:116) argued that the added labor necessary to add additional colors made decorated Prosser buttons more expensive. Therefore, they were not selected on the basis of being the cheapest fastener available.



Figure 7.2 Shell, metal, bone, and Prosser buttons from Site A, layer 2352BB/4.  
Photograph by Lori Lee.

The Site A button assemblage differs markedly from buttons recovered at earlier slave quarters at Poplar Forest (Heath 1999a; Hallinan 2013). A brief comparison of these assemblages highlights

local changes in the antebellum period that resulted from macro-scale processes such as industrialization. Assemblages from the North Hill and Wingo's slave quarters (1770s-1780s) and the Quarter Site (1790-1812) consisted entirely or almost entirely of metal buttons, which were alloy and tombac buttons (Heath 1999:58-62; Heath, Breen et al. 2015:59-67). It should be noted that bone preservation at the Quarter Site was poor in comparison to Site A due to acidic soils. Consequently, some bone and shell buttons may not have survived in the archaeological record. However, preservation within features at the North Hill and Wingo's sites was good and bone and shell buttons were still absent. Shell buttons were likely absent because they were expensive in the eighteenth century. In comparison to the buttons from the earlier Poplar Forest quarter sites, the Site A button assemblage contains a much greater diversity of material types and forms. These changes are largely a reflection of industrialization, mass production, and changing fashion trends (Hume 2001:88-92; White 2005:72).

The substantial increase in the number of buttons recovered at Site A over the number found at Wingo's (14 + 3 shanks), the North Hill (57) and Quarter Site (126) is likely in part due to the increased use of buttons as fasteners for women's clothing over time. It may also be a result of seamstress and laundering activity in the Site A cabin or a reflection of longer duration of occupation or greater number of residents. The main house at Poplar Forest was not built when the North Hill and Wingo's sites were occupied by enslaved laborers. It was completed during the occupation of the Quarter Site. Even then, the main house served as a retreat house for one man, and occasionally his two granddaughters, rather than a full-time residence for multiple families. Sewing needs for the main house were thus greater during the era of Cobbs/Hutter occupation. However, the number of enslaved laborers residing in the three excavated cabins at

the Quarter Site was likely greater than the number of enslaved laborers who lived in the cabin at Site A.<sup>29</sup>

The buttons recovered at Site A may reflect some buttons used for clothing for the Cobbs and Hutter families as well as those used by the enslaved laborers who lived in the cabin. The assemblage also contained buttons from articles of clothing provisioned by the Cobbs and Hutter as well as clothing, or buttons, independently acquired by enslaved laborers. Teasing out which buttons may have been acquired independently is difficult. Button purchases made by enslaved laborers at Rousseau's store in Fairfax, Virginia are noted as "buttons", "pearl buttons" and "set of buttons" (B Rousseau account book, LVA). Button purchases made by Hutter are, frustratingly, also recorded simply as "buttons" or "set of shirt buttons" in his expense journal (HIEJ). Fortunately, Emma Hutter was a bit more elaborative in a letter she sent to her husband from Poplar Forest in 1855 when he was traveling in Richmond, Virginia. She mentioned a few things she hoped her husband would purchase before he returned home. Specifically, in a discussion of all the domestic work she engaged in during his absence, she mentioned: "I haven't enough black twine thread bring me a gross of mens brass buttons and some white horn buttons for womens clothes. You can get them as you come up through Lynchburg if you do not choose to get them there . . ." (EWCH to ESH November 1855). She admonished her husband to burn the letter; fortunately he did not.

Given that Mrs. Hutter's discussion of sewing items was situated in commentary on her domestic work, it is possible that the brass buttons and white horn buttons were for clothes for enslaved laborers. Former slaves recalled the brass buttons on mens' coats when they described clothing to WPA interviewers (Greibel 1994:124). White horn buttons indicate that the buttons

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<sup>29</sup> The number of enslaved laborers on the plantation was certainly greater during the occupation of the Quarter Site (ca.1790-1812) than during the antebellum period.

were not dyed. Consequently, they were probably inexpensive, sew-through buttons. Horn buttons were noted on slave clothing in runaway advertisements in the late eighteenth century (Heath 1999c:59). It is logical that this use for horn buttons continued into the nineteenth century. Emma indicated that the buttons could be acquired in Richmond or Lynchburg. Hutter family letters document shopping in Philadelphia and Easton, Pennsylvania, New York City, Richmond, and Lynchburg (HFM). Family members also made purchases for them in Pennsylvania and New York (HFM). Ties to regional and national markets were strengthened through railroads and canals. Those same transportation media that took Southern consumers to Northern markets brought regional, national, and international goods directly into Lynchburg markets as well. Significantly, this meant that enslaved people (as well as the Cobbs and Hutter families) who had access to markets and the means or methods to acquire them, could obtain these goods without travel.

Besides the few decorative Prosser buttons, archaeologists recovered several additional decorative buttons at the antebellum cabin. Some of these were inexpensive iron buttons covered with an alloy or cloth surface. Several were ornate metal buttons with plating or stamped, embossed, or cast decorations. The decorative motifs included floral, embossed geometric designs, basketweave, flourishes, and embossed harps. A few of these buttons matched, but most were heterogenous. Matching buttons proved key for building a case that the eastern edge of Site A was a location where enslaved laborers who lived in the cabin were depositing trash from the cabin across a fence line. There were five matches between distinctive buttons recovered at Site A and those recovered along the eastern edge of the site, including two matches with buttons recovered from the subfloor pit feature (Proebsting and Lee 2012).

Beyond providing information about site formation processes, these decorative buttons are the remains of efforts to shape self-definition, enhance appearance, and shape social relations through personal adornment. Buttons, jewelry, and accessories recovered at Site A are the material remains of personal style and fashion that contrasted sharply with the typical garments used by enslaved laborers in their work routines. These objects were clearly important as items of personal adornment and to shape identity. But how did they also shape social relationships? Galle explored this question in her analysis of buttons and refined ceramics recovered at 41 slave sites in Virginia (Galle 2010).

Galle applied an evolutionary perspective to agency among enslaved laborers through considering signaling practices (Galle 2010). Signaling theory utilizes displays of costly objects to convey information that is significant for establishing and maintaining relationships (Galle 2010: 21). Galle defines as “a strategic competitive behavior that uses costly material and bodily displays to communicate information about an individual that is generally difficult to assess through initial interactions” (Galle 2010:21). The information transmitted by displaying costly material goods may include such things as social and economic status, psychological character, physical skills and knowledge, and possession of esoteric knowledge (Galle 2010:21). Galle argues that this transfer of information may have affected how enslaved laborers selected friends, spouses, and cooperative household members. For example, the ability of an enslaved laborer to obtain an expensive piece of jewelry might signal that he or she spent long hours laboring in garden plots, hunting or gathering resources to sell, or creating crafts for sale (Galle 2010:24). This labor ethic would be attractive to someone else who valued industriousness, and the information signaled by the jewelry could result in strategic business or family alliances between the person signaling the information and the person receiving the signal. Further, this same

object might simultaneously signal to a white slaveholder a hard work ethic and trustworthiness which would affect how the slaveholder perceived the reliability of the enslaved person (Galle 2010:24).

According to Galle, costly signaling also impacted relationships off of the plantation. When an enslaved person entered a store, a merchant could assess his or her character based on signals conveyed through costly or appropriate material culture before deciding whether or not to engage in a business transaction (Galle 2010 24). Consequently, costly goods do not simply indicate that enslaved men and women participated in the market economy solely to shape their identities; they strategically selected goods that would help them create, sustain, and negotiate relationships in a complex social and economic environment (Galle 2010:37). While I agree with Galle, I would argue that costly goods were not the only sort of material culture that could signal significant information. Mundane goods were capable of signaling equally complex personal attributes. Further, these signals were sometimes not solely meant for other people; they were sometimes also meant for spirits and ancestors. This latter means of signaling was one aspect of the uses and meanings of some particular types of personal adornment items found at the Site A cabin—such as glass beads and pierced coins.

### *Glass Beads*

Among the many kinds of small finds recovered at enslaved laborer sites, archaeologists have written most extensively about glass beads (Franklin 1997; Heath 1999a; Singleton 1991; Stine et al. 1996; Yentsch 1994, 1995). The debate over the significance of blue beads has been a particular emphasis (Adams 1987; Davidson and McIlvoy 2012; DeCorse 1999; Heath and Breen 2012; Singleton 1991:164; Stine et al 1996). Stine, Cabak, and Groover (1996:49) stated that

blue beads are important for their potential to reveal insight into “the African American worldview that they embodied” and because of their distinctive meanings to African Americans. Among archaeologists who question whether blue beads express worldview, DeCorse suggested that blue beads may signify socioeconomic status rather than social or cultural affiliations or beliefs (DeCorse 1999:144). I think that the presence of glass beads, if not blue beads, at so many enslaved laborer sites suggests that use of these personal objects does indicate some sort of shared practices or uses, although not necessarily belief systems. By the mid-nineteenth century African Americans certainly used glass beads in idiosyncratic ways.

Twenty-six black wound glass beads, 2 drawn, faceted black glass beads, 1 purple faceted glass bead, 2 white drawn beads, 1 bone bead, and 159 small (less than 3.5 mm) glass beads were recovered from the Site A slave cabin (Figure 7.3; Table 7.3). The predominant color of the small glass beads was white (91), followed by turquoise (17), aqua (14), and red and white compound beads (8) (Heath and Lee 2008). Four small glass beads were colorless, two were green, and there was one of each of the following colors: black, dark blue, dark green, purple, and light blue. The white beads account for 65% of the small glass beads. Turquoise beads and aqua beads represent 12% and 10% of the assemblage respectively. Red and white compound beads comprise 6%, and all other colors represent less than 3% of the small glass bead assemblage (Heath and Lee 2008).



Figure 7.3 Partial Site A Bead Assemblage: Row 1 faceted glass beads, Row 2 oblate glass beads, Row 3 spherical glass beads, Row 4 ellipsoidal glass beads, Row 5 tube glass beads, Row 6 bone bead. Small glass beads not pictured. Photograph by Lori Lee.

I created a typology of the beads recovered at Site A based on DeCorse, Richard, and Thiaw's (2003) Systematic Bead Description System (SBDS). I chose this typology because it is logical, more comprehensive than the Kidd and Kidd system (1983), and produces easily comparable results. I do not have bead length measurements for all beads or consistent records of post-depositional modification or breakage. I do not have information about the origins or age of the beads. I will investigate origins and chronology in future research. The categories from the SBDS that I did use, and the descriptive information I included in those categories (which follows the SBDS in some categories, but is more limited in others), are arranged as follows:

1. Material of composition. The materials represented in this assemblage include glass (G) and bone (B).



2. Manufacturing method. The techniques used for this assemblage include winding (W), drawing (D), and carving (C).
3. Bead structure. This refers to the number of layers: Simple (S) beads are made from a single layer of glass; Compound beads are made from two or more layers of undecorated glass (CPD).
4. Secondary modification. This includes intentional modification of the bead after the initial manufacturing process. It may refer to grinding, etching, tumbling, or reheating (DeCorse, Richard, and Thiaw 2003:88).
5. Shape. Shapes include oblate, spherical, faceted bicone, tube, and pentagonal. The term short, following the SBDS system, refers to beads whose length is equal to or shorter than their diameter (DeCorse, Richard, and Thiaw 2003:88).
6. Measurements. Maximum length (maximum measurement parallel to the perforation) and diameter (maximum measure of the bead's cross section) are recorded when I had that information. Measurements are in millimeters.
7. Luster, Diaphaneity, and Color. Luster is defined as dull (D) or shiny (S). Diaphaneity refers to light transmission and is described as opaque (OP), translucent (TL), or transparent (TP). Colors were assessed visually during cataloguing and are not based on Munsell classifications.

| Type # | Count | Material | Manufacture | Structure | Secondary Modification      | Shape                                     | Diameter (mm) | Length (mm) | Luster | Diaphaneity | Color                  |
|--------|-------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------------|---|---------------|-------------|--------|-------------|------------------------|
| 1      | 2     | G        | D           | S         | Ground facets               | Bicone with pentagonal transverse section | 6             | 5           | S      | OP          | Black                  |
| 2      | 1     | G        | D           | S         | Ground facets               | Bicone with pentagonal transverse section | 4.8           | 4.2         | S      | OP          | Pink and White swirled |
| 3      | 4     | G        | W           | S         |                             | Oblate                                    | 7-10          | 4.5-6       | D      | OP          | Black                  |
| 4      | 7     | G        | W           | S         |                             | Spherical                                 | 7.8-12.9      | 4.8-12.45   | D      | OP          | Black                  |
| 5      | 10    | G        | W           | S         |                             | Ellipsoidal                               | 9.5-20        | 7-9.5       | D      | OP          | Black                  |
| 6      | 1     | G        | D           | S         |                             | Tube                                      | 26            | 2.5         | S      | OP          | White                  |
| 7      | 1     | G        | D           | S         |                             | Tube                                      | 30.48         | 3           | D      | TP          | Colorless              |
| 8      | 1     | B        | C           | B         |                             | Spherical                                 | 9.7           |             |        | OP          |                        |
| 9      | 91    | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 1-2           |             | S      | OP          | White                  |
| 10     | 17    | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 1-2.5         |             | D      | TL          | Turquoise              |
| 11     | 14    | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 1.5-2         |             | D      | TL          | Aqua                   |
| 12     | 8     | G        | D           | CPD       | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 2.5-3         |             | S      | OP          | Red, white             |
| 13     | 4     | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 1.2-2         |             | S      | TP          | Colorless              |
| 14     | 2     | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 1             |             | D      | TL          | Green                  |
| 15     | 1     | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded; ground facets | Hexagonal                                 | 1.5           |             | D      | OP          | Black                  |
| 16     | 1     | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 1.5           |             | D      | TL          | Dark Blue              |
| 17     | 1     | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 1             |             | D      | TL          | Dark Green             |
| 18     | 1     | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 2             |             | D      | TL          | Purple                 |
| 19     | 1     | G        | D           | S         | Heat-rounded                | Short Tubular                             | 1.5           |             | D      | TL          | Light Blue             |

Table 7.3 Site A Bead Typology based on Decorse, Richard, and Thiaw (2003)

If blue beads had cultural significance for some enslaved African Americans, as suggested by Stine and her colleagues (1996), it is not indicated among the large beads found at the

antebellum assemblage from Poplar Forest. This result suggests that if color was significant, this significance was temporal, regional, personal, or idiosyncratic rather than predominantly cultural. Black beads, when considering larger beads, were preferred by, or were more accessible to, the individual(s) using beads at Poplar Forest in the mid-nineteenth century. Stine and her colleagues found an increase in the use of black beads at antebellum and post-bellum African-American domestic sites in Georgia and South Carolina (Stine et al. 1996:52). Therefore, the trend in popularity or availability of black beads may have been regional or temporal. I think the data suggests that glass beads continued to be desirable and significant to African Americans, although cultural preferences for color changed, became a less significant attribute over time, or became a reflection of style rather than belief systems.

### **Bead Uses: Adornment and Identity**

Determining the precise uses of beads by enslaved African Americans at Poplar Forest and the meanings associated with them is difficult, if not impossible. However, some possibilities are suggested by the multiple uses of beads among some enslaved African Americans in the antebellum period, which were established through WPA interviews (Rawick 1979). These interviews with former slaves revealed a range of bead uses in the antebellum period across the southern United States. Some women did, of course, wear beads to enhance their appearance. Carrie Hudson recalled that enslaved women wore beads, “but dey was just to look pretty” (Hornsby 1941: 219). Within an enslaved community, people’s group- and self-identities struggled against identities that were imposed by slaveholders. Provisioned work clothing was one material correlate of this imposed identity. Adornment thus served as a critical means for

enslaved laborers to define themselves according to their own perceptions or to shape their identities (Heath 1999c:47-69).

Whether or not enhancing one's appearance was the primary goal of adornment to the wearer, others sometimes perceived it this way. Mary Smith recalled that her grandmother: “. . . was good looking. She wore purty beads, earrings and bracelets, and wrapped her head in a red cloth” (Sims 1941:114). Because beads and other objects were often perceived as personal adornment objects by others, enslaved people could likely wear them without fear of reprisal from white slave-owners (Yentsch 1995:48-49; Yentsch 1995:191; Thomas and Thomas 2004:111).

Based on period photographs, artwork, and archaeological evidence, glass beads were commonly used by African Americans in the antebellum period (Foster 1997, 1998; Stine et al. 1996). Therefore, whites may have perceived beads as African or African-American objects, further demarcating the otherness of those who wore them (Yentsch 1995:48). Alternatively, glass beads may have been perceived superficially, as mundane adornment objects. In this case, whites may not have felt threatened by African Americans wearing glass beads because, from their perspective, the beads were not expensive. Therefore, perhaps they did not symbolize status in a threatening way.

Glass beads' potential use as charms or in other ways that upheld African-influenced traditions may have gone unrecognized. Charms are spiritually empowered rituals, objects, and groups of objects used for protection, to promote health and wellbeing, to invoke harm, or to influence the future. Virtually any sort of object could be transformed into a charm, although some materials were used more frequently than others. Roots, minerals, animal parts, and artifacts were commonly used as charms, both independently and in composite (Lee 2011:104-

107). Some former slaves recalled using glass beads as charms, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight.

DeCorse has documented that the predominant use of beads in Africa are as waist beads (DeCorse 1999:143-4). Burial 340 from the African Burial Ground (in use circa 1712 to 1795) contained an African woman wearing waist beads (LaRoche 1994:8-11). Given the long history of this tradition (Yentsch 1994:191), this practice may have continued in the Americas into the nineteenth century. In nineteenth-century burials of enslaved African Americans that contain glass beads, those beads are typically found in the neck and wrist region. Therefore, although the use of glass beads continued in the Americas, the ways they were used may have changed over time. If use of waist beads was maintained, given that the beads were hidden from view by clothing, it escaped the awareness of artists and writers who documented the lives of enslaved Africans and African Americans in North America. It did not, however, escape the eye of at least one traveler in Brazil who documented the use of waist beads by enslaved Africans there (Lima et al. 2014:111). Perhaps the growth of work in African Diaspora communities in Central and South America will shed more light on the continuity and discontinuity of waist bead use in enslaved African Diaspora populations.

### *Pierced Coins*

Pierced coins, particularly Spanish reales, are another object worn on the body that are frequently recovered at eighteenth- through twentieth-century archaeology sites associated with enslaved African Americans (Davidson 2004; Davidson and McIlvoy 2012:128). Therefore, it was not surprising when a pierced Spanish half real was recovered at the Poplar Forest antebellum slave cabin (Heath et al. 2005:15; Figure 7.4). The half real was recovered in

plowzone in the yard outside the cabin, immediately northwest of the chimney and within fifteen feet of the subfloor pit. Spanish reales were standard currency in Virginia from 1645 and they were legal tender in the United States from 1793 until 1857 (Heath et al. 2005:15). Thus the exchange value of the coin could be interpreted as its primary significance. But this coin was modified, indicating that the coin's value as an adornment object, and most likely a protective charm, was considered more significant to its owner than its economic value. Three additional pierced coins have been recovered at Poplar Forest at other sites associated with enslaved laborers; two of these are also Spanish half reales (Heath et al. 2005:15). This suggests that enslaved laborers valued this particular type of coin for a reason(s) beyond its obvious economic value.



Figure 7.4 Pierced Spanish Half Real from Site A with millimeter/centimeter scale.  
Photograph by Lori Lee. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest.

A pierced 1847 Liberty Head penny was also found in association with the antebellum slave cabin at Poplar Forest. This coin was recovered in plowzone in the yard surrounding the cabin. It was located just outside the projected southwest corner of the cabin, also within fifteen feet of the subfloor pit. Wilkie recovered a pierced 1855 Britannia penny at Oakland Plantation among the remains associated with Sylvia Freeman's home (Wilkie 1997:101). Freeman was born in Virginia in 1855. Wilkie interpreted this coin as a birth coin that commemorated Freeman's birth year. She further interpreted the coin as an example of "the magical practice of using coins as protective devices . . . quite literally brought by her from Virginia" (Wilkie 1997:101). The potential past uses of the pierced 1847 penny are multiple. For instance, Handler (1997, 2009) and others (Davidson 2004:33; Handler and Lange 1978:156) argue that copper objects had spiritual power in some African Diaspora populations. Whatever its past uses were, the modification of the 1847 penny suggests that its primary function was not economic for the person who pierced it.

Although pierced coins are frequently found at sites associated with enslaved African Americans, James Davidson (2004:26-27) argues that the use of coins as charms originated in Western Europe in the pre-Christian era. He suggests that metal coins were adopted as charms by Africans and African Americans because their qualities (reflectiveness, disk form, crosses impressed on multiple coin types, and accessibility) were appealing because they overlapped with aspects of African cosmology and religions (Davidson 2004:31-35). Further, they may have seemed innocuous to slaveholders who understood, and even used, similar charms (Davidson 2004:35). Consequently, pierced coins were intercultural artifacts. This made them ideal hidden transcripts.

*Fist-shaped Fastener or Hand Charm?*

Arguably the most intriguing personal adornment item found at the antebellum cabin is a tiny alloy figurative eye element of a hook and eye fastener (Figure 7.5). This stamped copper alloy fastener has the form of a clenched, right fist, emerging from a shirt cuff. The fist is centered in a circle, with a loop above to receive the hook fastener. This fastener was recovered in fill on top of the ruins of the chimney base for the cabin. Some ceramics sherds recovered from this same fill layer cross-mend with ceramics recovered from the adjacent subfloor pit.



Figure 7.5 Alloy fist-shaped eye fastener from Site A with millimeter/centimeter scale. Photograph by Lori Lee. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest.

Archaeologists have recovered twelve other fist-shaped fasteners, similar and in most cases identical to the one found at Poplar Forest (Heath, Lichtenberger, Adams and Paull 2004). Four of these artifacts were recovered in Tennessee: two from slave quarters at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage in Davidson County, one from a slave cabin associated with the Hilderbrand house in Shelby County, and one from a slave cabin at Wynnewood resort in



Sumner County. Three fist-shaped fasteners have been recovered in Maryland: one from the Charles Calvert House in Annapolis, Maryland, and two from the Maynard-Burgess home occupied by free blacks in Annapolis. Most recently, archaeologists recovered four of these decorative fasteners in association with a slave cabin at Kingsley plantation in Jacksonville, Florida (Davidson 2014; Fennell 2007, 2014; McKee 1995; Markus and Davidson 2011; Russell 1997; Smith 1987; Yentsch 1994). Archaeologists recovered another fist-shaped fastener, in hook form, at the Jimenez-Fatio house in St. Augustine, Florida.<sup>30</sup> With the exception of the Calvert House artifact, which was recovered from an urban household inhabited by black and white residents, and possibly the Jimenez-Fatio find of unspecified context, these fasteners were all recovered from the living and working spaces of African Americans with initial or primary occupation in the antebellum period (1820-1860).

Their nearly identical appearance, in combination with their widespread distribution, suggests that they were mass-produced. Exactly where they were produced is presently unknown. Archaeologists disagree on how they were used and the meanings they held for those who used them. This may be the result of the fact that these objects were each discovered independently in remote locations or over periods of time. The earliest ones that were recovered were broken or bent, and they were not found in sets, which obscured the fact that they were functionally hook and eye fasteners. It is only recently that enough of these fasteners have been recovered that, as a group, the patterns in their uses and meanings may be considered (Davidson 2014). Unlike glass beads and pierced coins, these objects currently do not have the

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<sup>30</sup> I saw this in February 2015 on display in a case in the gift shop with other selective archaeological remains from the site). I have not received specific information about the archaeological context it was recovered from yet, though I am researching it. City Archaeologist Carl Halbirt was present when I noticed the fastener on display in the gift shop on February 4, 2015. He said that he found it, or one that looked like it, when he was excavating at the site in 2001. He recalled that it was found in a layer of coal. The collection from this excavation is being curated at University of Florida and I am waiting to hear back from them about the precise context of the artifact.

comparatively rich interpretive framework created by combining historical documents, oral traditions, and archaeological contexts. Additional research is needed; meanwhile archaeological contexts provide the frame of reference for interpretation.

Many archaeologists (including myself), following a precedent set early on, have referred to these fist-shaped fasteners as charms (Russell 1997:66; Wilkie 1997:96; McKee 2000:197; Thomas and Thomas 2004:112; Lee 2012a:177). A recent critique by Davidson (2014) suggests that we have overstepped the bounds of interpretation by making this claim. Although I do think that these fasteners had a significance for at least some beyond their functionality, I will refer to them as fasteners since their intended purpose, from the perspective of the manufacturer, was for use as clothing fasteners (Davidson 2014).

Archaeologists have proposed various interpretations of the meaning of fist-shaped fasteners (Bartoy 2008; Davidson 2014; Fennell 2007, 2014; McKee 1995:40; Russell 1997:67; Smith 1987; Singleton 1991:162; Yentsch 1994: 33; Markus and Davidson 2011; Thomas and Thomas 2004:124; Lee 2012a:179). Yentsch stated that African Americans attributed protective power over witchcraft to the charms (Yentsch 1994:33). Smith suggested, and others concurred, that these fasteners may have been appealing as a form of sympathetic magic because some antebellum African Americans used the term “hand,” as evidenced in WPA narratives, to refer to protective charms (McKee 1995:40; Smith 1987; Thomas and Thomas 2004:112; although see Davidson 2014:28). Other archaeologists suggested that the fasteners may have been appealing because of their similarity to figas and Islamic Hand of Fatima symbols, both of which were used as protective charms in the Old and New Worlds (Smith 1987; Singleton 1991:162; McKee 1995:40).

The fist-shaped fasteners recovered at the Hermitage, Poplar Forest, and the Calvert House differ in form from figas and Hand of Fatima charms. Figas are also clenched fist figures. However, the thumb is inserted between the first and second finger of a figa, which is not true of the fist-shaped fasteners under discussion. People have used figas as protective charms in the Mediterranean for centuries (Fennell 2007:22). The Spanish brought figas to the New World in the process of colonization. The hand of Fatima symbol is an open right palm. People have used this symbol as a protective charm in the Middle East and North Africa for centuries.

Hand symbolism was also common in British jewelry and metal hardware in the Victorian era (1837-1901). Davidson established that all hooks and eyes sold prior to 1836 were imported from England or Europe, since that was the first year they were manufactured in the United States (Davidson 2014:44). Given the form, the manufacturing technique, and the time period associated with the fist-shaped fasteners, it seems likely that they were produced in England. More research is needed to clarify precisely where and when they were produced.

Fennell argues that fist-shaped fasteners were likely perceived in a more abstract sense wherein the hand itself is not the only significant symbolic element. He argues that the circle and the horizontal crossbar within the circle also hold meaning. Fennell argues that meanings associated with each of these symbolic elements are found in the Bakongo belief system because of the structural similarity to the Bakongo cosmogram (Fennell 2007:23-25). Fennell later expanded his analysis to include the possibility that these fasteners may also, or alternatively, have been adopted by enslaved African Americans with Igbo cultural heritage (Fennell 2014). Igbo ideology included a philosophical principle known as *ikenga* or “cult of the right hand” (Gomez 1998:130; Fennell 2014). This principal emphasizes personal achievement over ascribed

qualities, a concept that would have gained new meaning for enslaved laborers (Gomez 1998:130-131). The fist-shaped fasteners are all right hands.

Historians have recently begun to trace the African origins of enslaved people trafficked to Virginia during the Atlantic slave trade (Chambers 1999, 2000, 2005; Eltis and Richardson 2010; Walsh 1999, 2001). These studies suggest that the Igbo formed a significant part of the African component of slavery in central Virginia in the late eighteenth century (Chambers 1999; Walsh 1999, 2001; Samford 2007). Chambers argues that the presence of the Igbo in the interior tidewater and piedmont counties had a transformative impact on colonial and early national African American culture in Virginia (Samford 2007:11; Chambers 2000). Perhaps this impact continued to be expressed in the use of material culture in the nineteenth century.

Bartoy argued that while interpretations of the fist-shaped fasteners offered by other archaeologists are each plausible, none can be proven without additional evidence (Bartoy 2008). Rather than focusing primarily on the meanings associated with the charms, Bartoy emphasized their spatial locations. Archaeologists have recovered fist-shaped fasteners of the form shown in Figure 7.5 only in Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, and Florida. Bartoy noted the significance of the location of three of these states in the Upper South, in the borderlands between slavery and freedom (Bartoy 2008). He suggested that the fasteners were used as “active signaling devices” to convey resistance or abolitionist ideas to “like-minded people” (Bartoy 2008). When used as clothing fasteners, these objects would have been largely concealed from view. For those who saw them, fist-shaped fasteners were likely hidden transcripts.

Bartoy’s ideas about abolitionism or resistance may be supported by the discovery of a fist-shaped fastener in Connecticut in a non-archaeological context. This fastener was found inside the toolbox of a man who was reputed to be a nineteenth-century abolitionist (Hutchins

2005: personal communication). Research into this charm, its owner, and its background is incomplete, but what is known suggests the possibility that these fasteners may have symbolized abolitionist ideas to some people.

Whether or not fist-shaped fasteners symbolized resistance, the archaeological association of these objects with antebellum African American sites across three contiguous states and in Florida suggests shared African American understandings or meanings of this multivalent object. As Thomas and Thomas have stated: “. . . these [fist-shaped fasteners] were likely understood by slaves as signifiers of community values and solidarity in opposition to the planter-imposed ideology of subservience” (Thomas and Thomas 2004:124). This interpretation also suggests that the fasteners were used as hidden transcripts. Their regional distribution at African American sites suggests the widespread transmission of a shared cultural practice or appeal although their particular uses may have been idiosyncratic.

Significantly, archaeologists at the Hermitage in Nashville, Tennessee, recovered a fist-shaped adornment object with a different form in addition to the two stamped fist-shaped fasteners (Russell 1997; McKee 1995). That fist-shaped object is hollow cast and is not encircled or attached to a crossbar. It had a looped wire pushed through it so that it could be worn. The fact that these three objects are all fist-shaped, although manifested in two different forms, suggests that the hand figure was more significant than the framing element to the people who were using these objects. Intriguingly, archaeologists recovered a second decorative fastener at the Calvert House, which is shaped like a scalloped shell (Yentsch 1994:33). The fact that archaeologists have recovered only one shell-shaped fastener in contrast to twelve fist-shaped fasteners suggests a particular preference for the fist-shaped fastener, if both were equally available and access was not an issue.

Markus and Davidson (2011) questioned whether the fist-shaped fasteners served any purpose beyond the mundane purpose of fastening clothing because of the absence of historical documentation regarding their uses and because of the archaeological contexts where archaeologists recovered them (Davidson 2014). Davidson (2014: 28) provided evidence that “hands” described in detail in WPA narratives refer to composite objects, usually placed inside a bag or cloth. Although no mention is made of this particular type of fist-shaped fastener in the WPA interviews with formerly enslaved people, folklorist Hyatt recorded the African-American use of a stamped hand-shaped metal charm in Illinois in the 1930s (Hyatt 1970:583-584; Russell 1997:67). Davidson demonstrated that African American use of the term “hand” to refer to physical charms or conjure is first documented in 1881 (Davidson 2014:30). He also built a strong case for the source of the general term hand to refer to several kinds of good luck charms to be actual human hand bones, lucky hand root, or five finger grass (Davidson 2014:29-44). Yet it still seems curious that it is the physical hand and the form of the hand that are particularly sought for conjure or good luck and that this practice, although first documented in 1881, is widely documented throughout the southern United States and in some northern states in the two decades following that documentation (Davidson 2014:31-33).

I am not suggesting that the fist-shaped fasteners were the source of the general term hand to refer to good luck charms. But it seems that widespread use of physical hand bones and the form of the human hand in the late nineteenth century suggests that some significance was already placed on the hand prior to that timeframe. This is particularly true for items used in spiritual and religious practices, which are elements of culture that tend to be more traditional and conservative when it comes to change. Further, if lucky hand root and five finger grass

became substitutes for human hand bones (Davidson 2014:44), it is still not clear why *hand* bones were originally preferred.

Where the archaeological context of the fist-shaped fasteners is recorded, they are most commonly found in floor spaces, in yards associated with cabins, or in general middens. Because archaeologists have not documented finding any of these objects in deliberately buried caches, Markus and Davidson argued that identifying them as charms is very speculative (Markus and Davidson 2011; Davidson 2014). I agree that it is difficult to make a strong case for the use of fist-shaped fasteners as charms without supporting evidence from historical documents, burials, or other features. Their archaeological contexts do not seem to preclude their uses as personal charms, although these contexts may suggest that they were not significant as elements of intentionally buried household charms. Personal charms were often worn on the body, not buried in caches. This daily use made them vulnerable to loss. If they were worn on the body as fasteners or charms and subsequently lost, it is not surprising that archaeologists recover them in and around the homes of those who wore them. In fact, the fist-shaped fastener at Poplar Forest was found in the same area as a pierced coin and several glass beads. The unanswered question is whether these objects were lost or discarded deliberately. We must also consider the intent behind the act of disposal. Ogundiran (2014:82-84) recently challenged the interpretation of artifacts found in middens in Yorubaland as discarded trash. He argued that some objects discarded in these middens may be intentionally placed sacrifices deposited through rituals. Although it would be difficult to argue that fist-shaped fasteners found in middens are the results of similar practices without strong contextual evidence of whom placed them there, Ogundiran's research does caution us against dismissing historic middens solely as repositories of trash.

The recent discovery of four fist-shaped fasteners at Kingsley plantation, increasing the known number by one-third, is already impacting their interpretation (Davidson 2014). Prior to this discovery, all archaeologically recovered fist-shaped fasteners were found in three contiguous states in the Upper South. A pair was recovered at the Maynard-Burgess house and a pair was recovered at the Hermitage, although the hook and eye were associated with different cabins in the latter case and recovered many years apart. Now two pairs have been recovered at Kingsley. Perhaps they were used primarily or solely as fasteners there. Yet enslaved laborers at Kingsley had more flexibility than many enslaved laborers in terms of choices about their appearances and expression of spiritual beliefs (Davidson 2013: personal communication). Kingsley did not prohibit expressions of African identity among enslaved laborers. What was the appeal for first generation Africans, and others, of fist-shaped fasteners over other forms of decorative fasteners? And why are these fasteners found almost exclusively at African American sites of the early-to-mid-nineteenth centuries? This seems to suggest that they were particularly preferred or sought by African Americans. Or were they?

Davidson's thorough investigation of these fist-shaped fasteners revealed that ornamented hooks and eyes were advertised for sale in American newspapers from 1819-1825 (2014:49-51). During this short timeframe, all but one of these thirty-nine advertisements was advertised in northern, non-slave states. The one advertisement he discovered for a business in a slave state was in Baltimore, Maryland in the Upper South (Davidson 2014:51). Yet the archaeological examples all come from slave states and from much later contexts. Why?

Davidson argued that the short timeframe of manufacture indicates that ornamental fasteners were unpopular because they were too expensive, too fragile to withstand much laundering, or because they did not function well (Davidson 2014:48). He argued that the



presence of fist-shaped fasteners almost exclusively in sites associated with enslaved African Americans may reflect their use as unpopular fasteners sold cheaply for use on ready-made slave clothing or, they may have been manufactured specifically for use on slave clothing to signify the slave status of the wearer (Davidson 2014:48). These ideas seem unreasonable to me. Above all else, from the perspective of the slaveholder who bought it, clothing for enslaved laborers needed to be durable (White and White 1995). The fist-shaped fasteners are quite delicate and they are typically recovered broken. Withstanding washing (as Davidson noted) would have been a problem and it is doubtful that slaveholders wanted to invest in clothing that would need to be repaired or replaced frequently. These fasteners were also gilded. It seems unlikely that slaveholders would purchase gilded fasteners, or ready-made clothing with gilded fasteners, to mark the status of their enslaved laborers as “inferior though sturdy” (Davidson 2014:48). The timeframe these objects are associated with was also a time when few slave owners were buying ready-made clothing for slaves and instead slaves were producing their own clothing (White and White 1995). Finally, if these fasteners were manufactured specifically for use on slave clothing, why were they not more heavily advertised in the southern United States instead of the North? Davidson states: “Though as yet no archival evidence supports this last supposition [that fist-shaped fasteners were requested by slaveholders for slave clothing], it is at least within the realm of possibility” (Davidson 2014:48). This seems an odd assertion given that he critiqued other scholars for making interpretations that are unsupported by archival and archaeological evidence.

Are these fasteners so intriguing to archaeologists because they are unusual? Does this distract us from seeing their mundane function? In his discussion of African-American hoodoo practices, Puckett noted: “In fact, hoodoo beliefs derive much of their power from the fact that they represent the unusual; something not clearly understood and used by everyone. Perhaps

many signs are products of the conjurer's imagination standardized by group usage" (Puckett 1969:316). Puckett is not alone in documenting the significance of unusual and ambiguous objects in African American spiritual practices. I think that African Americans in the past would have found these tiny, brass fist-shaped fasteners as intriguing as the archaeologists who recover them. The widespread distribution of these objects suggests that their symbolism may have been standardized by group usage or that their aesthetic was broadly appealing. Yet the complexity of hand symbolism in the past gives them an ambiguous hidden transcript nature, something that may not have been clearly understood and used by everyone, and also suggests that their particular uses may have been idiosyncratic.

### *Conclusions*

Objects classified as personal adornment are often vested with meanings that reveal significant insight into the identity of their owners because they are *personal*. The historical and cultural contexts and personal situations when people used material culture are crucial to understanding potential meanings of objects. The broad historical framework of the Poplar Forest artifacts is antebellum slavery. In that sense, these objects cannot be understood without reference to the tension between slaveholders and slaves over identity, status, and self-expression and different belief systems.

These factors impacted the uses of buttons, glass beads, coins, stamped alloy fist-shaped fasteners, and other objects of personal adornment at Poplar Forest. Historical and archaeological analysis reveals that at least some of the enslaved African Americans at Poplar Forest had increased access to material goods, including personal adornment items, in the antebellum period. Although this greater quantity of goods did not offer them control over their legal status

as property, material culture was a significant medium used to mediate the realities of life and to assert varying degrees of control over their daily lives. They mobilized material culture to this end, perhaps through defining self through adornment in contrast with the anonymous definition imparted by provisioned work clothing or as a means of engaging in shared African American cultural practices. The presence of glass beads and pierced coins at many enslaved African American sites indicates their cultural significance, and the discussions of these objects during WPA interviews reveals the retention of that significance over time. Yet their precise uses, their personal uses, were fluid depending on the historic setting, cultural framework, and idiosyncratic needs and choices.

## Chapter 8

### **“We are all well white and black”: Health and Well-Being at antebellum Poplar Forest**

*“Jake and Aunt Katy have both been out several days. I was right good doctor wasn’t. We are all well white and black.”* (EWCH to ESH July 31, 1857)

This chapter focuses on practices used by whites and blacks at Poplar Forest to promote and maintain physical and mental health and well-being. It builds on earlier work by Edwards-Ingram (2001, 2005) who explored the health practices of enslaved African Americans, particularly women, in Virginia from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Poor health was shared across racial lines at Poplar Forest. Attempts to promote or improve health united whites and blacks in practice at times and divided them at others. I begin with a discussion of nineteenth-century medical practices and conceptions of health. Then I will discuss health and well-being at Poplar Forest in the antebellum period. This analysis incorporates macrobotanicals, material culture, and documents to assess and interpret health and well-being practices. This discussion also considers health consumerism within the framework of antebellum slavery. Health consumerism includes patients’ involvement in their own health care decisions as well as access to and use of materials and products for preventing, treating, and curing disease or maintaining or restoring well-being.

Disease is a biological phenomenon that impacts affected individuals without discrimination. Illness, however, is a different matter. Illness is a social construct and, consequently, it is impacted by social categories. Kleinman defines disease as “a malfunctioning of biological and/or psychological processes” and illness as “the psychosocial experience and meaning of perceived disease . . . the shaping of disease into behavior and experience”

(Kleinman 1980:72). Illness, then, can be understood as a discourse between disease, patient, and society. One's perception and experience of illness is shaped by many variables such as age, class, gender, ethnicity, and race. Any attempt to understand the disease/illness relationship must place it in a cultural and historical framework.

In the antebellum period, health and illness were constant concerns. These topics are recurrent in the letters from this period. Endemic and epidemic diseases, combined with the hazards of agriculture and industry, resulted in unhealthy rural and urban environments. The same factors that increased the mobility of people in the mid-nineteenth century also facilitated the rapid spread of epidemic diseases. Passengers boarding boats, stagecoaches, and trains served as unwitting conduits for the spread of disease. Social practices, such as seasonal travel to springs resorts, also impacted health by concentrating disease in densely populated locations.

Prior to the nineteenth century, the practice of medicine was as much an art as it was a science in the Western world (Bloom 1965; Bynum 1994). By the antebellum period, European, African, African American, and Native American medical theory and practices intermingled on Southern plantations as a result of centuries of interaction (Fett 2002:2; Levine 1977:63). Teasing out what particular individuals believed about health practices is problematic; however much has been written about general contemporary trends.

Medical practices of the nineteenth century were influenced by contemporary disease theory. For many whites, disease theory and treatment was primarily based on Hippocrates' humoral theory. Hippocrates hypothesized that disease resulted from an imbalance in four body humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. External forces, such as climate or diet, or internal forces generated this imbalance. Treatment involved restoring the balance between the humors through remedies that induced vomiting, administration of laxatives, the application of

blisters, and bleeding patients. Alternative or “irregular” treatments favored by some white Virginians included Thomsonianism, homeopathy, hydropathy, empiricism, and eclectic medicine.

The philosophy of Thomsonianism was very similar to Hippocrates’ humoral theory (Breedon 1974:151). Treatment required restoring balance to the four elements predominantly through the administration of lobelia, other plants, enemas, and steam baths (Breedon 1974:151-2). Homeopathy was developed as a reaction against heroic treatments. The founder of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann, reasoned that the element that caused sickness in a healthy person would also cure the same illness when administered to a sick person (Rothstein 1992: 153-4). Empiricism referred to folk healing learned through practice rather than in formal medical schools (Peard 1999:188). Eclecticism incorporated multiple approaches to healing, including Thomsonianism, herb doctors, and Native doctors, along with botanical medicines (Rothstein 1992: 217-8). Despite these various approaches to health, many people understood the experience of sickness and healing through the lens of their faith. The secularization of sickness increased with the rise of biomedicine as a scientific enterprise later in the century.

Fett (2002:38) argued that the secularization of health was an uneven and controversial process. Alongside the rise of biomedicine and scientific practice throughout the nineteenth century, a large percentage of white and black Americans continued to understand illness and shape health practices through the lens of faith. Yet the degree to which religion and science influenced perspectives about health and well-being practices was not always shared among whites and blacks. The responses of slaveholders to enslaved people who relied on spiritual power for healing in various forms was significantly shaped by shifting alignments of religious

experience, scientific knowledge, and perceptions of who embodied medical authority (Fett 2002:38).

In contrast to white Americans, Fett argued that enslaved African Americans had a broader, relational view of health and well-being (Fett 2002). This relational conception linked the health of an individual to community relations, honored kin relations by connecting the living with the ancestors, and situated the authority of healers in the wisdom of elders and divine guidance. The perceived imbalance that resulted in illness was not among physical humors, rather the imbalance was in the relationships between people, spirits, and ancestors. This perspective was based on the perception of the universe in sacred terms. While most white Virginians also conceived of the universe in sacred terms, perceptions of how it operated were often different, if not overlapping, between, and also among, whites and blacks (Fett 2002:38). Where their views differed, there was not always mutual understanding.

Whites often perceived the sacred practices of black Virginians that were different from their own in a negative light. This is most evident when the pejorative use of the term “superstitious” was used to describe African American practices and beliefs. A white Virginian correspondent of the New York Times observed the Christian worship of an assembly of African Americans in the 1850s. He reported “. . . negroes are excessively superstitious. They have all sorts of ‘experiences,’ and enjoy the most wonderful revelations. Visions of the supernatural are of nightly occurrence” (quoted in Levine 1977:61). When Olmsted toured Virginia, he noted that the religion of the enslaved was dominated by “a miserable system of superstition, the more painful that it employs some forms and words ordinarily connected with true Christianity” (quoted in Levine 1977:61). The latter observation reveals both the divergence and the overlap

between religious practices embraced by enslaved African Americans and the white members of their communities.

### **Slaveholders' Conceptions of Slave Health**

Beyond understanding general nineteenth-century conceptions of health and well-being, it is necessary to consider how slaveholders defined the health of enslaved people because they played a role in determining when, if, and how illness would be treated. Aside from the realities of disease and the personal experience of illness, the health of slaves was tied to productivity. The definition of a healthy enslaved person, from a planter's perspective, reflected natural, cultural, and social aspects. Nature was present in the form of disease, culture was represented by white nineteenth-century beliefs about the health of African Americans, and the social was situated in the local setting that influenced these two other aspects.

White slaveholders understood the health of slaves, if not the health of enslaved individuals, in terms of "soundness" according to Fett (2002: 20).<sup>31</sup> To be sound meant to be free from injury, defect, and disease. It also meant to be in good condition and robust. This concept extended to mental health as well (Fett 2002:20). To be sound also meant to be able to perform labor as expected. If one's ability to labor was diminished in some way, they were not sound, and consequently not healthy. The attributes affecting soundness—injury, defect, and disease, all impacted the lives of many enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest and, consequently their health and ability to perform labor. I will discuss examples of each of these attributes among enslaved African Americans at Poplar Forest before assessing the archaeological evidence.

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<sup>31</sup> I do not mean to imply that some slaveholders did not empathize in varying degrees to the health conditions of the slaves that they owned. However, I think that some may have considered the health of a slave, in terms of a laborer who was or was not able to work, whereas sympathy for the experience of illness would relate to the experience of the person who was enslaved, rather than their enslaved status.



## *Injury*

Impending injury was a constant reality for enslaved laborers whether working under dangerous conditions, or in daily work on the plantation. Documented injuries at Poplar Forest ranged from mild sprains to trauma resulting in death. On July 6, 1851, Smith was injured when a cow that he was milking calved (HFJ). A week later, Harriett sprained her ankle (HFJ July 12, 1851). In June, 1844, Jacob badly injured his leg (EWCH to ESH June 10-12, 1844). Among the men that Cobbs hired out in the Kanawha Salines, George was critically injured in a scalding accident (WRC to WC January 7, 1841; WRC to WC January 28, 1841). Yet he remained in Kanawha to recover and eventually returned to work light machinery (ESH to EWCH May 11, 1841). In December, 1840 an enslaved girl was mortally injured when she was thrown from a horse and dragged on her way to the milkpen (ESH to EWCH December 25, 1840). Another tragedy occurred in 1854 when Essex, Lydia's two-year-old son, died in a cabin fire (HFJ June 26, 1854).

In addition to work-related injuries and accidents, owners sometimes directly inflicted injuries on enslaved laborers. Whipping was a common punishment for enslaved laborers. Whether this was a practice regularly used by Cobbs, Hutter, or their overseers and headmen at Poplar Forest is unknown. It was documented on one occasion. Hutter paid someone to whip Harriett (April 19, 1861). Why he felt that she deserved this punishment is unknown.

Although slaveholders valued soundness in their enslaved workers, many felt that some situations necessitated inflicting physical harm. Scars from whipping were symbolic—physical injuries on individual bodies that reflected violations of social norms or legislation within a slave society. Politics intersected social practice through legislation encoding these social norms and

through the control slaveholders demonstrated through whipping. The sanctioning of whipping as an appropriate form of punishment for enslaved African Americans also reflected slaveholders' racialized conceptions about the fortitude of African Americans and their ability to endure injury and hard labor in a way that differed from whites.

The degree to which punishment was racialized can be seen in the following excerpt from the Lynchburg newspaper in 1859:

William, slave to Elizabeth Dinwidde, found on Back Street Sunday night drunk and behaving in a very disorderly manner—ordered 29 lashes.

Charles W. Brooks, a white man, found drunk on the street Friday night, was taken to the cage, and after getting sober, discharged by the watchman.

William McCreary, an Irishman, who has been on a “spree” for several days, but with no prospect of an improvement, was sent to jail, where he will undergo a regimen, which will, we hope, prove beneficial (*Daily Virginian* September 23, 1859).

Although each of the infractions mentioned was reported slightly differently, the root of the problem in each case was public drunkenness. Brooks, racially defined as a white man, was set free after he became sober. McCreary, racially or ethnically defined as an Irishman rather than a white man, was placed on a behavioral improvement regimen. William, an enslaved African American, was ordered to receive 29 lashes. Legislation prohibited enslaved African Americans from buying alcohol in Virginia, which is likely why William received the harshest punishment. This legislation was put in place largely because drinking affected labor performance or “soundness” of enslaved laborers and thus slaveholders wanted to regulate alcohol consumption. They also wanted to reinforce the social order which did not allow for enslaved African Americans to act in a disorderly manner, which could be perceived as a physical threat as well as a threat to the social order. In reality, in most cases the harsh punishment inflicted on enslaved African Americans affected soundness more significantly than the crime.

*Defects: Mental Illness and Physical Incapacity*

In terms of physical and mental “defects,” or afflictions, individuals in the enslaved community at Poplar Forest were affected by both. The Bedford County slave census for 1860 documents that Hutter owned a blind 10-year-old girl. It is not known whether she was born blind or her blindness was a result of a degenerative disease or accident. Although no existing documents identify this child, it seems most likely that she was Lydia Johnson’s daughter, Ida Reeder. Ida Reeder, named after Edward Hutter’s niece, was born on July 30, 1850 (HFJ). The only other girl born at Poplar Forest that year to an enslaved woman was Susan’s daughter, Elizabeth. Elizabeth died on September 15, 1854 (BCBDR). Only two other enslaved girls were born between 1849 and 1853 that survived beyond 1860—Harriett’s daughter, Eliza, and Mathilda’s daughter, Margaret (HFJ). Eliza was hired out to the mayor of Lynchburg just prior to emancipation and Margaret stayed on at Poplar Forest after emancipation, acquiescing to her mother’s wishes (EWCH to daughter, December 30, 1865; ESH to Aaron Howe 1866). Because these women were working as house servants, it is unlikely that they were blind. Therefore, unless Hutter acquired additional enslaved people after 1854, Ida was the blind child listed in the 1860 census.

After Hutter’s last yearly documentation of enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest, Ida Reeder’s name is not mentioned again in Hutter family documents (HIEJ January 1, 1854). She is not listed with her mother in the 1870 Bedford County Census, nor is she listed in the Bedford County Death Records (1853-1860). Consequently, she may have died between 1861 and 1870. Historic documents do not tell us how Hutter responded practically or emotionally to the complexity of having a blind enslaved laborer, although this “defect” certainly limited the range

of labor possibilities he could expect her to perform. Mental illness, however, is better documented.

William Cobbs hired out an enslaved man, Harry, to various salt producers in Kanawha Salines. Letters between Cobbs and his hiring agent, William Cox, chronicle the decline of Harry's mental condition (CLC to WC December 28, 1827; WRC to WC, January 27, 1830; January 9, 1831; January 6, 1833; January 27, 1833). In the initial letter, where Charles Lewis Cobbs proposed that his brother purchase Harry, Harry was described as "a very large stout able bodied fellow both young and active" (CLC to WC December 28, 1827). Two years later, Cox described him as "not being in his right mind" (WRC to WC January 27, 1830). Each year from 1830 to 1833, Cox had increasing difficulty hiring Harry to anyone on Cobb's behalf because prospective hirers thought Harry was uncontrollable and because he threatened violence and arson. Prospective hirers thought he might go "entirely deranged" (WRC to WC January 9, 1831). In 1833 Harry decided to return to Poplar Forest and because Cox could not conceive of any way to prevent that, he sent him back (WRC to WC, January 27, 1833). It is unclear where Harry was between 1833 and 1845 because no known documents mention him. On November 20, 1845 he returned to Poplar Forest and died mysteriously of an unknown cause five days later; Hutter recorded—"Harry fell dead in his path" (HFJ November 25, 1845). Mentally ill enslaved laborers were a dilemma for slaveholders. Although some, like Harry, were physically able to labor, inducing them to do so could prove difficult if not impossible. They could pose a danger to slaveholders, other enslaved laborers, slave hirers, and property. How Cobbs chose to deal with Harry once he returned is unknown. While Harry may not have been able to reflect on how mental illness impacted his daily life as an enslaved laborer, Ida Reeder must have experienced

her physical difference. Fortunately, she had several family members at Poplar Forest to support her and help her cope with her challenges, when they were not engaged in labor.

Ironically, the mental decline suffered by Harry would also become the fate of William Cobbs to a lesser degree. Cobbs' mental problems were the result of an injury he suffered during a military parade in Lynchburg when he was thrown from a horse. Cobbs and Hutter family letters document his episodic, erratic behavior (WC to WRC December 31, 1835; ESH to FAHR August 15, 1840; CJH to ESH June 17, 1844; ESH to EWCH June 26, 1850; ESH to EWCH June 30, 1850; ESH to EWCH July 17, 1850; MSC to EWCH August 15, 1852). These challenges were likely one reason that Marian Cobbs was eager to have her only child marry someone who could take over management of Poplar Forest.

Sadly, Marian Stanard Scott Cobbs was skilled in dealing with mental challenges long before she met William Cobbs. Her father, Samuel Scott, suffered from dementia which was exacerbated by drinking (Burton et al. vs. Scott July 15, 1823). As a result of his mental illness, he sometimes abused his enslaved laborers, chased them for no apparent reason, and at other times hid from them in a paranoid state (Marmon 1991, Part 3:80). Samuel Scott, in another twist of irony, found himself judged by standards of soundness as a consequence. His heirs disputed his will after his death in 1829 because of his mental instability (Burton et al. vs. Scott July 15, 1823).

Savitt stated that whites and blacks who suffered from mental illness usually remained at home and were cared for by family members or obligated owners (Savitt 2002:247). Unlike Cobbs and Scott, Harry was not able to rely upon obligated family members to care for him when he was in Kanawha. Hiring out removed Harry from care by his wife and any other family members he may have had at Poplar Forest or in the surrounding neighborhood. When he was

hired out in Kanawha, he relied upon the person who hired his labor to care for him. The costs of his care, under his hiring contract, fell to Cobbs. Cobbs preferred to pay others to care for Harry remotely rather than have him return home where he would be directly responsible for his care.

### *Physically Sound: Disease*

Like mental illness, the third aspect of “soundness”—disease, impacted whites and blacks at Poplar Forest. In his Farm Journal, Hutter documented thirteen instances of enslaved laborers being sick (1844-1854). In addition to recording who was sick, over time he also began to record for how long. This documentation indicated how much labor was lost each time a laborer was sick: “Davey came house sick; Washington sick; Smith sick; Harriett in house four weeks; Robert sick; Harriett sick 3 days; Smith sick 14 days, Harriett 10 days; Washington sick 3 days; Katey sick 2 days; Smith sick 1 ½ days; Sam sick 3 days; Sam sick 3 days (HFJ).”<sup>32</sup> From family letters in the same time period, it is clear that there were other enslaved laborers who were sick during this same timeframe (HFJ).<sup>33</sup> The names of the sick enslaved laborers were not, however, listed in the Farm Journal. In some cases, this was because Edward Hutter was absent from the plantation during the period of illness. But the primary reason was because the enslaved laborers Hutter listed by name as sick in his farm journal were all field laborers. Because the illness of house servants and children did not impact field operations, they were not included in the Farm Journal. In this situation, who was defined as being sick was clearly tied to productivity, role, and status. Unfortunately, Hutter did not record which illnesses or diseases affected the field

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<sup>32</sup> HFJ November 21, 1845; December 5, 1849; February 22, 1851; April 1, 1851; April 15, 1851; July 6, 1851; July 16, 1851; September 27, 1841; December 2, 1851; December 12, 1851; January 1, 1852; October 11, 1852.

<sup>33</sup> EWCH to ESH June 10-12, 1844; CJH to ESH December 15, 1845; CJH to ESH February 20, 1846; CJH to ESH April 7, 1846; ESH to EWCH April 29, 1846; CJH to ESH June 15, 1846; CJH to ESH July 31, 1846; CJH to ESH September 30, 1846; CJH to ESH December 16, 1848; ESH to EWCH June 26, 1850; ESH to EWCH June 30, 1850; ESH to EWCH July 5, 1850; ESH to EWCH July 7, 1850; EWCH to ESH June 19, 1852; MSC to ESH August 15, 1852; MSC to ESH April 16, 1854.

laborers. But family letters, court records, and the Bedford County Death index provide some information about the kinds of diseases impacting their health.

### **Health in Antebellum Bedford County**

From 1853 to 1860, the cause of death for white and black residents of Bedford County was recorded in a county register, when both the cause was known and the death was reported. This register documents the deaths of 1,186 enslaved African Americans and 1,365 whites in this eight-year period. Based on population statistics, these numbers represent a mortality rate of around 13.4 per thousand for enslaved African Americans and 8.6 per thousand for whites. The racial difference is primarily a reflection of the higher death rate for black infants and children under the age of five.

In the last decade of the antebellum era, approximately 46% of all deaths recorded in Bedford County were children under five years old (Daniel 1985:208). From 1853-1860, the death rate for African American children under age five was thirteen percent higher than for white children in the same age bracket (Daniel 1985:128). The principal causes of death for all children, across racial lines, were croup, flux, whooping cough, bowel inflammation, scarlet fever, pneumonia and various kinds of “fevers” (Daniel 1985:128). However, scrofula (a type of tuberculosis), worms, and “smothering” were documented exclusively among African American infants and children (Daniel 1985:128). Among older children and adults in Bedford County, scrofula was also documented as a cause of death for sixty-five African Americans and only one white person.

Scrofula historically affected whites living in poverty, particularly children (Savitt 2002:44). Therefore, its near absence among whites in Bedford County may indicate a low

incidence of poverty in Bedford County in the antebellum period. Yet poverty prevailed among enslaved African Americans. Worms were a rampant problem in Virginia slave quarters because of poor sanitary conditions (Savitt 2001:63-71, 128). Consequently, the high rates of scrofula and worms among enslaved blacks in antebellum Virginia were a result of poor living conditions created by slaveholders.

“Smothering” is a more controversial cause of death. From 1850-1860, twenty-one enslaved infants in Bedford County died, according to records, from “smothering” or suffocation. The term “smothering” implies that the mother, intentionally or not, suffocated the child. The further implication of the term, and often the perception of the slaveholders, was that this was an act of infanticide (Bush 1996:208; Echeverri 2009; Fox-Genovese 1988:323; King 1996:160; Schwarz 2006; Weaver 2008; White 1985:88). However, these deaths were more likely the result of sudden infant death syndrome and accidents while co-sleeping, a sleeping practice common throughout the non-Western world and all but necessitated by the imposed living conditions among antebellum enslaved people (Savitt 2001:126-7; Lee 2012b).

### **Health and Well-Being at Poplar Forest**

From 1844-1854, the years in which Hutter recorded this information, infant and child mortality at Poplar Forest was high among the enslaved (HFJ). When two-year-old Daniel died in 1846, he was one of fifteen enslaved children at Poplar Forest. The next year Sandy, Daniel’s two-year-old brother, died, followed shortly by his mother. In 1848, three among twelve enslaved children, Henry, Beverly, and Anthony, died. Three infants, Mildred, Agnes, and Sandy, died in 1850. James, age four, died in 1853. Two-year-old Essex and four-year-old Elizabeth died in 1854 (HFJ January 1850, January 1853, January 1854).



To understand whether infant mortality directly impacted the family/families of the residents of the cabin at Site A, it is important to consider who may have lived there. Given the proximity of the Site A antebellum cabin to the main house, a house servant(s) most likely lived there. In the period 1844-1854, Mima, Susan, Matilda, and Ellen (until her death in 1850) were the only women frequently assigned to work in the house (HFJ). Mima was an elderly woman, born in ca. 1775. It is unclear if she had any relatives among the slave community at Poplar Forest, although evidence suggests that she may have been Viney's mother and Lydia's grandmother (BCBDR: 1854 page 18 line 12). Mima died in 1854. If she occupied the cabin at Site A, someone else moved in or continued to live in the cabin after her death, until the cabin was abandoned post-1858. Susan, Matilda, and Ellen all had children at Poplar Forest. Each of them also lost at least one child or grandchild during the antebellum period (HFJ). Lydia lost four children at Poplar Forest prior to emancipation (HFJ, BCBDR).

In addition to poor living conditions that contributed to poor health, enslaved laborers were also subjected to many other practices that impacted their health and well-being, not the least of which was the oppression of being enslaved and the corresponding lack of control that over many aspects of their lives. Cobbs and Hutter bought and sold enslaved people, and hired them out for short and long periods, separating families and friends and breaking local social networks in the process. Hutter had someone whipped at least once (HIEJ September 19, 1859). These are just a few instances of the everyday hardships endured by enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest. Because their physical and mental health and well-being were so precarious, it is not surprising that enslaved laborers took measures to protect and maintain it.

*Disease among Cobbs' and Hutter's Hired Enslaved Laborers*

Harry, Moses, and George suffered health complications while they were hired out to salt producers in Kanawha. I have already discussed Harry's mental illness. Moses suffered from dropsy (WRC to WC May 13, 1827), the accumulation of fluid in body cavities, such as the abdomen. This was a secondary symptom of some other primary condition, such as chronic vascular, respiratory, or liver disease (Savitt 2001:142). Moses died in late January, 1829 as a result of the same chronic condition (WCR to WC February 8, 1829). George contracted cholera (WRC to WC January 6, 1833), a disease typically contracted through contaminated food or water. It was predominantly associated with blacks and poor whites as a result of their poor living conditions (Savitt 2002:227). George survived cholera only to be injured by a scalding accident a few years later, as already discussed.

When disease impacted the lives of enslaved laborers who were hired out closer to home, they sometimes returned to Poplar Forest for care. This seems to be the case with Doctor, who was hired out in 1852, apparently to Major Ellison (ESH to EWCH June 25, 1852). In a letter to her husband who was visiting Bedford Alum Springs in an attempt to improve his own health, Emma Hutter presumably expressed concerns about Doctor's illness and how it might create tension between the man who hired his labor and the Hutters. Edward suffered from dysentery that he contracted in the West Indies when he served in the navy (John L Brooks to ESH, June 4, 1840). Emma's letter did not survive, but in his response to it, Edward wrote: "You give yourself unnecessary uneasiness about Doctor—there is not the slightest ground for a difficulty with Maj. Ellison—I wish though as the idea gives you trouble that I had allowed him to sit in idleness at the cabin" (ESH to EWCH June 25, 1852). Hutter's letter reveals how health was implicated in

social relationships beyond the plantation. Hiring out a sick enslaved laborer could result in poor relations between the hirer and hiree.

Doctor continued to suffer health problems until mid-August when his health began to improve. A letter from Marian Cobbs to her daughter reported: “Ned says Doctor has mended very much think him almost well. Ned is quit [sic] thin he complains of shortness of breth . . .” (MSC to EWCH August 15, 1852). Ned and Woodson were also hired out with Doctor, probably to a representative for the Virginia and Tennessee railroad, and this report possibly came from Ned when he was visiting family at Poplar Forest or came to report his own illness. It is unknown what illness Doctor was suffering from in 1852, but he died of a hemorrhage on February 15, 1856 when he was twenty-nine (BCDR). Whether this hemorrhage was the result of defect, disease, or injury is unknown. If it were a disease, it may have also affected another enslaved man at Poplar Forest. Around the same time as Doctor died, his cousin, John Echols, was suffering from a disease or injuries that incapacitated him to the point that he had lost the use of his limbs (FAHR to ESH January 27, 1856). Unlike Doctor, John Echols eventually recovered from his condition (HIEJ).

In the antebellum period, particular groups of individuals were more likely to be hired out than others. Aside from young, able-bodied men, pregnant women and women with infants were often hired out. Hutter frequently hired out pregnant women and women with nursing infants. Slaveholders engaged in this practice because they considered pregnant and nursing women to be “encumbered” or reduced in their capacity to perform labor. Sometimes women with infants were hired out so that they could serve as wet nurses. Consequently, pregnant and nursing women produced income for slaveholders, through their labor fees, at a time when their work

capacity was reduced. While this practice was beneficial to slaveholders, it was not beneficial to enslaved women or their children.

Hutter hired out Susan in 1854 with her young daughter Elizabeth (born December 15, 1850) and her infant Coleman (born May 30, 1853). Elizabeth died while Susan was hired out (HFJ September 15, 1854). The practice of removing mothers and their young children from family and social networks on the home plantation at precisely a time when those networks were truly needed could have dire consequences for the children and the mother.

#### *Disease at Poplar Forest plantation*

Disease obviously affected enslaved people living at Poplar Forest as well. Doctor and John Echols' cousin, Rhoda, died of pulmonary disease in 1846 (CJH to ESH June 14, 1846). She was thirty-two years old. Savitt noted a correlation between degree of resistance to pulmonary infection and exposure to cool, wet weather (Savitt 2002:35). As a result of their living and working conditions, enslaved people were more susceptible to pulmonary illnesses than slaveholders (Savitt 2002:35). Rhoda was fifteen when she was inherited by Cobbs and she spent most of her adult life at Poplar Forest, except for a period when she was hired out to Hutter's brother at Sandusky. Therefore, her poor health was likely a reflection of poor living or working conditions at Poplar Forest.

When Emma Hutter was taking care of Jacob and Katy in 1857, as described at the beginning of this chapter, Jacob was suffering from rheumatism and dysentery. He had been unable to work for at least a month when Hutter's son wrote to him with an update on Jacob's condition (WH to ESH, August 10, 1857). Rheumatism, an infection of the joints, was somewhat

frequent among enslaved African Americans (Savitt 2002:54). It was debilitating and could cause long-term heart damage.

Another disease that impacted African Americans, and poor whites, much more frequently than slaveholders was scrofula (Savitt 2002:44). Scrofula was a form of tuberculosis. Aaron, who was the headman at Poplar Forest, died from this disease in 1848 (CJH to ESH December 16, 1848). It was so strongly associated with African Americans in the minds of antebellum whites, that Hutter's father expressed concern for the soundness of Aaron's children: "I fear however that none of his children are sound, he having died of a hereditary disease, Scrophula [sic]" (CJH to ESH December 16, 1848).

Rhoda's mother, Lucy, died at Poplar Forest earlier in the same year that Rhoda died (HFJ March 16, 1846). The cause of her death is unknown, but she had been sick for some time. Months before Lucy died, Hutter's father advised him to have Lucy stop "Imogin's nursing on her breast" because of her sickness (CJH to ESH December 1, 1845). Imogin was Hutter's daughter. Christian Hutter's admonition indicates that there was an awareness of possible contagion, but this often failed to prevent disease from spreading between enslaved laborers and the slave owning family. In the end, Imogin was not affected by Lucy's health condition, but both she and her sister, Marian Amalia, died seven years later as a result of scarlet fever shared between the Hutter family and their enslaved laborers. Imogin was seven and Marian was two years old at the time of their deaths.

Between the deaths of Edward Hutter's daughters, Matilda's son James, age four, also died of scarlet fever (HFJ January 30, 1853). Matilda was a house servant and consequently she would have been in close contact with Imogen and Marian Amalia. As a young child, James may have also been in the house when his mother was working there. This seems likely because

Amalia Reeder recalled the names of the female house servants and their small children, including Matilda and her daughter Maria (Dump), soon after a visit she made to Poplar Forest (FAHR to ESH, February 13, 1850; HFM).

Although house servants sometimes benefitted from material gifts received from slaveholders, such as used tableware, they were also more susceptible to the diseases of the white families that they cared for intimately, and vice versa. White slaveholders were often the initial caregivers for sick enslaved people. When enslaved field workers came to the house to report sicknesses and seek care, they also exposed slaveholders to the diseases they carried. Sick slaveholders likewise exposed healthy enslaved laborers to disease when they came into contact.

The life experiences of Letitia exemplify the complex ways that health and sickness was intertwined between enslaved laborers and slaveholders. As an enslaved house servant, Letitia, was intimately involved in the care of the Hutter children. Letitia was taking care of the first Marian Amalia Hutter on the morning the latter died, probably as a result of dehydration exacerbated by the heroic treatment (in this case forced fluid emission) a local physician used to attempt to treat it (EWCH to ESH May 13, 1842). Heroic treatments dominated medical practice in the United States from the colonial era until around 1850. These treatments relied on aggressive techniques such as leeching, blistering, purging, sweating, bleeding, and administration of sometimes toxic and addictive drugs in an attempt to restore health.

Letitia was born in ca. 1826 and was thus four years younger than Emma Hutter. They grew up together, in one sense, and family letters reveal Emma's particular fondness for Letitia, whom she called "Lishy." Less than two weeks after Letitia married Jacob in 1843, she was hired out for the year with her infant son Daniel. She returned to work in the house at Poplar Forest in 1845. In 1846 Hutter sent her out to work in the fields. This was likely part of the labor

restructuring necessitated by Hutter's decision to grow tobacco for a few years to recover economic losses suffered from an 1845 house fire. In 1846 Letitia also gave birth to another son, Sandy. Daniel died in 1846 and Sandy died in 1847, followed shortly by his mother (HFJ March 19, 1846; April 15, 1847; August 28, 1847). Letitia was twenty-one when she died. The cause of their deaths was not documented, but their health was probably impacted by the changing work routine and its effect on pregnancy and caring for infants and young children. Five enslaved laborers died at Poplar Forest in 1846 and four more in 1847, suggesting that the transition to cultivating tobacco was a difficult one.

Hutter had a physician perform a post-mortem exam before Letitia's burial. This unusual practice may indicate that Hutter decided to hire out Letitia during the year and did not record it. Since he often hired out women who had infants, this would not be out of character. Post-mortem exams were sometimes performed to satisfy insurance claims. Life insurance policies for hired enslaved laborers were a new phenomenon in the antebellum period, emphasizing the ambiguity between their dual status as person and property. Lynchburg Fire and Hose Company was among the group of insurers known to have sold life insurance for enslaved laborers. Hutter owned stock in this company and the company advertised in a local newspaper to which he subscribed. It seems likely that he had this insurance. He also paid Dr. Steptoe, a family physician, a \$5 fee for a bond to hire Susan. This was likely the fee to certify her health that was required to purchase insurance. Life insurance policies were another means that slaveholders used to attempt to control their economic risks when they surrendered control by hiring out enslaved laborers to others. Yet these policies could not, nor were they meant to, protect enslaved laborers from the real risks of bodily danger, in the form of abuse, illness, exposure, dangerous working conditions, and death.

On a plantation, the lives of whites and blacks were complexly entangled. In the social ties created between these groups through slavery, it really was a case of “in sickness and in health, til death do us part”—death, sale, or self-emancipation. The nature and degree of shared disease is captured in a letter that Marian Cobbs wrote to Emma Hutter in 1848 when Emma and Edward were away from Poplar Forest.

My Dear Em.

This is Wensday night. I have taken up the cross to write. I have just quieted the children, each one is asleep. Will by my bed is full bloom with mesels, not much sick as yet. Imogin is on a palat a little distance from him on the floor. I think she will be the next to bloom, she is not sick enough to subdue her sweet spirit, Your Father calls her Aunt Almira little Nan is sleeping in her crib very sweetly, more interesting than ever she looks well yet I think she is taking the whooping cough. I have gotten along thus far with the children better than I had anticipated I do hope and trust it will continue as to the end.

We have had very sick blacks Betsey has the mesles. George is very sick Mary was very ill Tusday I thought she could not live with violent spasms. I think her better this evening. I have had quit a time nursing and see no prospect for a termination very soon as new cases are reported every day. Your Father gets his horse himself every day. He visited your Aunt Rose today found her quit sick. I cannot tell when she will get home. I hope you are enjoying yourself and will returne in good helth and spirits. How comes on Miss Scott and Mr. Hutter? My love to both.

I have nothing more to write. Your devoted Mother.

Thursday morning George reported not to be so well – I shall send for Dr. Nelson. Willie rested well last night he is very thickly broken out Imogin is at my side sends a kiss to her Mother her dear Mother and Father I shall be greatly releaved when you get home I feel a great weight of responsibility. . . [sic] .(MSC to EWCH May 17, 1848).

The first paragraph of this letter describes the health of the Hutter children. The second paragraph discusses the health of enslaved laborers. The final paragraph discusses both.

The latter part of the letter was written a few days after the first part. Although George was “very sick” at the initial report, Mrs. Cobbs waited a few days before she called a physician. It is likely that she tried to treat George with home remedies and when this failed, she turned to a family physician and friend, Dr. Nelson.

Typhoid similarly impacted both the Hutterers and their enslaved laborers in 1855 (FAHR to ESH December 9, 1855). There is no information about who contracted typhoid, only that it affected both whites and blacks. Typhoid was spread through ingesting food or drink



contaminated by flies, fingers, or freshly polluted water (Savitt 2002: 62). Consequently, if the enslaved cook who was handling the food had typhoid, it could spread widely.

### **Treatments at Poplar Forest**

The next section of this chapter focuses on various medical treatments and practices that were used by whites and blacks at Poplar Forest. Health was a constant concern for both groups and the approach to treatment was eclectic—involving many methods in attempts to reach successful results. Just as whites and blacks impacted each other's health in various ways, sometimes intentionally and often inadvertently, they were also involved in healing each other in multiple ways. Mrs. Cobbs and Mrs. Hutter were in charge of caring for sick enslaved folks at Poplar Forest while enslaved house servants were engaged in caring for sick members of the Cobbs and Hutter families. We do not know if African American folk remedies and practices were employed by whites at Poplar Forest to restore their own health, but Cobbs and Hutter certainly employed their ideas of appropriate health practices to treat enslaved laborers. Because of the power structure involved, approaches to treatment were not, then, exclusive to whites and blacks. Given the overlap in medicinal practices, the following discussion will focus on the various treatments and practices used at Poplar Forest with the thought that most were likely used by both groups, at least occasionally, in most cases. The exceptions may have been the use of African American healers specifically for hoodoo or conjure and the use of charms (although it is likely that the whites also used charms of various sorts). Homeopathy, hydropathy, medicinal plants, proprietary and patent medicines, minerals, and physician's remedies were used by both groups. I will now discuss each of these medicinal practices in more detail.

## *Homeopathy*

Homeopathy was the medical regimen that Hutter favored and he used homeopathic remedies for his own family and for enslaved laborers. When typhoid fever struck Poplar Forest, Amalia Reeder provided her perspective: “Doctor Detweiller said you might safely have gone on with your cases homeopathically as directed in your book. He says symptoms of Typhoid fever are increasing for two weeks, (and that you probably got discouraged before that time), and that the cases generally lasted from four to six weeks” (FAHR to ESH, December 9, 1855).

Detweiller was Amalia’s physician and she often sent his advice to Edward. Edward traveled to Pennsylvania on at least one occasion to receive treatment from him (MSC to EWCH April 24, 1854).

Edward Hutter’s father and sister were both strong proponents of homeopathy. This might be a result of respect for its German origins because Hutter was a German immigrant. Homeopathy was developed in Germany by Samuel Hahnemann in the 1790s and brought to the United States in 1825 (Ayer 1970:238; Savitt 2002:167). Homeopathy was based on the principle that a small amount of a drug that can produce symptoms similar to those produced by the illness being treated would cure the disease (Savitt 2002:167). When Edward Hutter was being treated for a “chronic disease” in his throat by drinking Creosote and applying Croton oil externally, his father was quite alarmed. The latter wrote:

I cannot help thinking that the remedies applied are more dangerous than the disease! . . . what can I do to extricate you out of the danger in which you are plunged by these allopathic butchers! . . . At present I can only pray you most earnestly beware of all heroic drugs and applications, they poison your system more and more and will finally make you incurable (CJH to ESH May 26, 1845).

Christian Hutter went on to express his opinion that his son would laugh at his advice. If Edward Hutter did not initially embrace homeopathy, he began to value it over time. He was at minimum cautious about heroic cures. When his son William was sick, he advised his wife about his

treatment: “Should anything occur with him which would in your or your Mother’s opinion require Calomel –do take the doctor’s advice before it is administered. Willie’s constitution appears to be an excellent one and Calomel sooner than anything else would repair or break it. Don’t for God’s Sake believe it a stubborn prejudice in me” (ESH to EWCH June 19, 1844).

Amalia’s letter indicates that Edward Hutter kept a homeopathy book at Poplar Forest. He also subscribed to *Homeopathic Journal* (HIEJ, May 30, 1860). Although he used castor oil to treat some illnesses suffered by enslaved laborers, Hutter’s account book only included one other remedy—camphor, that Savitt described as the favorite treatments among slaveholders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (HIEJ July 8, 1861; Savitt 2002:155). The other drugs Savitt listed were commonly used in heroic<sup>34</sup> treatments: calomel, ipecac, jalap, laudanum, opium, and quinine (Savitt 2002:155). Their absence among Hutter’s purchases suggests he did not favor heroic treatments or supports his opinion that these should only be administered by doctors. His medical purchases did include homeopathic medicines, several purchases of medicine and pills of unspecified kind, aconite, belladonna, and a breast pump (HIEJ). Both aconite and belladonna have homeopathic uses. Aconite is highly poisonous when ingested, but externally it can be used to relieve neuralgia and rheumatism (Haller 1984). Belladonna, a member of the nightshade family, is useful for gastrointestinal disorders and asthma. Whether these purchases were for members of the main house, those in the enslaved community, or both, is unknown.

Although Hutter seemed to favor homeopathy, his overall approach to health care, like that of most people, was eclectic. Amalia’s letter suggests that her brother did not use homeopathy to treat the typhoid outbreak. This means that situationally he used other forms of

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<sup>34</sup> Heroic medicine involved bleeding, purging, inducing vomiting, and blistering in an attempt to restore harmony between the four humors: blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm.

treatment. One of these forms of treatment, as discussed in the opening of this chapter, was hydropathy. Although he was initially wary of hydropathy, he came to believe in the healing power of the Springs for some health problems (ESH to EMCH June 6, 1840; ESH to AHR September 14, 1840).

### *Hydropathy*

Hydropathy, or the “water cure”, was based on the belief in the healing powers of water. Water was perceived as a panacea and methods of treatment were multiple and diverse. Application of wet sheets, wearing water jackets and girdles, swallowing or applying ice chips, and baths of all kinds were some approaches (Ayers 1970:241-242). In a timeframe that noxious substances and aggressive treatments were common, the lure of a natural element had a broad appeal. Bathing in mineral spring waters was the water cure sought by many upper class whites in the antebellum period. Springs resorts in the mountains, foothills, and valleys of Virginia were popular in the summer months from 1790 through 1860 (Lewis 2001:3). Although visitors came from abroad and from the northern United States, the elite of antebellum southern society were the most frequent clientele (Lewis 2001: 4). These travels were facilitated by the development of canals and turnpikes in these areas between the 1830s and 1850s (Sarvis 1999:17; Gill 2002:74). Railroads developed stops near several springs resorts (Sarvis 1999:23). Virginia mineral springs reached their peak in popularity in the 1830s through the 1850s when thousands of people visited each year (Gill 2002:80). While they were frequently sought for their perceived healing properties, the social aspect of visiting the springs was also an important part of the annual routine of genteel antebellum Virginians (Lewis 2001; Gill 2002).

Large resorts, such as White Sulphur Springs, had African American communities made up of hundreds of free and enslaved men, women, and children (Lewis 2001:43). These folks were resort workers, seasonal employees, or visiting servants. Visiting enslaved laborers performed many of the same tasks for their masters that they did on their home plantations, such as cleaning, serving, and caretaking (Lewis 2001:44). A hierarchy existed among the black community at the resorts. Private servants were not treated with respect by African American resort workers and visiting enslaved servants received the poorest quality housing (Lewis 2001: 45). Some evidence suggests that some enslaved laborers believed in the curative powers of the Springs, including an enslaved woman owned by the Massie family of Amherst County who visited Bedford Alum Springs, near Poplar Forest in New London, Virginia (Lewis 2001:63). The springs were sought for both social and medicinal purposes. Marian Cobbs, Edward Hutter, and Emma Hutter frequented the Virginia springs in the summer months of the antebellum era. These visits were particularly common when they were ill. Maria, an enslaved house servant, accompanied Hutter and his mother-in-law to the springs in 1857 so that she could assist Mrs. Cobbs (ESH to EWCH July 10, 1857). While Maria was attending to Mrs. Cobbs through her illness, Emma Hutter was attending to the health of Jake and Katy, two enslaved laborers owned by her husband, at Poplar Forest.<sup>35</sup>

Although whites and blacks in a plantation household sometimes shared disease, it does not mean they shared the same experience of the illness. Perhaps sharing the same disease, and sometimes losing children as a consequence, created some sense of *communitas* between enslaved laborers and slaveholders. But it is likely that they often experienced their illnesses in distinctive ways. Those experiences were shaped by religion and culture.

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<sup>35</sup> Jake was a nickname for Jacob. Jacob has been mentioned in earlier chapters, he was married to Letitia, who was also called Letia and Lishy. They are discussed again later in this chapter.

Considerable evidence exists that the Cobbs and Hutter families perceived their illnesses through the lens of faith. Family members were all active members in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church (Patterson 1983). Edward Hutter's father, Christian Jacob Hutter was a Moravian. His interpretation of sickness and death among enslaved people at Poplar Forest was based in religion and it is the one reference among his letters that he uses to reveal his feelings about his son being a slaveholder: "You have been truly unfortunate with your black family. Don't you think that God makes use of this work to apprise you that he does not approve of holding such kind of property!?" (CJH to ESH, July 31, 1846). Edward's response is unknown, but religion and slavery were certainly not perceived as incompatible by many in the antebellum South. Most of Edward Hutter's fellow vestrymen at St. Stephens church were slaveholders.

Many enslaved laborers also experienced their illnesses through the lens of faith. That faith often included Christianity and African-influenced traditional beliefs. On the night before she died, Rhoda asked Jacob and Katey to pray for her (ESH to EWCH April 29, 1846). This suggests that all three practiced Christianity. Marriage services were conducted by an official from St. Stephens Church for a few enslaved laborers from Poplar Forest (Patterson 1983:208).

A funeral service was also conducted for six Poplar Forest enslaved laborers on July 13, 1856 by Reverend Wilmer (Patterson 1983:261). This group included Essex, Elizabeth, Bartlett, Mina, Lucretia, and Doctor. Some of these enslaved laborers had died as much as two years before this funeral service. Essex, Elizabeth, and Mina died in 1854. Bartlett died in 1855. Lucretia and Doctor died in 1856 (BCBDR). Some of these people were related. They do not represent all of the enslaved people who died at Poplar Forest over this two-year period. So it seems that they, or their parents in the case of the young children, may have had some religious connection with the church. But this did not mean that these individuals, or the others at Poplar

Forest, did not also hold African-influenced religious beliefs that would have shaped their perspectives of health and well-being. There are no historical documents for the Cobbs/Hutter era at Poplar Forest that document any African-influenced religious beliefs or health practices. To provide an understanding of African-influenced practices in this area, I will discuss an incident at Poplar Forest before Cobbs purchased the plantation. Then I will discuss archaeological evidence, which does suggest an intersection of European and African-American healing practices.

### *African American healers*

The presence of African American healers in nineteenth-century central Virginia was the result of generations of adapting African medicinal practices to incorporate European and Native American influences as well as adaptation to new physical, social, and political environments. What we know about nineteenth-century healers comes from interviews with former slaves, oral traditions, court records, and other documents predominantly written by whites. African American healers served many roles in plantation communities. They served as midwives, conjurers, and root doctors (Anderson 2005; Fett 2002; Hazzard-Donald 2013). Their significance and value among enslaved laborers is evident from their persistence among enslaved populations in the Americas for centuries. The medical practices of African American healers intersected with spiritual beliefs and supernatural traditions (Chireau 2003:93). Patients sought their aid in delivering children, preventing and curing natural diseases and supernatural illnesses, for protection, and to influence the outcome of particular events or processes. Some enslaved individuals at Poplar Forest sought out an African healer for one or more of these reasons in 1818.

*African American healers at Poplar Forest 1818-19*

The year 1818 was devastating for the enslaved community owned by Thomas Jefferson at Poplar Forest. Five enslaved children, including Nanny, both of Polly's children, and two of Amy's children died. Another child was stillborn. Two adult men died, Caesar and Joe. In addition to those who died, several others were ill (JY to TJ January 7, 1819, MHI). By April 1819, Jefferson's overseer, Joel Yancey informed Jefferson: "Those negroes are still sickly. Hall has been confined almost 3 months, he says he is poisoned, and none but a negro Doctor can save him. I cant [sic] consent to employee these people, unless instructed" (JY to TJ April 10, 1819, MHI).

There is no evidence that Jefferson consented, but a letter written by Yancey to Jefferson in July of the same year indicates that members of the enslaved community at Poplar Forest "charge Hercules with poisoning, and the cause of all deaths . . . for the last twelve months. He certainly has been intimate with a Negroe [sic] Doctor and have got physic from him. The people kept it conceald [sic] from me till the other day . . ." (JY to TJ July1, 1819, MHI).

This letter demonstrates that some enslaved African Americans preferred to use African American folk healers. The accusations of poisoning and the high mortality rate indicate that the treatment involved some sort of poisonous plant(s). Yet the patients who used this treatment did so willingly, because they had faith that it would work and perhaps because they were deceived about the poisonous nature of the treatment. For twelve months, through considerable illness and death, no one informed Yancey about the source. This suggests that they feared the retribution of Hercules or the power of the healer from whom Hercules obtained medicine.



These events took place nine years before Cobbs purchased Poplar Forest. Although the people that comprised the enslaved community at Poplar Forest were nearly completely, if not completely different, it is likely that they shared similar beliefs shaped by comparable experiences in the same region. Robert Williams, formerly enslaved at the Clay plantation adjacent to Poplar Forest, recalled that an enslaved African American hoodoo doctor named Dr. Ned Reed lived in the neighborhood during the antebellum period (Perdue et al. 1992: 324). Williams sought out his services to protect him from being beaten after he ran away. Some enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest may have also sought out Reed's services, if there was not a plant-based healer or conjurer at Poplar Forest, depending on the kind of health practice being sought.

### *Medicinal Plants*

Use of medicinal plants was an important part of traditional folk medicine (Edwards- Ingram 2001; Levine 1977; Perdue et al. 1992). In the nineteenth century, natural remedies and folk traditions that were an amalgamation of European, Native American, and African practices were used by slaveholders and enslaved African Americans to maintain and restore their health. Intriguingly, a search for folk medicine in North America produces a broad array of scholarship on African American practices, Native American practices, and Latin American practices, but very few references to European American practices. European Americans brought their own traditional practices with them, but there seems to be either a modern concern with labeling them "folk" or a dearth of investigation of the roots of European American traditional health practices. Moss (2010) investigated Southern folk medicine and found that many white Americans preferred home remedies based on medicinal plants to treatment by physicians. Hutter's

purchases of belladonna and aconite indicate that he incorporated the use of medicinal plants into the healing regimen he employed on the plantation, but not to the exclusion of many doctor's visits when home remedies failed to produce the anticipated results.

Culturally derived origins of diseases and treatments were central to African Diaspora populations (Voeks and Rathford 2012:7). Enslaved Africans retained and shared their ethnobotanical expertise as they gained new proficiencies with plants they encountered in their new environments in the Americas (Hoffman 2012; Moret 2012; Peter 2012; Rashford 2012; Van Andel et al. 2012; Voeks 2012). Carney and Rosomoff (2009:89) note that nineteen genera from fifteen botanical families are shared between Africa and the Americas. Further, enslaved Africans, enslaved African Americans, and runaway slaves all relied on their ethnobotanical knowledge for survival, healing, and nutrition (Carney and Rosomoff 2009: 89). Knowledge of plants and the natural environment was passed down from generation to generation to ensure survival. Some African and African American healers, were skilled in using plant-based remedies to cure both natural and supernatural illnesses.

The subfloor pit in the Site A cabin generated a diverse macrobotanical assemblage that represents some of the plant resources used by enslaved laborers that lived in the cabin. The vast majority of plant remains found at Site A were related to the subsistence strategies employed by the inhabitants as discussed in chapters four and five. Yet included within the macrobotanical assemblage are edible herbs, which have many potential uses (Table 8.1).

| Table 8.1 Herbs and Medicinal Plants from Site A Subfloor Pit |                      |                             |        |           |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-----------|
|   | Common Name          | Scientific Name             | Edible | Medicinal |
| Edible Herb   | Dock                 | <i>Rumex sp.</i>            | x      | x         |
| Edible Herb   | Knotweed             | <i>Polygonum sp</i>         | x      | x         |
| Edible Herb   | Purslane             | <i>Portulaca oleracea</i>   | x      | x         |
| Edible Herb   | Mint                 | <i>Mentha</i>               | x      | x         |
| Edible Herb   | Plantain             | <i>Plantago sp.</i>         |        | x         |
| Medicinal   | Jimsonweed           | <i>Datura stramonium</i>    |        | x         |
| Weed  | Cinquefoil           | <i>Potentilla</i>           |        | x         |
| Weed  | Cocklebur            | <i>Xanthium</i>             |        | x         |
| Weed  | Nightshade           | <i>Solanum sp</i>           |        | x         |
| Fruit   | Blackberry/Raspberry | <i>Rubus sp</i>             | x      | x         |
| Fruit   | Cherry               | <i>Prunus sp.</i>           | x      |           |
| Fruit   | Elderberry           | <i>Sambucus canadensis</i>  | x      | x         |
| Fruit   | Grape                | <i>Vitis sp.</i>            | x      | x         |
| Fruit   | Peach                | <i>Prunus persica</i>       | x      | x         |
| Fruit   | Persimmon            | <i>Diospyros virginiana</i> | x      | x         |
| Vegetable   | Maize                | <i>Zea mays</i>             | x      | x         |
| Vegetable   | Sorghum              | <i>Sorghum sp.</i>          | x      | x         |
| Nut   | Acorn Shell          | <i>Quercus sp.</i>          | x      | x         |
| Nut   | Black Walnut         | <i>Juglans nigra</i>        | x      | x         |
| Nut   | Hickory Shell        | <i>Carya sp.</i>            | x      | x         |
| (Bowes and Trigg 2009)  |                      |                             |        |           |

African Americans' knowledge of medicinal plant use was sought by blacks and whites and shaped American health practices (Cotton 1997; Savitt 2002). Carbonized seeds from fruits, vegetables, and wild edible herbs recovered at earlier Poplar Forest slave quarter sites provided extensive information about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century African American approaches to healthcare (Heath 2001; Raymer 2002). Analysis of macrobotanical remains from the subfloor pit at the antebellum cabin reveal that some health and healing practices persisted and others changed over time within the enslaved communities at Poplar Forest (Bowes 2009).

Jessica Bowes identified and analyzed the macrobotanical remains from the Site A subfloor pit (Bowes 2009). The remains of mint and jimsonweed within the subfloor pit suggest that enslaved laborers could have been cultivating plants for medicinal uses. Heath (2001, 2010: 171) and Bowes and Trigg (2012:161, 169) made similar arguments for medicinal uses of these

same plants and others at the North Hill (occupied 1770s-1780s) and Quarter Site (occupied about 1790-1812) at Poplar Forest. Jimsonweed was sometimes used by African Americans to treat worms and respiratory problems in the nineteenth century, while mint has multiple medicinal uses (Covey 2008:100-101). Mrozowski interpreted jimsonweed remains recovered at Rich Neck plantation as evidence of medicine to relieve pain (Bowes 2009). In the excavations of the African Burial Ground in Manhattan in New York City, large quantities of jimsonweed were found and interpreted as being used as a hallucinogen (Raymer 2003:39). Due to its toxicity, it can be ruled out as a food source. The hallucinogenic properties of jimsonweed make it likely that it was used as a medicinal plant. Purslane and knotweed may also have been cultivated for medicinal purposes (Bowes and Trigg 2009:30; Edwards-Ingram 2001:44). Cinquefoil was sometimes used for conjure, because of its similarity in form to the human hand (Russell 1997). The possible significance of the human hand form in apotropaic charms was previously discussed.

Just as whites and blacks on plantation used medicinal plants, both groups also relied on patent medicines and physician's remedies. It was common for southern plantations to have a stocked medicine chest on hand for sudden illness in their own families and among the enslaved community (Savitt 2002:154). Yet the presence of remains of patent medicines and physician's remedies at the homes of enslaved laborers indicates that illnesses were also treated there. The antebellum cabin provided evidence of this home treatment in the form of medicinal vials and bottles.

### *Proprietary Medicines and Physician's Remedies*

By the mid-nineteenth century, proprietary medicines had become a major industry in the United States. Although British patent medicines were used in the United States in the eighteenth century, the first patent for an American patent medicine was issued in 1820 (Estes 1988:7; Young 1960). In the decades before the Civil War, the majority of purchased medicines were proprietary rather than patent. Proprietary medicines were generally trademarked by registering brand names or distinctive bottle shapes or through copywriting labels and marketing literature (Fike 1987:3). Patent medicines were granted government protection for exclusivity of ingredients through the issuance of patents. Patenting a medicine required the disclosure of ingredients and product formula, aspects that many companies preferred to keep secret. By the nineteenth century the recipes of most medicines were seldom officially patented. Proprietary remedies were marketed as cures for every imaginable ailment, including indigestion, colic, venereal disease, and cancer. This period was one of transition from remedies mixed and bottled by doctors to prepackaged, mass-marketed medicines spurred by the rise of biomedicine and the ability to produce standardized glass bottles in molds, quickly and relatively cheaply, which was enabled by industrialization. Proprietary medicines of the mid-nineteenth century were often high in alcohol content, and some contained addictive narcotics (Fike 1987:3).

Estes (1988) produced an interesting interpretation of American patent and proprietary medicines. Because early nineteenth century white physicians perceived of the body as a system, health was based on maintaining balance between input and output. Because the causes of most diseases were unknown, treatment was aimed at controlling symptoms. Treatment involved influencing output of blood, urine, excrement, and sweat (Estes 1988:4). The majority

of patent medicines could be divided into five categories: tonics, blood purifiers, cathartics, oxygenators, and nerve elixirs (Estes 1988:5-6). Tonics claimed to strengthen the weakened body, blood purifiers were aimed at removing toxins in the bloodstream, cathartics produced bowel movements, and oxygenators were said to increase oxygen in the body, and nerve stimulants were purported to strengthen the nervous system (Estes 1988:5-6). The rapid growth of patent and proprietary medicines in the United States in the 1840s occurred alongside the rise and fall of many alternative remedies, such as homeopathy, Thomsonianism, and hydropathy. Estes argues that the growth of these practices simultaneously was an expression of the contemporary values of freedom of choice and self-sufficiency (Estes 1988:7).

Patent and proprietary remedies were used by whites and blacks in the nineteenth century. Because purchasing medicines was sometimes restricted to enslaved African Americans, it is unclear whether or not they used these medicines by choice or because they were required to do so. A consideration of archaeological evidence of patent and proprietary remedies at free black sites from Central Virginia might shed some light on the question of choice. Narratives of former slaves describe medical remedies imposed by owners as well as remedies provided by family members and African American healers. They are largely silent about the use of patent and pharmaceutical medicines partly because these are not folk terms used to describe those remedies. Plantation records at Poplar Forest are equally silent about purchases of patent and proprietary medicines, although some of these purchases are likely represented by Hutter's generic entries for purchasing "medicines." Although patent and proprietary medicines are elusive in documentation, their use is evident through archaeological remains.

Prior to analyzing artifacts of medical practices at Site A, a minimum vessel count of the glass vessels at Site A and Site B, an adjacent nursery site, was undertaken. The goals of this vessel count were to determine how many glass vessels were present at each location, to investigate trash disposal practices, and to consider how post-depositional processes (such as plowing) impacted these sites. A consideration of post-depositional processes was necessary because both Site A and Site B were heavily plowed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Consequently, this analysis was necessary to assess which vessels from both areas were associated with the antebellum cabin at Site A.

The minimum vessel count for each site consisted of separating glass sherds by color, type, and presence or absence of lead. Crossmending was the next step. Then vessels were created based on crossmends and shared physical attributes. Because the dividing line between Site A and Site B is arbitrary, although based upon a historic fenceline, analysis required recognizing vessels represented by sherds scattered across both sites. Consequently, the analysis of pharmaceutical bottles from Site A also includes bottles recovered at the edge of Site A, that we believe were used by the occupants of the antebellum cabin. Although glass analysis also included lamp glass, jars, miscellaneous containers, and tableware, the discussion here is limited to bottle glass because of its relevance to medicinal practices.

The results of the minimum vessel count indicated that at least one hundred forty-four glass bottles were recovered at the antebellum cabin site. Twenty-four of these bottles are not included in this discussion because they post-date the antebellum period. Among the remaining one hundred and twenty bottles with an identifiable primary function, twenty-five contained alcohol (20%); four are proprietary medicine bottles (3%); two are spring water bottles (1%); fourteen are pharmaceutical bottles and vials (12%); two are food-related (2%); two contained

cosmetic liquids (1%); one is a soda bottle (1%); and the remainder (seventy-four bottles) have an unknown primary function (60%). Fragments of additional embossed bottles that were likely pharmaceutical bottles were recovered at Site A, but they are not included in this discussion because they could not be conclusively identified based on the fragments recovered.

Although the percentage of identifiable medicinal bottles, 16%, is relatively small, they provide significant information about health and well-being practices among the enslaved laborers who lived in the antebellum cabin at Site A. In addition to the medicinal bottles recovered at the antebellum cabin, I also consider the use of one bottle found at the edge of the site and four bottles containing cosmetic liquids as potential evidence of health and well-being practices among enslaved laborers.

Four identifiable proprietary medicine bottles were recovered at the antebellum cabin. One bottle originally contained Dr. Jayne's Alterative (1850-1859). A second bottle contained some variety of proprietary medicine issued by Dr. Jacob S. Rose (1851-1857). The third bottle contained a remedy obtained at W.A. Strother's pharmacy (1853-post-1888). W.A. Strother was a pharmacist in Lynchburg. Dr. Jayne's Alterative and Dr. Rose's medicines were distributed from Philadelphia. Dr. Jayne's Alterative was advertised as a cure for scrofula, goiter, cancers, and diseases of the skin, among other complaints (Fike 1987:168). Dr. Rose manufactured various products such as Alterative Syrup, Blood Purifier, Carminative Balsam, Expectorant, Sarsaparilla, Antidyspeptic Vermifuge, and Magic Liniment (Fike 1987:179). The final bottle contained Bear's Oil. The particular uses for which consumers at Poplar Forest sought these medicines is unclear, although at a more general level they were certainly used to promote health and well-being. One additional proprietary medicine bottle was located near the antebellum cabin site. Archaeological evidence suggests that this bottle was also used by the



people who lived in the cabin located at Site A. The bottle contained De Grath's Electric Oil. This remedy is a useful proprietary medicine to frame a discussion of changing mid-nineteenth century health practices.

Alternating between the titles of Professor and Dr. when advertising his products, Charles De Grath was in actuality neither. This deception was common among curative peddlers. Electric Oil was advertised as a panacea, capable of curing anything "that creates soreness or pain" (Vrooman 1918:160). This oil was said to be charged with electricity, which was considered significant for regulating the humors of the body. In the 1850s, De Grath's oil was produced in Philadelphia, on a street adjacent to Chestnut, where Dr. Jayne's was produced. J. S. Rose also produced his proprietary medicines in Philadelphia. Although these medicines may have been exchanged during visits between the Cobbs or Hutter family members and Christian Jacob Hutter or Amalia Hutter Reeder who could easily obtain them in Pennsylvania, the discovery of some of these medicines during the excavation of the of the U.S.S. Republic antebellum shipwreck indicates that these medicines were widely distributed (Gerth 2006). The ability to easily procure medicines from more remote locations was a result of increasing transportation options in the mid-nineteenth century.

In addition to proprietary medicines, two bottles of Virginia spring water were also recovered at the antebellum cabin--one from Bedford Alum Springs bottle and one from Buffalo Springs (Figure 8.1). Bedford Alum Springs is located in Bedford County, Virginia and Buffalo Springs is located in Mecklenberg County. In the mid-nineteenth century, both springs were the sites of thriving resorts. These resorts, and many others like them throughout the valleys of the Blue Ridge and Appalachian Mountains, developed as a consequence of the curative powers imparted to the springs (Lewis 2001:3).



Figure 8.1 Bedford Alum Springs bottle from Site A. Photograph by Lori Lee.

It was common for slaveholders to bring enslaved laborers with them to the Springs to assist them during their stay. Marian Cobbs brought Maria with her to the springs at least twice (ESH to EWCH July 10, 1857; EWCH to ESH July 31, 1857; EWCH to MSC August 3, 1857; ESH to

EWCH August 10, 1857; HIEJ July 1861). Thus African Americans were not denied access to the Springs, yet their presence was usually predicated on fulfilling the racialized role of servant. Slaveholders, such as Massie, also sometimes brought enslaved laborers so that they could benefit from the healing properties of the springs. Therefore, the role of patient was also a means by which some African Americans gained entry to the Springs. The Bedford Alum Springs and Buffalo Springs bottles found at the antebellum slave cabin were likely used for health practices by the enslaved laborers who lived there. Whether or not this practice was something they chose, or something that was imposed upon them, is unknown.

A bottle of Barry's Tricopherous for the Skin and Hair and a basketweave cologne bottle were recovered at the antebellum cabin. In addition, fragments of three other bottles containing cosmetic liquids were recovered at the edge of the site. These bottles include a Madonna and Child cologne bottle, a cologne bottle with an embossed plume, and a bottle of Harrison's Columbian Hair Dye (Figure 8.2). Although the contents of these bottles may have been used for solely cosmetic purposes, they may have been used in another way. Laurie Wilkie's investigation of late nineteenth-century African-American midwifery practices suggests that midwives may have used these cosmetic liquids to prepare women for childbirth (Wilkie 2003:131-32). The presence of three cologne bottles near the antebellum cabin may be evidence of similar practices. All three of these types of cologne bottles were produced from 1830 through the 1860s (McKearin and Wilson 1978: 408-9). In the twentieth century, Carrie Cobbs Rucker lived on land that was part of antebellum Poplar Forest. She was a mid-wife in the Forest area in the early-to-mid twentieth century. She was a descendant of enslaved laborers from Poplar Forest and may have learned midwifery from her mother.



Figure 8.2 Madonna and Child Cologne Bottle. Photograph by Lori Lee

Hutter documented two purchases of Tricopherous in his account book (HIEJ April 6, 1857; March 4, 1859). He also noted one purchase of cologne (HIEJ August 15, 1857). Remains of a second bottle of Columbian Hair Dye were also recovered at the dependency wing of the main house. This evidence may indicate that some or all of these bottles were products initially purchased by the Hutter family and then shared with or appropriated by enslaved laborers living near the main house at Site A. Alternatively, these bottles may have been reused after they were

discarded or given to enslaved laborers after their initial contents were used. However, store account books from the antebellum period reveal that enslaved laborers were purchasing these kinds of goods (BR account book, LVA). Enslaved laborers worked in the dependency wing and the cook lived in a loft above the kitchen. The bottle of hair dye recovered there may have belonged to an enslaved laborer.

### *Minerals*

In addition to pharmaceutical glass, other kinds of artifacts recovered at Site A were also used for health and well-being. Fragments of sulphur were also recovered within the subfloor pit of the antebellum cabin. Most of these fragments were recovered from float samples, suggesting that more sulphur may have been present at the site, but overlooked due to sampling methods. But the presence of sulphur is likely the result of African American folk remedies or home remedies initiated by Hutter. Emma Hutter used sulphur to relieve stomach problems (EWCH to ESH July 12, 1850). Edward Hutter used it to cure sick pigs (ESH to EWCH September 8, 1841). He may have also given it to enslaved laborers who were suffering from stomach ailments or skin conditions. Alternatively, enslaved African Americans may have used sulphur to treat their illnesses in consonance with African American health practices. According to the testimony of some formerly enslaved people, sulphur matches were sometimes worn as a form of protection from malevolent spirits and sulphur could be thrown in a fire to change luck (Federal Writers Project 2006: 29). The latter practice was something Celestia Avery learned from white women that she worked for (before or after emancipation is unclear), highlighting the European origin of this practice which was adopted by Mrs. Avery when she tried it and found it to work (Federal Writers Project 2006: 29).

Although use of sulphur does not appear to have had African antecedents, African use of minerals that reflected religious and cultural beliefs did transfer to the United States (Hunter 1973; Vermeer and Frate 1975). Geophagy (dirt eating) was practiced throughout the world historically. It was, and is, practiced in Africa for medical purposes such as a remedy for stomach ailments and syphilis and as a mineral supplement for pregnant and lactating women (Hunter 1973: 171-184). Hunter (1973: 192-195) and Vermeer and Frate (1975) found that geophagy was still practiced by some African Americans, particularly pregnant women, in the United States in the 1970s.

In addition to sulphur, other minerals were also found that potentially played some role in folk remedies. These include quartz crystals and fragments of a shiny black mineral that resembles hematite. Although quartz is common at Poplar Forest, the unidentified black mineral was rare enough in the general area that geologists from a local college could not identify it. Finding exotic minerals at sites associated with enslaved laborers is not uncommon. Folklore suggests they may have been used in health-related and/or spiritual practices (Leone and Frye 1999; Puckett 1969). The same case can be made for glass beads, pierced coins, and two fragments of cut silver recovered in the subfloor pit (Davidson 2004; Leone and Frye 1999; Russell 1997; Stine et al. 1996; Wilkie 1997).

### *Charms for Protection and Well-Being*

Both whites and enslaved African Americans used charms for protection, to promote health and well-being, to invoke harm, or to influence the future. Charms are rituals, objects, and groups of objects endowed with supernatural powers (Lee 2011:104). The use of various kinds of charms was practiced in Europe and these practices were brought to the Americas by colonists.

Many of the charms or amulets, like many African American charms and amulets, were made of natural materials and some had multiple uses. For example, beads made from peony root were worn in Sussex, England to prevent epileptic seizures and to aid in teething (Hatfield 2003:10). Rabbit feet were carried to prevent cramps, rabbit bones were carried to aid toothaches, and particular small stones were invested with many sorts of curative properties (Hatfield 2003:10-11). There was considerable overlap between the kinds of materials used as charms by Europeans and African Americans and sometimes the qualities that they attributed to them.

African Americans also fashioned charms from a diverse array of natural and cultural materials including animal bones, plant materials, stones, coins, and beads (Anderson 2005; Chireau 2006; Stine et al. 1996:60). Glass beads were sometimes used as personal charms (Davidson 2004:31; Stine et al. 1996:54, 60). Among former slaves who discussed beads with Federal Work Project Administration interviewers, more described the use of beads for protection and well-being than for personal adornment. Rosa Washington recalled that her mother gave her a string of chinaberry beads to keep her well and protect her from “ghosts” (Washington 1941:137). Mrs. Washington elaborated that: “They’d be pretty. I never had no other kind” (Washington 1941:137). Therefore, she valued her beads for their aesthetic quality as well as protective qualities and, possibly, because they were given to her by her mother.

Marinda Singleton, formerly enslaved in Virginia, recalled that slaves hid charms under their clothing to avoid detection by their masters who did not approve of charm use (Fett 2002: 96). Glass beads, which could be worn as personal adornment or personal charms, were an option that was probably overlooked by masters who did not perceive their dual function. Precisely because of their potential use as common personal adornment objects, beads were ideal hidden transcripts (Scott 1990), conveying one meaning on the surface, but layered with other

meanings beneath this public display. This ambiguity was an important characteristic of some charms used by enslaved African Americans.

According to Cicely Cawthon, glass beads were commonly worn by enslaved infants and children (Waters 2000:55). Mrs. Cawthon was seventy-eight years old when she was interviewed at her Georgia home in 1937 by WPA interviewer Annie Lee Newton. She recalled:

In them days darkies wore beads. Babies wore beads around their necks. You wouldn't see a baby without beads. They was made of glass and looked like diamonds. They had 'em in different colors too, white, blue, and red, little plaited strings of beads. When their necks got bigger, they wore another kind, on 'til they got grown. They trimmed hats with beads, ladies and chillun too (Waters 2000:55).

Liza Smith, born in Richmond, Virginia to African parents around the year 1847, also recalled that enslaved adults wore beads: “All de men and women wore charms, something like beads, and if dey was good or not I don't know, but we didn't have no bad diseases like after dey set us free” (Baker and Baker 1996: 389).

Alec Pope stated: “Some [slaves] wore some sort of beads 'round deir necks to keep sickness away and dat's all I calls to mind 'bout dat charm business” (Hornsby 1941: 176). Pope's statement, prompted in response to a question about use of charms, suggests his reluctance to talk about them. In 1877, folklorist William Owens commented on the intersection of Christianity and African American “superstitions” which he felt resulted in “a horrible debasement of some of the highest and noblest doctrines of the Christian faith” (quoted in Chireau 2006:14). By the 1930s, when the WPA interviews took place, some whites and blacks considered the use of charms a superstitious practice that was inconsistent with Christianity (Powdermaker 1968 [1939]:286). African Americans often chose to distance themselves from this practice—at least verbally through denial of a hidden transcript in an interview with a government employee (who was often white), if not also in actuality. Mollie Williams stated:



“Lots o’ folks carry lucky pieces. It can be a rabbit’s foot, a buckeye, coin, or even a button. It all depends on how much faith you have in it. For my part I’d ruther trust in the good Lord to keep me safe from harm den in all the lucky pieces in de world” (Baker and Baker 1996:449).

Unlike Ms. Williams, some former slaves did not perceive Christianity and the use of charms as incompatible (Wilkie 1997:94). Betty Robinson recounted: “I been a good Christian ever since I was baptized, but I keep a charm here on my neck anyways, to keep me from having the nosebleed. Its got a buckeye and a lead bullet in it. I had a silver dime on it, too, but I took it off and got me a box of snuff” (Baker and Baker 1996:357). Mrs. Robinson’s act of transforming the dime from a charm back into money may indicate a change in her belief in the dime’s value as a charm, or it may indicate situational prioritizing of an economic need.

Sylvia Durant discussed how her adornment practices and charm use changed in relation to her beliefs: “Hear talk dat some would wear [dimes] for luck en some tote dem to keep people from hurtin’ dem. I got a silver dime in de house dere in my trunk right to dis same day dat I used to wear on a string of beads, but I took it off. No, ma’am, couldn’ stand nothin’ like that” (Davis 1941:346-47). Mrs. Durant stopped wearing the coin, and possibly the beads, yet she did not discard the coin or use it as money, so it was still not completely alienable to her. This change in use of the coin reflects how beliefs and practices change over time.

Glass beads were also one kind of object, among many, that were used by enslaved laborers to ease teething among children. Narratives of many former slaves describe various remedies and stringing of all sorts of objects, both natural and cultural, to aid children with the teething process. In the 1920s, folklorist Newbell Niles Puckett stated that this phenomenon was a reflection of the high rate of infant mortality among African Americans (Puckett 1969:345). As discussed above, infant mortality was extremely high among enslaved African Americans in the

antebellum period (Steckel 1988; Savitt 2002); the community at Poplar Forest was no exception.

### *Pierced Coins*

A pierced Spanish half real found at Site A was produced in the 1780s during the reign of Charles III or Charles IV. It is heavily worn and bears two deep impressions that seem to be purposeful modifications. WPA narratives document that pierced and non-pierced coins were worn by enslaved African Americans for protection or well-being (Baker and Baker 1996:235). Sylvia Durant and Betty Robinson, mentioned above, recalled wearing a dime in earlier years (Davis 1941:346-47). Elisha Garey recalled enslaved laborers engaging in this practice: “Slaves wore a nickel or copper on strings ‘round deir necks to keep off sickness. Some few of ‘em wore a dime; but dimes was hard to get” (Hornsby 1941:7). Although Garey grew up in Georgia, his grandmother was from Virginia.

Stephen McCray, born into slavery in Alabama, recounted to an interviewer in Oklahoma: “A dime was put ‘round a teething baby’s neck to make it tooth easy and it sho’ helped too. But today all folks done got ‘bove that” (Baker and Baker 1996: 271). This practice may not have persisted in McCray’s neighborhood in Oklahoma, but it continued in some areas such as Texas and Mississippi (Puckett 1969; Davidson 2004:40).

Folklorist Newbell Niles Puckett collected African American folklore in Mississippi in the 1920s (Puckett 1969). He documented the use of silver coins for good luck, for protection from conjuring, and as a general cure (Russell 1997:68). He noted: “Perhaps silver, however, is the most universal preventative of conjuration . . . One Negro estimates that about half of the Negroes in Columbus, Miss., use silver coins for counter-charms, either tied about their ankles or

put in their shoes” (Puckett 1969:288). He also noted: “The silver coin, so effective in warding off conjuration, is equally effective in bringing good luck when tied around the leg or worn in a necklace about the neck” (Puckett 1969:314). He also discussed uses of copper coins. One African American informant in Mississippi told Puckett that a penny worn around the neck served the seemingly mundane purpose of easing teething for young children (Puckett 1969:346; Wilkie 1997:86–7).

The modification of the pierced real recovered at Site A suggests that it was used for protection (Figure 6.4). Rather than being reserved for economic purposes, the coin was worn because of its perceived protective qualities. Directing resources toward well-being was one way the enslaved attempted to protect themselves from the harsh realities of daily life (Edwards-Ingram 2001, 2005). These harsh realities included oppression, sickness, death, violence, conjure, and separation from family and friends.

### *Conclusions*

Health was precarious in the nineteenth century. Maintaining and restoring it was particularly complex for enslaved laborers whose choices were circumscribed. Their living and working conditions put them at risk for many kinds of diseases and injuries. They could do little to change these conditions because they were enslaved. As health consumers, enslaved laborers had limited input into decisions about their own health care. Virginia legislation in 1856 made it illegal for a druggist to sell “any poisonous drug” to a slave or free black without an owner’s or master’s consent (Savitt 2002:166). When outwardly sick, enslaved people often had to submit to treatment by owners or physicians whether or not they approved of the treatment method. But enslaved laborers could, and did, find ways to engage in African-based health practices through

using objects in distinctive ways and seeking out African American healers. The latter became more complicated in the antebellum period as industrial slavery and increased hiring of enslaved women for domestic service resulted in large numbers of hired enslaved laborers being removed from established networks that were critical for health care and well-being.

Conceptions of the causes of disease and approaches to treatment overlapped between whites and blacks at times and diverged at others. Whites tended to have a systemic view of health that focused on maintaining balance within the body. African Americans had a broader, relational view of health that incorporated supernatural elements and community relations with physical wellbeing. Further complicating this situation, slaveholders' conceptions of what constituted healthy slaves were both racialized and pragmatically defined to incorporate diseases, injuries, and defects that prevented slaves from engaging in labor. Threats to health were common across racial lines, yet sometimes distinctive in type within racial groups. This bolstered slaveholder's perceptions, which were faulty in most cases, that health among African Americans was physiologically distinctive rather than a product of social and environmental constructs.

The antebellum time period was an active time for transitions in health practices for whites and blacks. Alternative healing practices grew in parallel with patent and propriety remedies and these were incorporated alongside folk remedies. All of these practices competed with the growth and secularization of biomedicine. Disease was a shared experience among whites and blacks at Poplar Forest plantation, yet conceptions of the etiology of disease and ideas about healing practices were not always shared. Treatments were accordingly similar in some cases, and divergent in others. Whites at Poplar Forest sought hydropathy in the form of bathing at hot springs to cure various illnesses, yet they did not deem this practice appropriate for

treating enslaved laborers. Perhaps recognizing the curative power of water induced them to supply enslaved laborers with Alum Springs and Buffalo Springs water. This method allowed Hutter to control how enslaved African Americans engaged in hydrotherapy, by bringing the water to the plantation rather than bringing enslaved laborers to the springs.

Hutter favored homeopathic treatments for his own family, so it is likely that he also used them to treat enslaved laborers. Unlike hydrotherapy, the conception of the appropriateness of this sort of treatment for particular groups was not racialized. Since homeopathic treatments were less aggressive and invasive than heroic treatments, they were likely more acceptable to the latter. Homeopathy incorporated medicinal plants and some of these were likely cultivated in the kitchen gardens. Locating the antebellum kitchen garden and analyzing the pollen and phytoliths recovered there could provide additional insight into medicinal plant use of whites at Poplar Forest. Hutter's purchases of belladonna and aconite suggest that he was not cultivating those plants, unless he bought them to obtain seeds to plant. Regardless, this expenditure indicates that he deemed these plants useful as remedies. The Hutter family's use of sulphur likely stemmed from a folk remedy, although the cultural origin of that remedy is unspecified. Whether or not enslaved African Americans used sulphur in accordance with how Hutter's family used it or according to a divergent pharmacology is unknown.

Archaeological and historical evidence shows that enslaved laborers employed multiple strategies to achieve wellness including their own remedies, remedies administered by the planter family and overseer, and remedies provided by local physicians and proprietary medicines. On a local scale, instead of solely subjecting themselves to white professional medicine, enslaved laborers also attempted their own cures made from plants, minerals, and man-made objects in their environment. Using African-based folk medicine may have been a

way to exercise a degree of self-control over their bodies and health. On a broader scale, the consumption of proprietary medicines by the inhabitants of the antebellum cabin represents the use of regional and national health practices that were non-traditional. Yet enslaved laborers incorporated these medicines into or alongside folk medical practices, rather than replacing them, when navigating the fine line between health and illness.

## *Chapter 9*

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In this dissertation, I analyzed whether enslaved laborers' consumer practices empowered them through providing material goods that they used to meet their own needs and desires. I focused on the consumerism of the community of people connected to Poplar Forest. In this final chapter, I summarize my results by answering the research questions I established in the first chapter. Next I discuss the broader implications of my work for other scholars engaged with understanding slavery and consumerism. I conclude by making suggestions for future work.

Travel became more accessible in the antebellum period when extensive canals, roads, and networks were created in regions that previously had limited thoroughfares. Members of the middle class and the elite used these new opportunities to explore other regions and countries. In the late antebellum period, travelers like Olmsted ventured into the Southern United States by way of roads and railroads built by enslaved laborers to experience firsthand the divergent lifestyles they encountered there. Their observations provide clues about how historical transformations impacted the socially vulnerable, including enslaved laborers. I began this research which posits that social transformations occurred through consumer practices of enslaved laborers at antebellum Poplar Forest.

Consumerism is a useful framework for analyzing slavery in the antebellum period because this approach combines social and economic threads. Social and economic conditions were changing rapidly during this time due to several external factors such as industrialization, transportation developments, and labor practices. These factors resulted in increased access to the market economy for many enslaved laborers, which transformed social and economic

relationships between whites and African Americans and among African Americans as well. Specifically, industrialization and transportation developments influenced the availability of recent technologies like ironstone, rubber and gutta percha goods, new varieties of cloth, such as flannel and denim, and access to salt fish and barreled herring and mackerel (Klippel et al. 2011:30). The rapidly changing variety of goods available in the antebellum period meant styles changed rapidly. It seems some whites accepted slave ownership of fashionable goods. Perhaps the presence of fashionable goods and recently available goods at the home of enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest indicates that sartorial laws became more lax with this influx of goods. The conditions that shaped increased access to goods varied according to regional differences, the form of labor enslaved people were engaged in, and the individual practices of slaveholders (Penningroth 2003:46). Because of these idiosyncratic forces, consumerism of slavery can be best understood through local case studies that are imbricated in regional and national processes.

Consumerism is comprised of four stages: production, distribution/access, use and meaning, and discard. I used the first three stages to frame my analysis. I return now to the research questions that I posed in chapters one and three to briefly summarize the results of my research. Struck by the artifact diversity I encountered in assemblages generated by antebellum enslaved laborers, I wondered *What dynamics of change generated these assemblages?* In other words, what social and economic processes from this timeframe intersected with consumer practices to result in assemblages with more artifact diversity than was typical in earlier periods of American slavery? Answering this question required a deep understanding of the developments that were taking place at local and regional scales.

The historical framework of antebellum daily life in Central Virginia was assessed through census data, family letters, newspapers, court records, merchant accounts, farm journals,



plantation management literature, WPA interviews, folklorist interviews with former slaves, and secondary historical sources. While historic documents described some aspects of daily plantation life, archaeological investigations provided insight into other dimensions of the lives of the enslaved that are missing from the historical record.

Histories about antebellum Central Virginia revealed a microcosm of a world in transition. Industrialization was changing physical and social landscapes, demographics, and labor practices. Changing labor included the shift from tobacco to multigrain agriculture production and increased hiring out of enslaved laborers. The labor niche for enslaved laborers expanded to include work in salt mines, iron forges, coal pits, and tobacco factories. Enslaved laborers were hired out in greater numbers and hiring out women became more common. Enslaved laborers, including some men from Poplar Forest, helped to build and maintain roads, railroads, and canals. Ironically, these same transportation systems were used to facilitate the interstate and intrastate slave trade, to transport hired slaves far from their homes (and sometimes bring them back), and to accelerate the flow of material goods produced and consumed by enslaved laborers.

Industrialization initiated the mass-production of affordable goods and newly available transportation options facilitated the transfer of international, national, and regional goods to local markets. Yet, how did these broad-scale changes directly contribute to diverse material worlds in the homes of enslaved laborers? Answering that question requires a narrower focus: *Among these kinds of goods, which goods were accessible to enslaved laborers? And, How were these goods obtained?* The answers to those questions relate to the first two phases of consumerism, production and access. I analyzed macrobotanical evidence, faunal evidence,

plantation records, material culture, and other historical documents for information about the production activities that enslaved laborers engaged in to earn money.

## **Production**

Aside from production of agricultural crops for the Cobbs and Hutter household, enslaved laborers at Poplar Forest cultivated and stored their own crops. These crops provided foods to supplement diet, and, for at least some enslaved laborers, they also provided a means of production of goods to be bartered or sold to each other, to members of the Cobbs and Hutter household, and for market exchange. Auxiliary production of crops and crafts on their own time also provided the enslaved with a degree of autonomy because they were not completely dependent upon the slaveholder for all of their needs. Through this means of production, the enslaved were able to direct their labor toward their own goals.

Artifacts recovered from this site provide evidence of production in the form of assemblages of work-related tools and sewing implements. Enslaved women and girls sewed for the Cobbs-Hutter family as well as for themselves and their families (January 14, 1850, HFJ; January 21-23, 1852, HFJ; Marian Scott Cobbs to Emily Williams Cobbs Hutter, April 16, 1854, HFM). Sewing provided a potential means of acquiring money or bartering for services or goods with other community members. Hutter documented paying cash to a few enslaved men and possibly women on occasion in lieu of providing them with work clothes (April 19, 1857, HIEJ; May 1, 1858, HIEJ). These clothes were consequently probably made by women within the Poplar Forest slave community.

In many similar ways, the enslaved at Poplar Forest sold services or crafts to the Cobbs-Hutter family and others and with their earnings they participated in the internal economy

(HIEJ). Social relations were entangled in these economic transactions. Sewing a shirt for a husband or brother reinforced family relationships. Repayment for this task, perhaps in the form of ribbons and beads purchased at the market, served the same purpose.

Some enslaved men from Poplar Forest likely earned money when they were hired out to salt mines and coal banks and possibly when they were working on railroads. Most salt furnaces operated on the task system and many of the enslaved who worked there earned monetary incentives and extra time off for extra work (Stealey 1993:135). Enslaved laborers who worked in industrial environments often spent their money at company stores set up on site. Enslaved laborers who lived on plantations had to find other means to access goods. House servants spent more time with the slaveholders and sometimes they received goods from them as gifts or provisions as a result. Some house servants at Poplar Forest also had more frequent sanctioned access to markets, because going to market was one of their assigned tasks.

### **Access**

Determining access to goods required considering where they were obtained. I did not identify any merchant account books that documented antebellum purchases by enslaved laborers from Poplar Forest, but artifacts recovered from the antebellum cabin provided clues about access. I combined that evidence with plantation records (HIEJ; HFJ), comparisons with the artifacts recovered near the main house, and data from antebellum merchant account books in Virginia to try and assess what material goods enslaved people acquired independently and which were provisioned by owners. Determining the method of acquisition was important because understanding whether or not enslaved laborers had any agency in the choice of goods was partially contingent on whether or not the goods were provisioned or self-acquired. This task was

complex and easier to apply to some material classes than others. I was able to ascertain broad patterns for food, clothing, and ceramic provisions. Most of the personal adornment items were likely self-acquired, aside from some functional items like buttons, because these were not items slaveholders typically provided for enslaved laborers. They are frequently mentioned as purchases in merchant account records. Buttons were more complicated to disentangle. While several sources indicate that white Prosser buttons and sew-through shell buttons were utilitarian and primarily used for underwear, waistbands, and shirts, I was unable to find good images or descriptions of these types of buttons in reference to clothing specifically for enslaved laborers in the antebellum period, but they are typical of buttons found at other antebellum sites associated with enslaved laborers, such as slave quarters at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage and the assemblage from the south tenant house at Poplar Forest.

Other factors that influenced access to goods included gender, life cycle, and social relationships with the slaveholders. The references Hutter made in his plantation records regarding payments to enslaved laborers for crops and crafts were nearly all made to prime age adult men (between 20 to 30 years of age). He documented other small purchases of crops, fowl, and eggs that were probably obtained from enslaved laborers, but he did not name them. This suggests that men of a certain age were able to engage in more independent production than women, which in turn gave them more access to goods. This is consistent with Barbara Heath's (2004a) analysis of production among late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century enslaved laborers at Monticello. She concluded that disparity likely resulted from women of the same age using food that they produced to feed growing families (2004a: 25). This probably impacted production at antebellum Poplar Forest as well, not only because these women had less time to

engage in production activities, but also because pregnant women and women with young children were more likely to be hired out in the antebellum era.

Social relationships between the enslaved and the slaveholders also seem to be a determining factor in access to goods. In a broader sense, social relations among slaveholders impacted the lives of enslaved laborers in a profound way, determining where they would live and work based on inheritance practices when slaveholders died, married, or expanded their landholdings. The enslaved community at Poplar Forest was comprised primarily of slaves inherited by William Cobbs and by his wife Marian Scott Cobbs in addition to the children of the women in this group and a small number of enslaved laborers purchased by William Cobbs and Edward Hutter. Because many of the enslaved laborers came from plantations where William Cobbs and Marian Scott Cobbs were raised, they had long-term, albeit conflicted, relationships with their owners. In some cases, these long-term relationships seem to have resulted in a degree of cultural capital that may have impacted access to goods.

Sometimes Hutter made purchases in the market for enslaved laborers, who in turn repaid him. The short list of names associated with this practice include some of the men that he paid for crops and crafts, but it only includes the names of three women—Lydia, her mother Viney, and Matilda. Although he once paid Lydia for working on Easter, he did not document paying them for any other labor, crops, or crafts. He does, significantly, give Lydia small monetary “presents.” Lydia eventually became the cook at Poplar Forest and after emancipation she continued to work for the Hutter family until her death in 1919. One of her daughters was named after Edward Hutter’s niece and the only ready-made clothing purchase that Hutter documented for an enslaved person was a dress for one of Lydia’s children. These exchanges, of material and immaterial things, suggest some kind of relationship between Lydia Johnson and the Hutter

family. The strong connection between Matilda Anderson and Emma Hutter was documented in letters. Matilda was also one of two enslaved women that Hutter documented sending to the market in Lynchburg. Therefore, people whom the Cobbs and Hutter families felt a strong emotional attachment to may have had more access to material goods because they were trusted or favored.

To some degree, social relations between the slaveholder and enslaved laborers were framed through paternalism. Hutter assumed the role of patriarch when he provisioned enslaved workers with shoes and clothing or gave them small monetary or material gifts (HFJ, HIEJ). Material culture was a significant means through which relations between slaveholders and the enslaved were alternately expressed, negotiated, challenged, and maintained. Items provisioned by Hutter reflected his idea of what an enslaved laborer should be. To consider what it meant to be an enslaved person from the emic perspective, it was necessary to consider objects that were self-acquired. Because I found no records indicating what enslaved laborers from Poplar Forest were buying, I examined other contemporaneous merchant account books from Virginia for evidence of the spending patterns of enslaved people. This analysis revealed, and the archaeological record at Poplar Forest confirmed, that personal adornment items and self-produced or self-acquired clothing were very important to enslaved African Americans. To understand why they were so important required a contextual analysis of use and meaning.

### **Use and Meaning**

From production practices to navigating the legal, social, and practical restrictions on access to goods, consumerism was an arduous process. Yet it was significant because the result was possession of self-acquired goods that fulfilled needs and desires. *How were these objects used,*

*and what meanings did they hold for their users?* I examined plantation records, WPA narratives, and conducted ceramic analysis, glass analysis, and analysis of personal adornment objects to answer these questions as discussed in chapters seven and eight. I was interested in the multivalence of each of these objects—what they meant to people in their everyday use and, more broadly, how they could be used as instruments of change by helping groups create a new self-definition through revising the cultural category to which the group belonged (McCracken 1988:135).

The purchases of many enslaved workers documented in merchant account books were clothing-related or items of personal adornment (Dew 1994; Heath 2004a; Martin 2008). These objects were used to shape outward appearance, to reflect sense of self, and to attract or signal information to others (Heath 2004a, Galle 2006). Enslaved laborers used mundane objects such as glass beads, ceramics, and stamped clothing fasteners as a means of experiencing personal empowerment through shaping identity, signaling information, and creating and maintaining social relations. When enslaved men and women purchased black silk gloves, cologne, whale bones to make corsets, lace, teawares, velvet, sugar, silk, torpedoes and suspenders, hair combs and myriad other things, they were making statements about what they considered important and necessary. Many of the objects they consumed were clothing and adornment items. Defining themselves on their own terms, through distinctive sartorial choices, was important to them. In this process, they were challenging the dominant perspective of what it meant to be a slave. Through adornment practices, they were re-shaping the cultural category of what a slave should look like, if not the definition of what a slave was. By doing so, they were causing whites to reflect on their perceptions of blacks and shaping their own visions of themselves. This practice

was not new to the antebellum period, but the objects that they used and their ability to access those objects were contingent on the time period.

Some personal adornment objects were likely worn to enhance appearance and to express personality. Other adornment items, such as glass beads, may have served a dual purpose of protection of health and well-being that was influenced by African American and European practices. The archaeological record at Site A revealed that African Americans likely continued to use herbal and object-based health practices, such as use of medicinal plants and charms, alongside incipient biomedical practices that they may have embraced, or may have been imposed on them.

WPA narratives document that pierced coins were worn by enslaved African Americans for protection or well-being (Baker and Baker 1996:235). A pierced Spanish half real found at the cabin site may have been worn for protection. This coin serves as a unique example of a repurposed object in a discussion of consumer practices. The monetary value of the coin was less significant to its African American owner than its value for health and well-being. This is important because it indicates that someone living in a state of imposed material impoverishment made a choice to convert currency into a charm. This is a statement about what was valued. Slave mortality, particularly infant mortality, was high during the antebellum period. Using coins and beads to promote health and wellbeing may be evidence of health care practices by enslaved laborers attempting to overcome the odds and exert some degree of control in the face of the uncontrollable.



## **Discussion: Benefits and Costs**

The life of an enslaved laborer was a life filled with uncertainty and subjugation. Consumerism was a means of mitigating those experiences by providing a degree of empowerment, but it came with additional risks to an already marginalized population. This discussion considers whether or not consumer practices benefited the enslaved people at Poplar Forest. Ultimately I concluded that overall, although there were benefits and costs associated with consumerism, the benefits outweighed the costs.

Enslaved African Americans were faced with the complex situation of making consumer choices within a consumer economy structured to reproduce inequality. They desired equality and independence and they negotiated the system through consumer tactics to acquire material goods that embodied these ideals. While few were able to buy their freedom from slavery, one could argue that the act of consuming goods was liberating in varying degrees.

Although their legal status remained the same, consumerism did change the social distance between enslaved laborers and free people. Consumerism affected the ways that whites perceived enslaved laborers and made many uncomfortable, if not begrudgingly accepting, of the ability of enslaved people to control some aspects of their own lives (particularly hired out laborers). Enslaved people also used consumerism to diminish their experience of marginalization in other important ways. They used consumer tactics to supplement meagre food provisions, create and maintain social relationships, control some aspects of their personal appearance, and shape self-identity through personal adornment. Consumer practices were less successful at changing other realities, such as living conditions and health risks, which may have been more circumscribed by race, poverty, and/or slave status. This does not negate the significance of consumerism for improving the quality of daily life. It indicates that negotiating

agency within the boundaries of slavery was more successful at achieving some goals than others, because agency was never disconnected from slavery.

I do not want to imply that enslaved people never altered power relationships through consumption. Clearly they did, in significant ways and at multiple scales, particularly when they bought their own freedom or the freedom of others. However, I think that recognizing the significance of consumer practices for diminishing social distance and shaping habitus, which directly impacted how people experienced daily life, through mitigating marginalization and social stigma, was also important. Further, although consumerism had a lesser impact on the overarching power dynamic between enslaved laborers and slaveholders, it certainly had an impact on power hierarchies within communities of enslaved people. Several of the enslaved workers at Poplar Forest plantation had access to money. Some also had access to markets. However, access to money and markets was not egalitarian, and these disparities may have exacerbated power dynamics within the enslaved community.

Although it had significant benefits, consumerism also had high costs. Slave leasing altered social and economic conditions and master-slave relationships became increasingly complex. People hired out to industrial environments usually had more access to money and greater access to goods, but these benefits came at the cost of removal from their social networks that they both contributed to and gained from on home plantations. These networks were critical among socially vulnerable people. Hiring out prime-age enslaved men, whom Heath has established were most successful at earning money in the internal economy (along with elderly men), could result in the decline of access to goods these men contributed to households (Heath 2004a). While sometimes hired individuals brought these resources, in the form of clothing-related materials, adornment items, and foods, with them when they returned home during

Christmas week, the overall ability of those who were hired out far away to contribute to the ongoing welfare of their families was at best complicated by their absence.

Protecting and maintaining health also became more complex because working in industrial environments posed new health hazards. Slave leasing contributed to a mediated relationship between owner and slave that was divested of direct concern for the enslaved laborers' well-being. Moses died of dropsy in Kanawha in 1829. George contracted cholera at the salt mines and survived, only to be scalded in an accident a few years later. Harry had a rapidly deteriorating mental condition. Although these three men could have suffered illnesses and accidents at Poplar Forest, had they been there, the difference is that at Poplar Forest they would have had family members to aid them in the recovery process.

Susan lost her young daughter Elizabeth when she was hired out. At the time she was nursing her infant son Coleman and taking care of Elizabeth in addition to the labor she was hired to perform. She did not have family nearby for aid or emotional support. Leasing out pregnant and nursing women had a negative impact on their well-being and that of any other children they were forced to leave behind. This risk may have contributed to an increased economic investment in materials perceived to protect and maintain health and well-being by repurposing mass-produced goods like beads and coins into charms.

Before emancipation, the acquisition of property by the enslaved did not lessen the oppression of slavery, nor did it equate to freedom. Consumer choices were made within the restraints imposed by a racialized social structure within which the enslaved themselves were classified as property. This meant that consumer choices made by the enslaved were not equivalent to similar choices made by whites and they did not carry the same meanings. However, through the selective process of consumer choices the enslaved were able to acquire

things that they both needed and desired. The kinds of choices that they made speak significantly about their values and sense of identity.

The contingent nature of African American consumerism is highlighted by the following event. The value and meaning of objects owned by the Hutter family, as well as the social relations that existed between the former master's family and the enslaved community, were redefined to some degree after emancipation. After plantation matriarch Marian Cobbs died in 1877, an estate sale was held at Poplar Forest. Washington Brown, formerly enslaved at Poplar Forest, purchased iron pots, bowls, saws, chairs, a cow, and a mule (BCWB 24:389). The meanings of these things to Mr. Brown thirteen years after emancipation were likely very different than the meanings of similar objects to him under slavery. Mr. Brown was hired out for several of the last fifteen years before emancipation (HIEJ). This experience may have provided him with the economic resources, skills, and social networks that contributed to his ability to make these purchases.

### **Broader Implications**

What does this study reveal about consumer behavior? As the scenario just described indicates, even when the same consumer is involved, historical transformations that impact social, economic, and political frameworks change consumer practices. Thus the more relevant question is, what does this study reveal about the consumer behavior of enslaved laborers in antebellum Virginia? We learn that consumer practices of enslaved laborers were not leveling. They did not change the legal status of enslaved laborers, but they did reduce the experience of marginalization and influence social status among enslaved laborers.

Within the system of slavery, enslaved laborers did not have equal access to goods and among the goods available to those who had access, choices were proscribed by laws, by mediation of slaveholders, and cost. Among available goods, enslaved laborers invested most heavily in clothing and adornment objects. They did so because these objects were important for self and group identities and possibly because these purchases were acceptable to slaveholders. Clothing and adornment items were also ideal hidden transcripts. Enslaved laborers may have used some adornment goods for spiritual or healing practices partly because the physical forms of these objects were judged to be benign by slaveholders.

This study highlights the importance of analyzing multiple classes of material culture. Every type of artifact recovered was significant to understanding consumer practices. Macrobotanical, faunal, ceramics, glass, buttons, and adornment objects all contributed to understanding which goods were provisioned, which were self-acquired, and how they were used. This is important because some studies of consumerism focus on specific types of material culture while excluding others. Adornment objects and coins are sometimes relegated to small finds purgatory because they are unique and found in smaller numbers than is desirable for quantitative analysis. Documentary evidence corroborated the significance of adornment objects among consumer choices made by enslaved laborers. Failing to prioritize the analysis of adornment objects consequently would have been a mistake.

Another implication of this study is the significance of examining multiple phases of consumerism. Without understanding production, it is hard to grasp the real value of the economically inexpensive objects that were acquired and even the value of the act of consuming. It is important to analyze access because slavery imparted so many restrictions. Access also reveals information about social relationships. To begin to interpret use and meaning requires a

contextual approach because meanings were contingent. Application of this approach reveals that consumer strategies supported the social structure at times and resisted it at others. Were enslaved laborers successful at shaping their worlds through consumer practices? I would say yes, because they accomplished many of the goals they set out to achieve. Did these consumer strategies eradicate the system of slavery? No, but through using consumer practices to define themselves in ways that contradicted the slaveholders conception of “slave” and to maintain practices influenced by African and African American cultural traditions, they did succeed in acquiring degrees of empowerment in the political struggle between slaveholders and the enslaved.

### **Future Directions**

This project was designed to contribute to understanding antebellum slavery in Central Virginia through a case study of a single plantation. Local case studies provide depth, yet they simultaneously lack breadth. The focus of this study was narrow for various reasons. To avoid the problem of using the material remains associated with a single cabin to assess the daily lives of enslaved laborers at antebellum Poplar Forest, I attempted to locate another cabin archaeologically at Poplar Forest. A second cabin was not located in the area that I tested. A second possibility was to attempt to isolate artifact assemblages resulting from enslaved laborers in the mixed deposits excavated at and near the dependency wing. Unfortunately, the materials excavated from the wing were catalogued using an early version of Rediscovery (a software for collections databases), with very limited memory for each digital record. Consequently, comparing the two datasets was difficult. Poplar Forest archaeologists reanalyzed the wing of offices artifacts in 2014, and they are working on the interpretation of this data. More fruitful

comparisons can be made between the materials found during the wing excavations and the materials recovered from the antebellum cabin once that analysis is complete.

An expanded version of this study would also benefit from a more detailed comparison with earlier slave quarters excavated at Poplar Forest. The decision was made early in this research project not to compare the antebellum cabin material with the Quarter Site excavations and the North Hill excavations directed by Barbara Heath (the Wingo's Quarter excavations were just beginning). This decision was primarily based on two factors. First, there is a gap in continuity between the sites. The North Hill was occupied ca. 1770s-1780s and the Quarter Site was occupied ca. 1790-1812 (Heath 1999a). This meant there was a twenty-year gap between the occupation of the Quarter Site and the occupation of the antebellum cabin at Site A (ca. 1833-1858). Enslaved laborers did live at Poplar Forest during this twenty-year period, but the locations of their cabins have not been identified yet. I decided that differences between materials recovered from the North Hill and Quarter Site and those recovered at Site A might reflect temporal differences in addition to cultural change in adornment practices, health and well-being practices, and social relations.

The second factor was that there was a nearly complete, if not complete, change in members of the enslaved community who lived at the North Hill and Quarter Site and those who lived at Site A. This change likely resulted in differing individual, familial, and cultural practices to some degree, which would complicate a comparison between the earlier and later periods. There was also a change in slaveholders between these time periods and since labor practices and slave management techniques were part of this study, it was decided to analyze one timeframe with one slaveowning family.

Finally, an expanded version of this study would benefit from additional comparisons with other antebellum assemblages in Virginia and beyond, to assess regional variability and determine whether or not the assemblage associated with the antebellum cabin at Site A is typical for the time period. Analysis from merchant and planter account books from across the state provided one way to make this assessment without comparing archaeological assemblages. These account books confirmed that items such as perfume, parasols, and corset parts that at first seemed unusual finds at a slave cabin, or perhaps objects gifted by slaveholders, were actually likely items purchased by antebellum enslaved consumers. Yet account books only provide a sliver of data about the kinds of goods owned by antebellum enslaved people.

By undertaking a contextual study of antebellum slavery at Poplar Forest plantation, I have contributed a case study of consumerism, social relations, and slavery in its final phase. The antebellum time period and the location, Central Virginia, have been relatively unexplored in historical archaeological investigations. Therefore this case study is significant because it contributes to a gap in knowledge of antebellum slavery in the region.

The goal of my dissertation was to produce a narrative of consumerism and slavery in the antebellum period. Now that I have completed that synchronic project, I think it would be useful to compare the antebellum cabin site with earlier slave quarters at Poplar Forest to get a diachronic perspective. Although this would not provide insight into how the lives of particular enslaved individuals and families changed over time at Poplar Forest, it would reveal how the lives of enslaved people living in one location changed over time as a result of local, regional, national, and global processes.

Secondly, the Poplar Forest assemblage should be compared to other antebellum assemblages. Pohoke and Portici in Manassas, Virginia, the Quarterpath Site in Williamsburg,



Virginia, and antebellum quarters at Montpelier in Orange, Virginia all have comparative data from the same time period within Virginia. Investigations at the Quarterpath Site and Montpelier are ongoing, but the interim reports indicate that these sites share many similarities with Site A in terms of access to money, adornment items, and medicinal practices. Andrew Jackson's Hermitage in Nashville, Tennessee would also be an interesting comparison for the same reasons. The data from some of the slave quarters at Jackson's Hermitage was recently placed online in the Digital Archive of Comparative Slavery. Thus the data are easily accessible for comparison. Although comparing these data sets would entail all of the problems of compatibility I outlined above, I do think comparing the sites would be useful for understanding regional diversity as long as the inconsistencies in data sets were made explicit in the analysis.

A comparison between the Site A archaeological record and the remains recovered during the Wing excavations would provide more insight into the similarities and differences of the daily lives of enslaved people and slaveholders in the antebellum period. This comparison would be complex because the wing deposits include a mixture of artifacts resulting from activities of the slaveholder's family and artifacts deposited by enslaved laborers who lived and worked at the dependency wing. A comparison between these assemblages would be further complicated by different recovery methods. Artifacts recovered during the initial wing excavations were not screened. Artifacts recovered from Site A were all screened through quarter inch mesh and some materials were screened through smaller mesh during the process of flotation. A significant number of the personal adornment objects, straight pins, several unique artifact types, and most of the fish bone recovered from the Site A subfloor pit were recovered in the flotation process. Comparable materials would consequently be largely absent in the wing assemblage. However, comparing the two assemblages would still be productive once the material has been recatalogued.

Finally, the excavation and analysis of a post-emancipation tenant house at Poplar Forest would be the project I would most like to see completed. After spending so much time thinking about the enslaved people who lived at Poplar Forest in the final years of slavery, I am most curious about what happened to them after emancipation and to their descendants. A community-based archaeology project that focuses on post-emancipation life would be an ideal way to learn more about what happened to people who were formerly enslaved at Poplar Forest based on archaeological evidence and oral tradition. I would particularly like to excavate the former home of Armistead Rucker and Carrie Cobbs Rucker, whose former location at Poplar Forest is known. Carrie Rucker helped take care of many children, whites and African Americans, in the Forest community and she was a mid-wife. Mrs. Rucker had ancestors who were enslaved at Poplar Forest. Her daughter Gertrude Rucker Clark and her husband Courtney Clark were the last inhabitants of Poplar Forest. Courtney Clark served as a caretaker for the property until 1979. A community-based historical archaeology project focusing on the lives of Armistead and Carrie Rucker and their children would provide a significant missing piece in the narrative of life at Poplar Forest and the legacy of slavery in Central Virginia.

Beyond the bounds of Poplar Forest, Virginia, and the antebellum period, this case study provides comparative data for projects exploring African American lives in the post-emancipation period. The Civil War had a profound impact on the social and economic structure of the United States. Production, access, use, and meaning were all affected and consumer strategies were adjusted accordingly. When slavery ended, identity categories became fluid once more. New laws and social practices were immediately engaged to shape the new racialized social order. Comparing the archaeological record of these changes to the antebellum period would provide insight into culture change and trends.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### People:

|      |                                    |
|------|------------------------------------|
| AHR  | Andrew Horatio Reeder              |
| BR   | B. Rousseau                        |
| MSC  | Marian Scott Cobbs                 |
| CJH  | Christian Jacob Hutter             |
| CLC  | Charles Lewis Cobbs                |
| CSH  | Christian Sixtus Hutter            |
| ESH  | Edward Sixtus Hutter               |
| EWCH | Emily (Emma) Williams Cobbs Hutter |
| FAHR | Fredericka Amalia Hutter Reeder    |
| GCH  | George Christian Hutter            |
| JY   | Joel Yancey                        |
| TJ   | Thomas Jefferson                   |
| WC   | William Cobbs                      |
| WRC  | William R. Cox                     |

### Historic Records:

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| BCC   | Bedford County Census                   |
| BCWB  | Bedford County Will Book                |
| BCDB  | Bedford County Deed Book                |
| BCBDR | Bedford County Birth and Death Register |
| HFM   | Hutter Family Manuscripts               |
| HFJ   | Hutter Family Journal                   |
| HIEJ  | Hutter Income and Expense Journal       |

### Repositories:

|      |  |
|------|--|
| JML  | Jones Memorial Library                                     |
| LVA  | Library of Virginia  |
| MHI  | Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Jefferson Papers |
| VDHR | Virginia Department of Historic Resources                  |

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2006-2007 Lecturer, George Mason University Fairfax Campus, Department of Anthropology.

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| Introduction to Anthropology   | African Diaspora Religions                   |
| Historical Archaeology   | Pseudoarchaeology                            |
| Patterns in Prehistory   | Social Life of Things                        |
| Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean  | American Culture: Activism and Social Change |
| Archaeology Field School   | African Diaspora Archaeology                 |
| Culture and Community  | Stuff: Learning from Things                  |
| American Culture: America in the Caribbean: Imperialism, Identity, and Migration |  |

#### Graduate:

Archaeology Field School

### **RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AWARDS**

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#### **Scholarships and Awards:**

2013 Virginia Professional Archaeologist of the Year awarded by The Archeological Society of Virginia, October 26, 2013

2010 SRI Foundation Scholarship for dissertation work

2008 Second Place, Student Paper Competition, Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology Conference, St. Mary's City, Maryland

2001 Winner of the Creative Bowles Social Science Essay Prize, Syracuse University

2000 Graduate Student Summer Scholarship, Syracuse University

2000 Graduate Teaching Associate, Syracuse University

2000 Graduate Student Summer Scholarship, Syracuse University

1999-2001 Graduate Teaching Assistant scholarship

1997 Who's Who in American Universities and Colleges

1997 Alpha Chi National Honor Scholarship Society member

1996 Centennial Scholar, University of Texas at Arlington

1996 Luciano Fannin Cavazo anthropology scholarship

1993-1995 Kilmartin Educational scholarship

1993 Academic Excellence scholarship

#### **Fellowships:**

2005 Resident Fellow in the *Arts, Science and Business Program* at Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany.

**Individual Grants:**

2001 Graduate School Summer Creative Research Grant, Syracuse University

**Collaborative Grants:**

- 2013 University of the Virgin Islands Cultural Award grant for “Transfer 2014.” Produced in collaboration with Edgar Endress and Janet Cook-Rutnik.
- 2010 University of the Virgin Islands Cultural Award grant for “Transfer 2011.” Produced in collaboration with Edgar Endress and Janet Cook-Rutnik.
- 2007 Creative Capital Grant for “Bon Dieu Bon,” focusing on Haitian migration, in collaboration with Edgar Endress.
- 2007 Virgin Islands Council of the Arts grant for “Transfer,” focusing on the cultural impact of the transfer of the Danish West Indies to the United States through the lens of migration. Produced in collaboration with Edgar Endress and Janet Cook-Rutnik.
- 2006 Virgin Islands Humanities Council grant for “Transfer.” Project produced in collaboration with Edgar Endress and Janet Cook-Rutnik.
- 2006 Virgin Islands Council of the Arts grant for “Transfer Day.” Project produced in collaboration with Edgar Endress and Janet Cook-Rutnik.
- 2005 Creative Capital Grant for “Bon Dieu Bon,” focusing on Haitian migration, in collaboration with Edgar Endress.
- 2005 Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute grant in collaboration with Edgar Endress and Janet Cook-Rutnik, for the “Transfer” project.
- 2005 Virgin Islands Council of the Arts grant in collaboration with Edgar Endress and Janet Cook-Rutnik, for “Transfer.”
- 2004 Planning grant from Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts in collaboration with Edgar Endress and Janet Cook-Rutnik, for the “Transfer” project.

**PUBLICATIONS**

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**Book Chapters:**

- 2012 Carved in Stone: Stone Smoking Pipes at Historic Sites in Central Virginia. In *Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest: Unearthing a Central Virginia Plantation*, edited by Barbara Heath and Jack Gary, pp.187-214. University Press of Florida: Gainesville.
- 2012 Consumerism, Social Relations, and Antebellum Slavery at Poplar Forest. In *Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest: Unearthing a Central Virginia Plantation*, edited by Barbara Heath and Jack Gary, pp.234-260. University Press of Florida: Gainesville.
- 2001 Ideal Spaces and Multicentered Places of the Plantation Household. In *Africa: Human Conditions and Global Dimensions*, edited by Seth Asumah, Ibipo Johnston-Anumonwo and John Marah, pp.159-176. Global Publications: Binghamton.

**Journal Articles:**

- 2013 The Discourse of Slavery: Freedom and the Negotiation of Power and Identity in Context. *Transatlantica: American Studies Journal* 2(2012). URL: <http://transatlantica.revues.org/6237>

- 2013(2011) Beads, Coins, and Charms at a Poplar Forest Slave Cabin (1833-1858). *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 40:104-122.
- 2012 Piecing Together the Past: Interpreting Inter-Site Connections at Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest. *Journal of Mid-Atlantic Archaeology* 28: 55-68. Co-authored with Eric Proebsting.
- 2010 Memory, Race, and Place: African American Landscapes at Poplar Forest. *History Compass* 8/12: 1352-1368. Blackwell Wiley Ltd. Co-authored with Barbara Heath.
- 2008 Late Antebellum Slavery at Poplar Forest (1828-62) *Quarterly Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Virginia*. Vol. 63(3):165-177.
- 2001 Traces of Multicentered Places in the Spaces of Plantation Society. *Maxwell Review* Vol. 10 (1): 55 – 61.

#### **Encyclopedia Entries:**

- 2012 'Life in the Slave Quarters,' 'Infanticide.' In *Enslaved Women in America: An Encyclopedia*. Daina Berry and Deleso Alford, eds. ABC-CLIO, Ltd.: Santa Barbara.
- 2011 'Dominican Republic,' 'Haiti.' In *Slavery in the Modern World: A History of Political, Social, and Economic Oppression*. Junius Rodriguez, ed. ABC-CLIO, Ltd.: Santa Barbara.
- 2010 'Charms,' 'Shells.' In *The World of a Slave: Encyclopedia of Material Slave Life in the United States*. Martha Katz-Hyman and Kym Rice, eds. Greenwood Publishing Group: Westport, CT.
- 2007 'St. Croix Rebellion,' 'St. John Revolt.' In *The Encyclopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellions*. Junius P. Rodriguez, ed. ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara.
- 2007 'Emancipation in the Danish West Indies,' 'Abolitionism in the Danish West Indies,' and 'Peter von Scholten.' In *The Encyclopedia of Emancipation and Abolition in the Transatlantic World*. Junius P. Rodriguez, ed. M.E. Sharpe, Inc.: New York.
- 2007 'African Burial Ground,' 'Infanticide.' In *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political and Historical Encyclopedia*, Junius P. Rodriguez, ed. ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara.
- 2006 'Peter von Scholten,' 'Abolition and Emancipation in the Danish West Indies.' In *The Encyclopedia of Antislavery, Abolition and Emancipation*. Peter Hinks and John McKivigan, eds. Greenwood Publishing Group: Westport, CT.

- 1997 'African Burial Ground,' 'Enslavement of Native Americans,' 'Infanticide,' and 'Archaeology of the Slave Trade.' In *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*. Junius P. Rodriguez, ed. ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara.

### **Coauthored Reports:**

- 2005 Poplar Forest Archaeology: Studies in African American Life. Excavations and Analysis of Site B, Southeast Curtilage. June 2004-June 2005. Report to the Public Welfare Foundation. Barbara J. Heath, Randy Lichtenberger, Keith Adams, Lori Lee and Elizabeth Paull. August 31, 2005. Manuscript on file at Poplar Forest.
- 2004 Poplar Forest Archaeology: Studies in African American Life. Excavations and Analysis of Site A, Southeast Terrace and Site B, Southeast Curtilage. June 2003-June 2004. Report to the Public Welfare Foundation. Barbara J. Heath, Randy Lichtenberger, Keith Adams, Lori Lee and Elizabeth Paull. June 15, 2004. Manuscript on file at Poplar Forest.

### **INVITED PAPERS**

- 2014 Hearth and Home: Excavating a Kitchen at Historic Sandusky Plantation. History Department Lecture Series. Lynchburg College. Lynchburg, VA. April 16, 2014.
- 2014 "*We are all well white and black*": The Intersection of Gender, Slavery, and Health in antebellum Central Virginia. Archaeology Institute of America David Anthony, Sr. Memorial Lecture. Randolph College. Lynchburg, VA. April 9, 2014.
- 2014 Situational Identity: The Materiality of Illegal Migration. Society for Historical Archaeology Annual Meeting. Quebec City, Canada. January 11, 2014.
- 2013 "(Re)-membering Self: The Personal Archive of a Displaced Haitian" Disasters, Displacement, and Human Rights Conference. American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. Chicago, IL. November 23, 2013.
- 2013 "The Materiality of Migration" Lynchburg Goes Global symposium. American Globe Preservation Society. Lynchburg, Virginia. May 4, 2013.
- 2013 "*We are all well white and black*": Health and Well-Being at Nineteenth Century Poplar Forest" Mid-Atlantic Archaeology Conference. Virginia Beach, Virginia. March 9, 2013.
- 2013 "*It was a Great Trial*": The Legacy of Emancipation at Poplar Forest Plantation. Legacy of the Civil War and Emancipation panelist. Lynchburg College. Lynchburg, Virginia February 20, 2013.
- 2013 "(Re)-membering Self: The Personal Archive of a Displaced Haitian" Disasters, Displacement, and Human Rights Conference. University of Tennessee at Knoxville. February 9, 2013.

- 2013 Invited Panelist “Building the Atlantic Mosaic: Piecing Together Archaeology, Memory, and Memorials of the African Diaspora” Society for Historical Archaeology Conference, Leicester, England, January 10, 2013.
- 2012 *“They would not like this country if they were to return”*: The Liminal State of Hired Slaves in Antebellum Central Virginia. Presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference, Baltimore, Maryland, January 7, 2012.
- 2011 “Memory, Race, and Landscape: Historical Archaeology at Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest.” Fort Vancouver Lecture Series. Fort Vancouver National Historic Park, Vancouver, Washington. July 21, 2011.
- 2011 “To employ themselves about their little affairs”: Consumerism and Antebellum Slavery at Poplar Forest. John Turner Lecture at Lynchburg College, Lynchburg, Virginia February 24, 2011.
- 2010 *“Someone’s in the Kitchen: Interpreting Slavery at Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest.”* Presented at the Many Voices, One Story? Public History Narratives of Native American and African American Histories conference, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina. April 17, 2010.
- 2009 “(Re)membering the Past: Archaeology, Race, and Structural Violence in Central Virginia. Panelist on the “Unearthing Social Justice: Archaeology and Crisis” panel at the Advancing Social Justice in Times of Crisis, Sixth Annual Public Anthropology conference. American University, Washington D.C. October 10, 2009.
- 2008 “Undocumented: The Materiality of Haitian Migration.” Text and Community Program for the Mason Project on Immigration. George Mason University. Fairfax, Virginia. April 15, 2008.
- 2008 “Land of the Free, Home of the Slave: Race and Contested Human Rights in antebellum Virginia.” Archaeology and Human Rights public symposium at George Mason University. Fairfax, Virginia. February 29, 2008.
- 2005 “Memory, Race and Place: Historical Archaeology at Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest.” Presentation to Lambda Alpha Anthropology Honor Society at the University of Texas at Arlington, February 23, 2005.

### **PRESENTED PAPERS**

- 2014 “Health and Well-being at Antebellum Poplar Forest.” Facing the Past, Freeing the Future: Slavery’s Legacy, Freedom’s Promise. Randolph College. Lynchburg, VA. April 4, 2014.
- 2013 “The Goods (and the Bads) of Southern Shops: Considering the Impact of Supply and Distribution on the Consumer Practices of Slaves in Nineteenth Century Virginia.”



- Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology annual meeting. Wilmington, DE. November 10, 2013.
- 2013 “Beads, Coins, and Charms at a Poplar Forest Slave Cabin (1833-1858)” Society for Historical Archaeology Conference, Leicester, England, January 10, 2013.
- 2012 “People's Remedies: Nineteenth Century Health Practices among Enslaved Laborers at Poplar Forest plantation”. Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting. Memphis, Tennessee. Co-authored with Adam Brinkman. April 20, 2012.
- 2012 “Written in Stone?: Considering Race and Ethnicity through Historic Stone Pipes in Central Virginia”. Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting. Memphis, Tennessee. April 21, 2012.
- 2012 “On/Site Production: The Antebellum Landscape at Poplar Forest”. Presented at Mid-Atlantic Archaeology Conference. Virginia Beach, Virginia. March 24, 2012.
- 2011 “They would not like this country if they were to return”: The Liminal Status of Hired Slaves in Antebellum Central Virginia. Presented at Virginia Forum, Lexington, Virginia, March 25, 2011.
- 2011 “Piecing Together the Past: Interpreting Inter-Site Connections through Small Finds at Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest.” Presented at the Middle Atlantic Archaeological Conference, Ocean City, Maryland. Paper co-authored with Eric Proebsting. March 18, 2011.
- 2011 “Transforming the Institution: Consumerism and Slavery in Antebellum Central Virginia.” Presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference, Austin, Texas, January 8, 2011.
- 2010 “Beads, Bells, and Trinkets in Bright Colors”: Personal Adornment in the Context of Antebellum Slavery at Poplar Forest (1830-1858). Presented at the Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology annual meeting, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, October 31, 2010.
- 2010 “Carved in Stone: Stone Smoking Pipes at Historic Sites in Central Virginia.” Presented at the Southeast Archaeological Conference, Lexington, Kentucky, October 29, 2010.
- 2010 “Edward Hutter’s Poplar Forest in Mr. Jefferson’s Neighborhood.” Presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference, Amelia Island, Florida, January 9, 2010.
- 2009 “Racial Borders and Temporal Frontiers: Slavery at Antebellum Poplar Forest (1830-1862).” Presented at the Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting. Atlanta, Georgia. April 25, 2009.

- 2009 “People, Traces and Things: (Re)membering Antebellum Slavery at Poplar Forest.” Presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference. Toronto, Canada. January 9, 2009.
- 2008 “Consumerism, Social Relations, and Slavery at Late Antebellum Poplar Forest (1828-1862).” Presented at The Council for Northeastern Historical Archaeology Conference. St. Mary’s City, Maryland. October 25, 2008.
- 2008 “The Smallest Things Forgotten: Comparative Analyses of Three Subfloor Pit Assemblages at Poplar Forest.” Presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference. Albuquerque, New Mexico. January 10, 2008. Paper co-authored with Barbara Heath.
- 2007 “Memory and Meaning: Life and Labor at Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest.” Presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference. Williamsburg, Virginia. January 11, 2007. Paper co-authored with Barbara Heath and Randy Lichtenberger.
- 2006 “Memory, Race and Place: African American Landscapes at Poplar Forest.” Presented at the Society for American Archaeology Conference. San Juan, Puerto Rico. April 22, 2006. Paper co-authored with Barbara Heath.
- 2005 “(Re)membering Self: Migration, the Personal Archive, and the Materiality of Memory.” Presented at the Memory and Migration Symposium in Stuttgart, Germany. June 11, 2005.
- 2005 “Memory, Race and Place: African American Landscapes at Poplar Forest”. Presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference. York, England. January 9, 2005.
- 2003 “Slavery in the Danish West Indies: Archaeology and Education at Annaberg Plantation, St. John, USVI”. Presented at the World Archaeology Conference, Washington, D.C. June 24, 2003.
- 2003 “Bon Dieu Bon: Roots and Routes of Haitian Migration.” Presented at the Critical Moments conference at Emory University, March 29, 2003.
- 2002 “African Cultural Transitions in the Danish West Indies.” Presented at the Uncovering Connections Conference: CUNY Medgar Evers College, March 16, 2002.
- 2001 “Traces of Multicentered Places in the Spaces of Plantation Society.” Presented at the New York African Studies Association Annual Conference, SUNY Brockport, April 28, 2001.
- 2000 “The Discourse of Slavery: Slave Narratives and the Negotiation of Power and Identity in Context.” Presented at the New York African Studies Association Annual Conference, Colgate University. April 26, 2000.

- 2000 “Illness as Identity: Women’s Health in the 19th Century.” Presented at Gendered Revisions: Identity, Culture and Conflict, SUNY Binghamton. April 9, 2000.
- 1998 “Articulating the Anorexic: A Comparison of Emic and Etic Perspectives.” Presented at the Graduate Student Organization Annual Conference, University of Texas at Arlington. April 10, 1998.

### **SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 2014 Board Member, Anne Spencer House and Gardens
- 2014 Co-organized symposium: Facing the Past, Freeing the Future: Slavery’s Legacy, Freedom’s Promise. Randolph College. April 3-5, 2014.
- 2012-14 Diversity Enrichment Program Committee Member, Randolph College
- 2012-14 Gender and Minority Affairs Committee Member. Society for Historical Archaeology.
- 2012-13 Co-organized symposium: Landscapes of Slavery in Virginia. Mid-Atlantic Archaeology Annual Conference. Virginia Beach, Virginia. March 24, 2012
- 2010-11 Council of Virginia Archaeologists Collections Committee Member.
- 2005 Co-organized and co-chaired symposium: Memory and Migration. Arts, Science, and Business Program. Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany. June 9-11, 2005.
- 2001 Graduate Student committee member of the Physical Anthropologist faculty search committee, University of Texas at Arlington
- 1995-98 Graduate Student Council Anthropology Representative, University of Texas at Arlington
- 1995-97 Graduate Student Affairs Committee Member, University of Texas at Arlington
- 1997 UTA Lambda Alpha Anthropology Society President

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

- Fall 2012-present Ainsworth Visiting Professor of American Culture. Randolph College. Lynchburg, Virginia.
- 2008-July 2012 *Archaeology Lab Supervisor*, Corporation for Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest. Forest, Virginia.
- 2008-present Responsible for creating and maintaining archaeology displays at Poplar Forest, including permanent exhibits, annual exhibits, special event exhibits, and loaned artifacts.
- 2006-2007 *Instructor*, George Mason University Fairfax Department of Anthropology. Fairfax, Virginia.
- Summer 2006 *Lab Staff Archaeologist*, Corporation for Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest. Forest, Virginia.
- Summer 2005 *Lab Staff Archaeologist*, Corporation for Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest. Forest, Virginia.
- Summer 2004 *Lab Staff Archaeologist*, Corporation for Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest. Forest, Virginia.
- 2002-2003 *Senior Staff Archaeologist*, Corporation for Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest.
- 2002-2003 Responsible for creating and maintaining archaeology displays at Poplar Forest, including permanent exhibits, annual exhibits, special event exhibits, and loaned artifacts.

2001-2002 *Cultural Resource Technician* GS 0401-05, Virgin Islands National Park Service.  
St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands.  
2000-2001 *Graduate Teaching Assistant*, Syracuse University,  
Summer 2000 *Archaeology Field School Supervisor*, St. John, USVI. Syracuse University.  
1999-2000 *Graduate Teaching Assistant*, Syracuse University.  
Summer 1999 *Archaeology Field School Teaching Assistant*, Syracuse University.  
Summer 1998 *Archaeology Field Supervisor*, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Forest,  
Virginia.  
1995-1997 *Graduate Teaching Assistant*, University of Texas at Arlington.  
Summer 1997 *Archaeology Intern*, Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, Nashville, Tennessee.

### **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

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American Anthropological Association  
Society for Historical Archaeology  
Society for American Archaeology  
American Studies Association  
Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology  
Council of Virginia Archaeologists  
Southern Historical Association