

# Bounded Yards and Fluid Boundaries: Landscapes of Slavery at Poplar Forest

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**In the spring of 1798, Thomas Jefferson's son-in-law informed him that several slaves had planted tobacco on his Albemarle County property without his permission. Randolph's refusal to let them raise it, and insistence that they grow something sanctioned by Jefferson in its place indicates that this tobacco was being cultivated on their allotted grounds, in their own time, and for their own profit. Jefferson's response to this entrepreneurial spirit was unambiguous.**

...I thank you for putting an end to the cultivation of tobacco as the peculium of the negroes. I have ever found it necessary to confine them to such articles as are not raised on the farm. There is no other way of drawing a line between what is theirs & mine....(1)

This exchange hints at the “after hours” activities of enslaved people living on plantations throughout Virginia and the limits placed upon them by slaveholders. While assigned tasks were often explicitly described in the historic record, activities that slaves organized and undertook for their own benefit and in their own time are often difficult to trace. Nevertheless hunting and gathering attest to an intimate understanding of the natural landscape, while through gardening people consciously shaped the land for ends that stood outside of an owner's control. Market gardening and poultry raising, perhaps more directly tied to the dominant plantation regimen, reveal how slaves used agriculture for their own purposes, and how they organized their labor to do so. Together, these economic actions, coupled with kinship networks and the mandatory requirements of servitude, combined to extend their world far beyond the plantation boundaries.

The consideration of a variety of evidence—archaeological traces of houses and yards, preserved fragments of seeds, artifacts, slave censuses, runaway advertisements, store accounts, and letters—is essential in reconstructing how one group of enslaved African Americans shaped the landscapes they inhabited.

By the time Thomas Jefferson was 31 years old, he held 187 men, women, and children in bondage. Although the population fluctuated over time with births, deaths, sales, and purchases, he remained one of the largest slave owners in central Virginia throughout his life. The number of individuals living at his Poplar Forest plantation ranged from a low of 27 in 1774 to a high of 94 in 1819. During this time, they created a community of extended, multi-generational families, tied by bonds of blood and friendship to the Monticello enslaved community and to a broader community spread across the region.(2)

African Americans living at Poplar Forest were, for the most part, two or more generations removed from the Old World. Clearly the social upheaval of the Middle Passage, institutionalized slavery, and the Anglo-American culture of the slaveholding class were important factors in the development of a creole culture. Equally important was the physical reality of the place. As Americans, they experienced climate, topography, and environmental factors quite different from those of their African ancestors. Together, these cultural and natural factors influenced the ways in which people reacted to and shaped the landscape around them.

Here, the term landscape is used in two ways. First, it refers to the physical result of the continuing interaction between people and nature. Second, landscape describes the real and perceived boundaries that limited one's experience of the world. Institutionalized slavery provided the overarching framework for these boundaries, but the network of

Session Two:

Agricultural  
Lifeways and  
Technologies



## Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape

social and economic connections that individuals created could stretch or tighten these limits.

### West Africans in Virginia

In discussing the identity of Poplar Forest slaves, it is important to outline the assumptions used concerning the origins of Africans brought to Virginia as slaves. The fragmentary and inexact nature of the source material has led scholars to disagree about the ethnicities and absolute numbers of individuals transported. However, most scholars believe that the majority of slaves imported into Virginia during the colonial period came from West Africa, with the largest numbers dominated by the Igbo cultural group from the region surrounding the Bight of Biafra. Akan-speakers from the Gold Coast made up the next largest proportion of transported Africans, followed by Senegambians.(3)

Clues about the origins of Jefferson's slaves survive in legal documents and in naming practices carried out within their community. Jefferson inherited the majority of his bondspeople from his father-in-law John Wayles, a large planter and entrepreneur who engaged in the transatlantic slave trade. The extent of Wayles's participation is unclear; however debts he incurred continued to plague his son-in-law nearly 25 years after his death.(4) It is possible that some of the men and women he held in bondage, and who Jefferson subsequently inherited, were transported by Wayles.

Slaves from 11 quarter farms, including "Guinea" and "Angola," made up the Wayles' legacy. Oral histories, the recorded ages of a few individuals and naming practices suggest direct ties to Africa. Akan day names survive alongside others suggestive of Fanti or Igbo

origins in the slave censuses Jefferson kept. Many men and women had names suggestive of origins in the Spanish or Portuguese-speaking world.(5) Further analysis of family connections and naming practices is needed to determine the extent to which West African or Caribbean naming practices persisted within families through time.

### Agricultural Traditions

Enslaved West Africans and their descendants formed the backbone of the tobacco and wheat-based plantation economies of colonial and antebellum Virginia. They came from regions with economies based on the cultivation of grains like millet and sorghum, root crops of yams and cocoyams, and starchy fruits like bananas and plantains. Agriculturists from Senegal to the Bight also commonly grew legumes, fruits, and bulbs. Maize, cassava, and tobacco from the New World reached West Africa beginning in the late fifteenth century and became important crops throughout the region.(6) Farmers made crop choices based primarily on the amount and dependability of rainfall. Grains that could be planted and harvested in fairly dry conditions predominated in the northern interior regions, while root crops were the staple foodstuffs of the south. Although some groups engaged in irrigated farming for rice, tree farming, and shifting cultivation in the region, West African farmers principally practiced rotational bush fallow in both the savanna and forest.(7)

In some societies, the care of individual crops was divided along gender lines, while in others work was divided by task rather than product, with men involved in clearing and tilling virgin land, and women employed in planting, tending and harvesting.(8) Farmers planted fields for periods ranging from

three to six years, employing a variety of strategies to stretch fertility and yield. They planted multiple crops within the same plot, a strategy that served the dual function of discouraging weed growth and erosion and protecting their harvest if one crop should fail. Where rainfall allowed, farmers planted crops in succession to ensure a constant supply of food. Finally, they rotated plantings within each plot to slow down the depletion of nutrients in the soil. After several years of heavy cultivation, land was allowed to lie fallow and regenerate for four to ten years before planting resumed. In some areas, farmers planted fallow fields with carefully selected cover crops; in others they allowed fields to regenerate naturally, only intervening to prevent the regrowth of trees.(9)

Rotational bush fallow shared some important characteristics with Virginia land-use patterns of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Cycles of land clearance, use, and abandonment characterized tobacco cultivation for much of the Chesapeake, with Indian corn or wheat often replacing tobacco before fields were completely exhausted.(10) By the late eighteenth century, Jefferson and many of his contemporaries used strategies such as crop rotation, selected cover crops for soil regeneration, and intercropping to boost yields.(11) While the context of these practices may have differed between landowners and enslaved workers, the practices themselves would certainly have been familiar to West African farmers.

West Africans and Virginians also shared elements of farming technology. Hoes were an important tool on both sides of the Atlantic, and Africans most likely found the transition from digging sticks and machetes to dibbles and cut-toes an easy one.(12) Thus, while enslaved farmers in Virginia did not nec-

essarily introduce new agricultural methods to North America, their familiarity with the technology, crops, and land use patterns current in colonial Virginia made the transition from Old World to New an efficient one from the perspective of their owners.(13)

### **The Poplar Forest Landscape**

The Poplar Forest landscape from the 1770s through the 1820s consisted of a changing mosaic of woodlands, farm fields, meadows, and waste grounds divided into quarter farms and punctuated by dispersed settlements. Networks of roads and footpaths connected these settlements, defined by an overseer's house, slave quarters, barns, and other outbuildings. Shared resources such as a blacksmith's shop, a tobacco prizing barn, and a grain threshing barn stood roughly equidistant to living quarters and convenient to public roads. Tobacco drying barns, cowsheds, and other farm structures adjoined fields and pastures within each quarter farm.(14)

Enslaved African Americans shaped fields and forests at Poplar Forest during their working hours to fulfill a variety of tasks. In their private time, they continued to alter this landscape to meet their own needs. Archaeological investigations of two sites—the North Hill and the Quarter—provide some important clues about after hours activities. Both slave quarters were associated with the “old plantation” complex nestled between the branches of the Tomahawk Creek near the center of the Poplar Forest tract. There, men constructed houses on the margins of eroded fields, a strategy perhaps mandated by overseers to ensure that the most productive land remained in cultivation.

Archaeologists discovered the remains of a subfloor pit at the North

Hill. Such features are rectangular compartments set beneath cabin floors that slaves used for storing foodstuffs and other belongings. Artifacts found in the fill of the pit indicate that this dwelling was abandoned sometime before the mid-1780s. An erosion gully cut across the hillside southwest of the cabin, and residents filled it with trash in the final quarter of the eighteenth century. The fill of the gully was cut by the line of a palisade fence that formed a substantial enclosure. It is probably associated with another cabin located outside of the excavation area and dating to a slightly later period.

The Quarter was occupied between 1790 and 1812. Members of at least three households lived at the site. Their log houses aligned roughly southwest to northeast, but did not form part of a rigidly defined slave row. The cabins were bounded on the south by a possible garden enclosure, and on the north by work yards. One yard was enclosed and shared by the occupants of two of the dwellings.(15) The most intensively used areas of the site appear to be the northern yards that were sheltered from the surveillance of the overseer, whose house was located behind the cabins on the crest of the hill.(16)

Floral and faunal data from both sites provide important insights into the ways that residents exploited the surrounding landscape. Seeds and bones preserve evidence of foraging and possible gardening activities as well as hunting, trapping, and fishing, pointing to the development of distinctly African-American foodways.(17)

Some carbonized remains, such as corn kernels or sunflower seeds, represent food that was directly consumed. Others represent what slaves discarded after they used the leaves, stems, or roots of the plant. Evidence of at least 35 species was recovered at the North

Hill. These included seven fruits, eight vegetables and grains, two to three nuts, nine edible herbs, four weeds, three grasses, one ornamental and one condiment.(18) Of these, nearly three-quarters represent domesticates. These may have arrived at the quarter in the form of provisions, or slaves may have raised them in kitchen gardens or allotted plots. Slightly more than one quarter of the plant remains represent native fruits, nuts and edible and medicinal herbs—species that clearly fell outside of the plantation provisioning system.

The subfloor pit in the North Hill cabin was particularly rich in carbonized floral remains, yielding nearly all of the grains and edible weeds, and just under half of the fruits. The erosion gully contained small quantities of grains and edible weeds, and half of the fruit seeds and pits.(19)

The variety of identified floral types recovered at the Quarter Site was less rich, consisting of only 15 species. These included six fruits, four vegetables and grains, two nuts, and three edible herbs. Most plant remains were associated with the fill of a single subfloor pit in one of the cabins.(20)

While the majority of plant remains identified at the Quarter Site to date represent domesticated species, just over 20% are gathered, native plants, including nuts, edible herbs, and native wild species. The proportion of domesticates to wild species is somewhat lower than that of the North Hill, but it nonetheless indicates the continuing importance of foraging.

How did slaves know which plants were valuable to gather? In discussing the transfer of African knowledge to the Caribbean landscape, anthropologist Merrick Posnansky has noted that plants from the same families were used in similar ways on both sides of the Atlantic.

## Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape

This does not mean that West Africans were necessarily the first to utilize such plants in the Caribbean, but it does mean that they were able to assimilate the knowledge of their Indian predecessors rapidly, grasp the potentialities of the plants on or near the plantation, and integrate this new information with their own considerable knowledge of plants and the pharmacopoeia of the obeah men and women.(21)

The similarities of usage between some native herbs on Jamaica and in the American South suggests such a transfer occurred in Virginia as well.(22)

All of these native plants grew in areas readily accessible to enslaved residents foraging within the plantation landscape. Many grew in open fields, disturbed grounds, and the edge zone separating forest from field. Others, like acorns and hickory nuts, could be collected in forested areas. Black walnut was a species valued by Jefferson, and most likely remained easily accessible as a garden tree after 1806 when he began landscaping the grounds around his house. Slaves may have encouraged the growth of fruit and nut trees near their quarters, a practice in keeping with the cultivation of fruit and nut-bearing trees in the Caribbean and West Africa.(23)

The native plants represented by carbonized remains served a variety of nutritional uses. Most could be directly consumed as greens, cooked as potherbs, or harvested for their seeds, which could be parched for cereal or ground for flour.(24) African Americans in the South used violets to make soup, and the plant became known as "wild okra."(25) Fruits could be distilled into alcohol or dried for later use.(26)

African Americans also used these plants, as well as domesticated species, to combat sickness. While Jefferson

employed a neighboring physician to tend to the ill or injured, slaves chose to treat themselves or, in cases beyond their skill, to consult a local "negro doctor."(27) Leaves, roots, bark, and even pits held curative properties for a host of maladies.(28) While the use of native fruits and herbs was widespread among both blacks and whites in the South, the combination of plant use with West African beliefs about the causes and cures of sickness and disease formed a distinctly African-American approach to healing. Archaeologists working on other sites occupied by enslaved families and their descendants have discovered similar assemblages of wild plants, suggesting that strategies for approaching illness that developed under slavery continued in the post-Emancipation south.(29)

Enslaved gardeners may have also cultivated several of these plants around their cabins for their aesthetic qualities.(30) While archaeologists have investigated the retention of African traditions of yard sweeping, and scholars have discussed the appearance of yard art in post-Emancipation settings, little is currently known about the extent to which enslaved peoples modified the landscape for beauty alone.(31) In the end, plants fulfilled multiple functions, and probably were valued for all of their properties.

While it is likely that slaves gathered the edible herbs, medicinal plants, and many of the native fruits in their own time, their source for domesticated plants is less clear. Corn and wheat were staples within the provisioning system. Jefferson's records of provisions, however, indicate that he customarily allotted these grains as flour rather than raw ears and sheaves.(32) It is unclear to what extent slaves gathered corn, wheat, oats, and rye from

plantation fields for their own use, and to what extent they raised these grains in their own plots.

Perhaps more intriguing is the presence of sorghum in the fill of the sub-floor pit associated with the North Hill. A staple of the West African diet, the grain was unfamiliar to Jefferson, who called it "guinea corn" when he received a parcel of seeds from his friend James Madison in 1791.(33) Its association with the North Hill indicates that sorghum was in use at least six years prior to his acquaintance with it. This contradiction in evidence suggests that enslaved men and women were cultivating the crop for themselves without Jefferson's knowledge.

Jefferson made no direct references to providing slaves with land for their own gardening efforts at Poplar Forest.(34) However, he recorded purchases of garden produce and poultry, as well as grass seed, hay, and fodder from enslaved men and women living on his own and neighboring plantations.(35) These activities were widespread throughout the Southeast and the Caribbean. Men tended to provide the majority of garden produce, animal skins, grasses, and fodder, while women provided the bulk of the eggs.(36)

Archaeologists recovered relatively small numbers of animal bones at each site that provide additional clues about residents' diets and their after-hours engagement in hunting, trapping, and fishing.(37) Pigs provided the staple meat diet at both quarter sites. The predominance of foot, cranial, and long bone fragments indicates that slaves received less meaty portions of the animals that were distributed as part of their pork provisions.(38) Bones from other domesticated species, such as cows and chickens, were found in relatively small numbers.(39)

Faunal analyst Susan Andrews has noted that the highly fragmented mammal bones recovered at the North Hill may be attributed to the theory of the “one-pot meal,” which is a method of cooking that is based on African traditions. This would presumably involve the breaking of bones into pieces small enough to fit into a cooking crock so that stews or dishes such as hoppin’ john could be prepared.(40)

Wild species made up an additional portion of the slaves’ meat diet. They consumed white tailed deer, eastern cottontail rabbits, eastern gray squirrels, opossums, a woodchuck, a raccoon, and a fresh water bass or sunfish.(41) While all of these species are edible, some of the small mammals may also have been hunted for their skins. These could be used at home or sold, traded, or bartered for goods.(42)

No significant variability was observed between the sites, although the North Hill appears to have had more diversity in wild species. Because of the poor preservation of the bones at both sites, it is impossible to establish whether the decline of diversity points to an increased reliance on provisions over time, or whether it simply reflects taphonomic biases.(43)

Archaeologists found lead shot of various weights and gunflints at both sites and a musket frizzen at the North Hill. Together with the variety of wild animals remains present, these artifacts indicate that some enslaved individuals had access to firearms and used them for hunting. Fishing, hunting, and trapping most likely took place during the evenings or on Sundays when slaves were dismissed from plantation labor. While all of the bones found represent animals that likely inhabited the Poplar Forest fields and woodlands, slaves might have had occasion to go further afield to find food.

### **Poplar Forest Slaves and the Broader Landscape**

What do we know about the movement of enslaved men and women at Poplar Forest? While travel was legally restricted to those with permission to do so, boundaries appear to have been less rigid than the law implied. From a relatively early age, Jefferson’s slaves knew of and experienced a landscape that extended far beyond the borders of their home plantation. Through a variety of mandatory assignments and voluntary choices, they left the plantation and experienced this wider community. Ties of kinship, economic activities, work assignments, and acts of rebellion, separately or in combination, influenced the frequency and distance of their travel.

Some men and women were separated from family members by “abroad marriages” or sales, and made travel a regular part of their weekly routine to visit spouses, children, and relations. Others left the plantation to pursue economic activities in local shops or markets, or to attend church services.(44) For many Poplar Forest slaves, travel was a part of their assigned work load. Wagoners carried goods to and from Lynchburg and area mills; messengers ran errands throughout the neighborhood.(45) These trips strengthened ties not only between landowners, but also between enslaved workers, who doubtlessly used such opportunities to renew acquaintances with their neighbors.

Because of the close ties between the two plantations, many Poplar Forest slaves traveled to Monticello, extending their knowledge of central Virginia far beyond the bounds of Lynchburg. As assigned by Jefferson and his overseers, they transported goods and livestock, provided labor at key points in the harvest cycle, and served

apprenticeships.(46) People also voluntarily traveled between the two plantations to visit family members.(47)

The route, whether followed by wagon or on foot, wound through Buckingham County, fording the James River at Warren before entering Albemarle County for the final push to Monticello. Depending on the roads taken, the journey was between 93 and 116 miles, and could last as long as eight days.(48)

Through these trips, and the stops they entailed, enslaved travelers extended their social and economic networks in important ways. Acquaintances in neighboring counties shared a meal, exchanged news, goods, and services; and created new bonds that might provide shelter for a tired wagon driver or aid a runaway in negotiating hostile territory.

On those occasions when slaves traveled to escape bondage, family ties clearly figured in to where they fled. Runaway advertisements throughout the South are full of comments indicating that husbands sought out wives and sons returned to the plantations of their mothers. As families were broken up by sales, they nevertheless found ways of maintaining connections.(49)

For a small group of enslaved men, and a smaller number of women, the landscape beyond Monticello was also familiar. Watermen, transporting goods from the plantation to market in Richmond, were afforded an uncommon degree of free movement and association. These men likely played vital roles in maintaining family connections and sharing cultural knowledge across the region. Their familiarity with large stretches of territory, and the people that dwelled along the rivers, made them important sources of information for runaways and aided in running away themselves. One Poplar Forest slave, Jame

## Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape

Hubbard, was “carried upriver” by a waterman. He remained free for a year before being captured in what is now West Virginia.<sup>(50)</sup>

A few Monticello-based slaves traveled beyond Virginia, serving Jefferson during his residence in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Paris. While these places were far removed from the realities of daily life at Poplar Forest, they nevertheless played some part in the perception of the wider world shared by the men and women that lived there. Hannah, Jefferson’s enslaved cook, was a literate woman. The only letter in her hand that survives is signed “Adieu.” Exactly how she learned French will never be known, but it is interesting to speculate about the extent to which Jefferson’s travels, and those of a few members of the enslaved community, affected the worldview of those who stayed behind.

### Conclusions

Drawing on traditions from West Africa and conditions endured in the New World, enslaved men and women formed the backbone of agricultural labor in colonial and antebellum Virginia. While slaveholders ordered plantation landscapes for the production of cash crops, slaves modified and exploited them through foraging, gardening, poultry raising, hunting, and fishing. The landscape that African Americans inhabited at Poplar Forest shaped the rhythms of their working and private lives and formed a starting point for exploring the broader communities of Lynchburg, Bedford County, and beyond. Movement between neighboring plantations, shops, warehouses, and places of worship provided men and women with opportunities to share ideas, foster friendships and family ties, and plan for the future.

Slaves’ familiarity with and reliance on the resources of the immediate landscape structured choices of foods and methods of preparing them, guided healing practices, influenced aesthetic preferences, and touched on many other aspects of daily life. These choices, made individually on thousands of plantations throughout the region, were shared and refined by the formal and informal exchanges of travelers. Beyond the boundaries of the plantation lay a world of possibilities: for finding a spouse, earning some money, sharing faith, or finding freedom. Through myriad contacts with the broader world, men and women received, developed, maintained and spread a regional African-American culture.

### Notes

1. Edwin Morris Betts, *Thomas Jefferson’s Farm Book*, (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1987), 268-269.

2. Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the Virginian*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948), 21, 31-32; Betts, *Jefferson’s Farm Book*, 5-18; Barbara J. Heath, *Hidden Lives, The Archaeology of Slave Life at Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 10-13.

3. Donnan puts Angolans ahead of Senegambians, in Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade, A Census*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 157; Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together, Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 6, 244-245; Michael Mullin, *Africa in America, Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean 1736-1831*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 24; Michael Gomez, *Exchanging*

*Our Country Marks, The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1998), 150.

4. Wayles was a factor for a group of Bristol merchants whose ship, the ‘Prince of Wales,’ sailed for the coast of Africa in 1772 and delivered a cargo of 280 slaves to Virginia. Julian P. Boyd, editor, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 15, March 1789-November 1789*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 676-677; James A. Bear and Lucia C. Stanton, editors, “Jefferson’s Memorandum Books, Accounts, with Legal Records and Miscellany, 1767-1826,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Second Series, volumes 1 and 2*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 752.

5. As recalled by her grandson Madison, Betty Hemings was the daughter of an African woman and a white ship’s captain. She resided with her six children and grandson at Wayles’s Guinea quarter before Jefferson became her owner and moved her family to Monticello in 1774. Betts, *Jefferson’s Farm Book*, 9; Annette Gordon Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, An American Controversy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 23. The connection to Africa of others owned by Jefferson remains less clear. It is most likely that Squire, Judy and Goliah, all born between 1727 and 1731, were the children or grandchildren of survivors of the Middle Passage, or experienced it themselves.

Cuffey probably was derived from Kofi, Friday. Phoebe and Quash may have come from Efu (Friday), and Kwesi (Sunday), names that were later creolized. There can be no doubt that “black Sall’s” son Quomina, who fled

with his mother and siblings to the British during the American Revolution, carried the Akan day name for Saturday (Kwamena). Other names are suggestive of Fanti or Igbo ethnicities: Beck may be derived from 'Beke,' Anthony from the tribal name 'Andoni,' and Jenny from 'Ginneh.' Laurie A. Wilkie, "Continuities in African Naming Practices Among the Slaves of Wade's Green Plantation, North Caicos." *Journal of Bahamas Historical Society* 15(1)(1993), 33-34. Anglicized names like Jack, Joe, and Abby, all common among Jefferson's slaves, may also be derivative of Akan day names. *Ibid.*, 33.

Sanco, Luna, Isabel, Bella, Lucinda, Belinda, and Emanuel bore Hispanic names. The name Dilcy, given to two girls born in the 1760s (one at Shadwell and the other at Poplar Forest), may have been derived from the Spanish word dulce, meaning sweet. Later generations of men and women owned by Jefferson carried on these names, adding Flora, Amanda, Lucinda, Sophia, Melinda, Lania, Maria, Lovila, and Lovilo for children born into the community.

6. A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 30.

7. Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 33-34.

8. S. O. Babalola and Carolyne Dennis, "Returns to Women's Labour in Cash Crops in Nigeria," in *Agriculture, Women and Land, The African Experience*, edited by Jean Davidson (London: Westview Press, 1988), 82; Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands, Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 29, 34; E. Francis White, "Women in West and West-Central Africa," in *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa*, edited by Iris Berger and E.

Francis White, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 65; see also Miriam Goheen, "Land and the Household Economy: Women Farmers of the Grassfields Today," in *Agriculture, Women, and Land, the African Experience*, 90-105.

9. Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 33-34.

10. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 22-24.

11. At both Poplar Forest and Monticello, corn and peas, and corn and potatoes shared the same fields. Edwin Morris Betts, *Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1944), 192-194, 517-518; Betts, *Jefferson's Farm Book*, 88, 312-317; Joel Yancey to Jefferson, February 7, 1820, MHi.

12. Hopkins, *An Economic History*, 36.

13. See Hopkins, 36-37, for discussion on why plows were not used in West Africa.

14. Barbara J. Heath, "Rediscovering an Historic Landscape: Archaeology, Documents and GIS at Poplar Forest" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology, Salt Lake City, UT, 1999).

15. Heath, *Hidden Lives*, 27-46; Barbara J. Heath and Amber Bennett, "'The little Spots allow'd them': The Archaeological Study of African-American Yards," in *Historical Archaeology* 34(2)(2000), 46-47.

16. Heath, *Hidden Lives*, 44. The three cabins excavated at the Quarter are designated Structures 1,2, and 3 in

the analysis. Structure 1 measured 15 ft. x 25 ft., was divided into two rooms, contained three subfloor pits, and was raised off the ground on wooden and stone piers. Structure 2 measured 13 ft. square, contained no pits, and had an earthen floor. Structure 3 was badly preserved. It probably measured 18.5 ft. sq., and was raised off the ground on stone piers. It did not contain any sub-floor pits, but had an extensive midden beneath it.

17. Leslie Raymer, "Macroplant Remains from the Jefferson's Poplar Forest Slave Quarter: A Study in African American Subsistence Practices," *New South Associates Technical Report #402*(1996), Stone Mountain, GA; *idem*, "Draft data from the Poplar Forest North Hill," (manuscript on file, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Virginia, 2000); Heath, *Hidden Lives*, 59-60; Heath and Bennett, *Historical Archeology*, 46-48.

18. Plant remains from the site include blackberry, elderberry, grape, peach, persimmon, strawberry and sumac (fruits); common bean, maize, oats, rye, sorghum, sunflower, and wheat (vegetables and grains); acorn, hickory and hickory/walnut (nuts); bed-straw, carpetweed, dock, goosefoot, knotweed, pigweed, purslane, smartweed, and vervain (edible herbs); cop-perleaf, nightshade, prickly mallow, and ragweed (weeds); agropyrum, goose-grass, and an unidentified grass family (grasses); viola (ornamental/edible) and poppy (condiment). Raymer, "Draft data."

19. Raymer, "Draft data." The data break down as follows: 90% of the grain, 46% of the fruit, and 89% of the edible weed assemblages were recovered from the fill of the subfloor pit; 8% of the grain, 50% of the fruit, and 8% of the

## Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape

edible weed assemblages came from the fill layers in the erosion gully that correspond with the occupation dates of the cabin. The remainder of the carbonized floral materials recovered from the site came from a small pit located just outside of the cabin (less than 2% overall) and the upper layers of gully fill (7%) and small isolated features (less than 2% overall).

20. The data in the following discussion of the Quarter site reflect floral remains from Structures 1 and 2 only. Analysis of Structure 3 is not yet complete, but a preliminary examination indicates no new species present. Floral remains include cherry, grape, huckleberry, peach, persimmon, and raspberry (fruits); common bean, maize, sunflower, and wheat (vegetables and grains); hickory and walnuts (nuts); and bedstraw, goosefoot, and smartweed (edible herbs). Distributions are consistent with the North Hill findings if peaches are excluded from the count. Nearly 73% of fruits, vegetables, and edible and medicinal herbs were recovered from the most intact subfloor pit in Structure 1, while the other two pits contained less than 1% of the assemblage. These features were extremely shallow, however, and it is likely that most of their contents were displaced by plowing. The floor of Structure 2 contained 25% of the edible assemblage excluding peach pits, which made up 79% of the total assemblage from this feature. See Raymer, *New South Technical Report #402*.

21. Merrick Posnansky, "West Africanist Reflections on African-American Archaeology," in *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, edited by Theresa Singleton, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 32.

22. U. P. Hedrick, editor, *Sturtevant's Edible Plants of the World*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 43.

23. Heath and Bennett, *Historical Archaeology*, 39-41. Remains of carbonized wood were systematically recovered from the fill of the subfloor pit in the North Hill cabin and the associated erosion gully fill. These were analyzed by Leslie Raymer of New South Associates. In all, 17 identifiable species of trees are represented in the wood charcoal assemblage. The ubiquity (expressed as a percentage of the total number of proveniences in which a given species is present) of such as walnut, sycamore, hophornbeam, elm/hackberry, dogwood, black locust, beech, basswood, ash, hickory, oak, and pine indicates that at this time, much of the land surrounding the cabin site was covered in hardwood forest, and had not been cleared for cultivation. Carbonized oak made up nearly 40% of all the charcoal recovered at the site, followed by hickory (7%), and beech (4%), suggesting that site residents preferred these woods with oak the clear favorite.

Charcoal samples recovered from the Quarter site indicate that by the first decade of the nineteenth century, the landscape around the "old plantation" had changed dramatically. The number of identifiable species recovered from features associated with two of the cabins shrank to three (hickory, oak, pine), with pine predominating. These are consistent with the regeneration of secondary growth in abandoned fields.

24. The young leaves of goosefoot, dock, nightshade, pigweed, and purslane were eaten as greens or cooked as potherbs, comparable in taste to spinach and asparagus. Dock, goosefoot, pigweed, purslane, and smartweed seeds provided flour or cereal. Hedrick, *Sturtevant's*, 43-44, 450-451, 512-514,

544; Leslie Raymer, "Macroplant Remains from Six Nineteenth-Century Cabins at the Hermitage, Tennessee: A Study of Antebellum and Early Emancipation Era African American Subsistence Patterns," in *New South Associates Technical Report #376* (1997), Stone Mountain GA, 39-40, 42-44.

25. Hedrick, *Sturtevant's*, 598.

26. *Ibid*, 244, 522. Jefferson reported on the abundance of the peach harvests at Poplar Forest, noting that enslaved women dried and processed the fruits in a variety of ways. Peaches, persimmons, blackberries, grapes, and elderberries could be distilled for wine, beer, or spirits. See also Betts, *Jefferson's Garden Book*, 517-518; Joel Yancey to Jefferson, November 19, 1819, MHI.

27. Joel Yancey to Jefferson, April 10, 1819, MHI; Joel Yancey to Jefferson, July 1, 1819, MHI; see also Thomas M. Randolph to Jefferson, April 25, 1800, ViU.

28. Sumac cured worms, sores, yaws, and burns. See Pamela Forey and Ruth Lindsay, *An Instant Guide to Medicinal Plants* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1991), 101; Kay K. Moss, *Southern Folk Medicine 1750-1820* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999), 77, 101, 104, 110, 132, 207. Raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, and persimmons served for kidney or bladder complaints, "looseness of the belly," and sores. Persimmon fruit was valued for its astringent qualities, and used to clean wounds. Virtually all parts of the peach served some curative purpose: the leaves and flowers acted as a purgative or, made into a poultice, diminished swelling; the stones aided sore throat and pain in the side. Flowers, roots, leaves, and bark of elderberry trees eased swelling, snakebite, toothache, burns, and the symptoms of

a skin irritation known as scald head. Taken internally, they could be used as a purgative, diuretic or emetic. See Moss, *Southern Folk Medicine*, 173, 182, 198, 199, 207.

Edible herbs also possessed medicinal qualities. Infusions of knotweed, smartweed, or pigweed stopped bleeding from ulcers, sores, piles, and relieved menstrual pain. See Forey and Lindsay, *Instant Guide to Medicinal Plants*, 23; Raymer, *New South Technical Report #376*, 40, 43; see also Betts, *Jefferson's Garden Book*, 644. Knotweed tea dispelled kidney stones, while bedstraw relieved throat and chest inflammations, and disorders of the kidneys. Moss, *Southern Folk Medicine*, 58, 94. Purslane was also known to have astringent properties, while the value of dock was in its ability to treat skin conditions, leprosy, venereal disease, and tumors. It also served as a laxative and blood purifier. See Raymer, *New South Technical Report #376*, 44; see also Moss, *Southern Folk Medicine*, 181.

The presence of jimsonweed at the North Hill hints at the possibility of its use medicinally. While all parts of the plant are poisonous, the seeds are especially toxic. Nevertheless, eighteenth and nineteenth century healers put it in salves and poultices to treat a variety of skin conditions. Its most important use, however, was in treating spasmodic coughing associated with asthma. The plant was burned and the smoke inhaled to relieve symptoms. See Raymer, *New South Technical Report #376*, 47; see also Betts, *Jefferson's Garden Book*, 644.

Jefferson also included malvaceae in his listing of medicinal plants native to Virginia (*sida rhombifolia* and *sida abutilon*), and a prickly mallow was recovered at the North Hill (*sida spinosa*). Raymer, "Draft data."

29. Charles B. Purdue, Jr., Thomas E. Barden and Robert K. Phillips, editors, *Weevils in the Wheat, Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1976), 73, 221-222, 263, 310; Ywone D. Edwards-Ingram, "An Inter-Disciplinary Approach to African-American Medicinal and Health Practices in Colonial America," in *The Watermark* 20(1997), 71; Raymer, *New South Technical Report #376*.

30. Poppies, violets, pigweed, and jimsonweed were commonly used as ornamentals by white gardeners of the period. Betts, *Jefferson's Garden Book*, 24, 644; Raymer, *New South Technical Report #376*, 40, 46-47.

31. Heath and Bennett, *Historical Archaeology*, 41-45.

32. Betts, *Jefferson's Farm Book*, 50, 52, 77, 163.

33. Idem, *Jefferson's Garden Book*, 166.

34. Subsequent owners of the estate made reference to provision grounds. Hutter Farm Journal, 1844-1854, (manuscript on file, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest).

35. Barbara J. Heath, "Engendering Choice: Slavery and Consumerism in Central Virginia" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology, Atlanta, GA, 1998); see also Bear and Stanton, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*.

36. Heath and Bennett, *Historical Archaeology*, 39-42; Heath, "Engendering Choice."

37. Because of the natural acidity of the Poplar Forest soils, bone preservation was relatively poor. Those bones that did survive represent the more

durable ones (i.e. teeth or long bones) or fragments preserved in features whose soil chemistry had been altered historically by the addition of ash or other materials that neutralized the soil. Additionally, many bones suffered weathering, burning, butchering, gnawing, and other modifications, both intentional and natural, that made it impossible to identify them beyond broad categories such as "unidentified bird" or "unidentified mammal." Consequently, the following discussion provides a fairly sketchy assessment of the importance and variety of meat in the diets of enslaved residents of each site.

38. Susan Trevarthen Andrews, "Faunal Analysis of Slave Quarter Site at Poplar Forest" (manuscript on file, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Virginia, 1993); Betts, *Jefferson's Garden Book*, 467; idem, *Jefferson's Farm Book*, 48.

39. Archaeologists did collect quantities of eggshells at both sites, suggesting the dietary importance of eggs, but raising questions about the low frequency of chicken bones.

40. Susan Trevarthen Andrews, "Faunal Analysis of North Hill Features, Poplar Forest," (manuscript on file, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Virginia, 1999), 19.

41. Bones from eastern cottontail rabbits, eastern gray squirrels, opossums, a woodchuck, a raccoon, and a fresh water bass or sunfish were recovered at the North Hill; white tailed deer, opossum, rabbits, and gray squirrels were found at the Quarter. Andrews, "Faunal Analysis" 1993; idem, "Faunal Analysis for Poplar Forest Feature 1206" (manuscript on file, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Virginia, 1995); idem, "Poplar Forest Quarter Site Faunal Analysis" (manuscript on file, Thomas

## Places of Cultural Memory: African Reflections on the American Landscape

Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Virginia, 1996); idem, "Faunal Analysis of North Hill, Poplar Forest" (manuscript on file, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Virginia, 1998); idem, "Faunal Analysis of North Hill Features" 1999.

42. Bear and Stanton, *Jefferson's Memorandum Book*, 500. Jefferson purchased squirrel skins from Jame Hubbard, an enslaved waterman in 1780. Heath notes in "Slavery and Consumerism: A Case Study from Central Virginia," in *African-American Archaeology Newsletter* 19 (1)(1997), 6, that a merchant who operated a store near Poplar Forest recorded purchasing raccoon skins from one of his enslaved customers.

43. Betts, *Jefferson's Garden Book*, 517-518; idem, *Jefferson's Farm Book*, 48, 58, 149, 417; Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman, February 3, 1814, ViU; Jefferson to Patrick Gibson, November 3, 1814, NHi. In addition to corn, wheat, herring, and pork, Poplar Forest slaves received milk, salt, and whiskey.

44. Heath, *African-American Archaeology Newsletter*; Heath, "Engendering Choice." Will kept shop accounts in New London and Lynchburg. Joel Yancey to Jefferson, October 14, 1819, MHi. Others frequented the Lynchburg Sunday markets as buyers and sellers. When a Sunday cold snap threatened the tobacco crop in 1819, overseer Joel Yancey discovered "every man except Armstead at B. Creek had gone off and 2 of the women to Lynchburg, and 2 men and 2 women from Tomahawk...." See also John Early, "Diary of John Early, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South," in *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 35 (1927), 7, on the African Meeting House in the Forest area.

45. Jefferson to James Lyle, April 5, 1811, MHi; Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman, August 9, 1812, DLC; James A. Bear, editor, *Jefferson at Monticello* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 67-68. Jefferson's social and economic relationships within the local community necessitated the regular movement of slaves passing throughout the neighborhood conducting his business. Wagoners carried flour to local mills, tobacco to market, and supplies from the waterfront in Lynchburg back to the plantation.

Jefferson to Charles Clay, December 18, 1811, MHi; Jefferson to Charles Clay, December 14, 1812, DLC; Jefferson to Charles Clay, May 5, 1813, MHi, Charles Clay to Jefferson, September 5, 1810, MHi; Charles Clay to Jefferson, May 1, 1813, MHi. Messenger service seems to have been the task of teenage boys and girls. Over the course of three years, they delivered notes, surveying equipment, garden seeds, and a copy of Tacitus to Jefferson's friend, Charles Clay, who lived at nearby Ivy Hill. In return, Clay sent his own slaves to Poplar Forest carrying rye seeds, a basket of asparagus, and a variety of notes.

William Steptoe to Jefferson, July 24, 1819, MHi; Ellen Randolph to Martha Randolph, August 24, 1819, ViU. When Jefferson sent a messenger to physician William Steptoe, asking leave to borrow his syringe, Steptoe replied that the desired object was "so often lent and sent about the neighborhood that I am sorry to say I do not know who had it last. However I will dispatch a boy after it." Two enslaved maids belonging to Mrs. Walker, whose property bounded Poplar Forest to the west, made weekly deliveries of fruits, vegetables, sweetmeats, and lamb to Jefferson's granddaughters during the summer of 1819.

BCOB 1781, 333-334; BCSB1:351; BCSB2:166. Unsanctioned travel within the environs of Poplar Forest also occurred. In 1781, Jack and Will joined Peter, the slave of John Thompson, Sr., in breaking into the mill and stillhouse owned by Thompson's son. The three were caught, tried, and punished for their actions. Peter probably lived on Thompson's tract of land adjoining Poplar Forest to the east.

46. Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman, December 31, 1811, ViU; Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman, January 6, 1815, ViU; Jefferson to Joel Yancey, March 6, 1817, MHi; Jefferson to Joel Yancey, January 11, 1818, MHi; Joel Yancey to Jefferson, January 9, 1819, MHi; Joel Yancey to Jefferson, December 31, 1819, MHi; Jefferson to John Wayles Eppes, October 22, 1820, MHi; Betts, *Jefferson's Farm Book*, 42-44. In the years following Jefferson's retirement, wagoners made frequent journeys between the two properties, carrying furnishings, farm equipment and food from one plantation to another.

Jefferson to Edmund Bacon, December 5, 1811, DLC; Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman, December 13, 1812, ViU; Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman, January 8, 1813, ViU; Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman, January 6, 1815, ViU; Betts *Jefferson's Garden Book*, 534-535. Workers moved between the two places when Jefferson needed extra hands at harvest or planting time. He also sent teenage boys and girls to Monticello to learn a trade in his nailery or textile factory. Enslaved men, as well as teenage boys drove cattle, hogs, and sheep from Bedford to Albemarle in the early winter for slaughter.

47. Heath, *Hidden Lives*, 16, 69, note 12. To create productive farms, Jefferson split most of the families that he owned between his two properties.

He granted family members to visit their kinspeople from time to time. Such visits usually took place at Christmas, and often individuals accompanied wagons bearing supplies to Poplar Forest, or aided in the driving of livestock on the return journey.

48. Jefferson to Martha Randolph, November 10, 1816, MHi; Joel Yancey to Jefferson January 9, 1819, MHi; Jefferson to Joel Yancey, January 17, 1819, MHi. While Johnny and Randall made the reverse trip in about three days, other slaves accompanying the wagon and herds of recalcitrant livestock northward might be on the road for eight days or longer.

Joel Yancey for Nace, March 12, 1812, MHi; Jeremiah Goodman to Jefferson, December 30, 1814, ViU; Jefferson to Jeremiah Goodman, January 6, 1815, ViU; Joel Yancey to Jefferson, October 14, 1819, MHi. It took Nace two days to traverse the thirty-seven miles from Poplar Forest to Henry Flood's tavern in Buckingham County when he traveled to Monticello on an early spring trip in 1821. Phil Hubbard made shorter work of the journey from Bedford to Albemarle, taking only two days to traverse the one hundred miles between the two plantations. His was an unauthorized trek, triggered by anger about an overseer's refusal to recognize his marriage. At Monticello, he sought, and gained Jefferson's support. Five years later, his nephew, William, ran to Monticello, this time to contest being asked to work on a Sunday.

Joel Yancey to Jefferson, December 24, 1818, MHi. Whether others apprehended between the two plantations had larger plans for freedom is unclear. In 1813, Hercules was detained in Buckingham jail and returned to Poplar Forest. Two other young Monticello men, Dick and Moses, arrived a Poplar Forest

on stolen horses, and without a pass, at Christmas in 1818. When the owners of one horse arrived, Dick claimed that he had found the horse, and that they had come to Bedford to visit family. He was whipped for the offense. Moses declined to make excuses, escaping before he could be punished.

49. *Lynchburg Virginian*, August 31, 1824, 4. Bob, a young man who had been raised by Jefferson at Monticello, and subsequently sold, was employed by his fourth owner as a waterman. His owner, in drafting the advertisement for his return, recognized the importance of kinship, stating that "he has relations at Monticello, at Mr. Jefferson's plantation near Lynchburg, in Richmond...and at Wilton below Richmond." He added that it was most likely that Bob was making his way to Monticello or Poplar Forest. Whether he succeeded, or was captured and returned, is not known.

50. Reuben Perry to Jefferson, March 29, 1811, ViW; Jefferson to Reuben Perry, April 16, 1812, ViW; Daniel Meaders, *Advertisements for Runway Slaves in Virginia 1801-1820* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1997), 161. In the spring of 1811, while Jefferson was visiting Poplar Forest, Jame Hubbard fled Monticello by boat with Harry, a waterman who belonged to Jefferson's son-in-law. In a previous flight, he had "attempted to get out of the state Northwardly" and had been apprehended. This time he made his way to Lexington, where he lived for nearly a year before he was discovered. He eluded capture, getting as far as Pendleton County, in what is now West Virginia, before he was arrested.

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**Places of Cultural Memory:  
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For Jefferson, Poplar Forest was a private retreat for him to escape the hordes of visitors and everyday pressures of his iconic estate, Monticello. Jefferson's Poplar Forest uses the knowledge gained from long-term and interdisciplinary research to explore the experiences of a wide range of people who lived and worked there between the American Revolution and the Civil War. Multiple archaeological digs reveal details about the lives of Jefferson, subsequent owners and their families, and the slaves (and descendants) who labored and toiled at the site. Barbara J. Heath, "Bounded Yards and Fluid Borders: Landscapes of Slavery at Poplar Forest".  
Session Three: Black Cultural Landscapes and Institutions. Audrey L. Brown, "Africanisms on the 'Old Ship of Zion': What Are These Forms and Why Do They Persist?"(2). Kenneth L. Brown, "Interwoven Traditions: The Conjuror's Cabin and African American Cemetery at the Jordan and Frogmore Plantations". Richard Westmacott, "Gardening, Yard Decoration, and Agriculture Among Peoples of African Descent in the Rural South and in the Cayman Islands". Arleen Pabon, "Por la Encendida Calle Antillana: African Influences on Puerto Rican Architecture". African Burial Ground: Discovery, Preservation, and Memorialization. Bounded Yards and Fluid Borders: Landscapes of Slavery at Poplar Forest. In Places of Cultural Memory, African Reflections on the American Landscape Conference Proceedings, pp.69-81. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service. [http://www.cr.nps.gov/crdi/conferences/AFR\\_69-82\\_Heath.pdf](http://www.cr.nps.gov/crdi/conferences/AFR_69-82_Heath.pdf) Heath, Barbara J., 1991. Heath, Barbara J. and Randy Lichtenberger. 2002. Excavation Report on Boundary Testing for Tree Screen and Parking at Historic Sandusky. Ms.on file, Historic Sandusky Foundation, Lynchburg, VA. (53 pages). Heath, Barbara J. 2001 Bounded Yards and Fluid Borders: Landscapes of Slavery at Poplar Forest. In Places of Cultural Memory, African Reflections on the American Landscape Conferences Proceedings, pp. 69-81. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service ([http://www.cr.nps.gov/crdi/conferences/AFR\\_69-82\\_Heath.pdf](http://www.cr.nps.gov/crdi/conferences/AFR_69-82_Heath.pdf)).Google Scholar. Heath, Barbara J. 2004 Engendering Choice: Slavery and Consumerism in Central Virginia. Jefferson's Poplar Forest: A Study of Enslaved African-American Subsistence Patterns, New South Associates Technical Report #781, Stone Mountain, GA.Google Scholar. Reitz, Elizabeth 1986 Urban/Rural Contrasts in Vertebrate Fauna from the Southern Coastal Plain. Historical Archaeology 20(2):47-58.CrossRef Google Scholar.