HUNTER RESEARCH

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Re:
Cedar Creek Sites 7S-C-100 (Historic) and 7S-C-102 (Prehistoric), Sussex County, Delaware: Treatment of Adverse Effect through Archaeological Data Recovery (Phase III): Analysis, Report, Public Outreach, and Curation
Parent Agreement 1535 Task 10

Dear David:

Further to our phone conversation of September 12th on the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office comments on the draft report for the above project, we are pleased to provide the following responses.

We appreciate the obviously close attention that the report has received from a respected colleague, and are pleased to have the opportunity to respond. As we sought to make clear in the report, ours was a conscious effort to present what we believe to be a defensible and replicable hypothesis about the site, while being fully aware that this is likely to be controversial and that the available data may be legitimately be interpreted in different ways.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's 1999 *Draft Guidance on Archaeological Data Recovery Projects* recommends that "Large, unusual or complex projects should provide for special oversight, **including professional peer review**". We feel that this project meets these criteria, and would welcome peer review by professional and academic colleagues with interest and expertise in the study of the archaeology of African slavery in the American Colonies and beyond. This process should help to move research forward on this very important but archaeologically challenging topic.

While it is clear that HPO are not convinced by our arguments, it is not my impression that they are requesting that the report be reworked to reflect their viewpoint. If this impression is correct, I would like to suggest that consideration be given to including their dissenting opinion in the final report, perhaps as an appendix and perhaps as one of several peer-review contributions. I can see nothing in the regulations or guidance that prohibits such an approach, and it would appear to show a healthy willingness to engage in the debate and dialogue which is necessary to advance topics such as this one. There

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could even be a forum/panel discussion about it at an upcoming conference and/or publication.

Our responses to specific points raised by HPO are presented in red below. HPO comments are in contrasting font.

The report represents a good effort to create a meaningful contribution from the limited excavations on this site. We understand the research was limited by the construction footprint, and thus, many goals could not be realized.

This is of course an important point and one that is ever-present in data-recovery situations. How far is it legitimate to investigate beyond the limits of the direct adverse effects? Our data is limited because we only examined part of the site. The remainder of the site is still there, however, making future investigation an option. The 17th century component is of course being preserved under covenant.

Data Presentation

The reviewer had some issues with the data presentation in the report. The map for Area A omitted the location of Structure 4. Figure 3.4 is the only map of the house compound but the scale is so large the labels for the features were not included.

We agree with this observation, and the fact that the labeling of Structure 4 was omitted on the version used in the draft. This will be corrected and we will also explore presenting this Figure at a scale which makes it easier to "read". An updated version of the Figure, with Structure 4 identified, was sent to HPO via Dropbox on 9/3/14. This figure is attached below.

It was difficult to follow the narrative when the spatial layout of the site is incomplete. Was there any spatial data gathered during the Phase III work? If so, it should be presented. The narrative of the Phase II report refers to shovel test pits, controlled surface collection and metal detecting surveys, but this data was not presented in this report.

There were 58 excavation units and a controlled surface collection (See Figure 5.1 from the Phase II report). Our Phase II accepted scope did not include further point-proveniencing for surface material. However, we did collect and catalog the material by areas which were mapped by cluster perimeters and shown in the report.

Documentary Research

It appears the historical context and primary documentary research is the same that was presented in the Phase II report. It is possible additional historical research on this site is warranted. Perhaps the information regarding the landowners can be expanded. While the inventory of John Draper Sr. is noted in

the text, an edited copy could be included the report. Indeed, a comparative study of inventories of the neighboring plantations would give the researcher some additional insights on the economic activities of the site, and the function of Structure 1. It is possible an enslaved workforce lived in the compound as the Draper and the Davis families were involved in slaveholding, though no documents presented link it to this site.

While additional documentary research is always an option, there is the question of diminishing returns. The project is in Sussex County, whose 18th century records are far less complete than those of Kent or New Castle. In preparing the research design for the Phase III work, our internal discussions, extensively involving Principal Historian Patrick Harshbarger and Historian Alison Haley, indicated that there were essentially no productive avenues of documentary inquiry left that could be explored within the framework of this project. The John Draper Sr. inventory does not relate to this piece of property, nor does it mention slaves. We really feel that to all intents and purposes the documentary evidence is exhausted for this property.

Slave Quarter Pattern

It is possible that the compound in Area A was occupied by African Americans, enslaved or free,

A "free-black compound" is a concept that seems wholly out of place in the slave- and plantation-culture of this time and place. This is not to say that such a thing could not have existed, but we are not aware of definitions of such a property type in the archaeological or historical literature that we have reviewed. It seems most probable that the African occupants of any compound-type site would be enslaved.

but there is no physical evidence to support this theory.

This statement is too sweeping. We argue, I hope clearly, that we are observing a pattern of different attributes in the archaeological record which together point to the presence of enslaved Africans in a setting which combines industrial, domestic and agricultural functions. Certainly there is a risk in making the whole greater than the sum of its parts, but in this case we felt this should be presented as a valid hypothesis.

Perhaps a more practical question would be: Were there African Americans living or working in Area A? While studying the quarters or the large plantations in Virginia may provide an archaeological signature of a slave quarter, it may not be easily applied to a small holding in Delaware. In general, labor is a complicated situation in Delaware during the colonial period. There are examples of mixed households, free African American households, indentured servants, contract labor, and rented slaves. The archaeological data alone appears to be unable to

address these distinctions at the present. There was a variety of labor arrangements that does not easily fit the Virginia pattern.

We agree that to uncritically transfer assumptions from Virginia (and the rest of the Tidewater) about slave quarters would be unwise given the more complex situation in Delaware (well surveyed by Williams 1996). The multi-use setting we are proposing here may be the sort of thing one might expect in the rather more diverse economic and social setting of Delaware.

A hundred-acre tract is not, in our opinion, a "small holding". For instance, the average size of 70 18th century mapped and surveyed tracts in southern New Castle County is 202 acres, with a range of less than 0.5 acre up to 2000 acres. 45 of these are between 50 and 300 acres.

In looking at each surviving African cultural trait that was suggested, it appears that none of them are really convincing.
Again, we are arguing here (cautiously) that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts

Are subfloor pits (other than a root cellar in front of the hearth) alone evidence of and enslaved African population?
No.

The pits in structure 1 are rather large and wood lined, and may be cellars, rather than personal pits.
The size of the two pits in question falls within Samford's range of personal pits, and the shallow depth would likely preclude such a pit as a cellar. Wood linings were also popular in personal pits. See Samford 2007.

Structure 1 was interpreted as a large residential structure or a quarter/ barracks similar to those found at large plantation sites in Virginia. But, this does not quite fit. There were only 2 subfloor pits were found compared to those with numerous ones in Virginia. Was this really a residential structure or a warehouse, as there is no hearth?
We argue that the burnt daub in the pits is probably from a nearby hearth or chimney. The lack of other pits does weaken our argument somewhat. What would such a warehouse contain?

Its proximity to the bloomery furnace suggests an industrial use.

Our literature research suggests that it was common for slave quarters also to be located immediately next to their working environment.

A case was made that inexpensive and out-of-date building methods were employed in Area A. Combine this with close proximity of the industrial activity to domestic quarters and we can assume we there were economically low status workers present. *However, there is nothing to indicate their ethnicity nor legal status of the inhabitants* (italics added)

Again, this is too strong a statement. We (based on the conclusions of our specialist Carl Blair) point to the technology of the bloomery furnace as really rather compelling evidence for skilled Africans at the site.

Bloomery Furnace

Fragments of a furnace and byproduct were documented. The only distinction that would suggest this was an African designed furnace is the lack of a lute, as there was no evidence of a longer tuyere tube. Also, there is a larger number of unprocessed or abandoned gromps present. This evidence points to an inexperienced operator, as opposed to experienced but enslaved African American workers.

It may be the only distinction, but it does appear to be an important one. Blair does not consider the evidence to show inexperience on the part of the operators.

Artifacts

Artifact of interest is the sleeve buttons in the Phase II and III reports. While they appear in a high frequency at this site, there is no research into these.

We posted inquiries on Histarch and we did show references to them on African American sites. We could expand on this slightly in a revision.

The Pillar Dollar button may not be modeled from a “Pillar Dollar” or 8 real coin, but a 1 real coin They appear to have been cast directly from a real coin, as they are both around 16 mm in diameter. They show up in Fort Frederick, Florida, and other Spanish or military contexts

Agreed. They have been found in New York State as well. We looked (unsuccessfully) for evidence as to whether or not the occupants of this site served in the military. Of course the buttons may come from surplus military clothing acquired by the occupants of the site.

Other artifacts found are notable, but not conclusive evidence of the ethnicity of the occupants. Gaming piece or charm could be related to enslaved or free African Americans or others.

Agreed

Presence of linen smoother suggests domestic clothing maintenance, possibly by females.
Or possibly the finishing of linen being produced on site or on the property, as seems to have been a practice in the more diverse post-tobacco economy.

Overall Site Pattern
It is difficult to interpret overall site patterning when no spatial data is presented. We really do not know where and what are the activity areas.
Does this comment refer just to Area A? Overall, the evidence allowed us to produce an overall reconstruction that is at least consistent with what would be predicted at this period (see the commentary on the reconstruction).

In general, we expect an in depth comparative study for a Phase III data recovery project. The site could have been compared with other 18th century farms in the region. The Moore-Taylor; Benjamin Wynn and Wilson Lewis Farm report by UDCAR for the DelDOT compared 5 similar sites in Sussex and Kent Counties. It is possible the arrangement of these structures could fit into the "informal hollow square" pattern observed in this study.
This is a valid point, and we could perhaps have communicated our changing thoughts on the site more systematically as the analysis and reporting progressed. Once the evidence from the bloomery was available we felt that we were obliged to pursue the slave compound hypothesis because this appeared more fruitful and innovative than other lines of inquiry. A comparison of the plan of this site with those of the UDCAR study would certainly be valuable, however.

A comparative study of probate inventories in the area may help shed light from the material culture of the neighboring plantations. If this site was occupied by African Americans, how does it compare with other, later, African American sites in Delmarva?
We doubt that such inventories are available in the quality and quantity needed. Comparison with later sites would be interesting and could be included in recommendations for future research. It is beyond the scope of the present work.

While we appreciate the enthusiasm and interest in comparing this site to Patricia Samford's examples in Virginia, we find the local comparisons may be more fruitful at this time.
The problem is that there really are no local comparisons, despite the fact that we are looking at a Delaware population that was about 25% enslaved Africans. Where are these people? Maybe they are hidden from us at the moment by the limitations of our techniques and paradigms. It is of course accepted that Samford's claimed patterns may not be fully applicable in southern Delaware, but hers is the most coherent and best

argued case in the region for a methodology for the systematic identification of enslaved Africans through archaeology. Our objective, in broad terms, was to see to what extent it might be applicable in southern Delaware. What is needed is an excavation, at an appropriate scale, of an 18th century Delaware site documented to have slaves to test the ideas more fully. In the meantime, it certainly seems prudent to more consciously include in scopes of work the search for archaeological patterns that might suggest the presence of enslaved Africans than has perhaps been the case. The Route 301 Louis Berger context study is likely to have useful insights in this regard.

Technical Issues

Please add O'Neil and Brewer in the bibliography

We will do this. Brewer 2001 is from the Chapter 2 the history chapter and O'Neil 2006 is a Power Point presentation titled "Brick Clamps: How Can You Get Excited About Fired Earth!?!"by Patrick L. O'Neill of Parsons Engineering Science, presented at several venues in the region).

In closing, I would again emphasize that we appreciate these thoughtful comments and the opportunity to respond to them.

I look forward to continuing discussion of the project.

Yours sincerely



Ian Burrow
Vice President

Area A

Plan View

