

In Search of Newtown Manor's African Community

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This archaeology project is a partnership between the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM), the GU 272 Descendants Association, Southern Maryland Heritage Area, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The study proposes to recover archaeological information that will be used to shed light on the lives of enslaved African Americans who lived at Newtown. The project will take place between the last week of February and May of 2020.

Two archaeological surveys (Smolek 1981 and King et al. 2017) undertaken in agricultural fields at Newtown Manor in St. Mary's County revealed many pre- and post-contact archaeological sites, including four areas (A, B, D & E) that may contain enslaved African American homes, and information about their lives (Figure 1). The artifact types (e.g. 18th-century stone wares and red wares), a paucity of building hardware suggesting log dwellings, and locations beyond the Newtown Manor House, support field quarters for enslaved workers.

This research design provides an overview of the arrival of enslaved Africans to Maryland along with their later sale by the Jesuits to Louisiana planters; the historic context was gleaned from King et al.'s (2017) report. In addition to this abbreviated history, this document provides an overview of the proposed archaeological field methods, specialized analyses, and public outreach products. Archaeologists will work closely with the GU272 Descendants Association on this project and have received their full support on this project (Attachment 1). Their input will guide research and direct how findings about their ancestors should be incorporated into interpretive materials and shared with the public. Any findings resulting from this project will first be shared with the GU272 Descendants Association prior to being released to the public.

Arrival of Africans to Maryland

People of African descent were in St. Mary's County from the time the *Ark* and the *Dove* arrived in the colony in 1634. Africans – not unlike indentured servants – were brought to St. Mary's to provide labor for tobacco cultivation. The difference was that servants came voluntarily and served limited terms while most Africans came involuntarily and served for life. Initially, the number of Africans was small, comprising two or three percent of the total immigrant population. Not all Africans arrived as slaves, nor did all slaves of African ancestry remain bound for life. One of the Africans to arrive in Maryland in 1634 was Mathias de Sousa, who came as a servant to the Jesuits.

Throughout the 17th century, Africans were distributed across the landscape in relatively low numbers with most planters owning no more than one or two Africans. This low number was due to availability and cost of Africans rather than an aversion to their use (Coombs 2011). As the colony moved into the 18th century the numbers of enslaved Africans increased. In Maryland, between 1658 and 1710, approximately 13 percent of lower western shore planters owned more than 10 enslaved Africans, with 15 planters owning more than 20 people (Menard 1975). Those who commanded larger labor forces typically divided them up and sent laborers to work on outlying plantations.

The first slave law, passed in 1664, followed on the heels of the arrival of the ship *Blessing*, which delivered 158 Africans from the Senegambia to Maryland shores (Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database 2019). The 1664 law, "An Act Concerning Negroes & Other Slaves," recognized "Negro"

slavery as a prior practice and declared that “all Negroes or other slaves already within the Province And all Negroes and other slaves to be hereafter imported into the Province shall serve Durante Vita,” that is, for life. What was more, the Assembly declared, any English woman who married a slave would become a servant for life, and their children would be born into the condition of permanent servitude, or slavery (King and Chaney 2011).

Lorena Walsh (1993) points out that, for the colonial period, far fewer Africans came to Maryland than to Virginia: while 80,000 captives were brought to Virginia between 1658 and 1773, just under 25,000 were brought to Maryland during the same period. Walsh attributes this to the larger size of plantations held by the Virginia elite. Brought to Maryland by British and local Chesapeake slave traders, most of the enslaved Africans arrived directly from Africa. In the early period, at least through the second quarter of the 18th century, about one third of the Africans imported into Maryland came from the Senegambia region of West Africa, although captives from the Gold and Windward Coasts, Bight of Biafra, Sierra Leone, and Bight of Benin could find themselves in Maryland. Later, proportionally more captives were brought from Angola or west central Africa.

By the beginning of the 18th century, enslaved Africans, although present from the beginning of European settlement, were becoming the primary source of labor for the elite. Historian Robert Brugger (1988:46) found that, by 1710, slaves formed 25 percent of the colony’s population; an estimated 4,000 Africans had arrived in the colony between 1695 and 1708. The course of economic and social development in St. Mary’s County and the rest of the colony had been set.

The Sale of Newtown’s Enslaved Community

From the first decades of European settlement, the region’s Jesuit fathers owned slaves, although the details of this ownership are muted in the records. A 1717 deed for Newtown Manor notes “possessions” of the Jesuits, including 15 enslaved individuals. Four men (Will, Jack, Kitt, and Peter), four women (Mary, Teresa, Claire, and Pegg), four boys (Jack, Clemm, Tomm, and James), and three girls (Betty, Cate, and Susan) are listed in the deed. By 1734, the enslaved population at Newtown had grown to 27 individuals. Of the 15 individuals listed in 1717, only seven, or just under half, were found in the 1734 inventory. In 1765, 29 enslaved people were noted but their names were not provided; only 15 were considered workers (3 in the house and 12 in the fields); the remaining 14 were children or the elderly; it is possible some of those present in 1734 were still there in 1765. In 1816, the Jesuits initiated a massive renovation and repair project at Newtown. They added a half story to the manor house and replaced the windows. According to a Newtowne cash book, 57,000 bricks were fired with Michael Jarboe and “Negro Peter” both paid for brickwork and “Negro Nick” paid for carpentry (Beitzell 1976:192).

In 1838, the Jesuits made the decision to sell all 272 of their enslaved African Americans in Maryland to Catholic planters in Louisiana. Fifty-six men, women, and children at Newtown were inventoried; children as young as nine months and adults in their 50s and 60s were sold to Jesse Beatty and Henry Johnson. The Newtown families joined 216 other enslaved residents from Jesuit farms in Maryland in their relocation south. Many, if not all, of the slaves departed the Chesapeake aboard the *Katherine Jackson* out of Alexandria, arriving in New Orleans in November and December 1838. The slave manifests for the Port of New Orleans suggest that the *Katherine Jackson* was used to ship slaves from the Chesapeake region to the South on a regular basis.

The proceeds from the sale of the enslaved African Americans were used to resolve debts on behalf of Georgetown College. In 1840, Father Fidel Grivel reported that the slaves arriving in Louisiana experienced a “cruel overseer,” although he went on to say, after they were removed from this overseer’s supervision, “they are pleased in their new place” (Georgetown Slavery Archive 96).

With no enslaved laborers to run their farms, the Jesuits at Newtown and the other manors turned to tenants. In 1841, Rev. Peter Havermans noted that a three-field system was in use at Newtown, including a field of clover. After the Jesuits left Newtown, services continued at the church, although attendance reportedly declined.

The sale of Newtown Manor’s 272 enslaved people to Louisiana was a traumatic event for the African American community. Recently, Georgetown University recognized their role in the upheaval of this community for the school’s benefit. As such, the Georgetown Slavery Archive was created and is managed by the University. In 2016, the GU272 Descendants Association was created to join with Georgetown University in the reconciliation of their ancestors’ enslavement. Their mission is to preserve the memory, commemorate their lives, and honor the 272 enslaved people removed from the Maryland Jesuit plantations. Today, there are over 10,000 people who trace their lineage back to these ancestors.

Survey Areas

Two multi-component archaeological sites were documented during King et al.’s (2017) survey (Figure 1). Site 18ST451 contains pre-contact and historic-period resources, including a linear scatter of 18th century domestic artifacts along the east side of MD 243 and south of the Newtown Manor House (Areas A & B) (Figure 1). Another 18th century domestic site was found near an unnamed inlet west of MD 243 within this same site boundary (Area D). The second site, 18ST891, is also a multi-component site. Here, a scatter of 18th century domestic artifacts also suggests dwellings of the enslaved population (Area E). An area that once contained a historic house site, now a grass field, is located within Area C.

18ST451 (Areas A & B)

This area was tested with shovel test pits (STPs) and contained 18th-century domestic artifacts likely associated with enslaved African American homes (Smolek 1981). There has been no additional work to define features or activity areas within this site. As such, a metal detector survey will be carried out to: determine structure and building locations; identify activity areas; and locate diagnostic artifacts (e.g. clothing fasteners, coins, etc.) to tightly date the site. All metal detector hits will be excavated, mapped with a total station, and collected for analysis. If artifact concentrations are identified through this method, 5 ft. x 5 ft. excavation units may be placed within these areas to better understand the site structure.

18ST451 (Area C)

A STP survey in this location revealed building remains and a scatter of domestic artifacts. Since features were not fully investigated, a remote sensing survey (ground-penetrating radar [GPR] and magnetometry) will be carried out within Area C. This geophysical survey is expected to reveal additional archaeological features. In addition, the results will facilitate planning for DNR. A limited number of excavation units may be used to investigate geophysical anomalies.



Figure 1: Site locations and geophysical survey locations.

18ST451 (West side of MD 243)

This site area had some STPs and a pedestrian survey carried out upon it. Higher artifact counts and concentrations of diagnostic materials were identified along the unnamed inlet and roadway (Area D). This area will be investigated with a geophysical survey that will include GPR and magnetometry. In addition, metal detecting will be carried out across the west side of the MD 243 to identify activity areas and locate buildings. STPs and excavation units may be used in this area to investigate features and ground truth anomalies identified through the geophysical survey.

18ST891 (East side of MD 243)

This newly discovered site was investigated with a limited number of STPs, but will be subjected to a metal detector survey to locate activity areas and identify diagnostic artifacts to tighten the date of the site. In addition, an area with high artifact counts from previous work will receive a geophysical survey. Additional STPs and excavation units may be used to investigate any anomalies. All metal detector hits will be mapped with a total station.

Methods and Analysis

The geophysical survey will be placed over three areas (C, D, and E) to: determine feasibility of this method on this site type; to locate cultural features; and to help with DNR planning. In addition, metal detecting will be used in Areas A, B, D, and E, to locate activity areas and identify diagnostic artifacts. The metal detector survey will be carried out using 10-25 ft. spaced transects. Each excavated artifact will be mapped with a total station for future mapping products and site interpretation and management.

Up to 15, 5 ft. x 5 ft. excavation units and up to 100 STPs will be distributed within the survey areas discussed above. The STPs will be used to better define site boundaries and ground truth smaller remote sensing anomalies. Although the sites were initially discovered using STPs, the sites have not been tested with larger excavation units that would recover additional artifacts and expose architectural and refuse disposal features. This additional data could provide tighter occupation dates for the sites, reveal food availability and consumption patterns, as well as other details on the daily lives of enslaved people at Newtown. Furthermore, excavation within these loci could confirm whether these were indeed the homes of enslaved African Americans and/or other tenants.

During the excavation of STPs and excavation units, all soils will be screened through ¼-inch mesh and all artifacts collected for analysis; archaeological features will be documented. Soil samples will be taken from cultural features to recover small artifacts and food remains. Specialized analysis of all faunal remains or other unique artifact types will be completed. In addition, clay tobacco pipe stems will be collected from the site to recover human DNA. The DNA analysis of pipe stems has proved successful in determining ancestry of site occupants (Schablitsky et al. 2019). This genetic analysis method will be used to determine if the site occupants were of African descent or other ancestry.

All fieldwork will be carried out in compliance with methods outlined in Shaffer and Cole (1994) and archaeological records and artifacts will be processed and packaged according to Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory (MAC Lab) standards (Morehouse et al. 2018). The artifacts, which are owned by the State of Maryland, will be deposited with the MAC Lab.

Research Questions

Since STPs were the only methods used to find and define the archaeological sites, the depth and number of research questions will remain vague until further studies are completed. At this time, the proposed testing strategy will be used to: tighten the site boundaries; determine presence of features with intact deposits; and confirm the sites as African. Likely research questions to be born from these investigations could include the following:

1. House Type and Distribution: The proposed testing strategy will attempt to determine the types of buildings used to house enslaved African Americans. Collection strategy will be used to understand the types of building material used in structures, and the numbers and types of hardware used to construct the homes. The distribution of building material and hardware may present a pattern allowing discernment of individual homes. These dwellings can then be observed on the larger landscape to compare and contrast with other 17th and 18th century plantations. In other words, how was the Jesuits' organization of the landscape, including placement of enslaved workers, distinct and/or similar to other Chesapeake plantations? And, how did it change over time?

2. Diets of the Enslaved: Understanding food procurement and consumption patterns in archaeology is important data for reconstructing the access enslaved people had to rations and wild fauna and flora. Through larger testing strategies and discovery of intact features, it may be possible to reconstruct the diet of the people living at Newtown. Typical archaeological patterns for enslaved populations show a heavier reliance on wild fauna and flora during the earlier colonial period, and an eventual shift to domesticated animals and plants. In plantation contexts, however, archaeologists continue to see a heavy reliance on wild caught game to supplement slave diets.

3. Access to Goods: Initial testing at the three areas believed to be homes of enslaved African Americans showed a high number of utilitarian ceramics including stone wares and red wares. The interesting observation on these sites was the absence of white salt-glazed stoneware, a popular mid-18th-century ceramic. Often, certain segments of enslaved populations had access to and used finer ceramics including tea wares. This study seeks to determine if the enslaved African Americans at Newtown, at least in field quarters, were provided tea wares and more refined tableware ceramics or if they only had access to coarser utilitarian wares. These patterns and findings would be interesting to compare to the Jesuit contexts to determine if tableware choices were linked to piety and modesty or to status.

4. Ancestry: The difficulty with basic home sites in agricultural fields is the absence of intact features and the homogeneity of artifact types across the color line. Until recently, archaeologists have lacked the scientific tools to unequivocally determine ancestry of artifact assemblages and sites. Traditionally, they have relied on site location on the landscape, artifact assemblages, and historic records. The discovery of human DNA on a tobacco pipe stem from a slave quarter site in Anne Arundel County demonstrated the scientific potential of wrangling ancestry from an artifact (Schablitsky et al. 2019). This study proposes to collect clay tobacco pipe stems from buried and intact deposits in an attempt to determine the ancestry of the tobacco smoker(s), as well as their sex (male or female).

Public Outreach

This project contains a robust public component that engages and incorporates descendant communities and the public. Here, archaeologists will include the GU272 Descendants Association in regular dialog about the project, sharing discoveries, and providing site tours. Once all of the data has been processed, the findings will be incorporated into web based interactive products such as a story map. The release of findings to the public and creation of any interpretive products will first be shared and coordinated with the GU272 Descendants Association.

The light but steady flow of visitors to Newtowne Neck State Park would also benefit from educational kiosks that provide an inclusive natural and cultural narrative. As such, archaeologists will coordinate with the GU272 Descendants Association and DNR to fund, design, and place up to three interpretive signs around the park.

Schedule & Field Coordination

Although the geophysical and archaeological surveys can be flexible, the week of February 24th or March 16th, 2020 is the time proposed for the geophysical surveys. The work should take approximately one week and will be coordinated with DNR. The archaeological survey is proposed to take place in May 2020. Since the proposed survey areas are owned by DNR and leased to local farmers, MDOT SHA will directly coordinate with DNR to access the property. MDOT SHA can adjust their survey schedule, and also has the flexibility to pay for crop damage to the farmer, should any occur.

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