Yard Areas and Middens: The Creation of Space by the Enslaved at Fairfield Plantation

Colleen Betti

College of William and Mary

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Yard Areas and Middens: The Creation of Space by the Enslaved at Fairfield Plantation

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Colleen Betti

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Dr. Neil Norman, Director

Dr. David Brown

Dr. Marley Brown

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Abstract

Fairfield Plantation in Gloucester County, Virginia, is best known for its 17th century manor house and connections with the elites of colonial Virginia. However, over the course of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries the plantation was home to hundreds of enslaved Africans. Some of the enslaved population at Fairfield lived and worked in the shadow of the manor house where a series of slave quarters, a work yard, and a large trash midden developed over the years. Using a detailed catalog created over the past summer of the artifacts recovered during archaeological investigations of this area, artifact distribution maps are able to reveal how the use of this space changed over the course of the plantation’s occupation. Using the idea that everyday actions can take on the form of resistance in oppressive situations, this thesis aims to address how the enslaved Africans living and working near the manor house at Fairfield Plantation were able to claim spaces as their own within the larger plantation landscape in the form of yard spaces and through their everyday management of refuse disposal.
**Introduction**

It is no surprise that plantation archaeology has been a major focus within historical archaeology of the Chesapeake as plantations were the homes of the most prominent members of Chesapeake society during the historical period. Morley Jeffers Williams’ excavations at Mount Vernon in 1931 are considered the first known archaeological study of a plantation, although the work done by James A. Ford at Elizafield Plantation later in the 1930s is better known (Singleton 1990:70). These excavation and others up until the 1960s were largely focused on aiding in reconstructions and informing histories, similar to efforts at Colonial Williamsburg. These early plantation archaeologists used archaeology to learn about the large manor houses and the lives of elites who lived in them (70-71). Plantation archaeology became more anthropological and focused shifted towards the lives of the enslaved beginning with Charles Fairbanks’ work on slave quarters in the 1960s, followed by work on quarters at several other plantations including Kingsmill and Cumberland Island in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Singleton 1990:73; Agbe-Davies 2007:414).

Writing in 1990, Singleton identified three themes that dominated plantation archaeology focused on slavery, “(1) the search for material correlates of ethnicity…(2) examinations of slave material life… and (3) interpretation of class and race” although multiple themes are usually present within studies (74). Over the past twenty years these themes remain the focus of archaeologists studying the African diaspora, although there has been a proliferation of topics within them and a heightened focus on interdisciplinary research, comparative perspectives, and engagement with descendant communities (Fennell 2008, 2).

The first theme refers to attempts to identify elements of African culture in the material culture of the enslaved. Archaeologists compared archaeological and ethnographic evidence
from the Americas to examples from Africa in order to identify similarities between the two. Elements of African culture retained by enslaved populations is hypothesized in the similarities in yard areas and yard care, including sweeping, among populations of African descent in West Africa, the Caribbean, and North America (Heath and Bennett 2000:43), African motifs on locally-made ceramic tobacco pipes (Emerson 1994), and ritual interpretations of subfloor pits (Samford 2007). In contrast, archaeologists use the same evidence to identify signs of acculturation within enslaved groups (Singleton 1990:74). However, in the twenty years since Singleton wrote her review, archaeologists have shifted their focus away from discussing acculturation towards developing a concept of Creolization (Fennell 2008:2). It is important to look for parallels to African cultures alongside evidence of Creolization at plantation sites where numerous enslaved Africans lived and worked in a multi-cultural landscape.

The second theme, studying the material aspects of life, can be found across the field of archaeology. When these studies relate to slavery, they include looking at the architecture and layout of slave quarters. Excavations at Thomas Jefferson’s Mulberry Row, Carter’s Grove’s slave quarters, and a growing list of other sites in the Chesapeake have shown the variety in size and quality of quarters during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. In general though, quarters appear to have been made of wood, often with ground-laid sills or post-in-ground structural elements and built in communal arrangements (Samford 1996:92). Subfloor pits are also frequently the subject of study (Samford 2007). Objects such as cowry shells, blue beads, and colonoware are often associated with enslaved Africans and are identified as markers of enslaved populations in the Chesapeake (Heath and Breen 2009). Other studies of objects found at slave quarters reveal details about the everyday lives of the enslaved. For instance, faunal remains have been used to look at the diet of the enslaved indicating that most enslaved groups supplemented their diets
through hunting their own food (Singleton 1990:155). Studies of the material lives of the enslaved form the basis for understanding their lives and the starting point for looking at larger questions.

Singleton’s third theme, “interpretations of race and class,” compares the lives of enslaved Africans to other groups such as planters or poor whites. It is within this theme that ideas of power, status, and economics appear. John Otto was one of the first archaeologists to look at plantations as mini-representations of southern society, where blacks and whites of different classes were represented by different assemblages of material culture (Singleton 1990:73). Orser criticizes Otto’s work for overemphasizing “caste” and thus privileging race over class relations on plantations (1988a:739). Orser counters that material culture at plantations should be looked at through the lenses of the economy and power, reflecting the planter’s socioeconomic position as well as the power relations within a plantation (743). Further studies under this theme have included looking at differences in tenant housing on plantations (Orser 1988b), the relation of slave houses to the formal plantation landscape (Epperson 1990), and how planters used material culture to control the enslaved, while the enslaved used material culture to resist this control (Thomas 1998). Archaeologists studying race and class on plantations continue to look at the social relations that still affect American society.

Enslaved Africans living at a home quarter under the watchful eye of a planter and his family had more limited autonomy than those living in more distant field quarters. The benefits of higher quality material goods and less fieldwork were counterbalanced by the planter’s close proximity and greater control over aspects of daily life. Forms of resistance used by enslaved Africans living within the home quarter were often invisible to planters, countering their actions without appearing to be a threat, yet still able to improve the lives of the enslaved. Using the idea
that everyday actions can take on the form of resistance in oppressive situations, this thesis aims
to address how the enslaved Africans living and working near the manor house at Fairfield
Plantation were able to claim spaces as their own within the larger plantation landscape in the
form of yard spaces and through their everyday management of refuse disposal. Within these
yard spaces enslaved Africans and African-Americans interacted with space in ways that
reflected African lifeways and attested to their retention of both culture and identity.

**Fairfield Plantation**

On June 12, 1648, Lewis Burwell I patented 2350 acres of land on the north side of the
York River in Gloucester County, Virginia (Mason 1946, 15). This land became Fairfield
Plantation and in the years that followed, Lewis I and his descendants increased the size of their
plantation, which reached 7000 acres by the mid-18th century (Brown and Harpole 2007, 169).
Lewis I moved his family from York County to Fairfield by 1651. The house that he built at this
time was likely located in 1963/4 by Professor John Blair of Richard Bland College of the
College of William and Mary in Petersburg, but with few surviving field notes or photographs of
this excavation the exact location of this excavated building is currently unknown. Lewis
Burwell II, and his wife Abigail, built a large brick manor house circa 1694 using money
inherited from Abigail’s uncle Nathaniel Bacon “the elder” (cousin of Nathaniel Bacon “the
rebel”). In addition to the money used for the house, the Burwells also inherited at least forty
slaves from Bacon. These were certainly not the first slaves owned by Lewis II. Documents
show that he purchased at least two slaves in 1691, an unnamed individual and a woman named
Nam, and three more in 1693, including a man named Yambo. Lewis I had many white
indentured servants as well as some Africans in his service whose status is unclear (Walsh 1997,
It is unclear if any of the slaves inherited from Bacon ended up at Fairfield, but there was certainly an enslaved African population at the plantation in the late 17th and 18th centuries. Very little documentation survives on the enslaved population at Fairfield. The documentary record is unclear for many years and it is impossible to tell if any of the slaves mentioned in the Burwell family documents were living at Fairfield or on one of their several other plantations spread across no less than eight counties. Even when it can be determined that a certain enslaved individual worked at Fairfield, seldom is any indication given as to what their job on the plantation was or where they lived across the thousands of acres. However, from the few references in the historical record, historians believe that a large percentage of the enslaved at Fairfield were Virginia-born and mulatto by the 18th century (Walsh 1997, 160; Morgan 1998, 10). After the death of Lewis Burwell II’s son Nathaniel in 1721, Nathaniel’s father-in-law, Robert “King” Carter, took over management of Fairfield and it is from his documents that most of the records of the enslaved population at Fairfield plantation survives. Walsh posited that Carter operated Fairfield as a distribution point for the slaves he purchased from merchants traveling along the York River. The newly arrived captives would have been brought to Fairfield for training before their placement on another Carter or Burwell plantation (Walsh 1997, 81). However, Carter also encouraged enslaved Africans to create family units on his plantation and this was likely the case for the more permanent enslaved community at Fairfield (Walsh 1997, 83). After Carter’s death in 1732, Nathaniel’s son, Lewis Burwell I of the second set (I/II), returned from England and took over management of Fairfield.

Lewis Burwell I/II rose to be a prominent member of Virginia society and was appointed acting governor of the colony by 1751 (Brown and Harpole 2007, 168). Lewis Burwell II/II inherited Fairfield from his father in 1756, and while not ascending to the position of acting
governor, he was very active in local politics. After a century of tobacco production, the soil at Fairfield was too depleted to be profitable and by the 1770s Lewis II/II had transitioned much of his agricultural endeavors to wheat, corn, and cattle. He also spent large amounts of money gambling and horse racing. These expensive recreational activities combined with a plantation whose profits were declining likely put Lewis II/II into substantial debt, a situation similar to many of his contemporaries (Brown 2006). Beginning in the 1760s, advertisements in the Virginia Gazette show that Lewis II/II intended to sell his enslaved Africans, in groups as large as 30, along with horses and other goods. The large number of enslaved Africans living and working at Fairfield in the mid-to-late 18th century remained relatively constant through the end of the Burwell family’s tenure; even after selling off several slaves before his death. There remained 140 enslaved individuals associated with his estate three years after he died according to the 1782 personal property tax records. After his death in 1779, Lewis II/II’s creditors chose to sell Fairfield, rather than one of the family’s three other Gloucester County plantations, along with its associated slaves and other personal property in order to pay off some of the family’s debts (Brown 2006).

The 500-acre core of the plantation was sold to Robert Thruston by Lewis Burwell III/II in 1787. It is unclear whether Thruston also purchased the enslaved Africans living at Fairfield, or brought his own slaves to the plantation. A combination is most likely. However, censuses between 1788 and 1816, the year Thruston died, show him owning between 20 and 60 slaves, many less than the Burwells. The smaller size of the plantation and smaller number of enslaved Africans may have coincided with the complete abandonment of tobacco monoculture seen at other properties across this region in the 1780s and 1790s (Walsh 2010). Brown and Harpole believe this paralleled a re-arrangement of the plantation’s labor force, moving more enslaved
workers to the plantation core. Robert Thruston’s son, John, who inherited the plantation in 1816, owned around 20 enslaved Africans according to personal property tax records, reflecting a further reduction of the number of people living at Fairfield. After John’s death in 1828, the plantation was sub-divided and farmed primarily by tenants from the Civil War through the end of the century. An advertisement in 1885 describes the former plantation as a farm of 300 acres with a “comfortable brick dwelling of eight rooms and all necessary out-buildings” (Brown and Harpole 2007, 169). Artifact concentrations suggest that after tenants operated the plantation much of the domestic activity occurred within the five acres around the manor house (169). One of the few surviving photographs of the Fairfield manor house shows an African-American woman sitting on the front porch of the house in the late 19th century, likely the building’s occupant. An oral history recounts the sheriff visiting an African-American woman, perhaps the same one, sitting on a piano stool adjacent a piano, which had a chicken tied to it. The woman, presumably once a slave, threw corn husks and cobs into a fireplace or stove at Fairfield only ten days before the manor house burned down in 1897 (Brown and Harpole 2012).

Today, many smaller houses and businesses occupy a substantial portion of the once extensive 7000-acre plantation. After the destruction of the manor house, the core of the former Fairfield plantation remained an active farm. The farmers employed no-till cultivation starting in
1996 and the five acres immediately surrounding the manor house ruin returned to pasture and yard in 2000. Prior to the loss of the manor house, plowing extended within a few feet of the building foundation, a fact confirmed by recent excavations. The entire site, excepting the manor house ruins, underwent significant plowing, making the plowzone a crucial element of the archaeological investigations.

**Yard Areas**

While slave quarters receive much attention in the Chesapeake, the areas between and around quarters are not commonly looked at beyond referencing the buildings themselves. When they are mentioned, it is typically only a sentence or two such as “the traces of fenced enclosures, and the spatial groups of structures denote communal spaces for socializing” or “the ground beneath the quarters and the surrounding yards were found to be strewn with layers of sheet midden” (Samford 1996:92; 97). There are exceptions to this though. Barbara Heath and Amber Bennett identify sites such as Utopia, Hermitage, Monticello, Poplar Forrest and Rich Neck Plantations where slave quarter yards have been excavated (2000:45). Ywone Edwards wrote about the meaning of “trash” found in slave quarter yards across the American South (1998). More recently, work at St. Mary’s Manor has identified a yard area around a single quarter where archaeologists hope to be able to identify activity areas (All of Us Would Walk Together 2014). Despite relatively little attention paid to yard areas, Dell Upton stated as far back as 1984 that “the quarter extended beyond its walls. The space around the building was as important as the building itself,” a sentiment that John Michael Vlach agrees with (Upton 1984:63, Vlach 1993). Of the little attention given to the layout and use of quarter yards, most investigations have been interested in gardens and animals kept by enslaved Africans.
Yard can refer to more than one space on a plantation. Closest to the word’s connotation today is Heath and Bennett’s definition of “the area of land, bounded and usually enclosed, which immediately surrounds a domestic structure and is considered an extension of that dwelling. A yard is set aside for particular personal or group uses” (2000:38). Due to the small sizes of quarters and tradition that stretches back to Africa, the yards around slave quarters were used to garden, cook, do laundry, raise animals and socialize (42). Evidence of gardening and laundering can be elusive, especially in plowed contexts, but a cooking pit in the home quarter yard at Shadwell provides proof of cooking in the yard by the enslaved (Kern 2010:87). Many quarters, such as Utopia, were arranged around a courtyard giving a social atmosphere to the yard (Heath and Bennett 2000:45). This atmosphere was observed by a former slave named James Bolton who recalled that “Sadday nights we played and danced. Sometimes in the cabins, sometimes in the yards” (WPA 2004). As an extension of a house, where many activities took place, quarter yards were important spaces for enslaved Africans living on plantations.

The other yard associated with the enslaved on plantations is what Vlach describes as “a space where slaves performed many of the household chores” defined by “the buildings that sat close to a planter’s residence” (1993:33). It was a place of work, but also maintained the same sense of community found within the quarter yards, as most of the tasks performed there required multiple laborers. One of the most common buildings in the yard was the kitchen and as such the yard became where food was distributed. The work yard also served as a play area for enslaved children before they were old enough to work either in the fields or the big house (35). There are numerous references in slave narratives of enslaved children playing in the yard. Certain narratives make it clear that it was the work yard and not the quarter yards, including Willis Cofer who revealed that in the yard “It wuz de cook's place to boss us when de other
…[enslaved] wuz off in de fields” (WPA 2004). Not all plantations had a distinction between quarters close to the house and the work yard as some planters preferred to have their slaves living in the same place as they worked. An example of this is Hayes Manor in Edenton North Carolina, where quarters were mixed in among service buildings (Vlach 1993:21). In these instances the quarter yards may have doubled as or blended seamlessly with the work yard that was located next to outbuildings dedicated to provisioning the plantation. This was likely the case at Fairfield Plantation.

Historical and ethnographic examples reveal yards in Africa and African-American yards in the Caribbean and the American South to be highly cultivated, communal, and well ordered (Heath and Bennett 2000, 39-42). These yard spaces were often ordered through a logic based on African cultural ideas rather than Western ones, and so well ordered does not always mean “neat” from the Western point of view. African American yards in the American South are sometimes home to what Gundaker calls “yard work.” Yard work involves using symbolic objects to create meaningful displays or areas within the larger yard. While yard work may date largely to after the Civil War, it shows that that yards were more than just useful spaces, but were purposefully created according to African-American cultural logic and were meaningful (Gundaker and McWillie 2005). Edwards sees large trash deposits that are sometimes found around slave quarters as evidence of practices similar to modern yard work. There are many references in the historical record of plantation owners complaining about the perceived dirtiness of these yards (Edwards 1998:255; Vlach 1993:14). The “trash” surrounding quarters may have carried symbolic meanings for the enslaved Africans derived from West African spiritual practices and was practiced as a form of resistance against the ordered landscape of the planter (Edwards 1998:252; 265). One significant form of trash was oyster shell, which may have served
as both a reminder of the world of the dead and to alert the quarter’s residence when someone was approaching (265). Some enslaved Africans purposefully maintained yards that may have been viewed as messy or disordered to white visitors.

In contrast to the symbolic use of trash in the yards of the enslaved, there has been archaeological and historical evidence from multiple plantations that enslaved Africans routinely swept their yards similar to West African practices. Yard sweeping was so routine that a former slave recounted a story of a haunted quarter that included a woman ghost who “ou could hear sweepin' up leaves in de yard and all dat time you might be lookin' hard and not see a leaf move” (WPA 2004). While initial attempts to identify yard sweeping archaeologically was not successful at plantations such as Poplar Forest, a different method of analysis was able to show evidence of swept yards at Site 8, a quarter at Monticello (Heath and Bennett 2000:48; Bon-Harper 2009). Keeping yards swept clean reflects West African beliefs that sweeping gets rid of ghosts and prevents them from following one home (Heath and Bennett 2000:43). While it has been thought that enslaved Africans were too busy throughout the day to maintain their own yards and homes (Edwards 1998:269), historical and archaeological evidence shows that numerous enslaved Africans routinely swept their yards.

There was also a symbolic purpose to yards that may explain the discrepancy between the use of trash and sweeping around quarters. Gundaker and McWillie identified surfaces, borders, and boundaries as having special significance in African-American yards (2005:109). Clean swept surfaces were considered sealed, and thus impervious to assault through the use of objects. But a surface made from oyster shells could serve the same purpose (111). A swept yard in combination with a boundary or boarder differentiated an area of order and harmony from the chaos of the wilderness or trash deposits (110; 113). Different boundaries within a yard allowed
African-Americans to create a world according to how they wanted it, even if this was not reflected in the world outside of their yards (117). The personal yards surrounding slave quarters have been the main focus of archaeologists looking at yard spaces of the enslaved as they were important areas of social interaction, financial gain, symbolism, and cultural connections to Africa.

**Middens**

Both yard work and yard sweeping involve refuse most commonly deposited in middens. A midden has been defined archaeologically as an “occupation deposit relatively rich in refuse… and with evidence for the deliberate and sequential accumulation of refuse at one location” (Needham and Spence 1997:80). King and Miller differentiate a surface midden from trash pits or other features into which refuse may be disposed (1987:37). A sheet midden is further defined as a “shallow complex of layers of trash and soil” (Pogue 1991:9). Middens can be found on nearly all plantation sites. However, the term midden is applied to a variety of features of all sizes, shapes, and durations. A search of the Society for Historical Archaeology website produces multiple references to a “small midden,” a “large midden,” a “domestic midden,” a “refuse midden,” a “deep midden,” a “thick midden,” and “midden deposits.” None of the articles or reports defines what they mean by midden, or what size a midden has to be considered large or deep as opposed to small or a sheet. There does not appear to be an exact definition of what constitutes a midden on a historic-era site beyond the broad concept of an area of purposeful refuse disposal. While the great variety in trash disposal areas makes defining various types of middens difficult, a more standard vocabulary would be useful when attempting comparisons between middens, especially as many authors do not clarify the dimensions of the midden they are discussing. On the large plantations in the Chesapeake, such as Fairfield,
enslaved Africans working in the main house would have been the ones disposing of household refuse and thus creating the middens located in the plantation core. As the material remains of a household chore done by enslaved Africans, comparisons between middens on plantations could add to the discussion of the daily lives of the enslaved.

Middens of all sizes and shapes are abundant sources of information for archaeologists. On the most basic level they can help date associated buildings (Bon-Harper et al. 2004). If unplowed, carefully excavated stratified midden contexts can reveal detailed information about the use of material culture by a household over time. Thanks to a detailed documentary record and careful excavation, the South Grove midden at Mount Vernon enabled archaeologists to link ceramic sets to specific owners (Breen 2004). While unplowed deposits are always ideal, research has proven that even when extensively plowed, middens can still provide great detail about the lives of those who created them. The majority of studies demonstrating this came out of St. Mary’s City, Maryland in the late 1980s and early 1990s. An analysis of a plowed midden at the van Sweringen site in St Mary’s City, Maryland showed that change over time can be seen in disposal patterns and midden composition. Through the use of mapping programs and ceramic and pipestem dating, artifact distributions across the site were used to see how the location of the midden and the function of buildings on the site changed throughout its occupation (King and Miller 1987). Similarly, at the St. John’s site, King showed that a plowed context that combined middens from different eras of occupation could be separated back into two distinct contexts allowing for comparison between the two (1988). When a large enough percentage of a plowed site has been excavated, midden deposits have even been used to determine the location of no longer extant building entrances or fence line locations (Pogue 1988; Heath and Bennett 2000, 48). Expanding beyond the more methodological focus of these studies, John Solomon Otto used
artifacts to look at status patterning and examine cultural interchange between slaves and plantation owners (1984). For all of the attention that has been paid to middens, they typically are used to aid in the study of other aspects of life rather than the role a midden played in the plantation landscape.

Midden formation processes on British colonial sites have been frequently looked at for clues to the locations of other features. Throwing trash into surface middens around structures was the most common form of refuse disposal across British North America (King and Miller 1987:37). More specifically, these middens typically formed outside entranceways because individuals would simply toss their trash out of the nearest door, reflecting the activities that were occurring nearby (King 1988:22; Miller 1994:73). This practice was the basis behind Stanley South’s pattern recognition models (1977). While there have been many critiques of South’s work, this basic idea of refuse being thrown out nearby entrances has influenced many studies of middens in the Chesapeake, although it is important to note that the majority of these studies were done in the late 1980s and early 1990s. More recently, the presence of a midden has been used to suggest the existence of a previously unknown building at Monticello’s Site 8. The concentration of artifacts is too far away to have been formed by one of the known houses (Bon-Harper et al. 2004). Middens also tend to be found in natural depressions in the topography such as a gully near the Home Quarter at Poplar Forest (Heath and Bennett 2000:49). While trash was most commonly deposited directly outside of buildings, other practices can affect how these concentrations form. Practices such as yard sweeping do not allow middens to build up directly next to a house. Instead, as the yard is swept over time, all but the smallest of items are moved to create a ring around the house or a pile along a fence or other boundary line (Bon-Harper 2009, Heath and Bennett 2000:49). At Carter’s Grove, evidence from a cross mend was interpreted as
showing that while the majority of fragments from an object ended up in a trash filled ravine, while smaller pieces remained in yards until swept into subfloor pits (Samford 1988:2). Fairfield Plantation does not fit neatly into these definitions of middens. At this time, only one large midden has been discovered in the plantation core and it is likely comprised of both refuse from the manor house as well as the nearby slave quarters. The close spatial relationship between the edge of the midden and known quarters provokes questions about the formation of the midden and its relationship to the quarters and yards at Fairfield.

**Space and Place**

Yard areas and middens are elements on the landscape involving the use and function of space and creation of places. Space is typically differentiated from place in archaeology, but both have multiple, and at times contradictory, definitions (Smith 2008:16; Heath 2010:159). Even when definitions generally agree, they often overlap. The similarity in the colloquial meanings of space and place adds to the confusion. Archaeological discussions of space and place are rooted in the work of philosophers and geographers such as Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, and Yi-Fu Tuan. In the broadest sense, space is constantly being created and changed while place is deeply connected to the past and memory (Smith 2008:16).

Using concepts laid out by Tuan, Smith defines place as a “fixed and static location of past actions, experiences, and memories” that is tangible and gives “meaning and identity to people who have real emotional attachments rooted to the landscape through their memories and heritage” (2008:16). Place is important to identity because it is in places that personal and cultural identities are held and a sense of belonging created (Tilley 1994:15; 26). Heath sees slave quarter yard areas as places that allowed enslaved Africans to shape a uniquely African-American identity (2010:173). More specifically, the yards were often maintained and used in
ways that reflected the African heritage of the enslaved. Food grown in yard gardens could be
used to buy personal items, promoting individual identity, and the activities that took place in
yards allowed for the creation of a community and a sense of belonging for the enslaved within
the plantation.

Under the influence of processual archaeology, space was seen as an abstract concept
where human activities occurred. It was a neutral concept with no meaning attached, and space
was considered universal with no differences across cultures or time (Tilley 1994:9). The
influence of this thinking can be seen in Heath’s recent definition of space as the “physical
dimensions or characteristics of architecture and landscape” (2010:159). This perception has
expanded and space has taken on a more meaningful role. Smith defines space as a concept that
is “dialectical and is about process, motion, and action…. it is always in the process of
becoming” (2008:16). This definition is based off of the ideas of Tuan. Because space is defined
by human actions, it is socially produced and is in a direct relationship with agency. Everyday
actions define space and when there is a change in everyday actions, there is also a change in
space and its meaning. Meanings of space come from the larger system of meaning that a space
is part of (Tilley 1994:10-11). In the case of slave quarters, they are a space defined by relaxing,
gardening, sweeping, and a variety of other activities that create a meaning for the yards in
connection to the larger culture in which they take place.

A different conception of space that combines both the physical and action-based
meanings has been described by James Delle based on the work of Henri Lefebvre and Edward
Soja. Delle sees space as a form of material culture because it is not a natural phenomenon but is
produced by human behavior and defines human behavior (1998:36-37). As a form of material
culture, space is expressed materially, socially, and cognitively and has different meanings for
different individuals (37-38). Material space is defined as the “empirically measureable universe that has been created and/or defined by humans” and includes the built environment (38). On a plantation the material space would include buildings, yard areas, fences, streams, roads, and middens. Social space is comprised of the relationships that define an individual’s spatial relationship with others and material space. This includes “how access to material space is allocated to members of any social group and defines appropriate behavior within certain material space” (39). On a plantation, the planter would decide what space was given to enslaved Africans to live on, but often the enslaved defined appropriate behavior in and around the quarters. Lastly, cognitive space is the “conception of social and material spaces that do not yet or may never exist and the interpretation of those spaces that will or do exist” (Delle 1999:16). Any drawn or written representation of a plantation or area on a plantation is an example of cognitive space. Due to their physicality, material and cognitive space are the easiest for historical archaeologists to access.

Delle combines these three types of space to create meaning using Soja’s concept of spatiality. Spatiality says that “space is simultaneously the product and producer of social relations” and “specific spatialites thus define specific behaviors and social relations” (1998:39). Because of this, space can be used to both impose and resist inequality (40). In this way, a planter could create a material space such as a slave quarter and allot that space to the enslaved workforce to live on as a way of creating a plantation hierarchy, as the Burwells did in the west yard at Fairfield. However, the enslaved Africans could then use that allotted space to create a sense of community, self-sufficiency and even rebellion, resisting against the imposed hierarchy.
Resistance

The Burwells and Thrustons likely shared their peers’ fear of slave uprisings and rebellions. At Fairfield, there are no known instances of slave uprising, but that does not mean that the enslaved community passively accepted their position. On plantations, there was a strict hierarchy with the white planter and his family on top and enslaved Africans on the bottom. The planter class saw themselves as having all of the power on a plantation, but while enslaved Africans may have lacked political and economic power in forms comparable to the plantation owner and his family, they had agency and power to resist against the planters as social power is possessed by all individuals and can be found in all social interactions (Frazer 1999:5; Thomas 1998:531-2; Smith 2009:394). Through resisting the power of the planters, enslaved Africans were exercising their own power. There are many forms of resistance that are covert rather than overt, lessening the chance that they will be mentioned in the historical record.

These covert forms of resistance were often expressed through the everyday actions of enslaved Africans. Due to the extreme oppression under which the enslaved lived, all activities, no matter how small, should be considered for their symbolic significance (Frazer 1999:6-7). With many activities being symbolically charged, resistance may be seen as part of everyday life, expressed in subtle ways (Oser and Funari 2001:63; Frazer 1999:7). Resistance is found in ways of subverting or ignoring the will of the plantation owner and in maintaining ways of life (Frazer 1999:7). Ways of life could be maintained through the creation of communities determined by the enslaved, not according to the vision of the planter (Thomas 1998:534). Many of these acts of resistance may not leave evidence to be found in the archaeological record, and instead need to be inferred through the historical record (Orser and Funari 2001:62). However, resistance can be found in nearly every aspect of life. This includes activities that leave material remains because
the creation of different meanings and uses for material culture by an oppressed group is a form of resistance against elites (Delle 1999:15). It is resistance expressed through material culture that can be examined through archaeological evidence.

**Connecting Space and Resistance with Slave Quarter Yards**

Space is a form of material culture that is involved in daily activities, and as such plays an important role in resistance. Delle explains that through resistance, groups will construct new spaces or reconstruct spaces that already exist (1999:17). In the context of plantations, this process has been identified in the concept of separate, but intersecting, white and black landscapes. Upton looked at this idea by examining paths of movement through the plantation landscape. The formal layout of the plantation designed by the planter was meant to express his position of power. The black landscape, which included quarters and work areas, excluding the main house, were reflexive, consisting of the enslaved Africans’ reactions to the white landscape, but at the same time undermined the intended effects of this formal landscape (Upton 1984:66; 70). Through their everyday actions of moving around the plantation landscape, enslaved Africans were able to create their own landscape that acted in opposition to the white landscape of the plantation owner.

A similar concept was the basis for Vlach’s argument that enslaved Africans were able to appropriate areas where they lived and worked within the larger plantation landscape as small acts of rebellion against the plantation owners (1993:236). The planters created elaborate formal landscapes to express their superiority and social power (5; 228). Because plantation owners did not often pay attention to the daily activities occurring in the quarters or workspaces, the enslaved were able to claim these spaces as their own and restructure the black landscape to fit their needs (15-16, 230). This included areas very close to the manor house like the west yard at
Fairfield. The ways in which enslaved Africans claimed and restructured these spaces were subtle and often related to daily activities, decreasing the chances that the plantation owner would notice (13; 235). This did not mean that the white residents of the plantation were oblivious to the creation of the black landscape. Philip Fithian, a tutor at Nomini Hall, another 18th-century Virginia Plantation, saw the stables, kitchen, and other work buildings as belonging to the enslaved, and as such were not suitable for his students to spend time around (Upton 1984:70). Other slaves had strict control over their spaces, such as the cook at a plantation in Louisiana who would kick the plantation owner’s daughter out of the kitchen (Vlach 1993:15). However, as the plantation owners had assigned the quarter and work areas to the slaves, they did not see the subtle acts of “claiming” as resistance. Through their daily actions, enslaved Africans were able to create their own spaces and a black landscape on plantations, resisting the efforts of plantation owners to control all aspects of their life.

**Plowzone**

At Fairfield, the archaeology relating to use of space in yard areas and middens is found within the plowzone, meaning that an understanding of the plowzone is necessary to use this data. The Law of Superposition, which states that sedentary layers are deposited sequentially, with younger layers on top of older layers, is fundamental to geology and archaeology. When these layers are disturbed, it can no longer be assumed that artifacts found at a lower depth are older than those at a higher depth. In the Chesapeake region, plowing has disturbed a large portion of archaeological sites, completely destroying vertical stratigraphy. Before the late 1970s, the plowzone was usually stripped off and the artifacts contained within were ignored or collected for comparison. The reasoning behind this methodology assumed that the horizontal stratigraphy was destroyed to the same extent as the vertical stratigraphy (Lebow 1982:41).
With the rise of cultural resource management in the United States after Executive Order 11592 in 1971, archaeologists began to pay attention to the plowzone as it was key to identifying and evaluating sites and was cheaper and faster than larger scale academic excavations archaeological methods (Dunnell and Simek 1995:306). By the late 1970s, the plowzone gained academic attention and a number of experiments to determine the extent of plow disturbance were conducted. In a detailed study in 1981, Lewarch and O’Brien determined that artifacts only move, on average, 3 m in the direction of the plow and 40 cm perpendicular to the plow. The average displacement of 3 m is often reduced if the next furrow is made in the opposite direction (Lewarch and O’Brien 1981:29). Comparable results have been obtained from similar experiments (Riordan 1988:3). While horizontal displacement exists within the plowzone, it was less severe than archaeologists initially believed, making the plowzone a valuable source of data.

The size of an artifact is also affected by plowing. Fragile artifacts, such as ceramics and bone, will eventually be reduced in size by repeated plowing until a stable size is reached. Artifact breakage post-deposition can occur in a variety of ways. The act of plowing brings two possibilities. Statistically less likely, the artifact will be struck by the plow and directly broken. The more common cause of artifact breakage during plowing is the build up of soil pressure in front of the plow (Dunnell and Simek 1995:308). Another cause for artifact breakage, especially for those close to the surface, is foot traffic. (Bon-Harper et al. 2004). Artifact breakage patterns are by no means regular, but an observed pattern is that artifacts that break during plowing will tend to near a spherical shape (Dunnel and Simek 1995:309). Archaeologists at Monticello have made the observation that the plowzone around a sub-floor pit will tend to have a larger percentage of large artifacts than areas with no sub-floor pits. They hypothesize that this is because sub-floor pits protect artifacts until some are dragged into the plowzone by occasional
deeper pass of the plow. As the artifacts have not been in the plowzone as long as the other artifacts they will not have been subjected to as many opportunities to break, and remain larger (Bon-Harper et al. 2004). It is not only subfloor pits that can introduce larger artifacts into the plowzone. Larger artifacts can indicate other undisturbed layers from which artifacts are sometimes drawn up from or that artifacts continued to be deposited after plowing had already been occurring (Dunnel and Simek 1995:309). While artifact size is reduced through plowing, size differences remain informative. Enough differentiation remains between the deposition size and the size of the artifact when recovered archaeologically that swept yard areas can be identified through frequency of small artifacts (Bon-Harper 2009). The processes that create the plowzone are not completely understood, but it appears that enough artifact size differentiation remains after 200 years of plowing, as is the case at Fairfield, for that data to be used in analysis.

The levels of horizontal displacement that exist within the plowzone are enough to destroy any relationship between the plowzone and small features like post holes. However, studies such as Riordan’s at the Chapel in St. Mary’s City, Maryland show that there is still enough spatial association in the plowzone to identify larger features such as middens and buildings. At the chapel, 50% of recovered brick fragments were found within 10 feet of the foundations after 200 years of continuous plowing (Riordan 1988:3-4). King and Miller at the van Sweringen site in St. Mary’s City were able to identify temporal, compositional, and spatial changes of a plowed midden, showing that more ephemeral features on the landscape can still be understood after plow damage. In addition, while vertical stratigraphic relationships are gone, changes over time can still be looked at in a plowzone using known artifact dates (King and Miller 1987). More recently, archaeologists at Monticello have used plowzone data to identify temporal changes, building locations and yard space use at a number of slave quarter sites.
Patterns in a plowzone remain consistent over time and can be used to identify buildings and activities occurring at a site in the past. In addition, for some sites with minimal or shallow features, the plowzone can hold nearly all of the data from the site. This is the case at the Fairfield quarter after over 200 years of plowing.

**Fairfield Plantation Core**

The brick manor house, built around 1694, was the administrative center of Fairfield Plantation. There was a formal entrance on the northern elevation and entrances on both the east and west sides of the south wing accompanied a circa 1710 addition (Harpole and Brown 2007, 142). In its first several decades the kitchen operated out of the west wing cellar (DHR Slideshow). The T-shaped building overlooked a steep drop in topography down to a spring that connected the plantation to Carter’s Creek and then the York River. Two roads approached the
planted plantation’s administrative center from the northeast and east, the latter connecting it with Abingdon Church and the former with Burwell’s mill. There are no firm dates for the roads, but they were established by the early 18th century, likely with roots back into the 17th century, and portions still exist today. Directly south of the manor house was a large, unterraced, formal garden surrounded by a substantial fence dating to at least the mid-18th century, but a firm date has not been established. Another fence extended from the northwest corner of the house blocking off the west yard which did not appear until after the manor house was built in 1694, but its duration is unknown.

**West Yard**

Documentary evidence of the west yard is limited to a 19th-century plat describing a brick kitchen located directly west of the manor house’s west door. This kitchen has not yet been found archaeologically, but high concentrations of brick in an area directly west of the manor house ruin suggest that it is nearby. Other buildings and features of the west yard have been discovered, but the sampling strategy of 5 foot square test units every twenty feet limits the interpretive potential of the features located archaeologically. Two of these features, (Feature 136 and Feature 206) are most likely subfloor pits but are not associated with any known structure. At the very northern edge of the yard where the level fields surrounding the manor house begin their decent to the spring, a deep depression marks the location of an icehouse. Excavations in the icehouse have not yet reached sterile soil and its construction date remains unknown. The earliest identified feature in the western yard is a large area of burnt clay (Feature 89 and Feature 129) believed to be the remains of a brick kiln associated with the manufacture of brick for the manor house in 1694 or the circa 1710 addition (DAACS). A well, likely dating to
the 17th and 18th centuries, is fifteen feet from the western wall of the manor, directly south of the southern entrance into the west wing cellar kitchen. During portions of the 18th century, the garden wall formed the southern boundary to the western yard.

In the summers of 2001, 2004, and 2005, Brown and Harpole excavated a large area of the west yard, expanding earlier testing that identified a subfloor pit (Feature 8) associated with a potential slave quarter. The units started in 2001 were dug using a machine excavator and mechanical screen. Those dug in 2004 and 2005 were all done by hand, but also employed the mechanical screen. Excavations continue adjacent to and within the area immediately surrounding the quarter, increasing the information about this area. Features found during the
block excavations were sampled providing additional information about these buildings. Current interpretation identifies at least two distinct quarters, potentially two additional buildings, and a probable fence line. The two quarters do not appear to have structural postholes, making conclusions about their exact size and orientation difficult.

Quarter 1 is located 75 feet west of the manor house. It includes a subfloor pit, a cellar, and two burnt areas on the presumed east and west gables. No postholes were found, suggesting the building was built on ground laid sills or piers. Two burnt areas (Features 78 and 79) indicate exterior gable chimneys and a general east-west orientation that matches the manor house. High brick concentrations on the west end may indicate a brick chimney whose foundation was destroyed by plowing. Using the hearths and cellar as the minimum limits for the building, the quarter was at least 10x22 feet and consisted of three rooms, including one for each chimney and a third room, potentially an addition, on the south elevation separated by a post-in-ground wall. High concentrations of glass recovered from this area suggest the quarter had glass windows. The subfloor pit and cellar (Features 8 and 88) were filled with architectural, domestic, and personal items dating to the first half of the 18th century, the former filled likely in the first quarter of the century.

The second quarter is more tentatively defined than the first. It is likely oriented north-south, but the southern end cannot be positively identified. A subfloor pit and a hearth area (Features 87 and 129) are what define this building. As with Quarter 1, there are no structural features, suggesting the use of ground laid sills or piers. A very tentative size for the quarter is 16 feet x 27.5 feet, with a chimney at the northern end. This quarter post-dates the first, as it’s suggested outline sits on top of the eastern end of the first quarter, and the subfloor pit was filled
with mid-18th-century artifacts. The quarter was torn down in the 1740s or 1750s. An alternative interpretation combines these two quarters into one larger building with multiple hearths.

The corner of a third potential building (Quarter 3) was identified during the block excavations through the discovery of three postholes. This building was post-in-ground, and a white salt glazed stoneware mug fragment in one of the postholes dates the building to post-1720, which was later destroyed by fire. Ashy soils were observed during excavation, which in the past have indicated a nearby subfloor pit. The function of the building has not been determined, but its location near other quarters and potential for a nearby sub-floor pit suggest it may be a quarter. Later excavations revealed more postholes extending to the south, but no additional postholes of similar size or shape were found to continue the line to the west. A forth building was originally identified directly to the north of this building, based on the discovery of three brick-filled holes, with postmolds, and repairs. A slightly deeper pass of the mechanical excavator was cited as the reason that no matching west wall was found. Alternatively, these postholes may represent a short fence line connecting pier or ground-laid-sill buildings, together forming a barrier between the developing midden to the west and the workyard to the east.

In 2012, a feature complex was uncovered fifteen feet west of the two identified quarters. In the portion visible in the two test units, this complex appears to be made of eleven separate features, including up to six postholes and six subfloor pits. The location and nature of the features suggests that they relate to yet another quarter. However, this is not confirmed. The feature complex was documented in place and backfilled. The lack of sampling these features or expanding the excavations limits the interpretations available. There have been very large postholes and posts found south of the manor house at Fairfield, associated with the substantial mid-eighteenth-century garden. An earlier garden at Fairfield, noted in the diaries of William
Byrd II, has not been identified. It cannot be ruled out that the feature complex described above could be related to a garden. Formal gardens in side yards can be found on contemporary plantation such as Bacon’s Castle (Martin 1991:11). There are also a large number of as-yet-unidentified, but frequently present, outbuildings besides quarters at Fairfield and this feature complex could be related to one of them. A large number of tobacco pipe stems with bore diameter measurements of 6/64ths of an inch were found in the plowzone above this feature complex, and were likely plowed out of one or more of the pits, suggesting a late 17th or early 18th century date. In order to be sure of the date and function of this feature complex it needs to be fully uncovered and excavated. For purposes of clarity this feature complex will be referred to as Quarter 4.

Figure 4: TU 553 and TU 556 feature complex
Another feature complex was identified nearly 500 feet south and 150 feet west of Quarter 4. Currently this is interpreted as one or more subfloor pits intersecting with a clay borrow pit and is also presumed to be a slave quarter. One of the pits was partially excavated, and the latest layers contain large amounts of creamware but no pearlware, dating the feature to the last years of the Burwell’s ownership of Fairfield (Jenkins 2012). Further excavation needs to be done to determine how long this quarter was occupied and how it relates to those found closer to the house.

Just to the west of the earliest identified quarter and lying over the feature complex is a large midden. The western extent of the midden has not been positively identified, but shovel tests at 50 feet intervals suggest that the midden does not extend much farther west than the current field boundary. It may be made up of southern and northern sections separated by a small area of lighter concentration, potentially the location of the kitchen. However, due to the large amount of space between shovel tests this is uncertain and closer interval shovel tests or more test units are needed to confirm this. It is the only midden identified within the plantation core, although another small midden may exist 300 feet to the west of the large midden.

Analysis of the midden’s composition and role in the west yard is the focus of this thesis. Trash disposal patterns in the west yard at Fairfield can be linked to the actions of the enslaved Africans that lived there. There has been no other midden identified as associated with the plantation’s manor house, with the exception of a 19th century concentration in the manor’s cellar. This means that even if some of the trash in the midden originated in the manor house, the midden itself is linked to the enslaved as they would have been responsible for the removal of trash from the main house, kitchen, and their own homes. While most of the midden has been

1 Figure 6: Oyster Shell Shovel Test
churned over by plowing, six test units are believed to contain intact midden layers. Across all the units, the midden layer contains charcoal and brick flecks as well as clay mottling. None of this intact midden has been excavated, but differences in depth as revealed by plow scars and artifacts visible in the surface show that there was variation within the midden even in the earliest levels. As the intact midden layers have not been sampled, the plowzone provides the information on the use and location of the midden.

**Methods**

The Fairfield Foundation’s co-directors, David Brown and Thane Harpole, began excavations at Fairfield plantation in 2000. Fieldwork within the acreage immediately surrounding the manor house involved a systematic sampling strategy, excavating five-foot-square test units every twenty feet (generally) across this approximately three-acre area. Shovel testing preceded test unit excavation and covered this area and the surrounding sixty areas. Additional test units were added to the sampling strategy when necessary, uncovering partially exposed features and looking for specific features (fence lines, subfloor pits, etc.) associated with feature complexes. To date, almost 600 test units have been excavated across the site. About 150 of these lay within the study area of the western side of the manor house. The western extent of the excavations has been constrained by the modern cultivated fields. In addition, the large quantity of artifacts found in midden units (up to four 20 liter buckets per unit) and the time needed to process these artifacts has limited the number of midden units excavated, although over the past three summers I have been able to help excavate, wash, and catalog seven additional midden units, with three more currently in progress. The entire area has been plowed for much of the twentieth century, and as such the majority of artifacts lie within a plowzone. One hundred percent of the plowzone has been screened through ¼-inch wire mesh. Most
features are documented but have not been excavated. Exceptions to this include two subfloor pits, one cellar, and several smaller features, including postholes, tree holes, and rodent burrow, in the open area excavation. Once in the lab, all brick, mortar and shell were washed, weighed and discarded. The remaining diagnostic artifacts were washed and cataloged.

This summer, I cataloged artifacts from 64 test units located west of the manor house. The nomenclature I used was modeled on the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS)’s catalog. Beyond the identifying of material, method of manufacture, ware type, and decoration, this catalog includes the maximum shard size, thickness, and weight of each artifact. It was these measurements that made the DAACS catalog beneficial to use, as they are important to my analysis. In an Excel spreadsheet, individual pages were created for the

Figure 5: Fairfield Plantation site map (Derek Wheeler)
categories: beads, buckles, buttons, faunal, ceramics, general, glass, tobacco pipes, and utensils. Columns under each category were created for each field in DAACS. A few deviations from the DAACS protocols were used. The largest was that only unidentified coarse earthenwares were munsalled instead of every ceramic as required in DAACS. Faunal remains were simply counted and weighed. The ceramics were identified and counted, and shell and brick weighed for an additional five test units that could not be cataloged due to time constraints. Sixty-nine units had been previously cataloged into DAACS and are available online, giving me a total data set of 138 test units. One unit found in DAACS, TU 306 has been eliminated from analysis because it was discovered that only half of the context was cataloged. Only artifacts from the plowzone were cataloged and used in analysis as the majority of features have not been excavated, and the yard areas and midden that I am interested in only exist in the plowzone.

The data in the catalog was imputed into the computer mapping software Surfer to create artifact distribution maps. Surfer uses algorithms to predict what may exist in the areas between data points, revealing patterns and areas of artifact concentrations. All artifact categories that had great enough numbers were mapped as contour maps. Oyster, brick, and mortar were mapped according to weight, while all other artifact categories were mapped by count. In addition, maps were created showing the average size of ceramics for each test unit, the Artifact Size Index measurement for ceramics, the mean ceramic date, and the pipe stem date for each test unit. Surfer contour maps had previously been created for shovel tests at Fairfield showing a much larger area than is focused on in this thesis, which allow the newly made maps to be placed in a wider context. All maps are oriented with grid north towards the top.
**Results**

For this thesis, the midden is defined by a high concentration of oyster shell and historic-period artifacts. Contour maps created from shovel test data reveal that the highest concentration of oyster shell across the entire Fairfield site is found approximately 100 feet to the west of the manor house.² A large amount of wine bottle glass was also identified in this area fitting within the contours of the oyster distribution, showing that the oyster dates to the historic period.³ These two maps show that the midden is divided into two sections. As the kitchen is known to be located in this general area, it is likely that it will be found in the gap between the northern and southern sections of midden. Shovel tests dug in a grid of 50 or 25 feet, only provide a broad outline of the midden and more detailed maps created from test unit data are necessary to understand variation within the midden and how it functioned on the landscape. The study area looked at uses data from the eastern half of the northern of the two midden sections.

The oyster shell distribution mapped from test unit data matches up extremely well with the shovel test map and provides an eastern and northern boundary to the midden, especially as it passes through the block excavation.⁴ Test units within the midden contain between 10,000 and 40,000 grams of oyster shell. Even after years of plowing, this sharp decrease on the eastern boundary is clear as oyster densities go from above 10,000 grams to less than 1000 grams between E1870 and E1880 on the Fairfield grid. The northern boundary is more complicated. A distinct line at 10,000 grams of oyster shell is present at N2070, but concentrations drop to around 6000 grams rather than to low thousands or hundreds of grams, as is the case on the

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² Figure 6: Oyster Shell Shovel Test
³ Figure 7: Wine Bottle Glass Shovel Test
⁴ Figure 26: Oyster Shell
eastern boundary. As there is still a higher amount of oyster in this northern section than elsewhere across the site, it will be considered part of the midden.

Artifacts that were in use during the entire span of Fairfield’s historic occupation are most heavily concentrated within the area containing 10,000+ grams of shell between N2010 and N2060 and west of E1880 on the Fairfield grid. Bone and wine bottle glass have nearly identical distribution patterns. As bone, wine bottle glass, unidentified coarse earthenware, and oyster shell were used throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries they represent some of the most commonly found artifacts at Fairfield. However, even with this long span of use, their distribution remains tightly clustered within the midden and even more specifically, within the five test units containing an intact midden layer. This area can be identified as the center of the midden as it represents consistent deposition in one area over a long span of time and does not follow shifts in deposition location seen in dateable artifacts.

Looking at the distribution of ceramics, pipes, and glass, there is a shift in the midden from the north to the south that coincides with a change in plantation ownership. Ceramics that date to the Burwell period which extends up through the appearance of creamware, are concentrated in the northwest quarter of the study area, within the boundary of the oyster-identified midden. The arrival of the Thrustons coincided with the arrival of pearlware at Fairfield. Pearlware and other later 18th- and 19th-century ceramics are concentrated in the southern half of the study area. Mapping the mean ceramic dates for each test unit produces a clear picture of the shift. The single 19th-century concentration in the northern half of the map is

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5 Figure 11: Bone, Figure 17: Coarse Earthenware, Figure 38: Wine Bottle Glass
6 Figure 14: European brown stoneware, Figure 18: colonoware, Figure 19: creamware, Figure 21 tin-enamel wares, Figure 25: North Midlands slipware, Figure 34: Westerwald, Figure 35: White salt glazed stoneware
7 Figure 10: American stoneware, Figure 27: Pearlware, Figure 36: Whiteware, Figure 40: Yellowware
likely associated with the outbuilding seen on a late 19th-century photograph of the Fairfield manor house.\(^8\) This pattern is also reflected in the distribution of hand wrought versus machine cut nails, pharmaceutical and other glass bottles versus table glass, and the lack of clay pipes in the southern half.\(^9\)

Pearlware has some of the highest concentrations across the entire study area, but it increases by a significant increment in the southern part of the west yard. Interestingly, the machine made cut nail map is nearly identical to the whiteware map, perhaps suggesting structures associated with the use of whiteware. Later 19th-century ceramics such as yellow ware and American stoneware show an even more prominent shift towards the south, as does non-wine bottle glass. These concentrations are not completely in line with the border of midden, but as the south west part of the maps are filled in entirely by the algorithms, it is unknown if the concentrations keep increasing as it goes west. As the southern part of the study area does border the edge of southern portion of the kitchen midden, it may be an indication of what will be found. There are not enough ceramics from the STPs to determine if the southern portion of the kitchen midden is largely 19th century, as delftware, creamware, pearlware, and whiteware were all found.\(^10\) The lack of bone and wine bottle glass in the southern half of the map may indicate that they were still being discarded in the same area as during the Burwell period. The evidence from the midden backs up previous findings that suggest a rearrangement of outbuildings and the landscape with the arrival of Robert Thruston that caused a shift in trash disposal.

There were only a few artifacts definitively associated with the 17th century occupation at Fairfield, which remains largely in the eastern yard. All 17th century ceramics were mapped

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\(^8\) Figure 41: Mean Ceramic Date
\(^9\) Figure 12: Bottle glass, Figure 20: Cut nails, Figure 28: Pharmaceutical bottles, Figure 30: Pipe Stems 5/64, Figure 33: Table glass, Figure 39: Wrought nails
\(^10\) Figure 8: Refined Earthenware and Porcelain Shovel Test
together along with pipes with a bore diameter of 7/64 or 8/64. These maps did not include tin-enamel wares, Westerwald or other ceramics that spanned both the 17\textsuperscript{th} and the 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The one exception is Hohr’s Grey medallion depicting King William that dates to the 1690s. In general, artifacts are concentrated within the center of the midden and in a ring around the early 18\textsuperscript{th} century slave quarters (Quarter 1 and Quarter 2). Very few test units had more than one 17\textsuperscript{th} century artifact, the exception being TU 554 and TU 558 that produced numerous fragments of very chunky North Devon gravel tempered ware. The North Devon gravel tempered gives the mistaken impression of a high concentration in the area later occupied by the midden. Because all of these fragments appear to be from the same vessel, the higher concentration does not reveal anything about the formation of the midden. The 17\textsuperscript{th} century artifacts are likely associated with the early 18\textsuperscript{th} century slave quarter or other unknown activities.

Ceramics whose dates of manufacture span both the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries have a much wider distribution than strictly 18\textsuperscript{th} century ceramics when looking at the northern half of the midden.\textsuperscript{12} The reason for this is due to their long periods of manufacture, meaning that 17\textsuperscript{th} -18\textsuperscript{th} century ceramics are represented in multiple shifts in the midden. North Midlands Slipware is the exception to this pattern. There were five different Burwell owners of Fairfield during the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and looking at the midden during the Burwell ownership, smaller changes in the midden can be observed and potentially associated with different owners. Comparing the ceramic and pipe stems distributions can help illuminate the how the midden evolved during the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and its association with various quarters.

Pipe stems with a bore diameter of 6/64, dating to between 1680 and 1720, are found across the area but the highest concentrations are near Quarter 1, Quarter 2, and Quarter 4, and

\textsuperscript{11} Figure 9: 17\textsuperscript{th} Century Ceramics and 8/64 and 7/64 Pipes
the subfloor pit in TU 390 and 409.\textsuperscript{13} It is likely that the large increase of 6/64 pipe stems found around Quarter 4 were plowed out of the subfloor pits located there, suggesting a potential timeframe for the filling of the pits. Chinese porcelain, Westerwald, English and German brown stonewares, and tin-enamel wares, all of which date to the same period as 6/64 pipe stems, are found in high concentrations in the same areas while later 18\textsuperscript{th} century ceramics such as creamware and white salt glazed stoneware are largely absent.\textsuperscript{14} Trash deposition patterns between 1680 and 1720 during the period of Lewis Burwell II/I and Nathaniel Burwell were mainly concentrated between N2010 and N2050 within the midden on the Fairfield grid.

Robert “King” Carter took over management of the plantation in 1721, which coincides with the introduction of white salt glazed stoneware, Buckley, and pipes with a bore diameter of 5/64. While 5/64 pipe stems are still found in the same region at 6/64 pipes, there is a shift in deposition to the north and slightly to the west. Chinese porcelain, Westerwald, English and German brown stonewares, and tin-enamel wares were still in use during this period and can be found across the same area as the 5/64 pipes. Added to this pattern are white salt glazed stoneware, and Buckley.\textsuperscript{15} The lack of white salt glazed stoneware and Buckley south of N2030 and east of E1860 and large numbers of ceramics up to the northern edge of the study area suggest that trash deposition in this period expanded from the early 18\textsuperscript{th} century quarters to the north and west.

The shift to the north west corner of the study area was complete by 1750 when pipes with bore diameters of 4/64 began appearing. Nearly all 4/64 pipes were found north of N2050

\textsuperscript{13} Figure 31: Pipe Stems 6/64 inch  
\textsuperscript{14} Figure 30: Pipe Stems 5/64 inch, Figure 14: European brown stoneware, Figure 16: Chinese Porcelain, Figure 21 tin-enamel wares, Figure 34: Westerwald  
\textsuperscript{15} Figure 15: Buckley, Figure 35 White Salt Glazed Stoneware
and west of E1860.\textsuperscript{16} Added to the ceramics from earlier in the century are creamware and colonoware.\textsuperscript{17} Colonoware can be found back into the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, but its distribution is nearly identical to creamware and 4/64 pipes at Fairfield, suggesting that it dates to the second half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century in this context. In addition, very little was found around the early 18\textsuperscript{th} century quarters. The later years of the Burwell’s ownership of Fairfield coincide with creamware, so its concentration to the north shows that this area was in use until the end of the Burwell era in 1787. Lewis Burwell II/II inherited Fairfield in 1756 and this last period is associated with his ownership, especially creamware, which was introduced in 1762. Interestingly, there are not high quantities of coarse earthenware, wine bottle glass, or bone in this area as would be expected in a midden deposit.\textsuperscript{18} It is likely that these were still being deposited in the same area as during the earlier 18\textsuperscript{th} century.

The ceramic concentrations in the northern section of the midden form a pattern that is consistent across nearly every artifact class looked at. Test units 11 and 462 have much lower concentrations of artifacts than the test units surrounding them in nearly every ceramic category, along with glass, nails, and pipe stems. The volume of the excavated test units were checked and TU 11 and TU 462 are not any shallower than the surrounding test units, so this pattern is not due to the area by stripped in the past, or naturally shallower geography. Instead, it seems to indicate a building surrounded by high concentrations of domestic artifacts. Architectural materials such as sandstone, limestone, and window glass also have high concentrations in these two units further strengthening the idea that this was the location of a building (Quarter 5). The building was likely a quarter due to the high concentrations of ceramics, especially as it is the

\textsuperscript{16} Figure 29: Pipe Stems 4/64
\textsuperscript{17} Figure 18: Colonoware, Figure 19: Creamware
\textsuperscript{18} Figure 11: Bone, Figure 17: Coarse Earthenware, Figure 38: Wine Bottle Glass
location of some the highest concentrations of colonoware found at Fairfield, which is typically associated with enslaved Africans. The long time range of ceramics following this pattern from white salt glaze up through creamware suggest that this building was in use for a long period of time, which may explain why there was a larger build up of ceramics than around the two excavated quarters that had shorter lifespans.

While the lack of artifacts around Quarters 1 and 2 suggests yard sweeping, more definitive evidence was sought by looking at artifact sizes. It was thought that artifacts found in yard areas, which would have been swept and trampled, would be smaller than artifacts in the midden, which would have been deposited after an initial breakage. Following the example of Monticello in their analysis of the Home Farm Quarter, I calculated the average size of creamware, pearlware, and whiteware fragments. These were suggested at they have similar rates of breakage (Bon-Harper et al. 2004). Unfortunately, as all known quarters pre-date pearlware and whiteware, only the creamware map could be used. The average size of the tin-enamel wares were then mapped, hoping that the long timespan of tin-enamel wares and the large quantity found would help a pattern appear. While distinct concentrations of larger sized fragments appeared, the units with the largest average size fragments are not within the midden and no discernable pattern appears.\(^{19}\)

The average size maps showed that there were definite variations in artifact size across the site, with many of the larger artifacts being in the midden but did not show any definitive proof of yard sweeping. Sara Bon-Harper had developed a formula to calculate the artifact size index (ASI), which measures how the proportion of small artifacts (<15 mm) to large artifacts in a test unit compares to the proportion across the entire site (Bon-Harper 2009). The formula

\(^{19}\) Figure 42: Creamware Mean Size, Figure 43: Tin-Enamel Wares Mean Size
gives each test unit a numerical value. The test units with the highest values have proportionally more small artifacts than the rest of the site, and those with the lowest values have proportionally more large artifacts. Bon-Harper has applied this method to slave quarters at Monticello and the Catawba New Town site in South Carolina and successfully identified evidence of yard sweeping (2009; 2010). I applied the ASI formula to ceramics dating to the Burwell period.

The map of the Burwell period ceramics’ ASI values provides a much clearer differentiation between the midden and yard areas than the average size map. This is in part due to the fact that one very large fragment can throw off the average size in a test unit even if all of the other fragments are small. The ASI formula does not run into this problem because it groups ceramics into two groups, smaller than 15 mm and larger than 15 mm, eliminating the effect of outliers. The large ASI values (more small artifacts) are represented in orange and the small ASI values (more large artifacts) are represented in purple. Spaces that are white represent an even proportion of small to large ceramics.

The ASI map fits with the hypothesis that smaller artifacts would be left in yard areas while larger artifacts would be moved into a midden. The area around the excavated quarters, particularly to the north, has some of the highest ASI values, and thus more small artifacts than large artifacts. This is consistent with what is expected in a swept yard. The purple concentration to the south of the large block excavation may be associated with Quarter 3. As this possible quarter post-dates Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, a deposit related to the later quarter would mask prior evidence of sweeping. The small amounts of purple within the quarters are due to ceramics that were plowed out of features. The midden contained both the largest number of ceramic fragments and had the lowest proportion of small to large fragments, meaning that a large

\[20\] ASI mpa
percentage of these fragments were larger than 15 mm. The switch from purple to white on the map lines up perfectly with the boarder of the midden as defined by the oyster shell, especially along the western end of Quarter 1. There is no evidence from this map that the potential quarter in the northwest corner of the study area has a swept yard, even if it seems to according to the density maps. There is a slight decrease in size, but in general artifacts here are still larger than those not in the midden. Areas of purple or orange that are not associated with the midden or excavated quarters are likely the result of currently unknown buildings or fences. In particular, the purple in the northeast corner coincides with the only spike in oyster outside of the midden, as well as visible concentrations of a number of ceramics.

**Conclusion**

The midden was formed around the same time as Quarter 1 in the early 18th century soon after the manor house was built. The exact date, footprint, and function of Quarter 4 it cannot be placed in relation to the midden, but some of the trash in the midden certainly originated from this structure. Trash from the quarters and main house was being disposed of into the same location, to the west of Quarter 1. This included kitchen trash, as the kitchen was located in the west cellar of the manor house in this period, and no trash deposit nearer to the manor has been identified. There is a distinct edge to the midden along the west wall Quarter 1 that can be seen in a number of artifacts including coarse earthenware, pipes, delft ware, Chinese porcelain, and wine bottle glass. It appears as though the midden was being formed while this building was still standing and that it extended directly up to the quarter. There are very low concentrations of any artifacts around all other sides of this quarter and little to no concentrations next to the mid 18th century quarter. If Quarter 4 is actually a quarter, it does not fit into this pattern. The feature has been completely covered by the midden, making it impossible to tell if the structure was
originally surrounded by trash or covered over after its demolition. For this reason it is not included in the analysis of trash disposal practices around the quarters. Trash was kept to the west and perhaps southern side of Quarter 1 and Quarter 2. All other areas around the quarter were swept clean, as seen by both the minimal number of artifacts found and the evidence from the 18th century ceramics ASI map.

The potential quarter identified through the plowzone materials (Quarter 5) presents a less clear picture. The construction of this structure appears to coincide with the beginning of Robert “King” Carter’s management of Fairfield and stood until the Burwells sold the plantation after the Revolution. At the time of Quarter 5’s construction, either Quarter 1 was still standing, or Quarter 2 had recently been built, and Quarter 3 was erected after Carter’s arrival. The addition of this northern building did not completely move the midden, but rather expanded it. The lack of bone, wine bottle glass, and unidentified coarse earthenware, along with the decrease in oyster in this area suggests that the original midden area remained the main location to dispose of organic material, kitchen related objects, and items that are dangerous to step on when broken. The high concentration of colonoware found in a similar pattern to Chinese porcelain around Quarter 5 shows that even if some of the ceramics were originating in the manor house, they were being disposed of in the same manner as the ceramics used by the inhabitants of Quarter 5. The presence of many oyster shells and the high number of ceramic fragments near Quarter 5 do not indicate a swept yard. Instead this could be evidence of a yard maintained with trash described by Edwards. The yard area surrounding Quarter 5 merged into the midden, leaving open the possibility that the midden was not an avoided place, but may have had its own uses for the enslaved Africans living close by. Evidence from the two excavated quarters and the quarter
in the northern part of the midden show that the enslaved residents were making deliberate decisions to where they disposed of their trash, and trash from the manor house.

The eastern part of this yard, closer to the manor house does not contain much evidence of the activities that may have occurred there. The few fragments of ceramics that have been found in this area are larger than those in the swept yard area but smaller than those in the midden. This suggests that the area was maintained as large objects were not allowed to remain there, but was not subject to the level of sweeping that the quarter yard was. This was a high traffic area as it was between the service buildings and the manor house and the need for easy access between these locations may have necessitated a clear area. The Burwells and Thrustons also may have had more interest in keeping the yard next to the manor house neat. The relative lack of artifacts in the eastern part of the west yard does not make it less important than the quarter yards or midden, but represents the transition between the domain of the enslaved Africans and the plantation owners.

After the Burwell’s sold Fairfield to Robert Thruston, activities in the northern part of the west yard decreased to the point that there are very few 19th century artifacts found. The pearlware that was found in the northern part of the west yard does reflect the pattern around Quarter 5, suggesting that it may have still been standing when the Thrustons arrived, but was soon abandoned as focus shifted to the south. Only the most eastern edge of the 19th century concentration can be seen on the maps. However, two test units recently excavated further to the west, but not yet cataloged appear to contain mainly 19th century materials, proving that the maps’ predictions were correct. The lack of bone and wine bottle glass in the southern part of the map may indicate that they were still being discarded in the same area as the Burwell period, or perhaps in portion of the midden to the south of the kitchen which has not yet been investigated.
Because no Thruston era structures have been identified in the west yard, these 19th century concentrations cannot be connected to any building besides the kitchen. If the enslaved Africans owned by the Thrustons lived to the west of the house, evidence of their quarters has yet been found. Because of the limited sample of the Thruston era artifacts and associated eras, no conclusions can be drawn about this time period beyond the fact that the use of the west yard changed at this time.

The west yard at Fairfield is a place according to Smith and Tilley’s definitions. Living and working in the same general area for nearly 100 years allowed the enslaved Africans at Fairfield to accumulate memories of past experiences on the landscape. Even if the enslaved living in this quarter were part of the transient population identified by Walsh, the lives of previous inhabitants were marked on the landscape by the trash they left behind and the manor in which this trash was disposed of. The swept yard was never subsumed by the midden, serving as a reminder of the earlier generations and the activities that occurred in the yard. In addition, since the practice of yard sweeping had connections back to Africa, these swept yards were reminders of the cultural heritage of the enslaved. As the yard was the center of the communal lives of enslaved Africans living on plantations, it gave meaning to the enslaved as a central part of their identity.

Place is a relatively stable concept as it focuses on the past, which is only ever added to rather than changed. This is contrasted with space, whose meaning changes along with changes in everyday actions. Over the course of the 18th century, daily patterns of trash disposal remained generally stable. When new quarters were built and old ones torn down slight changes in disposal practices occurred but, trash was still being disposed of in the same regions and yards were being maintained. A change in the meaning of space occurred when the Thrustons purchased the
property and the use of the west yard changed completely. The stability in the meaning of space in the west yard throughout the Burwell’s ownership of Fairfield allows for the entire span of time to be considered as a whole.

The same actions that give space meaning allow it to be seen as a form of material culture, which Delle divided into three categories, material, social and cognitive. In the context of the west yard at Fairfield, the material space is the physical layout of the buildings and the location of trash deposits. Socially, the Burwells and Thrustons decided the use of the space for quarters and kitchen, but enslaved Africans were the ones to define the appropriate behaviors within the space. Part of this appropriate behavior was how and where trash was deposited and how yard areas were created and maintained. A specific enslaved family or individuals would have been assigned to live in Quarter 1, but the social space of this quarter involved sweeping the yard and depositing trash in the midden to the west of the quarter. Similarly at Quarter 5, care was taken to dispose of most wine bottle glass and bone away from the house, while a thin layer of oyster shell and many ceramics accumulated around the building. Cognitive space in the past can only be accessed through documentary and pictorial representations. As no representation exists for the west yard at Fairfield, understanding the cognitive space is limited to documentary evidence from contemporary plantations, largely from the point of view of wealthy whites. These records show that quarters and yard spaces were largely thought of as being the domain of their enslaved residents (Upton 1984). When material, social, and cognitive space are combined, they reveal how space can be both the creation and creator of social relations, defining social relationships including imposition of and resistance to inequality (Delle 1998:39). At Fairfield, the spaces created through trash disposal practices, namely yard areas and the midden, affected both relationships among enslaved Africans and between enslaved Africans and the planters.
At Fairfield, enslaved Africans were able to resist against the power imposed by the Burwells, through their use of the space within the west yard. In situations of extreme inequality, such as slavery, everyday actions take on meanings that result in subtle resistance. Disposing of trash was a menial daily task preformed by the enslaved, but affected all forms of space and place. When the Burwells designated the west yard as an area for quarters, outbuildings and the work yard, and eventually a kitchen, they were imposing their power over the material space and defining social space. They defined the area through the use of fences blocking the west yard off from the formal areas of the plantation core. If the writings of 19th century planters can be applied to the Burwells, they likely wanted the quarters kept neat and tidy. The high concentrations of oyster and ceramics around Quarter 5 and its seamless blend into the midden show that this desire was not always followed. If this yard was participating the traditions of African-American yard work described by Gundaker and McWillie and Edwards, then this was a meaningful and purposeful use of trash disposal by the enslaved. In contrast, the swept yards around Quarters 1 and 2 meant the trash was hidden from the manor house by the quarter buildings. This appears to be following the wishes of the planters. However, the swept yard was maintained to a higher level than the general yard area close to the house, suggesting that enslaved Africans were sweeping their yards for their own sake, creating a boundary between yard and the wilderness of the plantation, rather than just due to the preferences of the Burwells and saw a difference between the two areas. Both of these practices can be related to the sealing of yards found in West African and African-American traditions. Even the midden itself was part of the black landscape at Fairfield as it was created by the enslaved Africans, with variations in location and composition that best suited the needs of the quarter residents.
The meanings behind how trash was being disposed of would have gone unnoticed by the planters allowing the enslaved a measure of control over their lives within their claimed spaces. Memory of African traditions, such as yard sweeping, the importance of yards in communal lives, and spiritual meanings of objects used in yard work, as well as memories of the previous generations at Fairfield were preserved in the spaces and places in the west yard at Fairfield. The everyday practice of trash disposal within the west yard aided the enslaved Africans at Fairfield in claiming this area as their own space within the larger plantation landscape, allowing for the creation of a community that preserved aspects of African lifeways.

Further work needs to be done to understand how this pattern changed as the Thrustons arrived and focus shifted further to the south, but as the conditions of slavery were no less extreme, trash disposal likely remained meaningful. Within the study area, an increased density of test units would help clarify the exact boundary of the midden in relation to the quarters as well as the area of yard sweeping. In addition, the features in the possible quarter, Quarter 4, and subfloor pits (features 136 and 206) need to be excavated to determine their function and date in order to fully incorporate these structures into the story of the west yard. The area identified as Quarter 5 presents the most intriguing area looked at in this thesis. No structural features have been identified and the quarter has been identified solely through plowzone concentrations. As this quarter sits in a unique area within the midden, low in oyster but high in ceramics, and could be an example of African-American yard work, the identification of the building would be immensely helpful in better understanding this area and how trash disposal practices were used by enslaved Africans at Fairfield to positively effect their lives.
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Works Projects Administration
Appendix A: Maps

Grid north is the top of the page for all maps

Unless indicated otherwise, all maps are showing artifact count

For test unit maps only

   Red outlines indicate locations of quarters. These are tentative outlines; especially the
   southern edge of the N-S oriented quarter.

   Green outlines indicate locations of confirmed subfloor pits.

   The yellow outline marks an area of a potential kiln.

   Cross hatching in magenta indicates intact midden layers.
Figure 6: Numbered Slave Quarters
Figure 7: Oyster Shell Shovel Test
Figure 8: Wine Bottle Glass Shovel Test
Figure 9: Refined Earthenware and Porcelain Shovel Test

Legend:
- Yellowware = Red Asterick
- Pearlware = Purple Diamonds
- Whiteware = Red Triangles
- Porcelain = Stars
- Ironstone = Blue Circles
- Delft = Blue Squares
- Creamware = Yellow Crosses
Figure 10: 17th Century Ceramics and 8/64 and 7/64 pipes
Figure 11: American Stoneware
Figure 12: Bone
Figure 13: Bottle Glass (non-wine)
Figure 14: Brick
Figure 15: German and English Brown Stonewares
Figure 16: Buckley
Figure 17: Chinese Porcelain
Figure 18: Coarse Earthenware
Figure 19: Colonoware
Figure 20: Creamware
Figure 21: Cut Nails
Figure 22: Tin-Enamel Wares
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Figure 41: Yellowware
Figure 42: Mean Ceramic Date
Figure 44: Tin-Enamel Ware Mean Size
Figure 45: Ceramic ASI