

**Building Freedom: Nineteenth Century Domestic Architecture on Barbados  
Sugar Plantations**

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**A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Master of Arts**

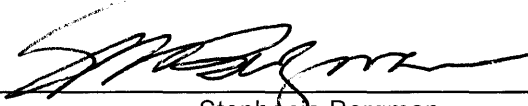
**Department of Anthropology**

**The College of William and Mary  
January 2010**

# APPROVAL PAGE

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

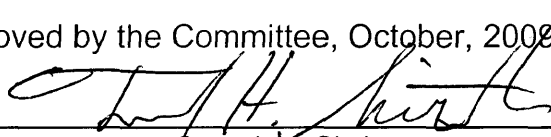
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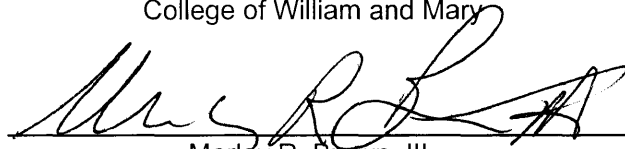


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## ABSTRACT PAGE

This thesis examines housing traditions that emerged during slavery but were significantly transformed after emancipation on the island of Barbados, West Indies. Despite the local and cheap abundance of coral limestone as a building material, sugar workers resisted permanent housing types that were introduced by the planter class as a means to enforce social control, racial inequality, and labor exploitation. After emancipation, plantation tenants often abandoned estate housing and constructed mobile, impermanent houses to actively pursue their vision of freedom. This research shifts the central focus of analysis from the dominant interests to the former slaves themselves, and the role material culture plays as a social tool used by Afro-Barbadians to creatively manipulate systems imposed on them during a period of dramatic change.

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## Acknowledgements

A number of people provided valuable help in this undertaking. First, I would like to thank the many caring and helpful people I met during my field work in Barbados. All field and lab work was carried out at St. Nicholas Abbey sugar plantation, and the many workers here often came to my assistance in times of need and were more than generous in sharing their stories and knowledge of the area. Mr. Winston Gay Harcourt Gill, Mr. Jason L. Greaves, and especially Ms. Kathy Ann Hines were especially kind and insightful. I am very indebted to Kathy and her compassionate family for providing me a home and allowing me to feel at home while in Barbados. I also thank the Warren family for providing the opportunity to conduct archaeological excavations on their beautiful and historic sugar plantation. I could not have imagined better people or more beautiful a place to do archaeology.

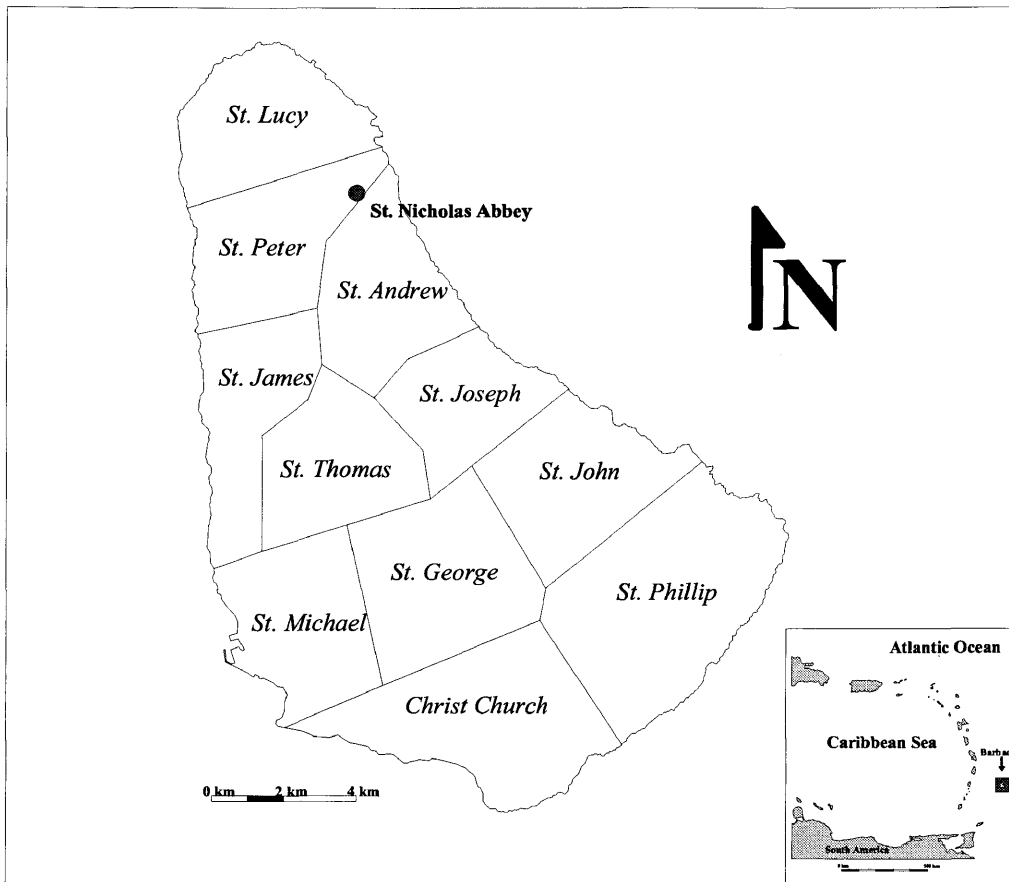
I am very thankful for all the professional support I received from my professors and mentors over the years. I am most grateful for my advisor, Frederick H. Smith, above all else for his overwhelming support and encouragement. He has been a true mentor and friend. This thesis would not have been possible without all the sage advice and coffee he has provided during my time at the College. I am especially appreciative of Jerome S. Handler, for not only paving the road for future scholars of the African Diaspora and Historical Archaeology, but because he has so generously provided his time, help, and resources with me over the past couple of years. It is a wonder he has endured me as long as he has. The individual members of my thesis committee, Marley R. Brown, III. and Neil L. Norman, were most instrumental in the completion of this thesis. Dr. Brown has facilitated many research and funding opportunities for me that were crucial to my success at William and Mary. Neil Norman was generous with his expertise and also forced me to engage more critically with many of the issues I encountered during my research. Finally, Grey Gundaker has been very influential during this process, and I greatly appreciate the encouragement and direction she always offers, especially during times when it

was sourly needed. I deeply regret any advice that I did not heed from my mentors, teachers, and friends.

## INTRODUCTION

The study of nineteenth century domestic houses of plantation workers on Barbados sugar estates shows how architecture expresses power, agency, and labor. Using a theoretical framework that explores how material space can be used to help define and constitute social expression (Lefebvre 1991; Delle 1998), it is possible to understand the ways in which plantation owners and managers used houses and settlements to reorganize and restructure labor during the transition from slavery to wage labor (Orser 1988b). In Barbados plantation owners and managers often embraced tenantry systems that originated across the Atlantic in England and relied on that English model as they reshaped labor on their sugar estates. They built permanent housing, spatially ordered in rigid rows to exert social control, enforce discipline, and keep a located labor supply for plantation production.

At St. Nicholas Abbey plantation in St. Peter, Barbados (Figure 1), I conducted documentary, archaeological, and architectural research on a stone tenant house. This permanent stone house, like other similar stone houses in Barbados, is commonly referred to as a “slave house”. As the difference of the material basis of distinction between class groups (land owner vs. tenant) is much larger than that between racial groups within the same class group (white vs. black tenants) (Orser 1988b), it is impossible to determine from archaeological information whether this house was originally occupied by whites, free people of color, or African or Creole persons that were of the same socio-economic class. The emerging spatial relationships observed in the archaeological record at St. Nicholas Abbey are, however, interpreted as the physical manifestation of the system of inequality that was conceptualized by the planter elite to enforce a new set of social relations following emancipation. The dialectics of spatial understanding were negotiated between laborers and landlords, resulting in resistance of a new social order that promised freedom yet delivered a new system of oppression.



**Figure 1: Project Area Locator Map**

This thesis interweaves social history with archaeological materials to provide fresh insights into the ways plantation laborers, as agents, used housing to negotiate, challenge, and improve the conditions of their labor (Silliman 2006). Although Afro-Barbadian peoples were legally free after the abolition of slavery in 1834, the limited availability of arable land forced the majority of former slaves to live and work on sugar plantations (Marshall 1987: 3). With the transition from slave to wage labor, many planters created new settlements on the peripheries of the plantations in non-agricultural areas, converting former village sites for the enslaved into sugar cultivation to increase production (Handler 2002: 125). In these new settlement sites permanent, stone-built house types were introduced for plantation laborers that reflected European concepts of housing, space, and labor control. Rents were deducted from wages by the planter for both house and

land, and the amount of rent charged was determined by the quantum of labor performed rather than the value of house or the spot of land occupied by the workers (Gibbs 1987: 33). As a result, power systems based on social relations were manifested in tenant houses, and in Barbados rubble stone-built houses are understood by many as representing the physical bonds of labor to the plantation. Thus, houses built of permanent and locally available materials were considered inferior by Afro-Barbadians that lived on sugar plantations following emancipation. Instead impermanent houses constructed of costly, imported materials became the most popular building material, and remained so until the late twentieth century as they symbolized the long struggle for freedom, mobility, and independence from the hegemonic power that planters once exercised.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Since 2007, archaeologists and students from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia have conducted archaeological research at St. Nicholas Abbey sugar plantation in Barbados. Over the past few years the property has been developed as a national heritage site, and archaeological testing was initiated to determine the value of existing sites for both academic and public interests. St. Nicholas Abbey is one of the oldest and most celebrated plantations in Barbados. It is located in the rural eastern half of St. Peter parish, with a small portion extending to the northwest corner of St. Andrew (Handler et al. 1989: 40). The great house attracts thousands of local and foreign tourists each year, as it is one of the oldest standing plantation houses in Barbados (Handler et al. 1989: 40). The grand three-storied structure has four chimneys, a Jacobean-style architectural centerpiece, and is surrounded by perfectly landscaped grounds and fields of sugarcane. It was constructed of coral rubble stone in the 1650s, and St. Nicholas Abbey is one of only three Jacobean-style plantation houses left in the Americas, the other two being Drax Hall in St. George, Barbados and Beacon's Castle in Surry, Virginia (Fraser and Hughes 1986: 11,15).

Since the seventeenth century St. Nicholas Abbey has been a very large plantation, comprising of approximately 409 acres, 220 of which are arable (Handler et al. 1989: 40). Currently another 90 acres are in pasture, with an additional 31 acres either being in woods (and until recently rented tenancies) (Handler et al. 1989: 40). The plantation was first established through the partnership of local planters Col. Benjamin Berringer and Sir John Yeamans. When Yeamans allegedly shot Berringer in a duel in 1660, Yeamans became the sole proprietor of the plantation. In ca. 1693, the estate comprising of 318 acres passed to Yeamans' son, and then his daughter Susana Berringer (Handler et al. 1989: 43). Susana married George Nicholas in 1718, and the property passed to him through customary property rights. The name Nicholas Abbey derives from George Nicholas and the estate bears his name to this day. George Nicholas lost the plantation to debt in 1730 and the property changed hands multiple times through the remainder of the eighteenth

century. In 1810 or 1811 the plantation went into debt and was purchased by the Cumberbatch brothers from the Chancery Court (Handler et al. 1989: 43). In 1822 it passed to Sarah Cumberbatch, the wife of Charles Cave, and remained in the Cave family through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At present the estate promotes the title of "St. Nicholas Abbey", although others embrace variations of this plantation name.

Despite the fact that the property passed through several successive owners over the course of the intervening centuries it is unique because it remained a unified plantation and it remains a single property into the current day (Handler et al. 1989:40). In 2006, the plantation was bought by the Warren family of Barbados, who wanted to protect the property from commercial development and maintain it as a national heritage attraction. The Warrens have made significant investments in restoring the estate, such as refurbishing the nineteenth century steam engine that grinds sugarcane in the original plantation factory. The Warrens have also installed a rum distillery in the old factory and converted the nearby overseer's house into a storage building for the rum and a bottling facility. In the near future tours will extend beyond the architectural splendor of the great house to provide a comprehensive experience of a fully operational sugar estate.

While we know much about the plantation owners and their families who made St. Nicholas Abbey their home, we know much less about the hundreds of people who worked on the plantation through its 350-year history. This is especially true of the enslaved workers that resided on the plantation, as the records that exist about their lives were almost always written from another's point of view and are heavily biased. Their authors often misunderstood what they were seeing and often misrepresented what they recorded. A large part of the daily reality of the enslaved was never documented and never even seen by plantation owners. In 1686, the enslaved population of St. Nicholas Abbey consisted of 157 people and averaged about 183 people between 1817 and 1832 (ranging from 173 to 202) (Handler et al. 1989: 44). Determining the location of settlement areas for enslaved workers was a primary objective of the College of

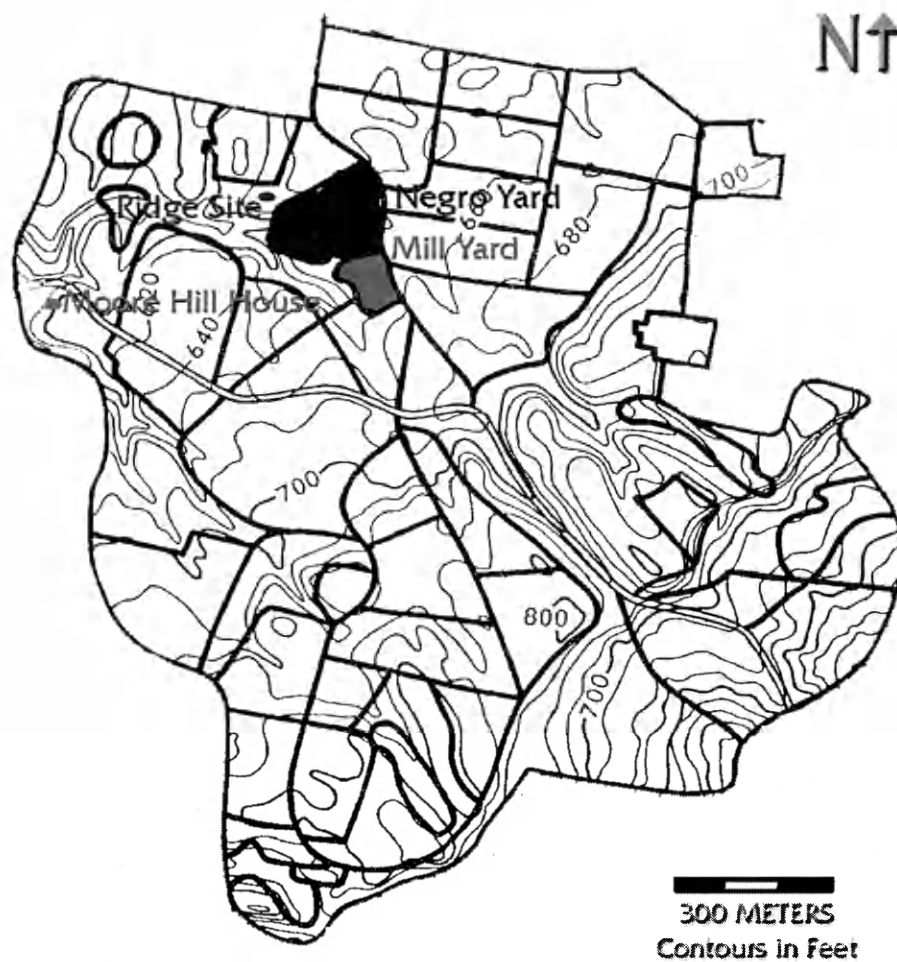
William and Mary's archaeological research program, and knowledge of an existing house that was possibly occupied by the enslaved at the plantation warranted documentation in the summer of 2008. Domestic laborers' houses that have survived on plantations throughout the Caribbean have much to tell about the past and the present. Based on the archaeological research from St. Nicholas Abbey and an architectural survey of the island of Barbados conducted in 2009, this thesis examines interpretive practices employed at rural, former slave sites. It reveals patterns that either illuminate or obscure our understanding of the histories and architectural histories of Afro-Barbadians. While freestanding extant houses do not represent the kind of shelter that most bondspeople occupied, important lessons can still be drawn from the way architectural design features-- such as materials, construction techniques, and site planning-- facilitated exploitation.

An initial archaeological assessment of the plantation during the summer of 2007 resulted in the exploration of a number of areas around the great house on the plantation, located in what is called the mill yard. The mill yard is the heart of plantation production and consists of the great house, sugar factory, and ancillary buildings. In addition to the mill yard, another site, located on a rocky ridge northwest of the mill yard in sugarcane fields, labeled the Ridge site, constitutes the archaeological remains of a village site that dated to the early nineteenth century, spanning the transition from slavery to emancipation (Devlin 2008). During archaeological and ethnohistoric research of St. Nicholas Abbey in 1987, Jerome Handler identified several stone mounds along this ridge, located between the sugarcane fields known as "Negro yard" and "Tenant field." Informants had indicated to Handler that the stone piles were remnants of three or four old stone houses--what they called "slave houses" (Handler et al. 1989: 41). In the summer of 2009, I also met a carpenter from St. Nicholas Abbey who was born in one of the stone houses that once stood on the Ridge site. Born in 1950 in what he called a "slave hut," he took me to the area we had previously excavated at the site and reported that the stone houses on the Ridge were torn down "not many years" after he was born.

In addition to the Ridge site, the team of archaeologists looked for other laborer settlements on the estate. In the summer of 2008, Larry Warren, the proprietor of St. Nicholas Abbey brought to our attention the presence of a rubble stone house or “slave hut” belonging to the estate. Warren expressed his interest to the project director, Frederick H. Smith, in conducting archaeological investigations at the house, which is located in the village of Moore Hill. The house was just west of the Ridge site, and situated about 400 meters from the great house in the mill yard (Plate 1 and Figure 2). The Moore Hill area has been identified as a tenantry that was plantation-owned up until at least 1980 (Watson and Potter 2001: 114), and the house is still retained by St. Nicholas Abbey. The house is referred to as the *Moore Hill site* due to its location in the village. Since similar stone houses existed on the Ridge site, it seems that these types of stone houses were common at St. Nicholas Abbey by at least the nineteenth century. Severe limitations of the archaeological record and historical documentation of these houses at St. Nicholas Abbey, and in Barbados in general, have not allowed for a precise dating of when these houses were introduced on the plantation. Even at the Ridge site where it is confirmed that these types of houses existed and were occupied until the 1950s, physical evidence of their remains was absent during excavations in 2007 and 2008, other than the piles of stone.



**Plate 1: The Moore Hill house, constructed of rubble coral limestone, is located on the western periphery of St. Nicholas Abbey estate.**



**Figure 2: Spatial relationship of domestic sites for the enslaved and plantation tenants. Settlements dating from the transition period of slavery to wage labor (the Ridge Site and the Moore Hill house) are distanced further west from the “Negro Yard”.**

I supervised the survey of the Moore Hill site from July 7 to July 12, 2008. The objective of this initial survey was to physically document the dimensions and architectural details of the house, since this is one of the oldest standing rubble stone houses on the island. Further, we hoped to learn if this house did, indeed, date to the period of slavery in Barbados. The architecture itself was impossible to date since there were no diagnostic material used to construct the house. We conducted a surface collection of materials around the house and placed a 50cm x 50cm test unit in the northeast quadrant of the interior of the house. The artifacts included a few pieces of late

eighteenth and early nineteenth century pearlware and whiteware ceramics, but most of the artifacts recovered, especially from the interior of the house, were modern twentieth-century materials. Since determining the construction and occupation of the house were inconclusive, I returned to Moore Hill in the summer of 2009 to conduct further investigations, which included placing four 1m x 1m test units in the yard around the house and two 1m x 1m units in the western interior of the house. Shovel test pits were placed at the end of a slope on the border of a gully behind the house. Interviews were conducted in 2009, and many of the residents of Moore Hill provided the location of at least four similar rubble stone houses in the village that were extant and occupied until the 1960s. Several people who lived at Moore Hill during the 1950s and 1960s could easily identify the former location of these houses, and reported that they were spatially arranged in a uniform row. Based on the archaeological evidence, the Moore Hill house may have been occupied as early as the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, though it is impossible to determine when the site was originally settled.

An emphasis on historical sources is utilized in this thesis to determine if this type of house was common on plantations in Barbados, what similarities or differences this type of house shared with plantation housing in other areas of the Caribbean, if these types of houses were built during the slavery and post emancipation periods, and who might have lived in them. The location of the Moore Hill house in a plantation tenantry was the obvious indicator of when and why the house was constructed. Plantation tenancies were created following the abolition of slavery in all British territories in 1834, resulting in the relocation of villages from close to the mill yard to the plantation peripheries (Handler 2002: 125). These new plantation tenancies were often located on non-agricultural, rocky, 'rab' land, usually within a kilometer of the mill yard (Gmelch and Gmelch 1997: 9, 11). For this reason, Barbadians have recently debated whether this type of house should be referred to as a "slave house." It seems likely that emancipated slaves may have built houses that appear similar. Other Barbadians have suggested these stone house types were the domiciles of indentured servants or their descendants, as they closely resemble the Irish/Scottish crofters' cottage. These issues altered methodological approaches attempted in 2008, as neither

architectural details, artifacts, or historical data provided specific answers or information relating to the original occupants of the house. In 2009 a new research strategy was employed.

### ***Methodology***

Since archaeologists have never identified or excavated a dwelling of enslaved peoples in Barbados, it is difficult to determine if the house at Moore Hill was used by slaves. As most slave villages were turned into agricultural fields following emancipation, deep plowing has severely disturbed these sites. In order to help interpret the Moore Hill site I use comparative analysis on a multi scalar level in the Caribbean region to shed some light on the subject of plantation housing. This included the review of secondary literature relating to vernacular architecture in the Caribbean (Buisseret 1980; Crain 1996; Edwards 1980; Fraser and Hughes 1986; Vlach 1975; Watson and Potter 2001; Slesin et al 1985), primary sources that reference housing conditions in Barbados (Belgrove 1755; Candler 1849 [1961]; Clark 1833; Coleridge 1841; Davy 1854 [1971]; Lamming 1953; Sturge 1840; Sturge and Harvey 1837; Thome and Kimball 1837; Treves 1908) anthropological and archaeological research on plantation housing in the Caribbean (Armstrong 1990; Chapman 1991; Delle 1998; Farnsworth 2001; Handler and Lange 1978, Handler 1997, Handler 2002; Handler and Bergman 2009; Higman 1998; Gibson 2009; Kelly 2008; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005), ethnohistoric research in Barbados (Boldin 1982; Gmelch and Gmelch 1997; Greenfield 1966; Handler 1965; Handler et al. 1989; Sutton 1969) census reports from Barbados (1911, 1946, 1990), and published photographs that depict laborers' housing.

An architectural survey of the island was possible with the help of anthropologist Jerome S. Handler, a pioneering scholar and anthropologist who is very familiar with the island. Together we surveyed many areas of Barbados by foot and by car to try to locate other historic stone rubble houses, or their ruins. Popular belief indicated that stone houses would most likely be located in the northern, rural parishes of St. Peter, St. Lucy, and St. Andrew. The parishes of St. Thomas, St. Joseph, St. Michael, and Christ Church were also selected, and we identified several

rubble stone structures in those parishes. The stone houses identified during the survey appear quite similar to the house at Moore Hill, but upon closer inspection they display some diversity in architectural detail. After the survey it became evident that stone houses that remained on plantation lands shared a number of common features, especially in terms of construction, design, dimensions, and placement of windows and doors. In contrast, rubble stone houses located in villages independent of plantations are different. The structures (or ruins of those structures) in independent village sites typically contrasted in dimensions and occasionally in construction technique and other features from houses tied to plantations.

For example, historic rubble stone houses in the island's first freehold village of Rock Hall, in St. Thomas, appear very similar to the one at Moore Hill. Though only two structures remained in the village and were in mere ruins, the extant walls were noticeably less thick and 50 cm higher than the Moore Hill house, and further distinctions were made as the windows were three times larger. The rural, northern parish of St. Lucy was also surveyed, and there was a considerable number on Cave Hill Drive. All of these homes displayed a variety of architectural details that were diverse (Plates 2 and 3), and some rubble stone built structures may have special use purposes, such as a kitchen (Plate 4).



**Plate 2: One of a handful of rubble stone houses located in the parish of St. Lucy, all showing diversity in architectural features from the Moore Hill house. This house is built on a stone foundation to provide a water table.**



**Plate 3: Another stone house located in St. Lucy, constructed of cut, coral limestone blocks. The technique of sawing coral stone into blocks was a post emancipation development.**



**Plate 4: A very small rubble structure without limestone mortar, located in St. Lucy. This structure was likely used as a kitchen, and would have been located behind the house.**

The descendants of Irish and Scottish indentured servants also lived in similar stone houses in the nineteenth century. Handler remembered a 'poor white' occupying a rubble stone house in the village of Chalky Mount in the early 1960s. This village is known to have origins as being an early white settlement of smallholders (Handler 1963). Returning to document the details of this house at Chalky Mount, we located the ruins of at least five stone houses that were constructed of cut sandstone blocks, which were coursed and held together with mortar. The dimensions were slightly larger than the rubble stone houses at Moore Hill and Rock Hall, and the walls that were still intact suggested an increased height (Plates 5 and 6). Further, the foundations of these houses were clearly visible, and were not aligned in a uniform pattern.



**Plate 5: Ruins of at least four stone houses were identified during fieldwork in the summer of 2009. This corner is the only standing remnants of the cut sandstone houses found near Chalky Mount in the village of Less Beholden in St. Andrew, Barbados. These houses may be the ruins of the village's well known historic 'poor white' (Irish/Scottish and their descendants) settlement (Handler 1963).**



**Plate 6: A rubble stone house in the rural, northern parish of St. Lucy. This house has many later additions built on, but it appears the oldest part of the structure was in the rear. This house is not located in a plantation tenantry, suggesting it was constructed in the nineteenth century by small land holders.**

The single house found in this survey that was identical to the one at Moore Hill is the Leacock house located in the village of Black Bess in Christ Church. Known to be located in a former plantation tenantry, the Leacock house had the same dimensions, construction technique and materials, as well as identical placement of windows and doors. Though the sample size of the stone houses found during this survey is small, the architectural data shows there are diagnostic differences between stone houses on plantation settlements versus those located in settlements independent of plantations. As such, I argue the Moore Hill house evidences master-controlled building from St. Nicholas Abbey even though the archaeological evidence does not prove or disprove that the house was constructed for laborers during slavery. All historical sources further support that planters seldom intervened in plantation laborers' housing after emancipation, and

this argument is further supported as plantation laborers' resisted living in permanent, estate housing.

These distinctions are interpreted using the historical materialistic approach advocated by Charles Orser (1988b). This perspective is used to analyze the material basis of society in the transformative period of post emancipation Barbados. Historical materialism is a powerful concept for archaeological study because it demonstrates ways in which social relationships and structures can be studied—and reinterpreted—through the physical remains that are the derivative of a living society. For many Barbadians today, these extant rubble stone houses symbolize the physical remnants of the institution of slavery. The challenge facing archaeological and architectural interpretation of these houses is to determine the difference between those house types that were actively constructed by labourers in Barbados and those that were constructed according to the plans and orders of plantation owners and overseers. The house at the Moore Hill site sheds light on these distinctions because it has remained a plantation-owned structure. Moreover, residents of Moore Hill also confirm that at least four other identical rubble stone houses were located at Moore Hill and they were arranged uniformly. The location of this settlement on the plantation, and the rigid spatial arrangement of the settlement, indicate planter intervention that most likely occurred during slavery. Henry Fraser, an architectural historian (1990: 166) has similarly noted that, “perhaps the best and most certain example” of what constitutes a “genuine slave hut . . . is the one at Moore’s Hill, in the tenantry of St. Nicholas Abbey.” Another Barbadian historian, Karl Watson, has determined from his observations of these stone houses that differentiate those of whites or indentured servants from the enslaved as being identical and uniform, in spatially arranged rows as now appears to be the case at Moore Hill (Watson 2003). Archaeological and historical evidence further posits that the rubble house at Moore Hill and other similar houses on plantations became abandoned by the mid nineteenth century, as many former slaves on plantations instead built mobile, wooden houses referred to as “chattel houses”. Understanding these phenomena relies on the material remnants of these

domestic houses, settlements, and an emphasis on the history of social relations between planter and labourer during the transition from slavery to wage labor in Barbados.

### ***Barbados, the Sugar Legacy***

Barbados is the eastern-most island in the Caribbean, lying about 100 miles outside the arc of the Lesser Antilles. Measuring only 21 miles long and 14 miles wide, its 166 square mile surface is largely comprised of coral limestone and its topography is relatively flat and suitable to agriculture (Handler and Lange 1978: 9). Barbados is the most densely populated territory in the Caribbean region with a current population boasting more than 270,000 people; with nearly three-quarters of all Barbadians being descendants of Africans who were transplanted to the island as enslaved laborers beginning in the early seventeenth century, with another 20 percent of mixed African and European heritage. The remaining 5% or so are whites—the descendants of mainly English, Irish, and Scottish colonists and indentured servants who arrived in Barbados in the seventeenth century, as well as recent expatriate immigrants from Britain and North America (Gmelch and Gmelch 1997: 1-3; Handler and Lange 1978: 9; Maynard 2003: 1).

The island's colonial history began in 1627 when a small group of Englishmen arrived with a small number of Africans captured during the voyage (Levy 1980: 1). In the 1630s Dutchmen from Brazil provided the technological knowledge along with the sugarcane plant, and by the 1640s Barbados became England's first possession in the Caribbean to cultivate sugar and import slaves on a large scale (Levy 1980: 3). Soon after the shift to sugarcane the plantation system became fundamental to the island's economy and society. Abolition of slavery was effected in all British colonies in 1834, but full emancipation was prolonged by a four-year transition to freedom known as the apprenticeship period (Beckles 2006: 138-39). On August 1, 1834 all former able-bodied enslaved persons became apprentices by order of British legislation (Levy 1980: 38); except children under the age of six, and persons too old or diseased to perform work, who were immediately freed (Levy 1980: 40). It was on August 1, 1838 when over 83,000

people were liberated (Beckles 2006: 139). Land constraints restricted the rise of a peasantry after emancipation and most former slaves remained dependent on plantation labor for survival (Marshall 1985: 4). Despite that many former slaves were forced to work and live on plantations, this thesis explores the possibility that plantation laborers were able to practice mobility—at least from one plantation to the next—in the decades following emancipation, and this is physically expressed in domestic architecture.

It was almost a century of unrest after emancipation when Afro-Barbadians collectively organized and participated in the workers' riots of 1937, which spread across many of the Caribbean territories. Afro-Barbadians began, on an unprecedented scale, organizing to fight their marginal social and political position in the planter dominated society (Beckles 2006: 250-52). One traveler account from Barbados during this year observed (Vandercook 1938: 242): "Since Barbados officially still regards labor agitation as a felony and deals with strikes with a machine gun, the trouble was short-lived . . ." It was not until 1950 that adult suffrage became a legal right for all classes of Barbadians, and in 1966 the island achieved independence from Britain (Beckles 2006: 261-274, 279-81). The plantation based economy, however, remained strong and continued to shape the social and economic lives of Barbadians until very recent times. Today Barbados is undergoing rapid economic growth and social change as tourism has replaced sugar production as the leading industry (Gmelch and Gmelch 1997: 166-70). The 400,000 plus foreign tourists who visit the island each year can still view the historic plantation landscape (Gmelch and Gmelch 1997: 166), as it is both physically visible and socially recognizable in the layout of village settlements; the old mill walls that still dot the scenery, the mansion houses surrounded by seas of small chattel houses painted vibrant colors, and the fields of green sugarcane plant are still common place in rural Barbados.

### ***Settlements and Houses of the Enslaved on Barbadian Sugar Plantations***

Houses and settlements changed dramatically during the transition from slavery to freedom in Barbados and throughout much of the Caribbean region. Historical analysis is provided to comparatively determine how houses and settlements changed in relation to systems of power. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Barbados' economy was based on sugar production and plantation work was done almost exclusively by enslaved African labor (Handler and Lange 1978: 15-16). It is estimated that by the late 1780s plantation slaves comprised about 88 percent of the total Barbadian enslaved population, and Barry W. Higman estimated that at the time of emancipation in 1834, approximately 78 percent of the 83,000 former enslaved peoples lived on sugar plantations (Handler 2002: 123, Higman 1984: 50). From around the 1660s to 1834, Handler has found that there were about 400 medium to large size plantations, each containing a slave settlement, with the majority having from 101 to 200 enslaved workers (Handler 2002: 141). The settlements were located near the mill yard, and were also within sight of the great house where the planter resided (Handler 2002: 125). Handler has written extensively on the history of settlements for the enslaved peoples of Barbados and the creolization of plantation communities (Handler and Lange 1978; Handler et al 1989; Handler 2002). According to Handler (2002: 144-145), beyond the physical location of settlements these were the spaces where communities and households were formed. Family connections could be established, children were born, the dead were interred, and various religious practices took place. Leisure and domestic activities occurred within these households, garden plots were cultivated, and revolts and other forms of resistance were plotted (Handler 2002: 145).

The cultural significance of these settlements have been heavily investigated by historical archaeologists in the last thirty years on plantations throughout the Caribbean, but in Barbados such research has been severely restricted as these sites were converted to agricultural fields where deep plowing was practiced. Though slave settlements were physically located on land designated by the planter, the enslaved were relatively free to construct their own houses and

organize their settlements (Handler 2002: 129). During the apprenticeship period, British emancipationists described plantation laborers as “living in little hovels of shacks irregularly spaced” (Sturge and Harvey 1837: 2). Set aside on relatively small areas of land, averaging around 6.25 acres (Handler 2002: 129) houses were set very close together.

Handler speculated that the majority of slave settlements were situated in a western direction from the mill yard, often in fields that he ethnographically gathered to be referred to as the “Negro yard” or “Negro yard field” (Handler 2002: 125, 127). Archaeology at St. Nicholas Abbey lends support to these statements and shows that the settlements of the laborers were consistent with plantation trends throughout Barbados. At St. Nicholas Abbey, the “Negro yard” field is northwest of the mill yard, consisting of five acres (Handler et al. 1989: 41), which is also the typical size of a slave settlement that he has found to be common for medium to large size plantations. St. Nicholas Abbey had an average from 173 to 202 enslaved people (Handler et al. 1989: 44), and approximately 25 to 50 houses would have been needed for such a community (Handler 2002: 142). Initial archaeological surveys of the “Negro yard” at St. Nicholas Abbey were conducted in the summer of 2009 with controlled surface collections in fields of good visibility, and systematic shovel test pits (50cmx50cm) every ten meters. Only three of the five acres of the village site was surveyed because it is located in an agricultural field where sugarcanes were too mature to permit testing for the first 60m of the northern section to 120m east of the established datum. However, the area of the field that was tested had an abundance of artifacts, and many materials were recovered that dated to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including numerous hand wrought iron nails and slate roofing tiles. Ceramics included a variety of English imports, such as Buckley ware and Staffordshire slipware. The archaeological evidence indicates that the site was abandoned in the early nineteenth century, and though the entire site was heavily disturbed from plowing, it shows signs of surprising integrity 25cm below the surface. Of noted importance was the large quantity of imported architectural materials, which demonstrates that during slavery planters’ at St. Nicholas Abbey intervened, and at least partially provided expenditure in housing.

Handler argued that during the apprenticeship period villages were often relocated to the peripheries of the plantation. Evidence from Moore Hill and other areas on the estate suggests that St. Nicholas Abbey adopted this settlement pattern (Devlin 2008; Handler 2002: 137). The “Negro yard” field is situated northwest of the mill yard, the “Tenant field” is just further west, and the “Moore Hill” fields are even further from the mill yard in the same direction (see Figure 2). The Ridge site, in-between the “Tenant” and “Negro yard” fields, dates to the early nineteenth century. This suggests the chronological and spatial layout of St. Nicholas Abbey slave settlements was first established at the “Negro yard” but by the apprenticeship period or earlier, settlements were relocated as far west as the “Moore Hill” fields; almost half a kilometer from the original village site. The relationship between settlement sites moving further west from the mill yard with the nearing of emancipation is reflective of a settlement pattern that allowed the former slaves to escape the surveillance of the planter. The “Tenant” and “Moore Hill” fields being 200 to 400 meters west of the mill yard rendered their most intimate community activities invisible from the overseer, and also allowed plantation tenants to go to and from nearby urban centers, as well as neighboring villages, without passing the planter’s house. A similar pattern of spatial changes in villages was observed by Douglas Armstrong (1990: 88-89) in his study of Drax Hall plantation in Jamaica. At Drax Hall, the slave settlement near the planter’s house is interpreted as being “a center over authority of the slaves,” and that “the Drax Hall layout and changes in its configuration through time hardly varied from observations on plantation layouts in the eastern Caribbean. . .” In Jamaica the former slaves often drifted from the plantations, but after emancipation in 1834 Armstrong (1990: 90-91) observed that most of the older plantation laborers stayed, though the village moved:

Slave houses moved down the hill . . . closer to the main roads that provided access to areas beyond the estate. . . The shift positioned the houses closer to the aqueduct that carried water to the mill and brought former slaves closer to the fields and works, avoiding the necessity of passing the main house when traveling to work or to town.

The location of the Moore Hill house is representative of the changing relationship of the planter and laborer. Former village sites were turned into agricultural production, and settlements moved further from the great house which provided plantation laborers at St. Nicholas Abbey with more privacy and a spatial barrier against central authority. Yet, new settlements that were still on the plantation meant the planter still had economic control over the lives of laborers. The evidence that stone-built houses were present in this newer settlement also suggests that physical distance may have coincided with increased social control.

### ***Housing Slavery: Amelioration, 1790 to 1834***

Planter intervention in slave housing did not occur in any significant number until the late period of slavery. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the increasing demands of British humanitarian and abolitionist movements, the declining economy of the British Caribbean, and the ending of the British slave trade in 1807 led to sanctioned amelioration efforts that sought to improve the conditions of enslaved workers (Beckles 2006: 117; Bennett 1955: 100). During this period Barbados maintained conservative policy and was the least willing to reform slave codes or extend legal rights to the enslaved or free colored people (Beckles 2006: 116). By the nineteenth century, however, Barbadian planters were able to recognize that amelioration was the only possibility to end their reliance on the slave trade and hiring out of slaves, and many were prompted to do so after the economic decline that followed the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War in 1775 and the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 (Bennett 1955: 137-38).

Unlike many other British Caribbean colonies, Barbados by the end of the eighteenth century had a naturally increasing slave population and did not need to import African slaves in large numbers. Historian Hillary Beckles noted that Barbadian planters used the natural population increase as propaganda against abolitionist arguments that equated 'growth' to 'good treatment.' Planters promoted their managerial policies as ideal and reflective of their paternalism (Beckles 2006: 117), and managerial policies in Barbados were so successful in their measures of

maintaining a local labor supply that it was the only colony in the English Caribbean to vote for abolition in 1807, as the need to buy slaves was almost non-existent by the early nineteenth century (Smith 2006: 273). Indeed, the African-born slave population of Barbados was less than seven percent by the early nineteenth century (Handler and Lange 1978: 295n 17)

It was only until 1823 that amelioration became a legally sanctioned reform initiated by the British government (Levy 1980: 21). Secretary of the State for the Colonies, Lord Bathurst, set forth a series of reforms as official policy in Barbados, one of which was the allowance of the enslaved to own property (Beckles 2006: 117). Customary rights of the enslaved were already in practice on the Codrington plantations located in St. John's parish, which were left to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts at the death of Christopher Codrington in 1710 (Bennett 1955: 1). The enslaved at these two plantations were (1955: 139) "granted a customary right of property in their huts and personal belongings . . ." Bennett's study of the Codrington plantations, *Bondsmen and Bishop: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados, 1710-1838* (1955) traces the changes that occurred on these estates as the managerial policies were unusually well documented for Barbados. Bennett noted that planters paid for the construction of new, more permanent housing for the enslaved as part of the amelioration process that was growing momentum during the late period of slavery in Barbados (Bennett 1955: 32-33, 100-101; 115-116).

Improving the material conditions of the enslaved was best documented at Codrington, though it appears that this was not uncommon elsewhere in Barbados, especially on larger plantations where health care, education, religious reform, and new houses were sometimes provided (Beckles 2006: 119-20). The relocation of villages occurred on the Codrington plantations in 1824, as the enslaved abandoned the "unhealthful Negro yard near the mansion house" and were relocated to higher ground (Bennett 1955: 115). This relocation of villages was in keeping with a trend that placed enslaved communities further from the dwellings of the whites (Bennett 1955:

115), and the practice occurred on plantations in other areas of the Caribbean during this period (Armstrong 1990).

Information either from the historical or archaeological record that pertains to the social and material life of the enslaved in Barbados is fragmented. What little historical information there is about housing for enslaved workers is often superficial and biased. While information about the vernacular architecture that existed on Barbados sugar plantations is limited, a chronological sequence of housing for the enslaved on the island suggests that wattle and daub was the predominant and earliest house type (Handler 2002: 132). Wattle and daub construction reveals some West African influences. Wood and stone houses were introduced much later, mainly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and are of European form and style (Handler and Bergman 2009). Moreover, it appears that wattle and daub houses were smaller than the later wood and stone houses. Archaeological and archival evidence in other parts of the Caribbean seems to support this observation, and archaeologists have investigated the ruins of stone houses that date to the late period of slavery in other parts of the Caribbean (Figure 3). The stone houses are fairly well documented in the region, not because they were the most common type of houses for the enslaved, but because most of the other houses were constructed of impermanent organic materials that perished and did not leave traces in the archaeological record.

**Figure 3: The majority of stone-built houses for the enslaved documented in these Caribbean territories date to the period of Abolition in 1807, or during Amelioration in the 1820s and after.**

**Dimension Figures (in meters) of Rubble Masonry Houses in Villages**

<b>Barbados</b>				
<b>Sugar Estates:</b>	Lightfoot	(n5)	7x4	mid-1830s
		(n22)	6.4x3.7	mid-1830s
	Codrington	----	----	1819-1823
	Newton	----	----	1796-1797
	St. Nicholas Abbey	(n1)	7x4	----
	Alleynedale	(n4)	----	----
<b>Non-White Freehold:</b>				
	Sweet Bottom	(n5)	7.6x3.7	1777
<b>Bahamas</b>				
<b>Cotton Estates:</b>	Clifton, New Providence	(n2)	8.2x5.3	1806-1807
		(n1)	8.2x5.3	1806
		(n1)	8.7x5.3	1807
		(n4)	6x4.6	1807-1809
	Sandy Point, San Salvador	(n12)	----	Early 19th c.
	Fortune Hill, San Salvador	(n30)	8x4.5m	----
	SW Bay, New Providence	(n1)	7.6x4.9	1800-1825
	Crooked Island, Great Hope	(n4)	----	----
	Bellefield, North Caicos	(n3)	----	Post 1805
	Wade's Green	(n3)	7.1x5	1800-1820
<b>Guadeloupe</b>				
<b>Sugar Estates:</b>				
	Grande Point	(n27)	6.5x4.5	19th c
	La Mahaudiere	(n1)	8x5	Post 1850
<b>Jamaica</b>				
<b>Sugar Estates:</b>				
	Seville			
	New Montpelier	(n2)	6.7x5.8	1802-1819
		(n2)	8.2x5.4	1819
		(n1)	7.9x4.2	1819
<b>St. Croix</b>				
<b>Sugar Estates:</b>				
	Estate Slob	(n5)	7.9x4.9	1790s

*Sources compiled from:* Chapman 1991: 112; Farnsworth 2001: 243-260; Gibson 2009: 34; Handler and Bergman 2009: 7-11; Higman 1998: 163-171;; Hughes 1981: 270; Kelly 2008: 395; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005: 123, 145.

The slave code of Barbados did not provide any provisions for housing, and if it had it probably would not have been enforced. Plantation managers were reluctant to expend large amounts of money for the houses of the enslaved. In Trinidad, for example, Governor, Lt.Col. Thomas Picton (cited in John 1988: 212) implemented Slave Codes that encouraged planters to “mitigate the situation of their slaves,” in order to promote “their natural increase, so as that in course of time the importation of slaves from Africa may be considerably diminished.” The first article of the slave code stressed the importance of housing to accomplish this end (John 1988: 212-13):

Every proprietor or possessor of a plantation shall provide the slaves attached thereto with good comfortable houses, well wattled and thatched, so as to be perfectly wind and watertight. The head or chief of every family shall have a house for himself, separated into two or more apartments, according to the number of that family, and there shall be cabanes or bed-places in those apartments, raised at least eighteen inches, to preserve them from the dangerous effects of sleeping on the moist ground.

Such a description of the “well wattled and thatched” house “separated in two or more apartments” parallels the houses for most of the enslaved in Barbados. It is a creolized housing tradition that emerged during slavery throughout the Caribbean. The wattle and daub house was deeply influenced by West African building traditions (Handler 2002: 131-32), consisting of a small, low, rectangular, one-story structure with a packed earth floor and a gable roof covered with thatch. Though there are variations of this house form, it was most similar to a ‘Guinea forest house type’ that was most popular in the southern Gold Coast (modern Ghana), and other tropical forest areas in West and West Central Africa (Handler 2002: 131; Johnson 2003: 55). The wattle from these houses were constructed by inserting wooden posts or stakes in the ground to form the framework of the structure, and then interlacing twigs and branches were woven around ground-posts. The wattle was plastered internally and most likely externally, as well, with a mud or clay mortar. In later years, a lime mortar may have also been used. The roof thatching was also influenced by West African building traditions, and could be made of plantation leaves, palm leaves, or the trash of sugarcane (Handler 2002: 131-132). Thatch roofing had continued on rural laborers’ housing during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and was used on the later wood and stone houses. A photograph, probably dating from the early twentieth century,

depicts the construction material and thatch roof (Figures 4, and 5). One illustration showing houses of the enslaved in Barbados is from an engraving in John Waller's account of his travels in the West Indies, and though construction of these houses appear to have been wattle and daub or stone, it is difficult to distinguish for certain (Figure 6). Photos from the twentieth century that depict stone-built working class housing are probably very similar to what existed during slavery (Figure 7).



**Figure 4: Stone house with thatched roof in unidentified location of Barbados. Although this photo was taken in the late nineteenth century or early twentieth, the house shown is probably very similar to the type of stone house found in the later period of slavery. (Handler and Bergman 2009: 6)**



Figure 5: Wood plank house with thatched roof, June 1907 (Handler and Bergman 2009: 8).

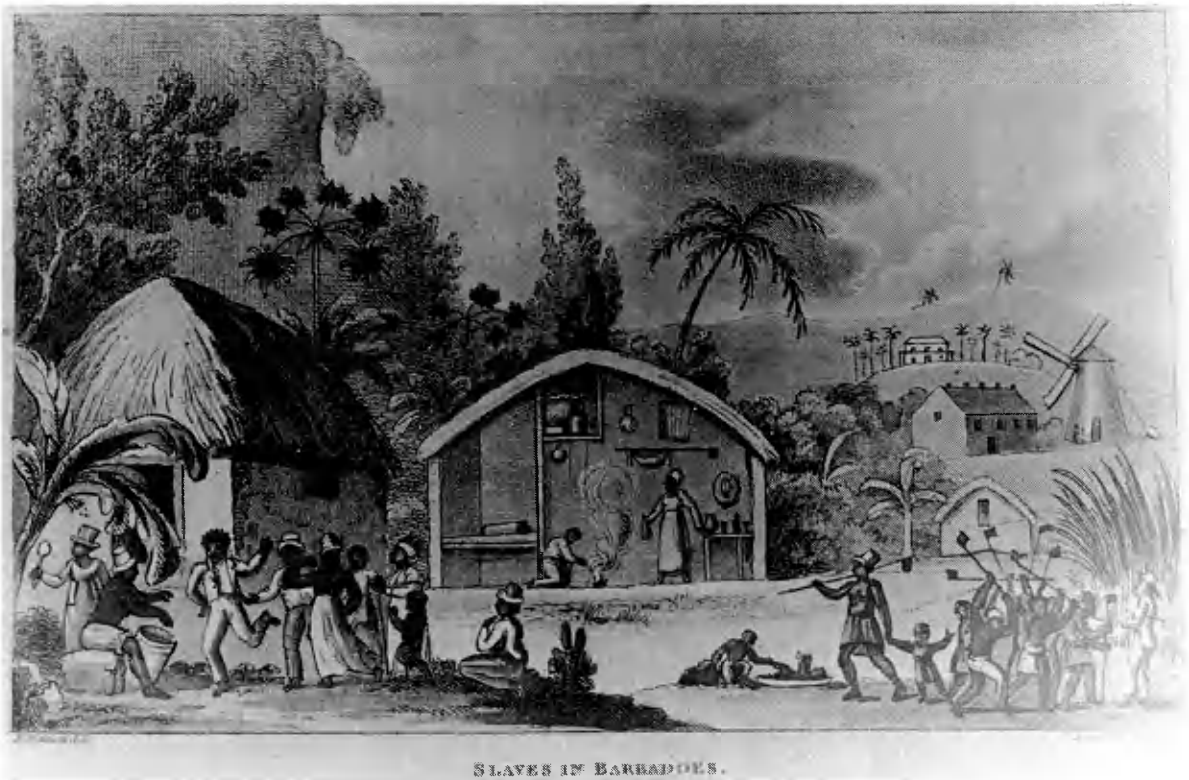


Figure 6: "Slaves in Barbados" in John A. Waller, *A Voyage in the West Indies* (London, 1820), facing p. 20.



**Figure 7: Stone house of rubble construction, with limestone exterior plaster and galvanized hip roof. Photo was perhaps taken in the 1940s or 1950s, but location is unknown (Handler and Bergman 2009: 8).**

Figures from newly constructed houses for the enslaved in historical documents and from archival records, especially from Newton plantation in Christ Church, the Codrington plantations in St. John's, and Lightfoots plantation in the parishes of St. John and St. Phillip; all suggest an average house size of approximately 305 square feet, ranging from 250 to 375 square feet (Handler and Bergman 2009: 11). These accounts of house sizes, however, may be biased since they appear mainly in pro-slavery sources, which stressed that enslaved Barbadians were generally well treated and received adequate shelter. Within each plantation, members of the unskilled field gangs inhabited the poorest and most sparsely furnished houses. There are indications that enslaved craftsmen, artisans, and drivers of a higher rank (this rank system was determined by the planters and not within the communities of the enslaved) on the estates sometimes had larger houses and more furnishings. Henry Nelson Coleridge (1832: 91), a traveler to Barbados in

1825, determined most of the houses for the enslaved were “a cottage thatched with palm branches and divided into two rooms,” but “some huts are smarter and larger than this. . . the driver on the Society’s estate has two large four post beds, looking glasses and framed pictures.” Such housing distinctions associated with rank are evident in other areas of the Caribbean, but may only have emerged during the later years of the slavery period.

Houses were highly valued and an important means of personal expression. The houses were, therefore, items of material culture over which they exercised some control and could express some autonomy relatively free of slave owners’ demands. In the mid-eighteenth century, William Belgrove (1755: 81), a well established Barbados planter, stressed that “Negro houses” should “be kept in good order, as more Negroes dye for want of proper houses than by other means.” Housing was closely linked to other dimensions of life, such as family and household, notions of self-esteem, and religious and mortuary practices (Handler and Bergman 2009: 19). Legally, of course, all houses belonged to the slave owner, but over the years there seems to have evolved some customary rights to these houses, similar to ones enacted at the Codrington estates, and what probably existed for some other types of moveable property; such as poultry, small livestock, clothing, jewelry, and household furnishings. Whatever the meaning houses had in their lives, when a group of planters (cited in Handler and Bergman 2009: 20) claimed, “We know nothing that so strongly attaches a slave to the plantation to which he belongs as being in the possession of a comfortable house,” the group was undoubtedly reflecting a very positive value enslaved peoples attached to their dwellings.

### ***Apprenticeship, 1834 to 1838***

Keeping laborers tied to plantation owned lands after emancipation was a chief concern shaping legislation in Barbados in the early nineteenth century. In the years preceding the Emancipation Act of 1833, British abolitionists attacked slavery on many fronts, and were most critical of the treatment of the enslaved. Embracing religious sentiments, abolitionists argued that slavery was incompatible with the tenets of Christianity (Newton 2008: 199-200). Abolitionist movements

were also driven by a unified national conscience that they believed “slavery had stained,” and in 1823 the British government committed itself to slave emancipation, urging the colonies to adopt specific measures to prepare for the end of slavery (Bennett 1955: 114; Newton 2008: 199).

No other area of the British Caribbean had such a huge concentration of agricultural workers. Of the approximately 83,150 persons freed in Barbados, 52,193 were categorized as *praedials* (agricultural laborers on the plantations), compared to 14,732 who were not (Handler and Lange 1978: 295). With a population density of 501 apprentices per square mile, planters in Barbados had little trouble keeping laborers on plantation owned lands. The closest in population densities were Antigua, which had only 269 apprentices per square mile, and St. Kitts with 290 (Beckles 2006: 130). During this transition period, planters in the English Caribbean decided to tie rents and wages to houses and provision grounds to maintain a labor supply. Even before emancipation British Caribbean planters reached a consensus that as landowners they possessed an “undoubted right . . . to charge a rental for the land on [their] own estate, occupied by free negroes, from whom he has not the power to extract labour” (Clark 1833: 49). Barbados was the only colony after emancipation to have an excess labor force, and it was the only British Caribbean colony to increase sugar exports and profits following emancipation (Levy 1980: 59).

The economic success of planters in Barbados was accomplished by a well orchestrated transition to freedom that ensured the labor force would continue working on estates for very low pay. Planters throughout the Caribbean were well aware of the ways in which the enslaved communities valued and appropriated the landscape. They hoped, and perhaps knew, that many former slaves would prefer to stay in their same houses located in their respective villages, as “Nothing but bad treatment on the part of the planters has ever caused the negroes to leave the estates on which they were accustomed to live, and in such cases a *change of management* has almost uniformly been sufficient to induce them to return” (cited in Thome 1839: 146). It was also commonly observed throughout the Caribbean that the enslaved were “attached . . . to their little hut and garden ground” (Clarke 1833: 49). Planters exploited the former slaves’ attachments to

the land to keep a labor supply as “admitted tenants at a moderate rental, to be deducted from their wages” (Clarke 1833: 49). These attachments to house and provision grounds were so strong that one planter even recalled (James Howell, cited in Thome 1839: 146):

In the year 1828, forty-three slaves were sold from the estate under my management, and removed to another estate ten miles distant. After emancipation, the whole of these came back, and plead with me to employ them, that they might live in their former houses.

During similar testimony a planter just prior to emancipation stressed the social significance of the houses and villages of the enslaved, and that planters would be successful in maintaining their labor supply following emancipation because they had few other options (Conder 1833: 84):

...I do believe, [they] would attach themselves strictly to the soil; because it is one of the properties of a creole negro to be fond of the place of his birth; he calls it (I have heard them call it so myself) his 'born ground'; in fact, the associations of his childhood are all laid there; he has his little fruit trees and other things about his little hut, and he has his family. If he removes thence, where can he get a house? Nowhere.

### ***The Plantation Tenantry System***

In Barbados it was fully expected that former slaves would remain on the plantations as all the land was owned by the minority planter class (Marshall 1985). Despite control of resources, the former slave owners of Barbados sought new forms of control, while the former slaves sought new forms of freedom (Bolland 1981: 592). The shift from slave to wage labor was merely a transition from one type of labor exploitation to another, each characterized by its respective struggles. The critical factor that many scholars emphasize in their assessment of whether the newly freed would emerge as a constituted peasantry, or remain dependent upon plantation labor, has been land availability (Bolland 1981: 593). In Jamaica, workers were able to purchase land for as little as 2£ per acre, where as in British Guiana and Trinidad land was occupied by squatters at no cost at all. In Barbados, however, land prices were as high as 500£ per acre (Levy 1980: 79). Thus, small land holders in Barbados represented much less of the population than any other colony in the West Indies, with holders of ten acres or less in 1840 constituting

only 818 persons in perspective to the almost 8,000 such land owners in Jamaica (Davy 1854 [1971]: 109). Only fifteen villages existed in Barbados in 1830, and this number did not increase significantly until the 1890s (Marshall 1987: 11).

The formation of a sizeable peasantry was not possible in Barbados as the planter class controlled all the land and instituted an oppressive wage-and-rent system, in which the new wage-laboring class often only received enough pay to maintain their bit of rented land as part of a tenantry system enacted on plantations. Planters also paid workers with rum and other disposable goods knowing that tenants would be forced to return to work (Smith 2005: 168). Former slave owners, thus, organized a labor system that created a class of people restricted to “landless poverty” (Beckford 1975; Butler 1995: 112-119). Marshall was able to construe from historical records that just prior to emancipation an estimated 73,000 people of the 102,100 residents of Barbados lived on plantations (Marshall 1987: 3). Many of the poorer whites and free people of color who worked on plantations during the slavery period were either forced or willingly moved off plantation lands after emancipation, while the vast majority of the former enslaved population—seventy five percent—remained resident on plantation lands for most of the nineteenth century (Marshall 1987: 3).

For the planters, the struggle for their existence was threatened from two sources:

Emancipation in 1838 and the Sugar Duties Act of 1846 (Gibbs 1975: 1). The smooth transition of labor from slave to free, mercantile protectionism, and substantial population growth helped the Barbados planter class weather these crises (Gibbs 1975:1-2). The sugar industry in Barbados between 1838 and 1865 was one characterized by a relatively improved agricultural sector, limited capital investment, and an unreformed factory system; but more significantly, it was the cheap and abundant labor force that allowed the planters to maintain a profit in the face of depressed sugar prices (Gibbs 1975: 19). During this period, plantation tenancies became the physical setting where planters consolidated all the legal, social, and economic measures of coercion needed to maintain their power.

With the establishment of a tenantry system the majority of emancipated laborers became tenants of land and houses on the several plantations under specific terms and conditions individual to each overseer. As there was no other competition for land or houses, planters had the power to create such a system and shape its character. Generally, planters provided houses (Boldin 1982:14); "Some of them were built entirely of timber and others were mainly of stone with shingled roofs. All of the houses were single roofed houses which were divided by a partition into two rooms; one serving at night as a bedroom for the parents, the other was occupied by the rest of the family. Although the amount of land varied, it was generally less than one quarter acre." The payment of rent for this 'house and spot,' as the set was generally termed, was ". . . a function of the quantum of labor . . ." and the laborers worked at reduced wages to help pay for it (Gibbs 1987: 33).

The Barbados legislature also mandated that former slaves would remain laborers on plantations. Barbados directly copied the Antigua contract law of 1834, which stipulated five days of consecutive labor on an estate resulting in a "general hiring" of the worker for a year (Levy 1980: 72). Either party could terminate this contract with one month's notice, though the laborer would then forfeit his or her house and provision grounds, leaving the hired laborer without employment or home. In order to prevent the tenants from paying rent with money earned by provisions or laboring elsewhere, the planters deducted the rents from plantation-earned wages, usually at one-sixth a week's pay (Greenfield 1966: 56; Levy 1980: 79) thereby obliging the tenants to work for wages on the plantations where they resided (Bolland 1981: 596). This meant laborers who were not residents on plantations where they worked would earn more than those who did, and at one-sixth a week's pay being deducted for rent, the resident laborers were only being paid for three out of the five days they worked in a week. If the hired laborer was evicted, any women or children being housed on the plantation would suffer the consequences, as they would soon be charged excessive rents that often resulted in homelessness (Brown and Inniss 2005: 261). Even if another plantation would accept a new laborer, such a person would have to start from

scratch and build a new home again. Thus, there was a strong desire for house ownership amongst plantation laborers.

These contract laws following apprenticeship caused great social unrest and were greeted with much resistance. On July 27, 1838, several hundred former slaves met in the parish of St. Phillip to demand land and better pay from their former owners (Levy 1980: 75). No such demands were met, and though the protest ended peacefully, the disputes between the new wage laborers and planters continued to escalate. Work stoppages always loomed as a frequent threat to the planters and some planters were forced to provide better wages to their workers (Levy 1980: 77). But with total control of resources, planters used the practice of house evictions to ensure the stipulations provided in the contract law were favorable to the estate. Perhaps unsurprisingly many laborers' refused to acknowledge such evictions, as it was believed that "the Queen had made a gift of their cottages" (Levy 1980:76). To ensure the threat of evictions planters passed more restrictive vagrancy laws, resulting in arrest if people did not leave their home upon their eviction notice.

Many new wage laborers also resisted the exploitive wage rates offered after apprenticeship. One planter explained that the fixed rate of 10d. Sterling, or two bits, per day, with house and grounds rent free, was provided on the island of Barbados after 1834. The only difference following apprenticeship in 1838 was that "The planters continued to pay {workers} the same rate to those who reside on their estates, and take the benefit of the house and grounds, but other labourers not possessing these advantages receive two and a half to three bits [1s. 3d.]" (Burnley 1841: 86-88). Thus, living in estate housing provided planters' with more control over laborers' lives, and it also meant that laborers living in estate housing would be paid considerably less.

The 10d.-per-day wage the plantation owners offered their tenants was estimated to be 20-30% below market rate (Greenfield 1966: 56). By the middle of the 1850s this had been reduced to between 12 and 14 cents a day (Gilmore 1980: 2). The dense population of the island, the

unavailability of lands, and restrictions on emigration offered few opportunities for tenants (Levy 1980: 80-82). In addition, politics, legislative power, and the administration of justice were all effectively controlled by the planter class. Barbadian plantation laborers were therefore restricted to very insufficient wages for work on plantations "on most illiberal terms," with the only alternative being "starvation" (Sewell 1862 [1968]: 34).

Beyond evictions and low pay, a system of incremental rents replaced the initial contract law as any worker who did not commit to at least five days of work per week on the plantation was charged exorbitant rents (Levy 1980: 78). These sliding scale rents proved too difficult to collect and planters again became fearful of losing total control of the island's work force. Resorting to a new contract law, the *Master and Servants Act* of 1840, which crystallized the practice of what is referred to as the *located labor system* in Barbados. In essence, the *Master and Servants Act* was strikingly similar to the contract law enacted just two years prior, the major difference being labor contracts were reduced from one year to one month (Gibbs 1987: 34). Plantation tenants were required to give their labor exclusively and regularly to their landlord/ employer at reduced rates. All located laborers paid, in effect, an indirect rent for their house in the form of labor. This so called "rent free" tenantry system was an arrangement wherein tenants who did not meet the obligations of full-time labor on the plantation became exposed to monetary penalties. These penalties consisted of approximately 5-10 d. per day for missed work, even though the "direct" rent paid when labor was performed was only 2 and ½ d. per day (Gibbs 1987: 33). These deductions were taken right from the tenants' wages, and resulted in a system in which rent was a function--not a value--of the amount of labor the tenant provided (Gibbs 1987: 33). The less labor performed, the higher the rent.

### ***The Tenants' Response***

The emancipated laborer who became a tenant was soon very much entangled in a coercive and exploitive labor system. Tenantries were a system of power to control labor based on a racial

system, just as the whip was used during slavery. As a system that only those experienced in the methods of labor exploitation could invent and operate, it was certainly not one in which those accustomed to slavery would entertain once liberated. Many resident laborers refused to enter into labor contracts, refused to sign to any written agreements with the planters, and many engaged in strikes and work stoppages (Gibbs 1987: 36). One planter, William Sharpe, attempted to entice laborers into five-day contracts at the wage of 15d per day, but was refused; with tenants asserting that only labor given one day a time would be agreed upon (Gibbs 1987: 37). In 1840 when the *Master and Servants Act* came into effect, the pro-planter newspaper, the *Barbadian*, reported 90 plantations suffered a boycott of labor for a short period (Gibbs 1987: 38). Some laborers were more extreme and decided to “relinquish their domiciles” and left the plantations on which they had so long resided (Gibbs 1987: 38). Finally, in January of 1840, with the re-introduction of contract acts, 27 sugarcane fires were reported (Gibbs 1987: 38). These are obvious indications that tenants were not going to sit idly by as planters’ facilitated exploitation.

A reconstruction program of the tenantry system found its advocates in a small number of Barbadians, and reformist proposals were regularly made by Samuel Prescod. Prescod, through the editorial columns of *The Liberal*, urged for the existing “unfree” tenancies to be converted to “free” tenancies (Gibbs 1987: 38). A letter reprinted in the newspaper *The Liberal* originally printed in the newspaper *The West Indian* on August 31, 1858, sought to answer whether the absence of contract labor would actually lessen the supply of labor in Barbados (Anonymous 1858 [1959]: 15-16). In the letter, titled “The Tenancy Question—A letter from a planter,” the planter reported (Anonymous 1858 [1959]: 15) “whereas our Estates are dependent for fully two-thirds of their labour on Workers free of all contract or obligations,” they perform “the severest work on our Estates,” implying that contract labor had no advantages for the remaining one-third of plantation laborers. It becomes evident that just twenty years after emancipation, laborers had already begun to challenge the tenantry system, and those who were still tenants-at-will were less likely to perform the labor obligations of the landlord. A group of planters from the parish of Christ Church expressed similar attitudes toward the tenantry system in the same year (1858 [1959]: 14)

writing "Our system seems defective as regards located labourers. On no estate do this class work readily. I think we ought to alter our present system of tenancy. They should be yearly, and free to dispose of their labour as they think fit."

### ***Housing Freedom***

With the passing of coercive labor legislature immediately following August 1, 1838, many plantation tenants were, for the first time, forced to pay for the houses they had constructed and maintained all their lives with the sweat of their own labor. This no doubt fueled an intense desire for home-ownership, but not just any house would do. Though the long established tradition of building wattle and daub houses was the most common during slavery (Handler 2002: 132); such a house could not be moved in the event that one was to become evicted or move. As a result, most plantation laborers chose to own houses that were built with imported, wooden boards once they could afford them. These small, mobile, wooden houses are popularly referred to as chattel houses. Several plantation tenants explained that the chattel house was merely an expensive (Boldin 1982: 52) "replacement of the wattle and daub" house. These houses were a creative adaptation within a cultural tradition that provided a form of agency individuals and communities used to manipulate the coercive structure of power inherent in the plantation system. Barbadian plantation workers were able to resist the coercive power of the planters' who attempted to permanently house their labor and instill a hegemonic ideology of paternalism and obedience. By the late nineteenth century more than 70% of all Barbadians owned their homes (Census 1990), and during this period stone-built houses dramatically decreased. Historically, Barbados is one of the only major sugar colonies that lacked estate housing (Harris 2007: 445), and surely this is the product of the long struggle that intensified between planters and laborers after 1838.

It is not known how common permanent, stone-built houses were in nineteenth century Barbados. The closest approximation to an idea of how often rubble masonry was used for housing is from census data. This data reveals that in the nineteenth century, an increase in home ownership

corresponds with the increase in wooden constructed homes (Census of Barbados 1946: xix). This relationship is largely due to the replacement of the wattle and daub houses, and less frequent stone houses. The census reports this change with the observance of earlier censuses where houses were classified into three groups, "wood", "stone", and "other" (1946: xv). The numbers and proportions of the occupied housing show an increase in wooden houses between 1871 and 1911, and the number of houses other than wood showed a continuing decrease from 1871 to 1921. By the census of 1921, there were 33,867 houses of wood (86.6 percent of the total, inhabited by 83.2 percent of the island's population) -- more than half being in the urban sprawl of Bridgetown, St. Michael, and Christ Church. In addition, there were 3,781 stone houses (9.5 percent; inhabited by 10.5 percent of the population), and 1,509 (3.9 percent; inhabited by 4.2 percent of the population) houses that were of "material other than wood or stone" (Census 1921: 42, 44, 50). Though the houses described as "other than wood or stone" are not defined, it is very likely that these were wattle and daub structures. Such houses were standing in rural Barbados in the early 1960s (Figure 8).



**Figure 8: Wattle and daub houses with thatched roofs, probably very similar to those found during slavery. These houses appear to be located in the rugged Scotland District located in the parish of St. Andrew, and possibly the village of Chalky Mount (a pottery kiln is in the lower right hand corner). The American photographer Frank Carpenter (d. 1924) took this photo (Handler and Bergman 2009: 6).**

In the 1946 census a similar table demonstrates *Houses by Tenure* from 1871 to 1946. In 1871, 47.39% of people owned their house, yet in 1881 home ownership increased to 58.46%. In 1891 that percentage jumped to 70.56%, and peaked at 76.26% after the first decade of the twentieth century. Ever since 1891 the island of Barbados has proudly claimed to be a nation of home owners by at least seventy percent of the island's total inhabitants. It is surmised that because land was largely unobtainable; plantation laborers invested in houses instead. The most popular house in Barbados during the nineteenth century was constructed of wood, as the census data reveals.

This is very curious as 6/7<sup>th</sup> of Barbados' surface is comprised of coral limestone. The material is overly abundant and easily worked (Senn 1945), providing an excellent construction material that is essentially free. Why did the majority of Barbadians instead build with imported wood, especially as the island was deforested by the early-eighteenth century (Handler 2002: 130)? Social causes are the only means to understand this obscured logic, as plantation laborers since emancipation have overwhelmingly preferred the chattel house. This is specifically due to the structure's most important architectural feature--mobility. In a geographic survey of the island in the mid-nineteenth century, plantation laborers were described by a visitor to Barbados as living in (Cochrane 1851: 50) "small wooden houses" which were in ". . . a mode of construction which enables them, when tired or displeased with their locality, to transport them elsewhere." The entire practice of moving wooden houses is still common in some Caribbean territories, and probably originated during the late period of slavery when many laborers were relocated to new settlements. Rev. James Curtin provided testimony in 1833 on whether the enslaved in Antigua were required to work on Sundays. Curtin defensively replied (1833: 138):

I know of one circumstance:--there was, when I first went, a custom of moving wooden houses on Sundays, because they could not get the strength sufficient to draw the house about on other days; that custom has ceased entirely within the last three years.

It is also very likely that moveable, owner-occupied houses altered the power of contractual labor arrangements after emancipation, since, in 1858, it was reported that two-thirds of tenants were no longer working under such contracts (Anonymous 1959: 15). This could only have been achieved by relinquishing the houses occupied during slavery, and either purchasing or constructing a new house on the same plantation or elsewhere. Stone houses, built and repaired by the plantation, were therefore often abandoned in favor of wooden homes. As the Earl Dunsald noted in 1851 (Cochrane 1851: 50), "I was told that a street of stone huts, constructed for their use, is almost abandoned by reason of the unsuitability of such residences."

Whether a house was built of wood or stone after emancipation is often interpreted on the basis of land ownership. In the 1960s anthropologist Sidney Greenfield studied family patterns at the village of Enterprise Hall, which was an early Afro-Barbadian freehold settlement. Greenfield noted that because Enterprise Hall was not owned by a large sugar estate, the typical “own-house-but-not-land” rule of the island did not exist (1966: 89). There were a total of 135 functioning households in the village, of which 106 owned both house and land, while 22 houses were owner-occupied on rented land (1966:89). In comparison, only three families were not able to own their own house and were forced to rent a shelter. Greenfield (1966: 89) finds the importance of home ownership one of the foundations for the community as “The great value placed on home ownership makes every man strive to be able to own the house in which he and his family lives.” Renting was perceived only as a last resort, as every dollar in rent should be used to begin saving for one’s own home (Greenfield 1966: 94). Describing the houses in the village he states (1966: 90): “Of the 156 buildings in the village, 46 (30 percent) are at least part stone. The stone is locally quarried limestone. This percentage is larger than is usual on the island, this again being the result of land ownership.” Another ethnographic study in the rural village of Endeavor described the relationship of building materials to land tenure (Sutton 1969: 98): “In physical appearance, one could not easily distinguish between the tenancies from the freehold areas. The only major departure from this pattern were the twenty more substantial privately owned stone and cement houses that were located in the freehold areas.”

The resulting differences in permanent materials being used when land ownership was obtained suggests that stone and concrete were used to display status. This evolution did not occur in the immediate post-emancipation decades, however, and was probably more of a twentieth-century development. In a well documented study of the freehold village at Rock Hall, houses that were constructed by the former enslaved on their parcels of land did not represent such status with permanent construction materials. In fact, it was the quite the opposite, as Marshall shows (2007: 39) that “enchantment of status was reflected to some extent in the quality of some of the housing stock. By 1849 Edward Carmichael had erected two houses on his lot: a spacious (340 square

feet) shingled house with detached kitchen and oven; and a wattle house with 85 square feet of floor space.” Another man of high social status from Rock Hall built two houses on his lot of land, both being “mainly of stone” with gabled and shingle roofs, that were of less rental monetary value than the shingle or wattle and daub houses of Mr. Carmichael (2007: 39-40). Moreover, not only was it common for the former enslaved to build multiple houses on their land at Rock Hall, but the founders of this village did not become peasant agriculturists. Instead, what little land they owned became shared with family members to remove loved ones from the (2007: 44) “constraints and constant hassle of living in a plantation tenantry.” Stone-built houses were not the most valued or common among former slaves, and land ownership conferred more social capital than economic in post emancipation Barbados.

Many sources argue that the chattel house is a post emancipation development (Boldin 1982; Crain 1996; Watson and Potter 2001), but it appears that the core, wooden cottage and the practice of house moving were common during the final stage of slavery. The creation of the impermanent chattel house has been interpreted as the result of coercive legislature, such as the *Landlord and Tenant Act of 1897*, which deemed it lawful for either party to terminate occupancy of a house so long as one month’s notice was given (Watson and Potter 2001: 55). This does not fit in with the census data, however, since in 1891—six years before the law was passed—over seventy percent of Barbados already lived in owner-occupied houses, and over eighty four percent of the houses were constructed of wood and probably moveable. In fact, it is very telling that this law was passed *after* home ownership was achieved by the working class. The majority of those who did rent houses in the late nineteenth century were almost entirely in the urban center of Bridgetown, where in 1946 over forty six percent of city dwellers rented both land and house. This is due largely to the fact that people in the city were not dependent on the plantations for survival, and were paying rents to their landlords, not *employers*. While Bridgetown is often described as having the worst living conditions for the working class, it can be asserted that material sacrifices were often sought to escape the prevailing social and economic control planters’ possessed.

Though stone-built houses were certainly introduced by planters during slavery; disputes over laborers' houses on planters' lands increased throughout the nineteenth century, as homeownership afforded a level of autonomy that planters' were threatened by. Legislation that directly affected the construction materials of plantation laborers' housing were common by at least the 1870s, when home ownership became widespread. Caribbean planters went to court over property disputes with tenants after attempting to confiscate the latter's house, and it was determined by common laws (based on those from England) that "what is annexed to the land becomes part of the land" (cited in Glenn and Toppin-Allahar 1997: 373). At present the "Law of Fixtures" survives throughout the West Indies and stipulates that any property which is physically attached to the land is within the power of the landowner. Legal battles between land owners and tenants' houses continue over such matters as arrears in rent or the sale of land (Glenn and Toppin-Allahar 1997: 372). It is certain that laws such as these influenced not only the building materials to construct the house, but also the foundation the impermanent house rest on. In a survey of the housing stock in plantation tenancies conducted in the 1990s, it was found that loose rubble coral stones of the house foundation were changed to concrete immediately following the purchase of land or when security of land tenure was obtained (Watson and Potter 2001: 76).

### ***Conclusions***

During the late period of slavery permanent stone houses were introduced by the planter class and new settlements were created on plantations in response to abolitionists and emancipationists, and to justify the treatment of the enslaved. Better housing was also used to lessen dependence on the purchasing and hiring of slaves and due to new legislature that enforced amelioration. These changes were occurring all over the Caribbean region and evidence that this strategy was employed at St. Nicholas Abbey is shown in the architectural remains of the original slave village and later tenant settlements. Permanent houses were used by planters after

1838 much as they were before, to keep and control a labor force on their plantations. As a result these permanent homes have come to symbolize the control that planters once exercised.

Following the passing of the contract acts in 1838 and 1840 many either willingly left the plantations they had long resided at while others were fined, imprisoned, or evicted from their houses in the immediate post emancipation years. Those that left the plantations they had been accustomed to during slavery had few opportunities and had to leave their home, community, and provision grounds. Home ownership provided security in this harsh environment; it allowed an increase in wages as non-resident laborers and also provided a means to escape the 'double rent' of house and land. Perhaps, too, abandoning estate housing eventually led to the development of a new social system that allowed for more autonomy though was still very much constrained by the hegemonic power of the planter class.

Houses were items of material culture highly valued within communities of the enslaved on Barbados sugar plantations, but after emancipation they became important tools of coercion used by the planters'. A focus on agency assures that labor is not seen as a "top-down" phenomenon where Afro-Barbadians simply fall victim to institutionalized violence and social control or buy into capitalist ideologies. Though plantation workers in the years immediately following emancipation were not entirely "free" agents who possessed autonomy, opportunity, or the resources to always fully resist or direct the labor relations in which they maneuvered, they used agency to negotiate the rules, resources, and restraints that allowed for new opportunities (Silliman 2006: 153). The interface between labor and agency comes into focus in the social history and lived lives of plantation laborers in Barbados and the ways they creatively negotiated the structure of power using agency. Whether acted in boycotts, work stoppages, refusal to enter labor contracts, burning sugarcane fields, or willingly leaving their domiciles; Afro-Barbadians pursued many avenues to change oppressive labor relations.

For many, this may have meant simply moving to another plantation where they may have been able to negotiate the terms of their labor to some degree, especially if they were able to purchase

their own home and avoid the rent-and-wage system. Others yet may have found refuge in neighboring villages with kin, friends, and family; or escape in the urban center of Bridgetown where life might be sustained free of the plantation system. The popular argument that the located labor system was one of total domination and oppression obscures this complex, transformative process. An overview of the social and architectural history suggests that many Afro-Barbadians were most likely moving from plantation to plantation in the decades immediately following emancipation. This no doubt increased control of their labor as most were not in contractual agreements with planters by 1860. Despite 75% of former slaves and their descendants lived and worked on sugar plantations in the nineteenth century, it appears likely that plantation laborers' were relocating and most likely negotiating the terms of labor relations.

## **THEORETICAL INTERPETIVE FRAMEWORKS: A REVIEW**

Although there are studies highlighting the prominence of vernacular housing traditions in the Caribbean, very little social science research has been directed at understanding architectural practices in the region. Jay Edwards (1980: 293) argues that we have only begun to “scratch the surface” of understanding the meaning of vernacular housing and that “folk-architecture traditions in the Caribbean remain, perhaps, the least studied major institution of these islands.” In the United States plantation landscapes have been the focus of much scholarly attention, and researchers frequently credit planters for the design and layout of houses for their enslaved workers. For example, John Michael Vlach (1993: 165) argues that slave housing became “one of the primary means by which {planters} marked their slaves as captive people,” and the ideology of the planters left a “broad signature” across the southern landscape.”

In the Caribbean the planter ideology of power and control was seldom expressed in the plantation landscape until the abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807. Even then, the extent to which they practiced such control varied considerably during different places and times, from plantation to plantation, and island to island. In fact, in the Caribbean the houses of the enslaved were one of the few places where enslaved peoples had more control over the plantation landscape (Farnsworth 2001: 235). While archaeological research on housing in the Caribbean has shown evidence of intervention on the part of the planter, even stronger evidence for independent action and resistance on the part of enslaved plantation workers is demonstrated (Higman 1998: 147).

### ***Caribbean Vernacular Architecture***

Studies of Caribbean architecture are diverse and have only recently emerged (Edwards 1983: 173). Though architectural expressions in the Caribbean are as varied as the islands themselves, they share a historical unity shaped by the institutions of slavery and colonialism

(Crain 1996:5). The shared elements in the Caribbean popular house are typically described as a creole style that developed from an amalgamation of 'high' architecture along with housing traditions that originated in the countryside's of both Africa and Europe (Slesin et al. 1985: 2). Patricia Green temporally discerns between creole architecture as a phenomenon that lasted from the early settlement period until the mid nineteenth century, when vernacular housing emerged and is popularly referred to as "Caribbean style" today (1997: 1703). In the 1970s, John Michael Vlach opened the door to cultural research of landscape and vernacular architecture studies with his comparative work on the shotgun house in Louisiana, Haiti, and Nigeria (1975). As a pioneer of the field he has shed light on the "African-based traditions that have helped shape American expressive culture . . ." However, according to Vlach (1986:43), "black folk architecture in the United States remains, for the most part, a hidden heritage." The same can be said of Barbados, and though the cultural origins of house types are often difficult to reconstruct, the influence of housing traditions that emerged during slavery greatly impacted vernacular practices, though this is greatly neglected in most scholarship. Here historical archaeology has much to offer. Historical archaeologists working in the Caribbean have extensively studied, researched, and interpreted the material remains of villages and village architecture on plantations.

At Montepelier plantation in Jamaica, Barry W. Higman documented the changes in plantation housing from slavery to freedom. Many of the changes that occurred in slave villages happened throughout the island of Jamaica. For example, at Roehampton plantation the estate owner ordered that stone houses be built and fashioned in (cited in Higman 1998: 147) "a row of houses the same as may be built here [in England]." Despite these efforts enslaved peoples at Roehampton "refused to occupy them," which baffled the planter as he argued these permanent houses were of "a far superior description . . . to the ordinary Negro house" (cited in Higman 1998: 147). Using archaeological and textual information at three village sites for the enslaved at Montepelier, Higman shows that changes in architectural forms that were imposed by the planter class were accepted by bondspeople only when there were opportunities for the enslaved to maintain cultural elements that conformed to the ideology of the planter. Rectangularity of

houses was such an element. The difference between organic and permanent building materials did not change the concept of how space was used within the houses. However, the building of durable stone houses in a grid pattern of regimented lines, as was imposed at Montepelier and Roehampton in the early nineteenth century, introduced an inflexible principle into the fluid settlement patterns that the enslaved traditionally built using organic materials (1998: 190). Such orderly spatial arrangements of settlements and the use of permanent building materials were copied from models in England, where rows of connected cottages with walls of stone or brick and thatched roofs were designed to tie laborers to farms, which became a common practice during the eighteenth century (Higman 1998: 190). Higman argued that planters in Jamaica attempted to impose this model at Montepelier to demonstrate their power and to reassure the planter class of the durability of a slave labor system that was entering its last day. Enslaved peoples used building materials to (Higman 1998: 190) “manipulate the fabric to produce preferred architectural elements,” but the “realignment of space within the village settlement pattern was more painfully achieved.”

William Chapman researched similar changes in slave villages during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the Danish West Indies (now the U.S. Virgin Islands), arguing that these settlements (1991: 108) “underwent dramatic transformation” that has been documented on other Caribbean islands with “little sense of interrelationship.” Chapman was the first to address the reason these changes became so common in the region by tracing the origins of these model-village ideals and linking the imposing architecture with agricultural and industrial practices. During the eighteenth century in Britain, landowners adopted a series of dramatic farm improvements, which included experimentation with new crops, rotational practices, redesign of farm buildings, and improvements in laborers’ housing (1991: 115-116). As the Industrial Revolution resulted in the wider dissemination of information on a global scale, many planters in the Caribbean began reading published treaties on agricultural improvement and followed advice from abroad.

What is now known as the enclosure movement caused the relocation of many rural villages in England, Scotland, and Ireland; whose inhabitants now needed new houses. Chapman argues that planters' who practiced similar model-housing ideals as those in Britain did so to increase productivity and population growth. Though Chapman traces the changes in building materials with current trends in Britain, he has a more difficult time explaining why wood, rather than masonry, proliferated in post-emancipation years. He suggests greater availability of wood products became available at this time, though (1991:119) "it is tempting to suggest that perhaps the planters' earlier preferences for wood construction had resurfaced, in a sense, in their new expectations for former slaves." This assumes the dominant interest of the planters' left little room for the development of a vernacular tradition, and obscures the overwhelming evidence that former slaves had established housing traditions during slavery that influenced building practices in the post-emancipation era.

In the Bahamas, Paul Farnsworth, as with Chapman (1991) and Higman (1998), questions the significance these European-style, imposed housing ideals had on local vernacular traditions in the post-emancipation period. He observed that stone built houses which closely resemble the stone-built slave houses found on many plantations in the Caribbean are widely recognized by Bahamians as their ancestral house (2001: 235). In Barbados, similar stone houses are almost always referred to as "slave huts," but in the Bahamas the relationship of these houses to slavery is recognized yet downplayed as Bahamians celebrate these house types as being embodied in folk traditions. Farnsworth struggles with these issues as he finds the stone-built houses (2001: 236) "stand as symbols of their enslavement."

Farnsworth observes that the majority of enslaved persons on Bahamian plantations probably lived in one-room wattle and daub, thatch houses that were part of the cultural heritage shared by both West African and Creole slaves as well as British and American born planters (2001: 270). With the introduction of permanent building materials after the rise of the British agrarian reform movement, the enslaved continued to build houses that resembled their traditional wattle and

daub types. The materials changed but not the house form. Only planters that were willing (2001: 270) “to supervise construction” were able to “strictly impose more European-inspired houses on their enslaved people.” Like Higman, Farnsworth is able to interpret the changes in materials as a (2001: 270) “successful cultural compromise between African and European peoples that established a Bahamian architectural tradition.” Thus, despite their artificial European appearance, stone houses are as much African in their heritage as they are European.

### ***Historical Archaeology of Plantations***

Many recent studies in historical archaeology that have interpreted the housing for enslaved on plantations throughout the Caribbean have reached a similar consensus; that the materials used to build houses and the spatial ordering of villages were part of the wider cultural negotiations that occurred between the planters’ and enslaved peoples. These studies usually fall under the rubric of “landscape archaeology,” and examine large spatial units—historical landscapes (Delle 1998: 14). Most landscape archaeologists agree that the spaces people build and occupy are endowed with multiple meanings that change with social situations, and through time. Landscape archaeologists also contend that material landscapes both shape and reflect social relations. These studies are shaped by diverse schools of social theory to help understand the relationship between individuals and the past societies they compose.

Marxist theory is often employed to focus on the dominant role of social structure in the shaping of daily life. This theory is often applied in archaeological studies of plantations in the post-emancipation era, and one of the most influential practitioners of this movement was advocated by Charles Orser in his study of the Millwood plantation in South Carolina (1988b). Orser draws on a historical materialistic perspective to analyze the material basis of society in the transformative period of a postbellum plantation. Historical materialism is an influential concept in archaeological studies because it demonstrates ways in which social relationships and structures can be studied—and reinterpreted—through the physical remains that are the derivative of a

living society. Class relationships and inequalities are central to Orser's interpretation as the discovery of a relation between the material artifacts of the past and the social structures that operated to maintain the racial inequality after emancipation are made (1988b). The study focuses on the evidence of settlement, housing and material possessions to understand the emergence of a racial and class based hierarchy.

Orser, however, goes further in this analysis to distinguish that the relationship between capital and labor is not equal to the distinction between racial designations. Rather, class is defined through economic status or standing and plays an important role in the evidence discussed within this study. The difference of the material basis of distinction between class groups (land owner vs. tenant) is much larger than that between racial groups within the same class group (white vs. black tenants) in Orser's findings in the American South. The Marxist analysis shows the significant role of history in establishing social relationships, as the historical precedent of racial slavery inherently was a major factor in the exploitation of black people in the terms of their labor in post-emancipation plantation contexts. Orser acknowledges this fact by recognizing that benefits of the "agricultural ladder," or the accumulation of wealth, were more accessible to whites than to blacks (1988b: 110).

At Millwood plantation evidence derived from settlement patterns and housing standards suggested that African Americans consistently were materially less "well off" than whites (Orser 1988b: 227–229). Further, the restructuring of the plantation system during the transition from slavery to emancipation served as a means of ensuring that despite "black slaves were legally emancipated, they were not all freed from the plantation system" (Orser 1991: 40). This system of inequality was physically manifest in the emerging spatial relationships found in the landscape of the postbellum American plantation. Drawing on Orser's work with the tenant plantations of the American South demonstrates how plantations operated in a socio-economic system that served to perpetuate the inequities of slavery during the post-emancipatory period.

James Delle has drawn upon Orser's ideas to analyze the changing course of plantations within a dynamic global capitalistic system. He centered his discussion on the rise of Jamaican coffee plantations during the late-eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries. This period was marked by the transition from a mercantile capitalism to competitive capitalism on a global scale; a transformation Delle terms a "crisis of capitalism." Like Orser, he uses spatial analysis to explore the ways in which global change in the system of capitalism is manifest locally. He has asserted that elites accelerated the reorganization of the means of production to facilitate the reordering of the relations of production to maintain their dominant position during such "crisis" periods in the capitalist system (1998: 3). Like Orser, Delle concluded "the planter class intentionally manipulated space...as part of the strategy to create, maintain, and legitimate social and economic inequality" (1998: 21). Delle also asserted that this process of elite imposition of a new order is complemented by "how the working people...resisted...these changes" (1998:21). Such resistance demonstrates that exploited populations are as capable of understanding the "role material culture plays in the construction and negotiation of power and inequality" as the planters do (Delle 1998: 7). Therefore, ideology is recognized as a social tool that multiple social groups use for their own advantage. Delle concludes that African-Jamaicans created their own identity by resisting those applied by white plantation owners. This avenue of research allows the central focus of analysis to shift from the dominant interests to the former slaves themselves and the many ways in which they creatively manipulated systems imposed on them during a period of dramatic change within the capitalist global system.

Other studies that analyze the plantation system in the post-emancipation period support the idea that black communities used identity to strengthen the community and ultimately battle racism in society. Douglas Armstrong conducted a study of the community at Drax Hall plantation from slavery through emancipation to interpret the formation of the Afro-Jamaican community (1990). Armstrong viewed the black population of Drax Hall as "participant creators of a new way" that ultimately molded their culture (Armstrong 1990: 277). Exploring the role of Creolization within the formation of the community, Armstrong's work shows that individuals and communities can

have a powerful effect on their social circumstances through the creation of shared or commonly understood identities. The Creolization of Jamaican culture was not just the product of the imposition of white colonial system of plantation slavery, but also of the negotiation of the members of the slave community in retaining and creating aspects of a shared “African” cultural continuity.

In a study of the changes of slave housing in the American South during the last decades of the antebellum period, Larry McKee suggested that the black household was a media for the struggle between white planters and black laborers for social power (1992). The ameliorative material changes white planters made to black housing carried implications of paternalism. Yet, enslaved laborers, whose physical and social position would place them under the most extreme pressures to accept the ideological meaning imposed by planters, were able to reinterpret their housing in ways that exerted their own power within the plantation context. Ultimately, McKee (1992: 208) posits the existence of an “uneasy consensus” based upon an “underlying set of usually unspoken and ill-defined ‘understandings’ between blacks and whites about treatment and personal autonomy.” McKee’s argument implies the power of African-American communities in combating their oppression through communal strength. This social power of the slaves to assert their own control over personal autonomy is the essence of the role agency plays in the dialectic interface of the individual and social structure.

The idea of paternalism is also explored in Laurie Wilkie and Paul Farnsworth’s (2005) study of Clifton Plantation in the Bahamas, created by a Loyalist immigrant from America, William Wylly. Wylly is best known historically for his attempts to impose ameliorative policies regarding slaveholding in the Bahamas from 1799 to 1821 (2005: 69). On his cotton estate, he promised houses and material betterment to enslaved couples that entered into marriages. During archaeological excavations, eight stone houses for the enslaved ordered in a rigid row were observed in a settlement that was at a greater distance from the original slave village, and each was built during different periods of the early nineteenth century in both slavery and

apprenticeship. This is interpreted as “the imposed landscape” that was a managerial design for the failing Bahamian economy and to promote a Methodist lifestyle (2005: 144). Wilkie and Farnsworth also argue that these model-ideal houses were copied from England during the agrarian reform movement as Chapman (1991) has determined, but the enslaved that lived in these new villages and houses were still able to practice their own ideas of how space was to be arranged and used.

By analyzing spatial activity with artifactual materials, Wilkie and Farnsworth show that the house yard area remained the dominate space of activity and is deeply influenced by West African tradition. Similarities in practice that were carried out in the house yards provided a reinforced sense of community (2005: 207). This interpretation incorporates Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice and Anthony Giddens’ idea of structuration that provides a more reflexive portrayal of individual social agents. This interpretive framework allows an understanding of the relationship between free will and contextual constraint. Attempting to balance individual and structure, Wilkie and Farnsworth interpret these house yards as both created by the individual and imposed on them by the planter. The cultural context is derived both from the formative experiences of life and from daily social interactions that constitute the negotiation between individuals and their relationships—the *habitus* and practice.

This review has explored ways historical archaeologists treat plantations, often as negotiated landscapes that are created from the ongoing tensions between the desire of planters to control workers and the desire of workers to escape the control of planters (Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005: 143). In the Bahamas and Jamaica stone houses that were imposed by planters during amelioration were tools of social and economic control, and though the plantation landscape was appropriated during slavery, after emancipation many former slaves in these islands were able to flee from the estates. In Barbados this was not possible, and the plantations remained a site of struggle between plantation owner and worker well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Stone-built houses in the Bahamas are not perceived by African descendants as symbols of their enslavement and instead are celebrated as part of their folk traditions, whereas in Barbados this correlation is non-existent. Almost all historical houses constructed of rubble stone are immediately recognized by Barbadians as “slave huts.” In direct opposition, the small, moveable, wooden chattel house is readily embraced as part and parcel of their cultural heritage.

The permanent stone-houses are seen as a sign of cultural oppression in Barbados, but not in the Bahamas. This can only be understood by comparing the local histories of each region within their respective socio-economic structures. Bahamas, unlike Barbados, was not always a plantation based society. After emancipation the fragile Bahamian plantation system collapsed, and former enslaved persons were able to construct their houses with any locally available or imported materials of their choosing. Therefore Bahamians continued building houses in various construction materials during the nineteenth century, including wattle and daub, wood, and stone (Otterbein 1975). Power systems based on labor relations were not manifest in houses as they were in Barbados, and do not carry the same negative symbolic association. In Barbados rubble stone-built houses are understood by many as representing the physical bonds of labor to the plantation. Impermanent houses are thus viewed within these communities as the embodiment of fluidity, mobility, and independence from the power that planters once exercised. In this thesis I examine these symbolic associations using Marxist theory, and interpret the selection of building materials in domestic architecture on Barbados sugar plantations as the manifestation of former slaves’ resistance to an imposing social order that was based on racial inequality.

The settlement location of rubble stone houses is imperative to understand the possible meanings these items of material culture had in certain communities. There are only two known examples of such houses that probably date to the late period of slavery that are still standing in Barbados, one of which is the Moore Hill house. The interpretation of the original occupants of this house is further complicated in that white tenants as well as black lived and worked on plantations in the early nineteenth century. However, as previously discerned the emerging

settlement pattern and the uniformity of stone houses at Moore Hill indicate this was a site for slaves or persons that had been enslaved at St. Nicholas Abbey.

## THE MOORE HILL HOUSE

This case study focuses on the evidence of settlement, housing, and material possessions to understand the restructuring of the plantation system during the transition from slavery to wage labor in Barbados. Nineteenth century social and power relations were explored to understand how race—as the historical precedent of racial slavery—became a critical factor in the exploitation of black labor in post emancipation Barbados. Plantation tenancies became settlements to perpetuate racial and social inequality, as well as master-controlled housing. Archaeological studies have shown that searching for race or ethnicity in material culture in plantation contexts is complex, as the difference of the material basis between class groups is much larger than that between racial groups within the same class group (Orser 1988 a,b). Because of these issues it is not known if this specific house was originally occupied by poorer whites, free people of color, or enslaved African or Creole persons that were of the same socio-economic class. However, the spatial relationships show that the settlement of Moore Hill, as a plantation tenantry, was designed by the planter to restrict former slaves to continue the function of plantation production after emancipation. Often times these settlements were created just prior to or immediately following emancipation.

Residents from the village of Moore Hill have confirmed that at least four other stone tenant houses of identical and uniform appearance, spatially aligned in a row, were present at this site (Figure 9), indicating this spatial arrangement reflects European ideas of housing and labor control similar to what existed in Jamaica (Armstrong and Kelly 2000; Higman 1998), the Danish West Indies (Chapman 1991), the Bahamas (Farnsworth 2001; Willkie and Farnsworth 2005), and in the French Caribbean (Kelly 2008; Gibson 2009). The form of these stone houses was not altogether different from houses common among Afro-Caribbean persons in the nineteenth century, but the spatial arrangement was (Figure 10). As Barry Higman (1998: 147) argues, archaeological research of housing in the Caribbean has shown evidence of intervention on the part of the planter, but even stronger evidence exists for independent action and resistance on

the part of enslaved plantation workers. This control and resistance is often materialized in the production of space, and the physical remains of the historical landscape evidences this at St. Nicholas Abbey.



**Figure 9: Row of four stone houses, probably similar to what existed in the Moore Hill tenantry at St. Nicholas Abbey, Barbados. The location of this photo is unknown but the topography suggests it was taken on the northwest coast (Jerome S. Handler, personal collection).**



**Figure 10: “Negro Huts, Barbados,” in Sir Frederick Treves *The cradle of the deep: the account of a voyage to the West Indies* (New York, 1908), facing p. 12. These wood plank houses photographed in the early twentieth century are what most people refer to as the ‘chattel’ house and are spatially arranged in a fluid manner.**

The emerging spatial relationships observed in the archaeological record at St. Nicholas Abbey are interpreted as the physical manifestation of the system of inequality based on a racial and social hierarchy as plantation tenancies were created to keep laborers tied to the land; simultaneously restricting property from those dependent on this system. Drawing on studies of Henri Lefebvre (1991: 26), the settlement pattern at St. Nicholas Abbey shows how the social production of space is commanded by the hegemonic power of the planter class as a tool to reproduce its dominance:

(Social) space is a (social) product ... the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action ... in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power.

After emancipation in Barbados, the island's settlement was based on a spatial arrangement to increase productive forces (Lefebvre 1991: 188), with former enslaved persons being removed from original settlements that were on arable lands. After free trade in 1846 this was again practiced, as planters converted former provision grounds into sugar production. This control of space was not only economic, but also served as a political instrument used by planters. Beyond space being political and economic, space also has a "use value" that resists the generalizations of exchange and exchange value in a capitalists' economy under the authority of a homogenizing class (Lefebvre 1991: 191). The master controlled houses, in spatially ordered villages at St. Nicholas Abbey, in Barbados generally, and throughout many of the Caribbean territories; show how these spaces became sites of struggle. People recognize and utilize the knowledge that spatial relations are also social relations. In the decades just after emancipation the power relations and control manifested in the most intimate and private spaces of plantation tenants was met with growing resistance during the nineteenth century. Interweaving historical and archaeological information from Barbados, fresh insights are gained into the daily lives of the plantation tenants that resided at St. Nicholas Abbey, and their continued struggle for autonomy from the planter class.

### ***Moore Hill, the Setting***

The heart of Barbados lies within the rural landscape of the island, within the many seas of small, brightly painted houses clustered close together in between fields of sugarcane, located on the margins of prime plantation land. Far from the gaze of most visitors, these small settlements remain steeped in tradition from the colonial era. The physical appearance of the modern day village of Moore Hill is very picturesque, at 620 feet above sea level it is situated off the main road that leads to St. Nicholas Abbey, and a single, narrow house-lined access road steeply veers east and increases in elevation until it dead ends at the top of a small cliff. The different houses in the now existing village are all discussed in this chapter. Of the sixteen houses that are in very close proximity in this settlement, eleven are concrete 'walled' houses, four are of wooden construction and one traditional chattel house remains. Barbadians today differentiate between stone and wooden houses as living in 'walled' or 'wooden' homes, respectively, and the construction materials are used to express social status as well as ownership of the land (Gmelch and Gmelch 1997: 12). The third to last house at the end of the access road is the only house in the village that is constructed of rubble coral stone, and is certainly the oldest standing structure in the village. It is also the only house not currently occupied.

The Moore Hill house is situated south of the main road, and is orientated toward the access road and cardinal north. The houses on this side of the road lead back into a very wide and steep gully that is overgrown in thick bush. The village itself is located in a very rural area, but two rum shops, a church, and a cricket field—three of the island's favorite areas for community based activities—is within walking distance. The Moore Hill house was resided in by at least three generations of the Lopez family until the 1970s, who now live in a modern, concrete home situated next door (Plate 7). The house is located at the highest elevation on the top of this cliff, and to the west of the house there is a commanding view of the Atlantic and a panoramic view of the main road below that leads up to St. Nicholas Abbey plantation. A thin layer of soil is apparent

in few areas, though most of the house itself is built right into bedrock that consists of the structure's main building material—coral limestone.



**Plate 7: The family that occupied the Moore Hill house during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century built and moved into a wooden house situated very close to their original home. Four years ago they upgraded their wooden house into the modern concrete, “walled” structure (on the right) once they obtained property rights to the land.**

The people who live in the village of Moore Hill presently refer to this house as being a “slave hut.” There is a widespread oral tradition in Barbados that these house types were introduced during the period of slavery. Stone houses of identical form and style to the one at Moore Hill are portrayed in Barbados as a symbol encompassing the period of slavery. For example, in March of 2007 a commemorative postage stamp was released to mark the 200 year anniversary of abolition, which depicts an image of a house identical to the one at Moore Hill (Figure 11). Its description reads, “Slave masters were required to provide slaves a house, often a small shack or

stone building.” Similarly, a photograph from c. 1920 of a house identical in nature to the one at Moore Hill is published in Glimpses of Old Barbados. (Stoute 1986: 156) with the caption reading “Thatched slave house.” Other published photos identifying this type of house for the enslaved display ones that once belonged to the Alleyndale plantation, though they were torn down in construction of a new highway sometime in 1986 (Buisseret 1980: 2; Fraser et al. 1990: 165-66) (Figures 12 and 13). Finally, a reconstruction of a stone house for the enslaved in the Tyrol Cot crafts village is strikingly similar to the one at Moore Hill. It is thus surmised that this local oral tradition in Barbados has established this house as being very important for the heritage of Barbadians and warrants preservation. This site is dually significant as only one other similar house survives as the island’s rapid economic growth and the wreckage of time have all but destroyed most of these stone houses.



**Figure 11: Published by the Barbados Postal Service on 25 March 2007 to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade from Africa. The caption reads (Barbados Philatelic Bureau, General Post Office, Cheapside, Bridgetown, 2007), “A few slave huts can still be found on the island. It was from these buildings (which are now in a state of disrepair and largely unused) that the Barbados National Trust replicated an 1820’s slave hut. This replica forms part of the “Chattel Village” located at Tyrol Cot the residence of the late Sir Grantley Adams (The first Premiere of Barbados).”**



**THATCHED SLAVE HOUSE c. 1920**

**Figure 12: Photo taken c.1920 of rubble stone house from *Glimpses of Old Barbados* (Stoute 1986: 156).**



**Figure 13: A house from Allenyndale Plantation in Barbados, identified as a slave house by architectural historian David Buisseret (1980: 2) in *Historic Architecture of the Caribbean*.**

It must be stressed that while the origins of vernacular housing traditions were established during slavery in Barbados on sugar plantations, it is determined that these stone houses were introduced during the late period of slavery and by no means represent what most of the enslaved were housed in (Handler and Bergman 2009). Most of the enslaved in Barbados lived in the wattle and daub house, and it does not appear that planters' interfered much, if at all, in the construction of these houses. Though no archaeological data for slave housing exists, it does not appear that planter-controlled architectural forms were very widespread in Barbados. However, archaeological evidence from the original slave village at St. Nicholas Abbey demonstrates that plantation owners were likely experimenting and providing some expenses in house construction, as imported slate roofing tiles and hand wrought iron nails were recovered in abundance at this site. It was much more difficult to establish what the construction materials for the domestic structures were used at the slave village. Further, precise dating of the Moore Hill house and plantation tenantry is inconclusive. Most of the material culture recovered archaeologically from the Moore Hill house and surrounding area date to the 1830s and after, suggesting that this type of house may have been more common just prior to or during apprenticeship (1834 to 1838). This chronological assessment fits with the time period that Handler (2002) suggests plantation tenancies were created in Barbados.

#### ***Architectural Details of the Moore Hill House***

The Moore Hill house is constructed of locally quarried, rubble coral limestone. Though there are no historical descriptions of construction methods used in rubble stone building in Barbados, it is known that these methods were locally-based by skilled masons, a knowledge that was introduced to the enslaved on Caribbean sugar plantations (Higman 1984: 218-223). Higman found that enslaved carpenters and masons created "standardized [architectural] plans chosen by the masters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (Higman 1984: 220). Retaining walls that demonstrate the same construction technique and materials are still evident at Mapps Cave, near

Bayleys plantation, in the parish of St. Phillip (Smith 2008: 108-109). Frederick Smith has analyzed this rock shelter using artifact densities that primarily date to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, consistent with the time period that Moore Hill was originally settled, and interpreted the cave as a “liminal space on the plantation landscape,” that provided enslaved peoples “temporary refuge from the rigors of plantation life” (Smith 2008:104). The construction materials and method of building the retaining walls used in this important space for the enslaved are identical to the rubble walls of the house at Moore Hill (see Smith 2008: 109).

Many of the plantations in Barbados had limestone quarries, because lime was constantly needed in the sugar boiling process (Buisseret 1980: 42). Plantation kilns that burned lime for the sugar boiling process were very large and had a stone body, but when coral was burned a much simpler furnace would suffice, as the temperature to burn coral is not as high as lime (Buisseret 1980: 42). Fields located in the southeast portion of St. Nicholas Abbey are named “West” and “East Lime Kiln,” and are located in a similar geographic area at the plantation (Handler et al. 1989: 41). The rubble walls of the Moore Hill house were held together with a mortar, which would have needed processing using the technology of a low-burning kiln (though these kilns may have been hand-constructed on site and not with the use of the plantation kilns). Lastly, because the dwelling house and sugar works are constructed of coral limestone rubble at the plantation, it is evident that skilled masons were employed at St. Nicholas Abbey; during slavery and in freedom. The knowledge and technology to build stone structures was readily available, as were the local resources. The materials used to construct the Moore Hill house would have been obtained from the plantation itself, though it is not known where the rubble stones were actually obtained. The wood that was used for the doors, shutters, floor boards, and possibly the roof all would have been imported.

### ***Physical Dimensions***

The house at Moore Hill is approximately 7m by 4m and 1.8m in height (7mLx4mWx1.8mH), or 23x13 ft., with 299 sq ft of living space. The walls are roughly 50 cm in thickness. There are a total of six beveled windows and each is 50 cm in width: Two are placed in the long side of the house, flanking the central front door (1m wide) in perfect symmetry. A single window is on the west wall of the house, and one window is in the rear, evenly spaced from the central rear door (Plate 8). The house is currently divided into two rooms, in the English style of a hall-and-parlor layout, with the hall being the front room and the smaller room to the side being the sleeping chamber. In the nineteenth century room divisions were constructed using either wattle and daub methods, or those who could afford it, a wood plank divider.



**Plate 8: A view of the Moore Hill house from the rear, with a central entrance flanked by a single window. Shown screening dirt from archaeological excavations inside the house is**

**student Ariel Shaker-Brown from the College of William and Mary, University of Chicago graduate student Genevieve Godbout, and neighbor Misha Scantlebury looking on.**

### ***Construction Method***

To build the Moore Hill house, cut limestone was used to construct corners, or 'quoins,' to reinforce the strength of the walls. The walls were built by piling limestone rubble, laid irregularly at right-angles to the wall plane, with larger blocks laid at the foundation and other areas of the house being built on/or into the bedrock surface. Rubble stone was possibly preferred because coral limestone does not readily lend well to fine 'ashlar,' or dressed masonry, and rubble masonry is most frequently seen in vernacular rather than the use of courses of laid and dressed stone (Oliver 1981: 13). Mortar was used as a bonding agent to hold the rubble stone walls, and was also applied to both the interior and exterior of this house. The ingredients for the mortar traditionally included lime, sand, water, and probably molasses, which served as a retardant to keep the mortar from becoming too thick or drying too quickly. Molasses has historically been used as a minor ingredient in mortars, especially in "hot countries," and is believed to have been applied to the walls of uncut, rubble stone to reinforce their strength and help hold the stones together (Heath 1893: 41,132).

The chronological order used to construct rubble stone houses involves: 1) the walls are erected and mortared 2) the roof is assembled 3) the floor is laid 4) the doors and shutters are attached 5) the detail work and painting are completed. After quarrying the various sized rubble stones for construction, they would have been brought to the site and the inside corners of the foundation were to be marked on the ground (Otterbein 1975: 38). Window and door frames are built into the walls as they are erected. As the walls of the house are constructed of rubble stone, the corners in contrast are of cut, faced stones that are fitted to form ninety degree angles. At the nineteenth century Clifton plantation on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas, Laurie Wilkie and Paul Farnsworth documented stone houses for the enslaved that are very similar to

the Moore Hill house, and noted that (2005: 112), "As long as the roofs remain intact, these are strong buildings. Once the roofs are lost, however, the mortar begins to dissolve, and buildings literally melt away." Currently galvanized iron sheet metal forms a hipped roof on the Moore Hill house, which became a popular roofing material in the Caribbean beginning in the mid nineteenth century (Fraser et al 1990: 166). Stone houses for the enslaved in Barbados are known to "have had low, hipped, thatched roofs, later to be replaced with galvanized, corrugated-iron sheeting" (Gravette 2000: 117).

Most managerial accounts showing expenditures for stone houses suggest imported wooden shingles were common as "stone houses with shingled roofs" were constructed in Barbados at Lightfoots and Codrington plantations in the early nineteenth century (Handler and Bergman 2009: 9-10). Hipped roofs with wooden shingles often were constructed using wooden boards, where as laths were nailed on if the roof was to be thatched (Higman 1998: 161). Currently, wood beams and corner braces form a frame to support the galvanized iron roof at the Moore Hill house. During our archaeological excavations no evidence of roofing materials was recovered and the paucity of nails suggests the roof was originally thatch. Roof thatching materials and construction would have been similar to what was used on wattle and daub houses, and these roofs continued to be popular on Barbadian working class houses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Parts of the sugar cane were the most common thatching throughout the slave period. Cane leaves and tops as well as the "cane trash" (cane stalks after they have been crushed and the juice expelled) and "rotten canes" were used as thatching, but the leaves and tops were considered preferable (Handler and Bergman 2009: 21-22).

As mentioned previously, Moore Hill house is divided into two standard rooms. There is evidence that it was built with the intention of being divided into two rooms since the floor elevations and surfaces in each room are different. The front room upon entering the house appears to always have been a floor constructed of wooden boards, as excavation in this room resulted in a single depositional layer of matrix that was loose dirt down to bedrock, with artifacts dating to several periods. All of the wood

used for the flooring would have likely been imported from abroad. The nails were probably made from imported iron rods by blacksmiths on the estate. Floorboards in the Caribbean typically only last twenty years before they are ravaged by termites and begin to rot and decay, requiring much more upkeep and expense than earthen or stone floors (Otterbein 1975: 42). There was little debris and almost no rubble stones in the single, 20cm-deep, layer of deposition found in the front room. In comparison, the small chamber room showed evidence of having three possible different floor surfaces. The original floor, at a depth of 10-28cm below surface, was leveled off from the varying elevations of exposed bedrock using small, unshaped stones and marl. Later it appears that floor boards were placed on top the marl floor, and in the twentieth century a modern PVC floor was laid on top the rotten floorboards. The many flooring surfaces used in this room greatly obfuscated any dateable context from the archaeological excavations. A modern fire pit was also found in the southeast quadrant of the chamber room, which was dug down 10-20cm until bedrock was reached. The majority of materials recovered from the fire pit dated from the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries. John Candler, a British Quaker who visited Barbados in 1849, reported that cooking was done out of doors (Borome 1962: 135), and it seems likely that this would have been the original location for a fire pit or kitchen, though no archaeological traces of one were discovered in the yard area.

Room divisions, shutters, and doors would have been additions in the second to last phase of the building process. The centrally placed front and rear doors are very wide, measuring a meter in width, while the windows are a half meter wide. The top half of the door was often divided horizontally, thus creating a window, and not a door, by opening only the shutter. Wooden shutters on the bevel windows were used exclusively (never glass panes), and were attached using iron hinged nails to the outside of the shutters and frames. In these stone houses window shutters consisted of three small wooden boards nailed together, and opened from the top of the frame. When closed, they would keep out rain, wind, and sun, and allowed for more privacy. Traces of red colored paint are detected on the door and windows, though paint did not become accessible until the twentieth century. The final step to building these stone houses would be applying limestone plaster

to the thick, rubble walls, giving a finished and smooth surface. It should be noted, however, that not all rubble stone houses of this style were plastered. The Moore Hill house was plastered inside and out, though it is not known if this was done during the initial construction period or later.

### ***Archaeology at the Moore Hill House***

The purpose of the archaeological survey and test excavations at the Moore Hill house were to gather information on the stratigraphic integrity of archaeological materials, and to provide a sample of materials that would allow for dating periods of occupation of the structure. It was also hoped to gain preliminary information on the spatial distribution of activities in and around the house. Controlled surface collections yielded a variety of artifacts, the overwhelming majority of which were imported and derive from English production sources. The highest artifact density from the surface collections included plain and transfer printed creamwares, pearlwares, and whitewares (n 97); coarse, unrefined earthen wares (n 19); manufactured architectural hardware (n 8); reworked ceramic gaming wares (n 9); buttons (n 59); beads (n 14), marbles (n 37) and tobacco pipe fragments (n 2). Inside the structure each room was hand excavated and the dirt was screened to recover smaller artifacts. There was a paucity of eighteenth or nineteenth century artifacts, and no sealed contexts (such as a builder's trench or earthen floor) from construction were found. Four units (1-meter-square) outside the house were strategically placed, with two units just outside the rear door and window, where artifacts were more likely to be discarded. Another two units were placed ten meters from the rear of the house, and several shovel test pits (50cmx50cm) were dug throughout the yard area. The entire front yard area was not excavated as there was little to no soil present, and much of the back yard also had exposed bed rock, which forced us to modify our excavation grid. Compared to excavations inside the house, many more artifacts dating to earlier periods were recovered outside the walls of the structure. Unfortunately, the materials in the yard had been heavily disturbed and churned by erosion and redistribution; possibly from garden cultivation where natural soil layers occurred.

A high density of material culture was recovered from the site that reflected non-utilitarian uses, including gaming pieces, buttons, and beads. A more general observation of the spatial distribution of artifacts shows that the earliest and highest density of artifacts that were recovered came from the yard area within five to ten meters from the rear of the house. Relatively few items were found in the yard area furthest from the house, and the materials found inside the house consisted mostly of modern artifacts, including late twentieth century beer and rum bottles, large quantities of coconut and gourd shells, several buttons and beads, slate used for writing, and even an old cart plate with the date 1909 imprinted on it. A few coins were recovered from the front room, probably lost between the floor boards, which date to the early twentieth century. The artifacts recovered from the interior of the house structure are almost entirely late nineteenth and early to mid twentieth century materials. No artifacts recovered from the site date to the seventeenth century. The presence of only a few late eighteenth-century ceramics suggests that the site was not settled before the construction of the house.

The distribution of the gaming pieces was most common in the yard area (n 14), but a couple were also found inside the house. These gaming wares have been found in many other house contexts on slave villages, such as an African Jamaican slave settlement at Seville Plantation (Armstrong 1990: 137-39; 2005: 112). The yard-area behind the house may have been a place for leisure activities for members of the household and community. Other studies have confirmed that yard areas were strongly preferred for community activities among persons of African descent in the Caribbean region; including practices ranging from cooking to religious and burial activity (Armstrong 2003, Handler 2002; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005). The majority of gaming pieces recovered consists of re-touched and recycled ceramic materials made primarily of whiteware and delftware. Reworked delftware ceramics have been found in many other archaeological contexts in slave villages throughout the Caribbean, and the material also seems to be a preferred type of ceramic to rework in games of chance in the region (Armstrong 1990: 138). Interpreting what games were played with these pieces is harder to establish. Workers from St. Nicholas Abbey offered important insights into the intriguing artifacts that we discovered;

especially the estate gardener, aged 65, who not only relayed what types of games were played, but also the process used to create these gaming pieces. He claimed that many games were played with old ceramics, and that game pieces were made by taking broken ceramic sherds and fashioning them into a small square by rubbing them across a rough surface. The rubbing was done to wear down the sharp edges and form a circular disk of the desired size. Games played included drawing a circle in the dirt with a stick, with a dividing line down the center. Two people played this game, and each opponent would take turns tossing their gaming pieces much as they would dice. Each would win points, or for the more risky—money—and the winner was determined by whoever was able to get the most pieces to land with the design surface face-up in their half of the circle. Others from the plantation recognized immediately that the ceramic disks were gaming pieces, and they had knowledge of the games in which they were used.

While dating reworked ceramics and various periods of occupation using stratigraphic contexts from the archaeology is not possible at this site, the materials recovered do offer insightful clues within their social and historical context. An overwhelming 46% of materials recovered from the site are materials of special use; including buttons, beads, reworked ceramics, marbles, and several marble-sized seeds. A reasonable explanation for this unusual proportion of artifacts that were likely used for gaming, recreation, or adornment, suggests that this house was not always a purely domestic site that was occupied during the nineteenth century. It could be that the house instead became a private space within the community that was used as a gathering place, to build a fire indoors, play games, and socialize away from the restrictions the planter dominated society imposed on plantation laborers lives. As with Mapps Cave in St. Philip (Smith 2008), the house was a sanctuary and served as a liminal space within the village. As demonstrated earlier, historical references to plantation laborers living in stone constructed houses support this interpretation, as sources indicate that these types of houses were introduced during slavery but abandoned during the post emancipation decades.

### ***Interpreting the Moore Hill Site***

Archaeological evidence suggests the Moore Hill house was a liminal, social space following emancipation, but it is still inconclusive whether the house was originally occupied by enslaved or freed Afro-Barbadians. Though little historic information provides much detail about stone built houses on sugar plantations, it is evident that after emancipation planters' did not intervene in the housing of sugar workers. It was observed in 1849 that the living arrangements of the workers in Barbados were "bleak" and though a few planters expressed the need to construct new houses for their workers, the proprietors did not because they were met with an unwillingness to obtain leases from laborers (Levy 1980: 115). Rather than rent from their employers, "Many preferred instead to camp in their own crude huts, made from the remains of boxes and crates, which could be quickly disassembled and moved in the event of a disagreement with the employer" (Levy 1980: 115). The most detailed accounts of the material and social conditions of the labouring class in the nineteenth century comes from the Rev. Edward Pinder, who wrote *Letters of the Labouring Population of Barbados*, a 48-page pamphlet, originally addressed to editor Samuel J. Prescod of the *Liberal*, under the pseudonym "Meliora," Latin for "better things." Pinder's Letters were written during his year long stay in the island in 1857, and though he was an Anglican clergyman born and raised in England, he came from a long established and prominent planter family in Barbados. Of the many reforms Pinder passionately argued for, his most urgent was a call to planters (1858 [1989]: 5) "towards improving the dwellings of their laborers. At present they are insufficient, and poor, and mean, and degraded, and devoid of all decencies and comfort." He continued that the "state of their dwellings" should be the first priority made in relieving the conditions of the poor, as (1858 [1989]: 11) "Most of the larger estates, *e.g.*, have *some* cottages belonging to the proprietors," which should be repaired to "-let such cottages as those be tenanted as a reward of the most faithful and industrious labourers;-at the same time, let every facility be afforded, every encouragement given, to such as may be anxious to improve or enlarge their own dwellings;-let some rewards and prizes be offered to those whose allotment and homes bespeak attention;-and I will venture to assert that the same results will follow *here*,

which have invariably followed similar attempts in our agricultural parishes in England.” This, Pinder believed, would enforce capitalistic ideologies.

During the nineteenth century the traditional prejudices against black agricultural workers continued to solidify, not only in Barbados but in all the West Indies, and even across the Atlantic to the original abolitionists. The prominent political and religious leaders in Britain, as statesmen, endeavored to discourage laborers from abandoning their duties on the plantations by introducing heavy taxes on land to further restrict the possibility of a landed proletariat class (Levy 1980: 123). The period 1846-54 was marked in the West Indies with the equalization of custom duties on sugar imported to Britain, and Barbadian planters survived free trade and even competed with Cuba and Brazil that were still using slave labor in the 1850s. In the 1860s looting became common and labor unrest was paramount (Levy 1980: 129-30). The output of sugar was the smallest since 1837, and a succession of droughts and crop failures worsened the already suffering working class. In 1872 the economic condition of the island was so appalling, that when a ship belonging to the West Indian Steam Packet company sank in the harbor, looting and riots were met with gunfire as the “people thought Jesus Christ had sent the ship as a gift for their relief . . .” resulting in one death and seventy seven arrests (Levy 1980: 134). By the turn of the twentieth century the Colonial Office in London had newer, richer parts of the empire on their minds (Richardson 1997: 65). At this time, there were just over 40,000 agricultural workers, and nearly as many unemployed (Levy 1980: 135).

In London the Colonial Office feared that Barbados planters’ might be bankrupted with depression hitting hard in the Eastern Caribbean, and in 1897 a commission was charged with determining the varying severity of results in the event the sugar cane industry failed (Richardson 1997: 35). Barbados susceptibility to collapse was the most severe and ranked at 97%, with St. Kitts at 96.5% and Antigua with 94.5% following closely behind (Richardson 1997: 35). The very territories that had the densest populations and greatest labor supply after emancipation were most in danger at the end of the nineteenth century. Barbados was deemed the most vulnerable

because the “island’s settlement pattern was indeed related directly to the plantation production of sugar cane” (Richardson 1997: 35). However, it was during this time that the working class secured their greatest achievements: the majority of plantation laborers’ had moved out of estate housing and independently eradicated contractual labor arrangements.

### ***Conclusions***

This thesis has shown that the exploitation of locally abundant and easily worked coral limestone in Barbados was seldom utilized in the construction of plantation laborers’ domestic houses, except when planters’ intervened in housing for the enslaved during the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century. Barbados is a very unique outlier in the basic principles of vernacular architecture, and demonstrates how Afro-Barbadians creatively manipulated material culture in the construction and negotiation of power, as ideology was recognized as a social tool that both social groups (planters and tenants) used for their own advantage. The Moore Hill house is one of the last surviving domestic structures that facilitated exploitation as planters’ employed architectural practices and settlement strategies that originated in Britain and were used to enforce social and economic inequality based on race in post emancipation Barbados. Plantation laborers did not passively accept such forms of control, and estate housing was abandoned by Afro-Barbadians during the immediate post emancipation decades of the nineteenth century. Plantation laborers further refused to build with permanent materials that were used during slavery as many sought new forms of freedom after emancipation.

This thesis has demonstrated that the materials used in house construction and the spatial arrangement of houses in plantation tenancies were actively selected to resist the planter-imposed landscape and display a distinct Afro-Barbadian identity that ultimately aided in the manipulation of a system that perpetuated inequality based on race and class. During economic uncertainty, planters often sought new forms of control and often they became materialized in the production of space. Resistance was acted on by individuals and communities located in

plantation tenancies, as is shown by the archaeology at Moore Hill. Plantation tenants at St. Nicholas Abbey most likely abandoned permanent, estate housing in the immediate post emancipation decades. The Moore Hill house thus became a social, liminal space where former enslaved workers from the estate could gather and enjoy in activities of leisure free from the demands and rigor of plantation life.

After emancipation the popular chattel house represented independence from the planters' hegemonic power, and was a powerful symbol of freedom that was physically materialized in the built landscape. By the twentieth century the symbolic association of construction materials was transformed as 'wood' versus 'walled' construction became important indicators of social status. This became significant after independent villages became more common in the late nineteenth century. As the majority of Barbadians were homeowners by the twentieth century, many former plantation residents were also able to become small holders, or move onto "family land" that was further subdivided by other black landowners. Greenfield (1960: 166) has found that the transmission of rural land among Afro-Barbadians is similar to the traditional system found in Jamaica, and termed "seed to seed inheritance." Rural landholders used this system of family land to protect their kin and children with the legal means to escape from located labor, much as mobile houses were used (Greenfield 1960: 166). Rural Barbadians often relay this traditional concept by saying "people lived lovin" and in the "old'n days" they all could share the land (cited in Greenfield 1960: 168). These beliefs were practiced at the non-white freehold in Rock Hall, St. Thomas, as Woodville (2007) found that instead of using land for agricultural production, Afro-Barbadians further subdivided their smallholdings to allow family members escape from plantation tenancies. As a result many freeholders continued sugar agricultural pursuits on land that was not independently owned. Even though Greenfield found that the sharing of family land was primarily a thing of the past in 1960, I am aware of at least two people that I met in the summer of 2009 who both referred to recently acquired family land in the rural parishes of St. Peter and St. Andrew. It is possible that as house spots in plantation tenancies were granted to house owners in the late twentieth century (Watson and Potter 2001: 42), many Barbadians

unable to afford land must remain in former plantation tenancies, on what is now family-owned land.

Further research is needed to truly understand the dynamics of the located labor system, as well as beliefs and tradition embedded in settlements and houses in rural Barbados, and how they have changed through time. For example, house moving is the only form of labor practiced by Afro-Barbadians that is primarily paid in kind (often with rum and food), and is a community activity consisting of anywhere from a dozen to twenty persons (Handler 1965). As early as the mid nineteenth century there are reports of people moving their houses by the light of the moon, often while joining in the chorus of songs performed just for this purpose (Glenn and Toppin-Allahar 1997). Today there still exist laws regulating when and on what highways houses may be moved in Barbados.

These housing traditions continue in Barbados, and despite some colonial efforts made in the 1940s and 1950s in the provision of more “durable” housing at affordable purchasing rates, sugar workers by and large continued to refuse investing in houses built of permanent materials (Housing Authority 1955). In fact, most rural Barbadians continued living in small, wooden houses until the late twentieth century, when the *Tenancies Act of 1980* was passed (Watson and Potter 2001: 61-78). This new legislature was designed to specifically eradicate renting of house spots on plantation owned tenancies. After land ownership was obtained in these plantation tenancies, the percentage of houses with concrete foundations increased from 6.26% in 1980, to 30.24% in 1993 (Watson and Potter 2001: 236). Similarly, houses built entirely of permanent wall construction increased from 5.26% in 1980 to 26.75% in 1993 island wide (2001: 230). The overall percentage of houses built entirely of wood on the island of Barbados in 1980 was at 91.27%, and by 1993 swiftly decreased to 55.59% (2001: 227).

These changes are dramatic and have swept the island rapidly. The woman and family that grew up in the Moore Hill house moved into an independently owned chattel house by the 1970s, and

four years ago they upgraded their house to a permanent “wall” home as they became landowners. It is not known when this family moved into the Moore Hill house, but it is speculated that Barbadians were more willing to occupy stone-built houses on plantations once direct rents were practiced by the late nineteenth century (Gibbs 1987: 33). This accounts for the abundance of twentieth century materials, and relative disparity of eighteenth and nineteenth century artifacts (especially utilitarian materials) recovered from the site. Upon interviewing other residents at Moore Hill to inquire if they owned their house spot, many either looked suspicious or appeared confused. However, if asked whether they paid rent for their spot of land, many women would smile and shrug, “oh ya know, before we did, maybe a dime a week; just enough to let us know this land was theirs.” Others verified that in the recent past they either didn’t pay rent or paid a reduced amount if they worked at St. Nicholas Abbey plantation. Nobody I spoke to pays rent for land or house in the village of Moore Hill today, and this fact is physically evident. The only physical reminder of the conflict, struggle, and negotiation that took place between planter and tenant during the transition period from slavery to wage labor at St. Nicholas Abbey is the lone chattel house, which stands as a symbol of agency. In stark contrast, the rubble stone-built structure at Moore Hill is a standing monument to one of many failed attempts of planters’ experiments to control the most intimate and private spaces of former plantation tenants. The historical and archaeological record remains silent as to the original occupants of this important site, but the power these houses exude are salient, as anyone in the village will tell you; this is a “slave hut.”

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