THE EXPANDED AND REVISED EDITION OF AN AMERICAN CLASSIC

IN SMALL THINGS FORGOTTEN
AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF EARLY AMERICAN LIFE

JAMES DEETZ
History is recorded in many ways. According to author James Deetz, the past is given new dimensions by studying the small things so often forgotten. Doorways, gravestones, musical instruments, and shards of pottery (objects so plain they would never be displayed in a museum) depict the intricacies of daily life. In this completely revised and expanded edition of *In Small Things Forgotten*, Deetz has added a chapter addressing the influence of African culture—a culture so strong it survived the Middle Passage and the oppression of slavery—on America in the years following the settlers’ arrival in Jamestown, Virginia. Among Deetz’s observations:

- Evidence shows that until the 1660’s white and black servants lived on equal terms, often in the master’s house. Slavery based exclusively on race evolved over time.
- Southern shotgun houses, similar to ones in West Africa, marked the end path of African migration to the West Indies and then to the port city of New Orleans.
- Houses in seventeenth-century Chesapeake were built by sinking their posts directly in the ground, a cheap technique allowing people to invest more in tobacco production.
- The remains of clay smoking pipes found in Maryland and Virginia demonstrate the intermixing of African and European technologies.

Simultaneously a study of American life and an explanation of how American life is studied, *In Small Things Forgotten* colorfully depicts a world hundreds of years in the past through the details of ordinary living.
an archaeology of early american life

EXPANDED AND REVISED

james deetz
illustrated by amy elizabeth grey

in small things
forgotten
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The power and depth of the impact of the Renaissance is all around us, but in ways we rarely appreciate. The sense of loss experienced when one of a set of dishes is broken and the pattern is no longer available, the elaborate filing of silver, glassware, and china patterns with stores so that proper wedding gifts may be purchased, the bilateralism of most mantelpiece arrangements, the positioning of the master of ceremonies and contestants at the Miss America Pageant, and the food we consume and its arrangement on the plate—these and countless other aspects of twentieth-century material culture bear witness to how complete and profound the effect has been. Yet there have been Americans whose cultural heritage has had the strength and integrity to resist the full impact of this transformation, and we must take their story into account, since it gives us another perspective on the American experience.

Cato Howe is not a name we will find in our history books. He fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill beside the other troops commanded by Colonel Prescott, but since he was but one of a large army, he shares his anonymity with all the other foot soldiers who have served their country's cause in countless battles from Lexington to Danang. Like them, he returned home after his release from the Army and lived out his life in a modest way. But Cato was different from most of his contemporaries both in the military and at home in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Cato Howe was black.

If archaeology is a vital contributor to our understanding of all of America's common folk, and what their life meant to them, it is doubly so in the case of our understanding of the black experience in America. Prior to the various emancipation actions, beginning in Massachusetts in 1783 and continuing into the nineteenth century, blacks
were chattels, property to be disposed of in any way their owners saw fit. People who held such a status could hardly be expected to have recorded a history of their own in any conventional way, although the strength of oral tradition has preserved more than we might hope. Piecing together black history on a local level is a fascinating and often frustrating process of assembling fragments to form a coherent whole. To gain a true understanding of the story of a people, it is best to detail a picture of their life within a community and then relate that to the larger world. It is in this process that archaeology can contribute in a significant way.

Our knowledge of Cato Howe and his fellow blacks of Plymouth comes from two sources: Fragmentary written records give us a partial picture, lacking in important details. A complementary body of information has been gained by excavating the site of the tiny community in which Cato Howe lived until his death, in 1824. The site of this community is known today as Parting Ways, named for a fork in the road leading from Plymouth to Plympton in one direction and Carver in the other. At the time of its occupation by at least four black families, it was called New Guinea, a fairly common term used over much of Anglo-America for separate black settlements.

Nothing is known of Cato Howe’s early life, before his military service. There are references to a Cato in inventories prior to that date, since slaves were included with other taxable property. But Cato was a common slave name, and it is impossible to determine if any of these individuals was the same person. It is a near certainty that he was a slave prior to the Revolution, and along with the other 572 blacks who served in Massachusetts armies, he was given his freedom in 1778 in return for his service. He enlisted as a private in Colonel John Bailey’s regiment, and was discharged in 1783. These facts are provided by his military records. Upon returning to Plymouth, Howe probably found himself in the same straits as his fellow blacks who had been given their freedom. While the state saw to it that these people were free, it did little or nothing to provide for their new needs, and subsistence, employment, and housing were difficult to come by. We know nothing of his activities or whereabouts until 1792. In that year, on March 12, the town of Plymouth “voted and granted a strip of land about twenty rods wide and about a mile and a half long on the easterly side of the sheep pasture, to such persons as will clear the same in the term of three years.”

“Such person” was Cato Howe, and joined by three others—Prince Goodwin, Plato Turner, and Quamany—they established a tiny community on the property. Howe lived out his life on the property. He and the other three men are buried there, where their graves can be seen today, marked by simple field stones. His life at Parting Ways seems to have been a difficult one. In 1818 he applied to the government for a pension, based on reduced circumstances. The pension was granted, and in 1820 he apparently was asked to prove that he had not purposely reduced his circumstances to qualify for the support. His personal property at that time was listed as follows:
Real Estate: None.
Personal Property: 1 cow, 1 pig, 5 chairs, 1 table, 2 kettles, 3 knives and forks, 3 plates, 2 bowls, ax, hoe.
Total Value: 27 dollars.

He stated his occupation as farmer in his deposition. If so, wresting a living from the land where he lived was a taxing job. Today, over a century later, the soil on this tract of land is gravelly and singularly unfertile. To complicate matters even further, he was troubled with rheumatism, and his bedridden wife, Althea, was seventy years old and unable to feed herself. Both had been given assistance by the town before he received his federal pension. Although it is not recorded, Althea Howe must have died shortly thereafter, since Cato married Lucy Pretisson of Plymouth in 1821. Three years later, he died, and his estate was probated. His inventory has survived, and attests to his most modest circumstances, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire Shovel 8¢</td>
<td>1 Table 20¢ 1 Table 20¢ 1 Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Chairs $1 Bed, Bedstead and bedding $5.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Spinning Wheel 25¢ 1 pr. Handirons 50¢ 1 Iron Kettle 50¢</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Iron Pot 1 Dish Kettle 20¢</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Tea Kettle 30¢ 1 Spider 20¢</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Lamps 12½¢ Tin Ware 25¢</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooden Ware 25¢ 6 Junk Bottles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Coffee Mill 12½¢ 1 Mortar 12½¢ Knives, forks, spoons 17¢</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Flat Iron 20¢ 1 Skillet 15¢ Family pictures 12½¢</td>
<td>.47½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Ax 50¢ Crockery and Glass Ware in cupboard $4 Wash Tub 25¢</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Rooster Cock 20¢ 4 Hens 80¢</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Dwelling House $15 1 Barn $15</td>
<td>42.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cow $12</td>
<td>61.82½</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Cato's death, his wife remarried and moved to Boston.

Were it not for Howe's having served in the Continental Army, we would know hardly a thing about him. Except for his inventory and the town's granting him permission to settle on their land, all our knowledge of him comes from military-related records. Even less is known about the three men who were his neighbors in the little community of New Guinea. Had they not also been in the Army, we would know less still. Quamany enlisted at age seventeen and was discharged in 1783. Like Cato, he applied for a pension. Denied it in 1818, he finally received it in 1820, when his guardian, Nathan Hayward, stated that he was incapable of taking an oath, that he was without
property, and that he, his wife Ellen, and their two sons were supported by the town of Plymouth. His occupation was listed as laborer. Quamany received his pension of eight dollars monthly. He died in 1833.

Prince Goodwin is the only one of the four whose life before the war is indicated in any way. He was a slave, owned first by Dr. William Thomas and then by his son, Judge Joshua Thomas. He spent only three months in the military and, deserting in 1777, did not receive his freedom, as did the others in 1778. He apparently returned to the Thomas household, since he stayed on as a servant to the judge’s widow, and apparently divided his time between New Guinea and the Thomas household. He was married and the father of five children, but there is no record of his death.

Like Howe and Quamany, Plato Turner served in the Army until 1783 and applied for a pension in 1818. We learn little else about him from written records, save that his death is listed in the Plymouth church records in 1819. He was survived by his widow, Rachel.

The ninety-four acres of land on which these four men lived were provisionally granted to Cato Howe in 1792, although there is no record of an outright grant of title to him. The four men cleared the property, built houses, and resided there with the town’s permission until 1824. By that time, both Howe and Turner had died. The town authorized the sale of the property in that year, referring to it as land “recently held by Cato Howe, deceased” and “formerly occupied by Prince, man of color.” A map drawn by the town clerk in 1840 shows each man’s parcel as he had cleared it, and located “Quam’s house,” even though Quamany had been dead for seven years. Even later, the 1857 map of Plymouth places a “Quam” in the same location in 1840 and a J. Turner also residing on the property. Quam is also on the 1879 Plymouth map, and a “Burr” house is shown at Parting Ways. From this cartographic evidence, there seems a strong possibility that although the town authorized the land’s sale in 1824 and explicitly stated that it was formerly held by the four men, they and their families were in some way allowed to live there longer. The land was not sold—small wonder, in view of its poor quality—and remains to this day the property of the town.

In 1975 an archaeological investigation of the Parting Ways community was begun. Renewed interest in the tiny community and its inhabitants had been generated by a special town bicentennial committee on black history, and this group’s efforts at first were directed at the cemetery. Its location had not been lost over the years, and as a part of the town’s bicentennial program, volunteer groups landscaped the area. At the same time, the committee sought and obtained a vote at Plymouth town meeting to set the land aside for memorial purposes, including the area of the Parting Ways settlement. It was in this area that archaeological excavations were carried out.

If we were to rely only on the documentary sources for our knowledge of the life of the four men who lived at Parting Ways, we would have little on which to proceed.
The information summarized above is all we know. For this reason, the archaeological dimension of the study of the community assumes a much greater significance. In some respects, such investigations take on some of the aspects of prehistoric archaeology, since so little is forthcoming from the historical record. After two seasons of excavation, a whole new set of facts about Parting Ways had been obtained, facts that in many ways place a somewhat different perspective on the simple lives of Cato Howe, Plato Turner, Prince Goodwin, and Quamany.

When the site was first visited, the area later shown to have been the main center of occupation was grassy, with an occasional locust tree, in contrast to the scrub pine and oak that covered the remaining original ninety-four acres. There was only one visible feature, a large cellar hole heavily overgrown with brush. Initial excavations were directed at this feature and a slight depression in the ground a short distance away.

The open cellar hole had all of the appearances of having had a house standing over it in the not too distant past. There was a strong likelihood that it marked the location of the house of the last known inhabitant of the site, James Burr. Burr is known to have lived there in 1895, when a sketch of his life was published in the Boston Globe. Burr had an interesting life. He was born and educated in Boston. As a servant to a congressman, he lived in Washington and traveled to England. He later returned to Boston, where he worked as a barber, and in 1861 he moved to Plymouth and settled at Parting Ways. His reason for this move was that he desired to live near his ancestor's grave. Plato Turner was James Burr's grandfather.

This information agrees with the location of a Burr house on the 1879 Plymouth map. Still there in 1895, at the time of the Globe article, the house stood until the early years of the twentieth century. In all probability, the cellar hole was of that house, but it was not until two informants came forth with new information that such an association could be proved. In the August heat of 1975, an elderly couple visited the site while digging was in progress. The man was ninety-one years old and remembered walking past the house as a child; this was in the last years of the nineteenth century. When the Globe article was written, Burr lived at the site with his widowed cousin Rachael and her three sons. The informant remembered a lady living there known as Rachael Johnson, her proper married name.
This piece of oral history established the cellar as that of James Burr. Later, a photograph of the house was found in the archives of the Pilgrim Society in Plymouth. The house has a small central chimney, and with its shingled exterior and six-over-six windows, looks not unlike any simple vernacular house of the nineteenth century (see Figure 13). Archaeology was to demonstrate that the exterior appearance was deceptive and that it differed from its Anglo-American counterparts in a rather dramatic way.

When excavations were completed on the Burr cellar and in the depressed area nearby, a clear and intriguing set of architectural features had been revealed. The site had never been disturbed by cultivation or other earth removal since it was lived on. As a result, both the focus and the visibility of the features were excellent. The Burr house had been built in two stages, separated by perhaps as much as thirty years. The initial construction had taken place long before Burr moved to the site, and in view of the relationship between the two men, it may have been done by Burr's grandfather, Plato Turner. This first, small structure was twelve feet square, as evidenced by perfectly preserved stone footings. These footings stood on an intentionally mounded earth platform. Artifacts in the fill of this feature and in the trenches that held the footings all point to a construction date at the turn of the nineteenth century, with cream ware and pearlware fragments providing the most precise dating evidence. These footings immediately abutted the cellar, and the cellar was beneath a second room, producing an overall ground plan of two contiguous rooms, each twelve feet square. However, the cellar was not added to the initial structure until much later, since no early artifacts were found in association with it and the scant pottery sample it produced dates to the later nineteenth century. The most reasonable explanation of this feature is that the first build was made at about the time the land was first occupied by the four men and that, much later, James Burr enlarged it and added a cellar. Whether he lived for a time in the smaller building, or remodeled it upon moving to Plymouth, is unknown. But the evidence for a two-period construction is quite clear and sufficient. The enlarged house is the one seen in the photograph.

Both sections of the footing showed extensive evidence of fire. Melted window glass, heavy charcoal and ash deposits, and large numbers of nails all attest to the house's having burned in place. A second informant, interviewed in 1976, said that he had used the area to pasture cattle and knew it quite well. He stated that the house burned in 1908. On the other hand, yet another informant recalls visiting Rachael's son Jesse, in a house measuring approximately fourteen by twenty feet, "around the time of the First World War." Also, he stated that this house was later moved to Plympton. Is this the same house? It seems unlikely that it is, since the Burr house is known from archaeological evidence to have burned. If it is not the same house, then somewhere in the area, as yet undiscovered, is a feature that is the remains of Jesse's dwelling. Such a seeming conflict is not at all uncommon when dealing with informants, and the discrepancy is mentioned to illustrate...
that complete agreement among all sources is rare indeed. As we have said, however, such a lack of fit serves as a warning that further attempts must be made to bring all of the information into reasonable concordance.

Test excavations in the shallow depression nearby produced a sample of pottery all dating to the main period of occupation of the site, from circa 1790 through circa 1840. When these excavations were enlarged, the depression was found to be the location of another cellar. When completely exposed, mapped, and measured, it was a rather puzzling feature. Extensive excavations in the area surrounding the cellar failed to produce any evidence of footing trenches, post alignments, or any other sign of the building that had originally stood over it. Like the Burr footings and cellar, this cellar, too, was twelve feet square. An external bulkhead entrance had originally led into it, but, at some later date, that had been walled in. Two of the cellar walls were of dry-laid field stone, and two others had been covered with boards. This second cellar was filled with refuse and stone. The artifacts in this fill suggest an occupation date during the first half of the nineteenth century, essentially in agreement with the historical record.

We have seen previously that the mean ceramic date for the fill of this cellar is not in agreement with either the known period of occupation or with the terminus post quem provided by a stoneware jar known to have been made in Taunton, Massachusetts, at the Ingalls Pottery during the 1840s. The explanation for this discrepancy, that the pottery owned by the occupants of the site was acquired second-hand, is most reasonable. A more striking aspect of this pottery is its very high quality. Types such as hand-painted creamware are not often encountered on New England sites representing people of average means. We might guess that not only was the pottery given to the people of Parting Ways by the townspeople of Plymouth, but it was given by the wealthier ones. Might it not be that the ceramics were provided the men by their former masters? After all, ownership of slaves and the more elegant kinds of dishes are both characteristic of the more elite members of a community. The presence of the kind of pottery normally seen as an indicator of high status on a site occupied by pensioners receiving eight dollars a month should serve as a caveat to those who would uncritically use such a single piece of evidence to support a point.

It was while this cellar was being excavated that a discovery was made that raised a number of important questions about the site and its inhabitants. Broken on the cellar floor were two large earthenware jars unlike any before encountered on a New England historical site. Eighteen inches tall, of red, unglazed, well-fired clay, their shape and physical characteristics immediately set them apart from the entire Anglo-American ceramic tradition. These jars were made in the West Indies, and served as sugar containers for shipment to various colonial ports. They are also said to have been used at times for storing and shipping tamarind, a West African cultivated fruit that was grown in the West Indies. By a striking coincidence, during the same season as the Parting Ways dig and again a
year later, similar vessels came to light. At least four were found in a contemporary trash pit in Salem, Massachusetts, and one came from a site in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Their initial discovery at Parting Ways suggests that they might well relate to the African and West Indian background of the people who lived there. In the New Hampshire case, there were blacks living in the household represented by the site. And of course Salem was an important port town in the nineteenth century, dealing in a wide range of West Indian commodities.

How the Parting Ways people came by these jars will never be known; they may have possessed them before moving onto the property or received them, with or without contents, later. But their discovery raised an important issue that bears on any African American site and its interpretation: What degree of African cultural survival can be detected and described when dealing with the material remains of African Americans at an earlier time in the country’s history? It would be the height of ethnocentric arrogance to assume that people recently a part of a very different culture would, upon coming to America, immediately adopt an Anglo-American set of values, of ways of doing things, and of organizing their existence. The misleading factor in this case is that the materials with which they were forced to work were the same, for the most part, as those available to the dominant culture which surrounded them. Again we see a strong parallel with language, in this case one that draws on comparable data. In the West Indies, blacks speak hybrid languages known as Creole languages. Haitian Creole incorporates a French vocabulary, while Dominican Creole employs a modified English vocabulary. But the two share not lexicon but grammar, which in both instances is West African. The same rules are used to assemble the words of two Indo-European languages. Similarly, an Anglo-American set of rules for folk house building can govern the combination of a diverse set of stylistic elements. So it is that while the artifacts available to the members of the Parting Ways settlement were of necessity almost entirely Anglo-American, the rules by which they were put to use in functional combinations might have been more African American. With this possibility in mind, we can look at the material dug from the ground at Parting Ways in a new and potentially more useful way.

In addition to the Burr house and the separate cellars, a third architectural feature was unearthed. Near the second cellar, another depression indicated the remains of some earlier structure. Upon excavation, it was found to be a rectangular pit, roughly eighteen inches deep, measuring twelve feet by nine. Postholes were evident at two of the four corners and at the midpoint of each long side. On the dirt floor were traces of mud walling. The structure that had stood there may not have been a dwelling house, but it seems to have been fairly substantial. Mud-wall-and-post construction is reminiscent of West African building methods, although it did occur in the Anglo-American tradition at an earlier time.

The architecture at Parting Ways provides us with the
first suggestion that an African American mind-set was at work. One measurement runs through all of the excavated structural remains, that of a basic twelve-foot dimension. We have seen that sixteen feet is the Anglo-American standard. At this site, a twelve-foot unit appears to have been used in the same fashion. The Burr house is made up of two twelve-foot modules. The second cellar may actually be the entire footings for a small structure identical to the first build at the Burr house. However, to suggest the use of tiny, twelve-foot-square dwelling houses at Parting Ways in its early occupation, raises the question of a heat source, since no archaeological evidence of fireplaces was found. Yet, even though the photograph of the Burr house shows a small chimney projecting from the roof, there was neither evidence nor space for a hearth and chimney of the sort seen in American houses of the period. Lacking such evidence, it is difficult to determine how the chimney was supported and what general sort of stove or fireplace was employed. But the negative evidence is strong, so there had to be some accommodation for one within the building.

We might suggest that the difference between twelve and sixteen feet is slight, within the range of normal variation. To be sure, there are Anglo-American houses even smaller than twelve feet in one direction, as witness the John Alden foundation of 1630. However, this latter building was quite long, so that the amount of square footage available is almost identical to that observed in the twenty-foot-square Allerton foundation plan. The difference in square footage in a twelve-foot square as opposed to a sixteen-foot square is appreciable, 144 in one case and 256 in the other. This is critical if we are thinking of space in terms of the proxemic relationship between it and its occupants. Yet, if it could be shown that the twelve-foot unit is more broadly characteristic of African American building, a much stronger case could be made. Happily, such a relationship can be clearly demonstrated.

In an article on the shotgun house, John Vlach compares these houses in the American South with those of Haiti, and both with West African house types. The shotgun house is acknowledged as a true African American architectural form. Not only does the Burr house plan conform to the ground plans of shotgun houses, the dimensions are remarkably similar. Beyond this, there are differences. Shotgun houses have end doorways and distinctive windows, while the photograph of the Burr house shows a rather typical New England exterior. Again we see a case of using the material available but arranging it in a way that subtly and more deeply reflects the maker’s cultural roots. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy calls the shotgun house an architecture of defiance, in that it is a case of blacks stating their heritage through their building tradition in the face of the dominant culture. The little houses at Parting Ways were probably no less, yet because of the poverty of their builders and the scarcity of material, perhaps the statement was not as blatantly made.

Other aspects of the Parting Ways community show the same differences, albeit not as clearly as the building forms. The settlement pattern, in which all four men ap-
pear to have placed their dwellings in the center of the ninety-four acres, might be a significant difference from their Yankee contemporaries. While it may be that they formed a close community simply for mutual reassurance, it is equally likely that the placement of the houses reflects a more corporate spirit than four Anglo-Americans might show in similar circumstances. At the time of the community's formation, the usual pattern of Anglo-American house placement was a scattered one, each family on its own property. Although the town clerk's map explicitly designates discrete portions of the ninety-four acres as having been cleared by each of the four men, they still placed their houses close to one another. Burr's house was probably Plato Turner's. The other cellar has not been clearly identified with any of the four, yet we know that Quamany's house stood just across the road. Since Goodwin spent only a part of his time in the settlement, there is a good chance that the other cellar was Cato Howe's originally. However, he died in 1824 and the cellar was not filled until 1850, presumably at the time the house was either razed or moved. Both archaeological and documentary evidence indicate a continued occupation, perhaps uninterrupted until the twentieth century. But throughout that time, occupation seems to have been concentrated in a small area on the ninety-four-acre tract.

Another striking difference from contemporary Anglo-American sites is seen in the food remains recovered from the Parting Ways site. We have seen that sawing of bone, as opposed to chopping it, appears sometime in the later eighteenth century. No sawed bone was recovered from the site, although one would normally expect all of it to be so cut. It may be the poverty in which the inhabitants lived that is shown by the large number of cow's feet, which make up the majority of the animal bone found. Such parts were of little value to Anglo-Americans, although they could be cooked to yield nourishment. On the other hand, we must not overlook the possibility that these bones might reflect in part a different cuisine, as might the chopped bones from larger cuts of meat. In any case, the animal bone from Parting Ways in no way conforms to that seen on similar sites occupied by Anglo-Americans.

Parting Ways is a very special site, in that it was occupied by at least three families of African Americans who were free of those constraints which might have been imposed on them under the institution of slavery. However marginal they may have seemed to the dominant European community, they were able to organize their world on their own terms from the late eighteenth century onward. Such conditions did not prevail in the Plantation South, where the yoke of slavery was not removed until the time of the Civil War. And while African Americans on all of the plantations coped with the harshness of their condition, they did so in different and often covert ways. It is perhaps due to this difference that the Parting Ways residents left us with a subtle yet clear material statement of their way of organizing their lives. Each constituent element of the archaeological record from Parting Ways, taken alone, is not totally convincing, although powerfully suggestive. But
been taken as a group, as an expression of African American culture as it was to be seen in early-nineteenth-century Massachusetts, they are indeed compelling, an expression of a worldview not only different from that of the dominant European American culture, but coherent in its own right, attributable to the African heritage shared by Cato, Plato, Quamany, and their families.

Prior to the excavations at Parting Ways in 1975 and 1976, the site was known only as the location of a tiny cemetery which was said to mark the graves of at least some of the inhabitants. A sign at the side of the road informs the reader that:

**HERE LIE THE GRAVES OF FOUR NEGRO SLAVES**

Quamany Prince

Plato Cato

These men fought in the Revolutionary War
and were freed at its close.

The cemetery is located in the original 94 acre plot of
land which was deeded to them by the government when
they were given their freedom.

The few markers in the cemetery are but the broken stumps of what had been modest green slate gravestones, their inscriptions and designs long since vanished. A discovery made in 1978 not only calls into question the identity of the occupants of the graves, but adds yet one more dimension to the nature of the cultural heritage of the Parting Ways residents, in this case a somewhat enigmatic but dramatic one.

As part of a more extensive survey of the original ninety-four acres for National Register nomination, a large area paved with fieldstone was discovered, just across the road from the original settlement. As is customary with such surveys, excavation at that location was very limited, involving a single test trench fifteen feet long and two and a half feet wide. But excavations were not required to determine the nature of the feature; it was only necessary to remove the thin layer of leaves which had covered it over the years. What came to light was an area some twenty-five by forty-five feet in extent, covered evenly with closely packed cobbles. The southern and western edges of the paving were not sharply defined, but the eastern edge was much more distinct. The northern edge had been obliterated by the widening of the road in 1950. Almost seven thousand artifacts were found atop the paving, and for the most part were concentrated in two discrete areas. The vast majority of these artifacts were fragments of pottery, but there were pieces of shattered glassware as well. All had been intentionally broken on the spot, and as a result most could be partially or fully reconstructed. The pattern that emerged was one that called for comparisons with that associated with African American ritual practices and their West African roots. The two concentrations differed from each other. The more northerly one consisted of two sugar jars, a stoneware jug, miscellaneous pressed glass objects,
and a variety of bottles. One of the sugar jars had a hole broken through the base. The second concentration consisted of English white earthenware and a few glass objects. Both concentrations produced a *terminus post quem* in the 1840s. Except for a few pieces of window glass, two nails, and two bricks, no architectural materials were found, and bone or shell was also lacking. Clearly, these concentrations were not the result of domestic trash disposal, nor was the paving in any way the remains of a building of any kind. This negative evidence, combined with the fact that the objects were broken in place, all points to both an intentional construction of the paved area and the placing and breaking of ceramic and glass objects on it in two discrete areas. Such a pattern has a striking parallel to grave decoration practices as they are known from the American South.

Throughout this area, African American graves are ornamented in a distinctive fashion. In *Go Down, Moses*, William Faulkner perhaps summed this up most succinctly:

> \ldots the grave, save for its rawness, resembled any other marked off without order about the barren plot by shards of pottery and broken bottles and old brick and other objects insignificant to sight but actually of a profound meaning and fatal to touch, which no white man could have read.\(^4\)

John Vlach tells us that there is a clear pattern in the types of objects used by African Americans to decorate graves.\(^5\) Bottles and jars predominate, sometimes broken in such a way that they appear to be whole. This was often accomplished by breaking a hole in the bottom, invisible when the object is set upright on the grave. Such breakage could be seen to be done to prevent theft, but Vlach cites extensive evidence that such is not the case, since the community will not disturb grave offerings, even coins, as a result of customs which had their origin in the African past. Similar grave ornamentation is known from all of West and Central Africa, where, as in America, graves and their decorations are seen as inviolate, not to be stolen from. Two themes seem to unite the American and African practices, white objects and objects associated with water. A widespread African system of belief holds not only that the spirits of the dead are white beings, but they reside beneath the water. The connections between African and Southern African American grave decoration are clear and explicit. The extent to which both are related to the paved area at Parting Ways is only slightly less so. True, it is not known whether they mark the location of burials, although it seems very likely that they do. John Vlach, who visited the site in the fall of 1978, commented that whether they marked graves or not, they bore a very strong resemblance to the *ritual compounds* of the Akan of Ghana. Furthermore, they force us to question the identity of those individuals buried beneath the stumps of green slate gravestones in the cemetery always traditionally identified with the Parting Ways settlement. Given the dates of death of the occupants of Parting Ways, it is most unlikely that their gravestones would have been made of slate, marble having
long since replaced slate as the universal material for grave-
stones. Furthermore, the cemetery at Plympton, a few miles
away, has one eighteenth-century cenotaph commemorat-
ing people who had died of smallpox and been buried else-
where. Several small groups of green slate stones, three or
four in number, are to be found in the woods around
Plympton, marking the graves of smallpox victims, and it
seems very likely that the Parting Ways cemetery is but one
more of these.

Of course the Parting Ways site does not reflect the
changes we have suggested for Anglo-American culture
change, nor should it. Yet in its not fitting this pattern, it
reinforces it, since it serves to draw a line beyond which
explanation cannot and should not proceed. It tells us that
such patterns are applicable only to the remains of a single
cultural tradition, and once outside that tradition, other
rules apply. During the digging of the Parting Ways site,
this difference was brought home again and again when
certain implicit assumptions based on our experience in
Anglo-American sites did not work out. A large amount of
dirt was moved in the name of solving this and that prob-
lem formulated from prior experience, and nothing came to
light. The occupants of the site constructed their houses
differently, disposed of their trash differently, arranged
their community differently. But because the artifacts
themselves were so familiar to us, the essential differences
were disguised behind them, and only when a more basic
consideration of different perceptions of the world was
made did the picture come into focus.

African American archaeology has become an impor-
tant and vital component of historical archaeology in the
United States. Since the artifactual and architectural re-
 mains of these communities are a better index of the life of
African Americans in their own terms, they hold great
promise of supplementing American black history in a dif-
ferent and important way. Cato Howe, Plato Turner,
Quamany, and Prince Goodwin seem like simple folk liv-
ing in abject poverty when we learn of them from the
documents. The archaeology tells us that in spite of their
lowly station in life, they were the bearers of a lifestyle,
distinctly their own, neither recognized nor understood by
their chroniclers.
Frozen in time and embedded in the American landscape is the track of our collective existence, material culture. It holds the promise of being more democratic and less self-conscious in its creation than any other body of historical material. Although relatively few people wrote in early America, and what was written captured the personal biases of the recorder, in theory almost every person who lived in America left behind some trace of their passing. Perhaps a personal possession, now broken and buried, or a slave cabin in the forest covered with Virginia creeper, or a gravestone tilted by time but still speaking to us across the centuries, or something as humble as the remains of a meal consumed and forgotten—it is all there, and we must not disregard it. If material culture makes a vital contribution to our understanding of the American experience, then it assumes critical importance in the accounting of the African American past. As we have seen, a proper understanding of the residents of nineteenth-century Parting Ways could not have been reached in the absence of the material record, both there and from other places. Such is the case at site after site along the entire eastern seaboard, from New England to Georgia. African American archaeology, accompanied by a large body of scholarship on African American material culture, holds the promise of bringing people who had been marginalized in the writings of their contemporaries back into the picture. As the social satirist Dick Gregory said on a visit to the Parting Ways excavations, "Now we will get a piece of the ink."

In recent years African American archaeology has assumed increasing importance, taking a central place in American historical archaeology. The story that has emerged from the results of excavating sites occupied by blacks, both enslaved and free, from measuring and drawing the plans of hundreds of old houses, and from comparing the results with each other and with various aspects of West African culture, gives us a fresh perspective on the entire American experience. More and more it becomes clear that far from a simple matter of acculturation of Africans to the dominant Anglo-American lifeways, a complex mixing and reformulation of components of both cultures took place, particularly in the American South. Such a process is known as creolization, the interaction between two or more cultures to produce an integrated mix which is different from its antecedents. Few people when viewing the memorable scene in Deliverance realize that the young boy playing Dueling Banjos is using an African musical
instrument while seated on a porch which owes its origins to West African architectural forms. As Mechel Sobel says in her book *The World They Made Together*:

It was not simply that the politically dominant racial group, the whites, maintained their traditions and imposed them on the blacks. On the contrary, the social-cultural interplay was such that both blacks and whites were crucially influenced by the traditions of the "other." As a result, a new culture emerged in the American South that was a mix of both African and English values. \(^1\)

Sobel sees this process as permeating all of eighteenth-century Virginia society, including "attitudes toward time, understandings of causality and purpose, perceptions of death and the afterlife" and most relevant to our concern, "attitudes toward space and the natural world, as they affected settlement and building." \(^2\) Studies of African American material culture and archaeology have been carried out from Massachusetts to Florida, and as far west as California, but in two areas, the Chesapeake and coastal South Carolina, research has been particularly intensive, and it is on these two regions that we focus our attention. Three aspects of early African American life will be explored: housing, foodways, and ceramics, including a local clay smoking pipe industry.

The form of African American dwellings has varied, both in time and space, as a result of various historical and cultural factors. We begin with the shotgun house, which we briefly encountered as it related to the spatial dimensions of the Turner-Burr house at Parting Ways (see Figure 14). The shotgun house is the most explicitly African vernacular architectural form to be found in America, showing clear and unambiguous derivation from West African houses in both plan and dimensions. Its emergence on the American landscape is the end point of a path that leads...
from West Africa through the West Indies to the port city of New Orleans. John Vlach was the first to make these connections clear, and his research provides the definitive statement on the subject.\(^1\) Shotgun houses differ from their European contemporaries in three important ways. They are sited with the gable end facing the nearest thoroughfare, whether a city street or a country road, while Anglo-American houses almost always are placed with the long axis parallel. While both houses are entered from the street or roadside, the difference in placement means that shotgun houses are entered through the gable end while European-derived houses are entered from the long side, either through a central passage or into a hall. The room arrangement of shotgun houses is very different from both hall and parlor and central hall houses; each room leads into another from front to back, with three or more rooms lined up one behind the other. Doors between rooms are usually placed in such a way that one can pass in a relatively straight line from the front entrance to the room farthest to the rear. Indeed, this room arrangement has been said to be the reason for the name “shotgun”; one could fire a gun from one end of the house to the other through the aligned doors. This explanation seems rather far-fetched, and John Vlach has shown that a more likely possibility for the name’s origin lies in the Yoruba word for house, *to-gun*, meaning place of assembly. Shotgun houses have rather deep porches on their fronts, which in effect form another room of sorts, an intermediate space linking the outside world with that within. We have already seen that the normal size of rooms of shotgun houses is significantly smaller than the size of rooms of an Anglo-American vernacular dwelling. In room size and arrangement, it is clear that the shotgun house reflects a very different proxemic order, one of closer social interaction, which Vlach refers to as “an architecture of intimacy.”\(^4\)

The clarity of the African derivation of the shotgun house is the result of the manner in which it was introduced into the American South. Shotgun houses make their first appearance in New Orleans during the first decades of the nineteenth century. New Orleans’ sizable community of free blacks was substantially increased by the arrival of over two thousand free people of color in 1810, most of them from Haiti. The urban Haiti shotgun house is virtually identical to those first built in New Orleans. Both share identical floor plans, placement in relationship to the street, and porches in front. Both the porch and front entrance, Vlach suggests, were derived from the indigenous Arawak Indian house, making the Haitian shotgun house a creolized form, incorporating these features with French building techniques and a floor plan derived from the basic Yoruba two-room house.\(^5\) From New Orleans, the shotgun house spread across the country, changing but little, to be found along all of the major railroad routes, northward along the Mississippi, and even penetrating the coalfields of West Virginia. Wherever we find the shotgun house, its presence is clear evidence of the strength of the African tradition in African American material culture. In the absence of the constraints imposed under a system of slavery,
this architectural expression was able to flourish, providing
us with the clearest vision of the maintenance of an African
architectural tradition in the New World.

In the Chesapeake and in South Carolina, dwellings
of African Americans take a different form, both from the
shotgun house and from those of each respective region.
Along the eastern seaboard, African Americans were not
free to construct dwellings that might show clear connec­tions
to prior African forms. It is very likely that although
slaves actually built the houses in which they would live,
there was some measure of control exercised by their own­ners over just what form their houses would take. None­theless, we can see that slave dwellings were not purely
European-type structures. Although not as clearly African­derived as are shotgun houses, slave houses in the South are
best seen as the product of creolization, in this case between
Anglo-American and African house types. In his book Un­
common Ground, Leland Ferguson summarizes the findings
of archaeologists working on a number of plantation sites
in South Carolina.

6 Although the evidence is somewhat
ambiguous, a pattern can be seen suggesting a house type
quite different from what one might expect had the build­ers been of Anglo-American stock. Shallow trenches mark
the locations of walls in the earlier examples, dating to the
mid eighteenth century. Posts along the trenches either
served to support clay walls or, alternatively, held woven
branches over which clay would have been applied, the
traditional “wattle and daub” type of wall known both in
England and West Africa. Little evidence of chimneys was
present, although one structure had an interior hearth. This
lack of chimneys led Ferguson to suggest that most cooking
was done outdoors, typical of West Africa, yet there must
have been some source of heat, for winters in South Caro­
lina can be quite cold. Room sizes found in one- and two­room houses are close to the norm shown by both shotgun
houses and West African dwellings. Later in the century,
trenches are no longer present, and post holes—not the
massive ones associated with earthfast building in Vir­
ginia—have been interpreted as the supports for wattle.
These later houses also show evidence of having had chim­neys, probably of stick and clay, similar to those found on
Virginia sites, and known from photographs of both slave
cabins and the houses of poorer white farmers. Room sizes
of these later houses are slightly larger. What appears to
have been happening in South Carolina was that over time,
slave houses became more European in flavor, although at
no point did they become identical to the smallest of An­
glo-American vernacular houses.

On the basis of presently available archaeological evi­
dence, it appears that in Virginia, earthfast construction
was used in building dwellings for slaves. William Kelso
has excavated a number of slave houses at Kingsmill, near
Williamsburg.7 While these houses resemble other earthfast
buildings of the eighteenth century, there are notable dif­
fences. Three houses appear to have had porches, in one
case, on all four sides of the building. We shall see that
porches are probably of African origin, making their ap­
pearance in Virginia in the nineteenth century on the
houses of all of Virginia's inhabitants. Their presence on eighteenth-century slave houses at Kingsmill lends a certain weight to this proposition. Another feature that sets apart the Kingsmill slave houses from those of their Anglo-American contemporaries is the presence of numerous small root cellars beneath the floors. Such root cellars have been found on other slave quarter sites in Virginia, including those on Mulberry Row at Jefferson's Monticello. Often called "hidey-holes," these little cellars have come to be taken as a marker of African American ethnicity, although in the absence of a documented African American presence on any given site, such a relationship must remain somewhat speculative for the moment. With one possible exception, the Kingsmill foundations showed no evidence of chimneys. While this may be evidence of outdoor cooking, as Leland Ferguson has suggested, as in South Carolina, there had to have been some source of heat during oftentimes frigid winters. William Kelso has shown that stick and clay chimneys were attached to the house in such a way that they could be pulled away from the house in the event of fire. He based this conclusion on patterns of nail concentrations beyond the end of the slave house excavated at Monticello, and on surviving photographs showing such chimneys leaning slightly away from the house and supported by poles. He went so far as to build such a house, set it afire, and knock away the poles. Captured on film by the BBC, this piece of experimental archaeology showed dramatically that such an arrangement actually worked, the chimney falling away from the house, engulfed in flame, leaving the building unharmed. If stick and clay stacks were the rule in eighteenth-century slave cabins, both in South Carolina and Virginia, one would not expect to find any trace of such a chimney, for were it constructed around posts set into the ground, it would have been impossible to knock it away from the house in the brief time that would be necessary. The chimney would not intrude below ground level, and as a result, would leave no trace to be found by the archaeologist.

By the early nineteenth century in Virginia, at least some plantations were constructing more substantial houses for their slaves. At Flowerdew Hundred, a slave cabin dating to the 1830s was excavated. The house had been set on brick piers, raising it above ground level by a foot or so. In a house of this type, the floor would have been of wood, and access to the space below gained either through a trapdoor or by crawling beneath, given enough room. While such an arrangement would certainly reduce dampness and provide healthier living conditions, it may tell us something about social control as employed by the planter. If, as some have suggested, hidey-holes were used to store valuables, perhaps including things not come by in legitimate manner, such could not be used in a covert fashion in a cabin set on piers above the ground. Standing slave cabins in Prince George County show such foundations, and there is ample room both to see and crawl beneath their floors.

When we piece together what we know about shotgun houses, the Turner-Burr house at Parting Ways, and the archaeological evidence from Virginia and South Caro-
lina, a pattern emerges which has implications of a broader nature, suggesting an ordered and logical explanation of the picture of African American dwellings as a whole. While it should come as no surprise, it appears that to the extent European-American influence on house forms was exercised, it was to the same extent houses became less explicitly African in flavor. We have suggested that the inhabitants of Parting Ways, slaves who had been given their freedom and were thus able to express themselves through their material world, did so in such a way that their African heritage surfaced one more time. The ground plan of the Turner-Burr house shows rooms with dimensions close to those of both shotgun houses and earlier slave houses in South Carolina. The layout of the house differs from those of shotgun houses in the placement of the entrance, which we know from a photograph to have been on the long side of the building. This entry location is likely derived from the dominant, non-African architectural tradition of the region, but we must not discount another possibility. A house with two small rooms, entered from the side, is the basic form over much of West Africa. In addition, John Vlach writes:

The Yoruba architectural repertoire is quite extensive, ranging from common houses to palaces. But despite the variety, all of the buildings are based on a two-room module which measures ten by twenty feet. . . . This two-room house is essential to the Yoruba architectural system, and consequently was not easily forgotten even under the rigors of slavery.8 Whatever the case, the Turner-Burr house more closely resembles a Yoruba two-room side-entrance building than it does either an Anglo-American house or a shotgun house, and this similarity may well be more than coincidental. The main difference is in the construction material, frame on the one hand and mud on the other. The remains of one mud-walled building were uncovered at Parting Ways, the little nine-by-twelve-foot structure near one of the cellars. This feature in turn is reminiscent of earlier slave houses in South Carolina.

Shotgun houses and the Parting Ways architecture stand at one end of a continuum which ranges through the earlier and later slave houses of South Carolina to the earthfast dwellings of the Chesapeake. The primary factor that appears to shape this continuum is the institution of slavery, and how that affected African Americans in each instance. The first Africans to arrive in the colonies were brought to Virginia sometime before the spring of 1619. A census, or muster as it was called, was taken in the colony between March and May of that year, and it lists as "Others not Christians in the service of the English" four Indians and thirty-two Africans. Of the latter, fifteen were adult men and seventeen adult women.9 Later in the same year, another twenty-odd Africans were brought by a Dutch ship to the colony. A second muster, taken in 1625, shows seven "negroes" residing at Flowerdew Hundred. One of them, a
"young child" of an anonymous "negro woman," may well have been the first black child born on English soil in the New World, and was certainly among the first few true African Americans. We are not certain of the status of these first Africans in Virginia. They might have been slaves, but it is somewhat more likely that they held a status more like that of indentured servants. At least some had Christian names, and in the earlier seventeenth century, religion was the predominant criterion by which one would be enslaved; heathens of any color were considered as potential slaves, property whose progeny would also be owned by another. Christians, on the other hand, were not seen as appropriate chattels, whether black or white. As the seventeenth century passed, the opposition between Christian and heathen slowly gave way to that between black and white, and by century's end, race had become the sole determining factor of who would be enslaved and who would not. Slavery based on the color of one's skin did not arrive full-blown on English American soil, but slowly emerged over a considerable period of time. While Virginia's African population was never large until the last years of the seventeenth century, it was nevertheless a constant presence. Dell Upton's study of changing house size makes it very likely that until the 1680s, both black and white in whatever form of servitude often resided in the same houses as their masters. When this residential pattern changed, it did so as a result of deteriorating social relationships between masters and servants, the majority of whom were English. The first separate residences for servants almost certainly housed more whites than blacks, and in view of the small African population, these buildings were probably constructed largely by European Americans, using an earthfast technology brought from England. It was only as the seventeenth century drew to a close that the balance shifted to a majority of Africans, now fully enslaved, and living apart from their masters. It would only be after this time that the distinctive features of eighteenth-century slave houses that we see at Kingsmill appeared, sub-floor root cellars and porches, added to an architectural form which owed more to its English antecedents. So it is that a combination of an earlier close social relationship between Africans and English and the development of separate housing for servants as well as slaves later in the century led to a house form more outwardly English than that seen in South Carolina, Louisiana, or at Parting Ways in Massachusetts. The Africanisms of Chesapeake slave houses are additions to a pre-existing house type—root cellars and porches—rather than a more creolized blending of elements.

South Carolina had a very different pattern of settlement by Africans than did Virginia. Established at about the time that slave imports increased dramatically, it never witnessed a small black population as did Virginia during the earlier seventeenth century. Africans came into the colony in large numbers from the start, for most of South Carolina's first settlers came from Barbados, not from England, bringing their slaves with them. As the slave trade increased, with more and more Africans arriving in the slave market at Charleston, a separate residential quarter...
for slaves was already firmly in place, so that opportunities for the kind of close interaction which we see in earlier Virginia were not present. Such separation furnished an environment in which various African cultural traditions could survive and flourish. Furthermore, from the early eighteenth century, South Carolina had a black majority, which remained until the earlier years of the twentieth century. It is in South Carolina and Georgia where we see the strongest retention of a wide variety of African cultural elements. These include the coiled basketry made on the Sea Islands, the Gullah language, a creole using a modified English vocabulary set in a grammatical context more West African in form, a strong woodworking tradition, and African methods of grave decoration. To this we can add housing, as archaeology has shown. In contrast to Virginia, where the earliest slave quarters were conceived as dwellings for both blacks and whites, slave houses built on the Carolina rice plantations were much closer in form to African antecedents, and changed at a slower rate, approaching their Virginia counterparts, but never becoming so European in either outward appearance or construction techniques.

At least two aspects of West African architecture appear to have been incorporated into the construction and design of Anglo-American buildings. Framing techniques brought from England underwent changes in the new American environment, most of them involving some kind of simplification. But Mechel Sobel suggests that in the Chesapeake, and only there, a truly "radical" and even "revolutionary" transformation took place. According to Dell Upton,

Whereas traditional Anglo-American frames of the type used in New England employ large timbers tied together by complex joints, southern frames consist of pairs of light walls linked at the top. Relatively small major timbers—about four by eight inches—were set at ten-foot intervals, with the spaces between filled by three-to-four-inch studs... Two long walls constructed in this manner were tilted up, and ceiling joists notched at their undersides were dropped on to hold the walls upright... In the southern frame the parts were relatively unspecialized, and could be cut out and assembled with equal ease.

Upton goes on to say that this framing system, which appears during the early years of the eighteenth century, ultimately spread across the country, and can be found in nineteenth-century buildings as far away as California. In another article, Upton writes of the English form of framing becoming "so distorted as to be unrecognizable" in the Chesapeake. However, if the transformation of the frame of Chesapeake buildings was the result of the adoption of African building techniques, it is less a matter of distortion than of the incorporation of non-English techniques into the local tradition. The type of framing described above is very similar to that found over much of the African American past.
West Africa, including dimensional sizes used for the various parts and the method of assembly of the structure. The date of the emergence of the new method of framing and assembly was just at the time when the African population in the Chesapeake underwent a dramatic increase, making the African derivation of the southern frame highly probable.

The veranda, or porch, also appears to have its roots in West Africa. Writing about the porch in nineteenth-century America, Henry Glassie says

...it was a living space between the indoors and the outdoors, a room that stretched the length of the facade (for all the world like a veranda in Yorubaland) providing a place to escape from the inferno inside, to rock and watch the action on the road.  

John Vlach sees an irony in the way in which African architectural influences are so widespread in Anglo-American building that they become essentially invisible. He sees this as particularly so in the case of the front porch. But it is generally agreed that porches of this kind were never a part of the English architectural repertoire. The porch, such as it was, in English houses and those of earlier Anglo-America was a rather small entrance chamber, a vestibule of sorts. But in the hot humid summers of the Chesapeake, a large exterior porch is most appropriate. One wonders why porches do not make their appearance earlier; Vlach quotes Pierce Lewis as saying

...gallons of eighteenth-century Virginia sweat were spilled before there was a grudging admission that the doors and windows of Georgian London provided inadequate ventilation for a Tidewater summer ...

Perhaps "grudging" is the operative word here. A porch would represent a major alteration in the physical appearance of a building. In this, it differs from framing techniques, which do not alter the outward form of the house. Then too, since Africans undoubtedly constructed many of the houses for their Anglo-American residents, they would naturally use framing techniques with which they had a long familiarity, but when it came to designing buildings, this was done by Anglo-Americans, and a certain inertia in the adoption of a major architectural element is not surprising. We have seen that porches have been found on slave cabins excavated at Kingsmill, dating to the third quarter of the eighteenth century. This is the earliest evidence that we have for porches to date. That they were unknown in New England on the eve of the American Revolution is shown by a delightful exchange of correspondence between a builder and his client. One Henry Pelham was attending to the construction of John Singleton Copley's house in Boston. On July 14, 1771, Copley wrote Pelham from New York:
Should I not add Wings I shall add a peazer when I return, which is much practiced here, and is very beautiful and convenient.

Pelham answered:

I dont comprehend what you mean by a peazer. Explain that in your next.

Copley replied:

You say you dont know what I mean by a Peaza. I will tell you than, it is exactly such a thing as the cover over the pump in your Yard, suppose no enclosure for poultry their, and 3 or 4 Posts added to support the front of the Roof, a good floor at bottom, and from post to post a Chinese enclosure about three feet high. these posts are Scantlings of 6 by 4 inches Diameter, the Broad side to the front, with only a little moulding round the top in a neat plain manner. some have Columns but very few, and the top is generally Plasterd, but I think if the top was sealed with neat plained Boards I should like it as well. these Peazas are so cool in Sumer and in Winter break off the storms so much that I think I should not be able to like an house without...
vated the houses of the overseer and planter, as well as a single slave house at the northern end of the plantation. Since the three structures were some distance from each other, refuse from each could be attributed to the occupants with a high degree of confidence. As one might expect, the greatest differences were those between the planter’s house and the slave cabin, and it is from the material recovered from each that Otto gives us a detailed picture of diet and foodways of slave and planter alike.

The slave house was small, measuring approximately seventeen by twenty feet, and set on piers. A single chimney of tabby brick—a mixture of shell, lime, and sand—was located at one end. At least one of its windows was glazed, and a shutter pintle, door pintle, and lock bolt suggest that there was some modest degree of privacy. Based on the number of slaves on the plantation and the number of houses, we can assume that the building housed between seven and nine people. A refuse area was located some distance to the south of the house. When we combine the information recovered from the refuse area with what we know of the house, we are able to piece together a picture of a world that few if any saw, other than those who were responsible for its construction.

The refuse deposit consisted largely of animal bones and shattered ceramic and glass wares, but also produced lead shot, a percussion cap, and a single English gun flint. Gun parts and shot have been found on other slave sites, and while we can never be certain that they tell us that slaves had access to firearms, the probability is quite high.

In view of the remarkable diversity of species represented by the faunal remains, it becomes even more so. No fewer than twenty-two different species of wild animals are represented. Domesticated animal food remains included rabbits, pigs, cattle, sheep, and chickens. But fully 44 percent of the edible meat available to the inhabitants of the house was from wild species, and included opossum, rabbit, raccoon, clapper rail, two species of turtle, and fifteen species of edible fish. This variety of fish and game tells us that the slaves were obtaining these animals from a wide range of habitats—sounds, tidal rivers, marshes, ponds, forests, and grasslands—which would require a significant amount of spare time. We know from the records that Cannon’s Point employed a so-called task system in organizing slave labor. Each hand was responsible for cultivating a set number of quarter-acre plots, and once this had been done, the balance of the day could be used, in the words of the planter, “to employ . . . what remains of daylight in their own gardens, in fishing, or in dancing—in short, as they please.” This should not be seen as an act of generosity on the planter’s part, but rather a means whereby he could economize on slave rations. Rations at Cannon’s Point consisted of nine quarts of corn for each adult, and five to eight for children per week. Rice, flour, and molasses were also issued. But for the occasional piece of fresh meat at slaughter time, meat rations were limited to three pounds of salt pork and fish weekly. This amounts to slightly less than a half pound of protein-rich meat each day, hardly an adequate amount to sustain a person who is engaged daily in hard
labor. It was clearly in the planter's best interest to keep his workforce healthy, so by permitting and providing time for hunting and fishing, he was able to achieve this with the least amount of investment.

Combining the variety of meat at hand with vegetables from their own garden plots, the slaves seem to have prepared a variety of stews for the most part, for the vast majority of ceramics recovered from the refuse deposit were bowls of one kind or another, with dinner plates being quite scarce. The bones of the larger animals were chopped rather than sawn, reminiscent of both Parting Ways and all Anglo-America at an earlier time. The bowls used by the Cannon's Point slaves for food consumption were largely of a type of pearlware known as annular ware. Annular ware is decorated with a series of concentric colored bands on the exterior of the bowls, placed horizontal and parallel. It was the second least costly of all the pearlware products of the Staffordshire ceramic industry and we often find it on sites associated with people who held a subservient station in life. Not only is it commonly found on slave sites over the entire South, but also in the Indian quarters at Franciscan missions in California and even at a fort occupied by a Cape Colored regiment in nineteenth-century British South Africa. In every case, annular ware appears not to have been of hand-me-down status, but rather to have been acquired by those in control, to be issued at appropriate intervals. John Otto suggests that because of their distinctive type of decoration, "they appealed to a steady group of customers," including black slaves. But this seems very unlikely, and their presence at slave sites seems one more case of the planter's management of available capital. The appearance of annular ware on slave sites of the early nineteenth century may well mark the time when mass-produced English pottery became inexpensive enough to be purchased in quantity for issue to slaves, for as we shall see, another kind of bowl is typical of the eighteenth and late seventeenth century, produced by the slaves themselves.

When we compare the faunal material recovered from the planter's house with that from the slave quarter, significant similarities and differences appear. The planter's household actually consumed a slightly higher amount of fish and game than did those of the slaves. But the species are not entirely the same, with "high-status" game food such as venison and alligator present, as well as marine turtles. Pork was slightly more common than beef in the planter's diet; in the slave faunal remains, both appear in equal amounts. More telling is the parts of cattle and pigs consumed in each case. Whole hindquarters are represented in the planter's refuse, while that of the slaves produced teeth, scapulae, pelves, and forelegs, mostly from poorer cuts of meat. In contrast to the slave faunal material, that from the planter's house shows the bones to have been sawn rather than chopped. A high percentage of transfer printed dinner plates tells us that the planter's pattern of food consumption was typical of that of all of Anglo-America at the time. Yet only a short distance to the south of the planter's house, there were people partaking of a foodways...
tradition of a very different kind, one that archaeology has shown to stretch back in time to the late seventeenth century, with deep African roots.

As early as the 1930s, a distinctive kind of pottery was turning up on sites in the Chesapeake. Gray to brown in color, it was an unglazed ware, handmade and fired at a relatively low temperature. The commonest shape was a shallow bowl, but other forms were also produced, including skilled copies of European vessels—three-legged pipkins, milk pans, porringers, punch bowls, chamber pots, and even teapots (see Figure 15). It was not until 1962 that its existence was formally recognized; prior to that date, it was simply noted, cataloged, and stored. The archaeologist who called attention to this pottery was Ivor Noel Hume, in a brief article in the Bulletin of the Virginia Archaeological Society. He suggested that it had been made by local Indians to trade with the English colonists, since it bore a certain resemblance to the local Native American pottery. Hume gave the name Colono-Indian to the ware, and thought that it had been made on the nearby Pamunky, Chickahominy, and Mattaponi reservations. Three years later, Lewis Binford reported on Colono-Indian ware from surface collections made on five sites in southeastern Virginia, and attributed its manufacture to two local Indian groups, the Weanock and Nottoway. He suggested that the flat bottoms exhibited by the vessels might be seen as evidence of cooking on European-type hearths, since Indian pots have rounded bases better suited to standing in ash and coals. Colono-Indian ware was initially thought to be a strictly local product, found only in the Chesapeake, and until the late 1970s no one thought to ask if the pottery might have been made by another group of people familiar with European cooking methods and who came from a tradition of handmade pottery—African Americans.

It is significant that the first archaeologists to question the identity of the makers of Colono-Indian ware were from the University of South Carolina, and had done extensive fieldwork in that state. By the decade of the seventies, it was abundantly clear that far from being produced
only in the Chesapeake, Colono-Indian ware was to be found in every state along the eastern seaboard from Maryland to Georgia, precisely that area where plantation slavery had been established. While Stanley South had raised the possibility that at least some of the Colono-Indian ware from South Carolina was made by Africans, it was Richard Polhemus who stated what now seems obvious, that Africans, not Indians, were its primary if not exclusive makers. In a 1977 report on the Tellico blockhouse, an early-nineteenth-century site in Tennessee, Polhemus wrote:

The single historically documented factor linking "Colono-Indian" pottery-producing settlements on the coastal plain of Virginia and North Carolina with those in the uplands of South Carolina and the Tellico blockhouse is the presence of Negroes at the sites in question.20

He went on to compare the pottery with that from Nigeria and Ghana, and found that the similarity was great. Certain Ghanian pieces were indistinguishable from South Carolina ones. Both were flat-bottomed, burnished, grit-tempered, and had incised X's on their bases. Leland Ferguson, a colleague of both South and Polhemus, commented in 1980 that

with this important observation, the lid was cracked on a box that has sat covered with dust in the darkest corner of North American historic sites

Ferguson was the first to propose the term "Colono ware" to designate this pottery, and that usage has since become universal.

Three aspects of Colono ware provide us with a firm basis on which to argue its African American production—its pattern of occurrence over time, its geographical distribution, noted above, and its physical form.22 In Virginia, the colony where Africans were present from the first quarter of the seventeenth century, Colono ware does not make its appearance until the last twenty-odd years of that century, and becomes increasingly common on sites of the eighteenth century, reaching its highest frequency between 1750 and 1800. During the early years of the nineteenth century, its popularity appears to have declined, and by 1820 it had all but vanished from the scene. In South Carolina, a fortification ditch at Charleston, cut in 1670 and filled in 1680, contained large quantities of Colono ware, which tells us that the pottery appeared fully developed from the first decade of the colony. The Barbadian settlers of South Carolina brought slave potters with them. The colonial pottery industry in Barbados dates to the mid seventeenth century or earlier, and produced both wheel-made wares and handmade forms very similar to American Colono ware. As in Virginia, Colono ware became increasingly common during the eighteenth century, and disappeared during the early years of the nineteenth. When we
consider the pattern of population change for the two groups who might have produced Colono ware, a simple but compelling fact emerges. As the native population declined, and the African population burgeoned, Colono ware became increasingly common. Virginia is an excellent case in point. There the native population underwent a dramatic reduction in numbers as the seventeenth century passed. By 1669, the number of Indian males in the colony had dwindled to a mere 279, representing nineteen tribes. Writing of the Virginia groups in 1781, Thomas Jefferson said:

Chickahominies removed, about the year 1661 to Mattaponi River. . . . They retained however their separate name so late as 1705 and were at length blended with the Pamunkies and the Mattaponies and exist at present only under their names. There remain of the Mattaponies three or four men only, and they have more negro than Indian blood in them. They have lost their language, have reduced themselves, by voluntary sale, to about fifty acres of land, which lie on the river of their own name, and have, from time to time, been joining the Pamunkies, from who they are distant but ten miles. The Pamunkies are reduced to about ten or twelve men, tolerably pure from mixture with other colours. The older ones among them preserve their language in a small degree, which are the last vestiges on earth, as far as we know, of the Powhatan language. . . . Of the Nottoways, not a male is left. A few women constitute the remains of that tribe.23

Jefferson was writing about four of the groups once thought to have produced Colono ware for trade with the Europeans; with numbers so small it seems quite unlikely that such could have been the case. This is especially so considering that he penned these words at the time when Colono ware in Virginia appears to have been produced in very large quantities. Leaving aside for the moment the question of why Colono ware appears much later than Africans in the colony, the steady increase in Colono ware during the eighteenth century matches closely the pattern of African population growth in Virginia.

We have seen that in South Carolina, Colono ware was present from the first years of the colony. There, as in Virginia, its popularity increased through the eighteenth century, and faded sharply in the early nineteenth. In both places, its disappearance was probably the result of the greater availability of inexpensive Staffordshire wares, of the type which we have seen from the slave refuse at Cannon’s Point. While the pattern of occurrence over time of Colono ware in Virginia and South Carolina is essentially the same, there are significant differences in the shapes that were produced, and these further strengthen the argument that African Americans were the makers of the pottery. The close copying of European ceramic shapes in Colono ware seen in Virginia is conspicuously rare in South Carol
lina. There, the usual shapes found are three, large jars, small jars, and shallow bowls. The most reasonable explanation for this comes from those differences we have seen between African American residential patterns in the two colonies. The relatively small African population in Virginia resided at least in part in the same house as the planter, along with white indentured servants. It was only at the time the slave population began to increase during the last quarter of the seventeenth century that slaves, along with servants, were moved to separate quarters. Under such circumstances, it is logical to assume that during the time African Americans were living in the same house as their white masters, they became familiar not only with European foodways but also with the kinds of ceramic vessels used in preparing and consuming food. But once moved to separate quarters, slaves had to make do without the various items of equipment available to them before in the master’s house. Slaves were issued a minimal amount of equipment for their own use, often little more than an axe and an iron pot or two. Under such circumstances, household production of ceramics would almost certainly take place, and in their shapes and use would reflect both European and African foodways. This would account for both the time of appearance of Colono ware in Virginia and the various forms in which it was produced. In South Carolina, there was no opportunity for slaves to gain a close familiarity with European ways of cooking and the vessels used. Separate quarters set at a considerable distance from the planter’s house were present from the colony’s beginnings, and this pattern continued through the following two centuries, right up to the Civil War. The limited repertoire of shapes of Colono ware vessels is just what we would expect under such circumstances. When we consider these shapes as they relate to African foodways, they can be seen to be a sort of least common denominator of various West African cooking practices. Basic to West African foodways, both now and in the past, was a meal consisting of two parts. Large jars are used to cook one of a number of starchy carbohydrates, such as rice, manioc, or corn. Smaller jars serve as containers in which to stew a mix of vegetables, meats, and various spices. The meal is served by placing the carbohydrate in a shallow bowl, ladling the vegetable and meat mixture over it, and consuming it with the fingers. We need only to think of gumbo, an American dish with clear African roots, including its name, to visualize better what such a meal would be like. Meat such as sausage, chicken, shrimp, or fish is cooked with celery, onions, and peppers in a seasoned sauce and served over a bed of rice. Even okra, the thickening agent for gumbo, is of African origin. In eighteenth-century South Carolina, this foodways pattern survived almost unchanged from what it had been in the African homeland, largely free of the external influences that were present in earlier Virginia.

Certain economic factors may have been at work which would explain the increasing production of Colono ware during the eighteenth century. In his 1962 article, Noël Hume explained the presence of Colono ware on Virginia sites as the result of planters acquiring pottery from...
the Indians for use by slaves, "being loath to purchase fancy English pottery" for them.24 But we must ask why it had to be "fancy," given the low price of locally produced coarse earthenwares; these would have sufficed just as well, and the supply would have been more assured. But with large numbers of slaves on many plantations, even inexpensive earthenwares would represent an investment on the planter's part. In the same way that allowing slaves to procure much of their own food was a cost-cutting measure for the planter, permitting and perhaps even encouraging the production of pottery by slaves would have achieved the same result. There would certainly have been a built-in workforce, and the supply would have been constant and ample. With the African population growing at a steady rate, if the dwindling Native American population had been producing the Colono ware, there would have been an increasing demand accompanied by a decreasing supply, far too great a gap to allow for the trading of Colono ware from the Indians to the degree that would have been required to provide for an ever larger number of people.

The evidence for the production of Colono ware by African Americans is compelling, and while not everyone accepts the argument, it is difficult to ignore. Yet one more body of evidence must be considered, for it provides us with a complementary perspective on the whole question of African American craft production in seventeenth-century Virginia, as well as lending even greater credence to the production of Colono ware by slaves. As we have seen, the attempts by the Virginia colony to achieve some measure of economic independence from England during the seventeenth century involved a number of local industries. Among these was the production of clay smoking pipes, similar in shape to those made in England, but made from a tan clay, and often elaborately decorated with a wide variety of designs (see Figure 16). These pipes made their appearance on sites dating after the 1630s, and their production continued through the early years of the eighteenth century. Like Colono ware, they had been found on sites since the 1930s, but little attention was paid to them until 1979 when Susan Henry published a paper on them entitled "Terra-Cotta Tobacco Pipes in 17th Century Maryland and Virginia."25 Henry's main question had nothing to do with who might have made the pipes, but rather was directed at the relationship between their production and economic changes in the import trade. But she attributed them to the local Indian peoples, and used the term Colono Indian, following Noel Hume's use of the designation. Like him, she suggested that they were made by the local Indians for trade with the European colonists.

Some of these pipes appear to have been made by hand; others show clear evidence of having been made in a mold of the type used in English pipe manufacture. Two methods of decoration were used: stamping, and designs that were produced by rolling some kind of toothed implement through the clay, perhaps a watch cog. These roulettred designs were filled with a white substance, producing a pleasing contrast to the tan clay of both bowls and stems. While stamped designs continued in use through the early
eighteenth century, motifs produced by rouletting appear not to have been applied to pipes after circa 1680, at about the same time that Colono ware made its first appearance in Virginia. But if rouletted pipes were made by Indians, why does their production stop when it does, and is it a coincidence that it does just as Colono ware begins to be produced? The answer may lie in the designs themselves, and their possible origin.

Fish, horned animals, stars, ships, and a variety of geometric motifs appear on the pipe bowls, and the stems are frequently decorated in simple designs of lines and triangles. While many of the geometric motifs are so general as to make any stylistic comparison to other decorative traditions difficult, there are certain ones that are not from the repertoire of either Europeans or Indians, but distinctive enough to be recognized as having probable West African derivation. The first person to call attention to this possibility was Matthew Emerson in a 1988 University of California, Berkeley, doctoral dissertation entitled "Decorated Clay Tobacco Pipes from the Chesapeake." In this work, he proposed the alternative adjective "Chesapeake" as a replacement for the older term Colono Indian, or Colono, which some had used following Leland Ferguson’s lead. Of the motifs with possible African derivation, the most convincing is the so-called Kwardata, a very individualistic design which is identical in both Chesapeake and West African examples. In Nigeria, the Kwardata design symbolizes the transition from youth to manhood. It is created by defining a connecting band of diamonds with parallel punctuate lines which act as a background, the design itself being negatively formed (see Figure 16a). Equally striking is a motif created by several concentric arcs, with a row of circles above them (see Figure 16b). This design is absent from the local Indian repertoire, and has a close West African parallel. The "double bell" motif, two arcs flanking a horizontal line, is found both on Chesapeake pipes and on a smoking pipe from Cameroon (see Figure 16c). There are other designs that while not as convincing as the three mentioned, are nonetheless suggestive. Stars with sets of
circles at the ends of their points are not found in the native American decorative tradition, and while stars alone are commonly used in many parts of the world, the use of circles to embellish the ends of various motifs is common in African decorative arts. Four-legged animals are found on some Chesapeake pipes, some with horns (see Figure 16d). These horned animals have been identified by some archaeologists as deer, and one name given to the motif is the “running deer” design. But the animals on the pipes have horns that look far more like those of antelope or goats, pointing backward rather than being erect as are deer antlers. While deer would be the only horned animals known to the Indians of Virginia, Africans would be familiar with both goats and antelopes.

While highly suggestive, all of these motifs are not sufficient evidence to permit the attribution of Chesapeake pipe decoration to African artists. But they do provide a starting point from which to explore further the possible relationships between these pipes and blacks in seventeenth-century Maryland and Virginia. Unlike Colono ware, Chesapeake pipes were in all likelihood made for sale. One senses that they were not made in many locations, but widely traded. Their production required a somewhat more sophisticated technology than that involved in making Colono ware. The molds used in making some of the pipes were either brought from England or manufactured in Virginia. As yet, none have been found, leaving that question unresolved. But whether English or locally made molds were used, the technology involved—shaping the clay, placing it in the mold, and boring the stem with wire—was unknown to both Native Virginians and Africans. White filled rouletted designs are a common feature of a number of West African pottery traditions, but absent from both Native American and European ones. It would seem, then, that Chesapeake pipes are a true creole form, combining at least in part an English technology with decorations done in a manner with close African connections. When we consider the geographical distribution of Chesapeake pipes, it becomes possible to suggest an explanation that accounts for the facts known about them as well as about Colono ware. Unlike Colono ware, which has been found from Virginia to Georgia, Chesapeake pipes have a limited distribution. They come from sites in the Chesapeake east of the fall line, precisely that area where the earliest African population was to be found. This was the region where the African and European population interacted most closely prior to the removal of slaves and servants to separate quarters. Living as well as working together, the two groups would have created an ideal context in which to produce artifacts such as Chesapeake pipes. But when both slaves and servants were removed from the immediate physical world of the planter, a fundamental change in the quality of social intercourse may well have taken place. The decoration of Chesapeake pipes by Africans could have continued under the new arrangement, but it did not. While such pipes were made into the early years of the eighteenth century, these later examples are mostly mold-made, look more like their English counterparts than
before, and are decorated by stamping in English fashion. In a way, then, Chesapeake pipes and Colono ware are the same thing, at a higher level of abstraction. They are artifacts produced wholly or in part by Africans, and their complementary distribution over time bears witness to nothing less than the passing of an entire social order. We know less about the nature of black-white social interaction in the earlier seventeenth century than about that of later times. There is a tendency to project the image of plantation slavery made famous by writers such as Alex Haley and Margaret Mitchell in an uncritical fashion on these earlier times, where in fact, a very different kind of community may have existed, closely knit, and one in which servitude rather than the color of one’s skin dictated the social order. Such a community would be expectable in a situation where those of lesser social standing were of both European and African origin, and would change only when the demographic balance shifted to the full-blown racially based slavery which appeared as the seventeenth century drew to a close. Historians have suggested that European attitudes toward blacks, whether slaves or servants, were indeed different in the earlier seventeenth century. Edmund Morgan, while admitting the relative scarcity of written information on black-white relationships in Virginia before 1660, writes,

"While racial feelings undoubtedly affected the position of Negroes, there is more than a little evidence that Virginians during these years were ready to think of Negroes as members or potential members of the community on the same terms as other men and to demand of them the same standards of behavior. Black men and white serving the same master worked, ate and slept together, and together shared in escapades, escapes and punishments."

Morgan goes on to point out that before 1660 some of the blacks, perhaps a majority, were slaves, but others were servants and some were free. They could earn wages and even use the money to purchase their freedom. The historical record for this period is not as strong as we would like, so that any additional piece of information is indeed valuable. The pattern of occurrence of both Colono ware and Chesapeake pipes not only provides archaeological support to Morgan’s thesis, but also fits comfortably with what we know about the plantation community at an early time. An older kind of community gave way to a new order, one that was to remain for the most part unchanged until the national ordeal of the Civil War. Archaeology has contributed to our understandings of this transformation, if only in a modest fashion.

African American archaeology will continue to be a major component of the work of historical archaeologists in the years to come. As it does, we will sharpen our approaches to the excavated material, to ensure that we recover the maximum degree of understanding. Much has been written in recent years about “ethnic markers” as they
attest to an African American presence on a site. Objects such as pierced coins, cowrie shells, beads—particularly blue ones—and quartz crystals are seen as evidence that African Americans were once in residence. But no quantity of such objects can provide absolute proof of such a presence when taken in isolation, in the absence of independent documentation. And when such a presence is demonstrated in the documents, what is the need for archaeological substantiation? True, they can be seen as "africanisms"—survivals—but given what we know from the broader archaeological record and the work of scholars of African American material culture, this comes as no surprise. A far more productive approach to understanding the archaeological record of African Americans is to work on sites such as Cannon's Point, Parting Ways, or Kingsmill, to name but a few, and attempt to piece together the whole fabric of a way of life, connecting foodways, dwelling houses, community layout, pottery, and smoking pipes into a coherent, logical whole. What has already emerged from the work of archaeologists on the many sites so far investigated is a sense of the creation in the past of a new way of life, one which owes much of its form to the strength of a culture that survived the middle passage and the rigors of life under the oppression of slavery. Archaeology, not the written record, allows us to look into another world, which in its rich and varied form has made a vital contribution to the culture of all Americans as we know it today.

Samuel Smith, Cato Howe, Nathan Hayward, Jonathan Fairbanks, Isaac Allerton, Miles Standish—all are names we have encountered as we have surveyed the objects left behind by them and so many others, objects that in a special way tell us of our past and their world. Special because, in the telling, we have gained insights that would have been very difficult to obtain were we to rely solely on the written record. Writing, which to modern Americans seems an almost universal skill, tends to mask the differences between ourselves and the Americans of earlier generations. Obviously the literate minority of early America were more like us at least in that one respect, and since the writing is in English, archaic as it sometimes is, we feel a community with the writers of the past that is misplaced when it is extended to everyone who lived. Were we to confront any of the men named above, we would experience a sense of culture shock as profound as if we had