

CHAPTER 3

Archaeological Visibility of Afro-American Culture: An Example from Black Lucy's Garden, Andover, Massachusetts¹

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Introduction

The persistence of African cultural traits among Black Americans has long been recognized. Elements of present-day Afro-American speech, music, dance, and diet have been identified as African in origin (e.g., Blassingame 1972; Garrett 1966; Lomax 1970). It is likely that during the 18th and 19th centuries such elements were more pronounced than today. As Blassingame writes: "The most remarkable aspect of the whole process of enslavement is the extent to which the American-born slaves were able to retain their ancestors' culture" (1972: 39).

In this paper I discuss the tangible, material ways in which Afro-American culture of the late 18th and 19th centuries may be visible in the archaeological record. My premise is that domestic sites of known Black occupancy will reveal patterns of material culture distinctive of Afro-American behavior. Attention is focused upon the habitation site of Lucy Foster, a freed Black woman who lived in Andover, Massachusetts during the early-mid-19th century.

Lucy Foster

Whether Lucy was African or American-born is uncertain. In an article on the history of Andover which appeared in *The Andover Advertiser*, August 29, 1863, Alfred Poor writes that "... she [Lucy] was a dau. of a slave in Boston, and was given to Mrs. C. [Chandler] when she [Mrs. Chandler] was the wife of Job Foster . . ." (p. 2).

Little documentary information about Lucy is available. Glimpses of her life,

however, are provided in the recorded affairs of Hannah Foster Chandler, her first husband Job Foster, and her second husband Philemon Chandler.

Job Foster, a well-to-do yeoman farmer in Andover (ECPR),² married Hannah Ford of Wilmington, Massachusetts on March 27, 1760. They resided in Andover where Job presumably continued to farm. When Lucy entered the Foster household is unknown, but she was present at least by 1771, since in July of that year she bore a daughter "given" to Job. The following entry appears in the records of the Andover South Parish Congregational Church: "July 14, 1771, Sarah, a child given to Job Foster and Lucy, a Negro, Child was baptized" (SPCR).³

Lucy was probably a servant in the Foster household. By the 18th century it was common throughout New England, and the North in general, for slaves to be used as domestics (Bailey 1880; Greene 1928). Females were cooks, laundresses, maids, and general household workers (Greene 1974: 110). Lucy probably served in such roles both before and after she gained her freedom, most likely in 1780 when Massachusetts slaves were emancipated.⁴ Indeed, Lucy remained with the Fosters until Job died in 1782, and also stayed in Hannah's service until the latter's death in 1812 (ECPR).

Shortly after Job Foster's death Hannah remarried. Her second husband, Philemon Chandler, was also a well-to-do yeoman farmer in Andover (ECPR). The marriage occurred on February 2, 1789 (SPCR).

Exactly when or how Hannah and Philemon met is unclear, but both served as appraisers of Job's estate. John Abbot Jr., Joseph Ballard, Philemon Chandler, and Hannah Foster, administrator of the estate, appraised Job's real and personal property at £1046 17 04 (ECPR). But, on March 31, 1785, Joseph Foster, a son of Job and Hannah, complained to the probate court that substantial personal property had been omitted from his father's probate inventory (ECPR). Benjamin Greenleaf, judge of probate for Essex County, ordered the appraisers to reevaluate the deceased's moveables. On July 29, 1785, John Abbot Jr., Philemon Chandler, and Hannah submitted an addendum to Job's inventory which included additional personal property valued at £49 06 04 (ECPR).

Since Job died intestate and the documents of administration of his personal property have not survived, it is uncertain what percentage of his moveables was awarded to Hannah. With respect to the real estate, however, she received one third of all her late husband's holdings. Greenleaf appointed a committee of Andover freeholders "... to divide and set off by metes and bounds, one third part ... of all the real estate of Mr. Job Foster, yeoman, unto his wido Mrs. Hannah Foster for her use and improvement during her natural life" (ECPR). The committee recommended, and the court approved that Hannah be given certain tracts of land plus "... the east end of the dwelling house [Job's] from the top to the bottom as far as the middle of the chimney together with the south half of the cellar" (ECPR).

Hannah, attended by Lucy, probably remained in Job's house until 1789.

At this time she remarried, and, along with Lucy, moved to the Chandler homestead.

Two events marked Lucy's stay in the Chandler home: 1) "On Oct. 20, 1792, bapt. Peter, son of Lucy Foster, negro woman," and 2) on September 22, 1793, Lucy was admitted to the South Parish Church on profession of faith (SPCR). The father of Lucy's son is unknown as is her role in the Chandler household. What is certain, however, is that by 1800 both Hannah and Lucy no longer resided in Philemon's house. In recognition of kindness shown him in his later years, Philemon bequeathed Hannah \$610.16, plus flax, wool, soap, cyder, apples, and the right to remain in his dwelling house for one year after his death (ECPR). He died on October 7, 1799 (SPCR).

By 1800, then, it is probable that Hannah and Lucy were again living on the Foster homestead. Hannah died on December 25, 1812, and the real estate mentioned both in her will and probate inventory clearly indicates that, at least at the time of her death, she was residing in her first husband's house (ECPR). Moreover, these documents reveal Hannah's beneficent feelings toward Lucy. In the first item of her will, Hannah writes, "I give and bequeath to Lucy Foster, the Black girl who lives with me . . . one cow, I also give to said Lucy one acre of land . . . [boundaries are given]" (ECPR). Here Lucy built a cottage in which she lived the remainder of her life.

In the 1863 newspaper article mentioned above, Alfred Poor gives the only known description of Lucy's dwelling place.

When we get nearly over the plain we pass by the road which leads through the woods over the Chandler Bridge and the river street, and as we leave the plain, a sand bank called Black Lucy's garden, so named because a colored woman once had a cottage between this and the meadow, on an acre of land that was bequeathed to her by wid. Chandler. Capt. Joshua Ballard, with about \$150 of her [Lucy's] own money, together with some more contributed by her friends, built her cot. about 1815, in which she lived about 30 years . . . (p. 2).

Poor's account is corroborated by primary information. First, Hannah's will, executed by Joshua Ballard, indicates that Lucy was given the acre of land (ECPR). Second, the \$150 of "her own money" used to build her cottage probably is accounted for in the administration of Hannah's estate. The largest note paid from the estate is \$126.15 to Lucy Foster (ECPR). And third, that Lucy occupied the cottage for about thirty years is supported by the fact that she died in 1845, age eighty-eight, just thirty years after the dwelling was built (SPCR).

How Lucy supported herself during the thirty years she lived in the cottage is uncertain. Although fifty-eight years of age by 1815, she may have continued as a servant, doing chores for local Andover families. Hannah's death, however,

Table 1. Lucy Foster's annual dole from the fund for the relief of indigent persons in the South Parish Congregational Church, Andover, Massachusetts

Year	Amount of annual dole
1813-21	\$1.00 (per year)
1822-23	1.50 (per year)
1824-25	2.00 (per year)
1826	3.00
1827	1.50
1828	2.00
1829	no records
1830-35	2.50 (per year)
1836	3.00
1837-38	5.00 (per year)
1839-45	4.00 (per year)

left her economically impoverished. Lucy's indigence is demonstrated by the dole she received from the South Parish Church. Immediately after Hannah's death, Lucy is identified as needy, and remains one of the parish poor until her death (see Table 1). By 1844 her health is failing and her economic condition is desperate. The following information is taken from the accounts of the Overseers of the Poor:

January 1844, an order to Joshua Ballard for supplies furnished Lucy Foster (state pauper) \$23.42.

February 17, 1844, an order to Dr. Daniel Wardwell for attendance on Lucy Foster \$1.34.

October 7, 1844, an order to Joshua Ballard for relief of Lucy Foster \$21.61.

July 7, 1845, an order to William Balduni for expenses for Lucy Foster \$1.25.

November 4, 1845, an order to Joshua Ballard for supplies to Lucy Foster \$1.75.

In this last account Ballard obviously is being reimbursed for funds already spent, since Lucy died of asthma on November 1, 1845 (SPCR).

The Black Lucy's Garden site, so named from the reference in Poor's article, was identified and excavated by Adelaide and Ripley Bullen in 1943. The house does not survive, but excellent information in Hannah's will plus documents that describe other properties allowed the accurate location of Lucy's one acre (Bullen and Bullen 1945).

The house burned probably soon after Lucy's death, and there was no further occupation of the site. Excavation provided charred wood as well as ceramic

wares manufactured no later than the mid-19th century (Baker 1978; Bullen and Bullen 1945). Based on the number of sherds, the ceramic assemblage includes 64 per cent pearlware, 17 per cent redware, 13 per cent creamware, 2 per cent Chinese porcelain, 1 per cent delft ware, 1 per cent jackfield ware, 1 per cent local stoneware, and 1 per cent hardwhite ware. Furthermore, the absence of ironstone, which first appears circa 1810 and continues through the 19th century (Godden 1971), is negative evidence supporting the mid-19th century as the time of final occupation.

Excavated features associated with Lucy's occupancy are the cellar of the house, a well, a dump, and a vegetable cellar (Bullen and Bullen 1945). Upon initial examination the cultural materials retrieved appear identical to those from Anglo-American sites. Yet, when compared to recent findings from other Afro-American sites, artifacts and features at Black Lucy's Garden are seen to fit patterns not previously observed on sites of Anglo-Americans.

Ceramics and faunal remains

In his excellent study of status differences among planters, overseers, and slaves at Cannon's Point Plantation in Georgia, John Otto (1975; 1977) demonstrated a significant correlation among social status, shape of ceramic vessels, and dietary habits.

With respect to items of ceramic tableware, Otto found that serving bowls constituted 44, 24, and 8 per cent of the total tableware on the slave, overseer, and planter sites, respectively. Conversely, he found that items of serving flatware (i.e., plates and soup-plates), comprised 49, 72, and 84 per cent of the total tableware from the slave, overseer, and planter sites, respectively (Otto 1977: 106). Ceramic items apparently were issued to both slaves and overseers by the planter family (Otto 1977: 100). Knowledge of the diet of the former probably influenced the items provided.

Documents indicate that both slaves and overseers ate pottages and liquid-based stews of meat and vegetables, while the planter family ate roast meats and vegetables prepared individually (Otto 1977: 104). The zooarchaeological data support the documentary information. Remains of cattle, sheep, and hogs from the planter's kitchen reveal saw marks indicative of purposeful butchering to produce roasts. At the slave and overseer sites none of the bones has saw marks. Instead, these remains are chopped and split open. The extent to which the planter family influenced the diet of the slaves and overseers is uncertain. Food may have been issued or purchased. Nevertheless, it is clear that the slaves and overseers ate stews from serving bowls, while the planter family ate roasts from flat tableware.

Although Black Lucy's Garden was occupied by a freed northern Black, striking similarities exist between the archaeological data from this site and that from the Cannon's Point slave site.

	Slave cabin Cannon's Point Plantation	113 vessels Black Lucy's Garden	Parting Ways
Total tableware count	80	49	81
Serving bowls	44	41 %	53
Flatware	49	51 %	46
Other tableware shapes	7	8 %	1

The minimum number of reconstructed ceramic vessels from the Black Lucy site is 113 (Baker 1978). Of these there are forty-nine items of tableware. Following Otto (1977), tableware is divided into serving bowls, flatware, and other shapes (e.g., tureens, pitchers). This classification reveals twenty serving bowls, twenty-five flatware vessels, and four other tableware vessels. Thus, bowls represent 41 per cent of the total tableware, while flatware and other shapes comprise 51 and 8 per cent, respectively.

In terms of faunal remains, 82 per cent of the cattle, sheep, and hog remains is chopped and cleaved open, suggesting that stews, not roasts, are the main bill of fare.

The patterns of ceramic shapes and faunal remains observed at Cannon's Point and Black Lucy's Garden are repeated at the Parting Ways site. Excavated by James Deetz, Parting Ways is a late 18th and 19th century rural community of four families of freed slaves in Plymouth, Massachusetts (Deetz 1977). A count of the minimum number of ceramic vessels, reveals eighty-one items of tableware (Baker 1976). These include forty-three serving bowls, thirty-seven flatware vessels, and one pitcher. Serving bowls, flatware, and other shapes comprise 53, 46, and 1 per cent of the total tableware, respectively (see Table 2). Moreover, without exception all of the faunal remains from Parting Ways are chopped, not sawed (Deetz 1977: 152).

Although affiliation of the above patterns to African cultural elements is unclear, the presence of serving bowls exceeding 40 per cent of all tableware, plus chopped faunal remains approaching 100 per cent of all such remains, appear distinctive of Afro-American sites, both slave and free.

Architecture

Excavation at Parting Ways revealed at least three undisturbed architectural features—one cellar hole and two sets of footing stones—associated with the Black occupants. The consistent dimension of these units was 12 feet, and not the standard Anglo-American 16 feet (Deetz 1977: 144-149).

The 12-foot dimension, as Deetz notes (1977: 150-151), assumes great significance in light of John Vlach's recent research on shotgun houses in the American South and in Haiti, and on West African house types. Vlach (1976; 1978) has identified the shotgun house as a legitimate Afro-American architectural form. This is especially important since architectural units at Parting Ways strongly resemble shotgun houses in both floor plan and dimension. The 12-foot module, then, may represent a distinctive Afro-American architectural tradition. If such a tradition existed, one might expect to observe its remains on sites of other Afro-Americans. Well within the 12-foot range is housing of freed slaves living in Charleston, South Carolina. The description below is taken from an article entitled "Freed Blacks in Charleston, S.C." which appeared in *The New York Tribune*, June 30, 1869:

The door was less than 5 ft high and it was the only entrance for light. The room was about 10 ft square with an earth floor; there was a fireplace made of sticks and clay . . . and there were three beds made box shape of boards (p. 2).

Lucy also lived in a small cottage. Its construction was probably influenced by her desires and tastes, as well as by the modest amount she had to spend. The humble quality of the dwelling is indicated by its absence from the 1830 map of Andover (Dorman 1830). As previously noted, Lucy's cottage burned soon after her death, and there was no further occupancy of the location of her dwelling. Excavation of the undisturbed cellar showed that it was approximately square. The sides varied from 10 feet 6 inches to 11 feet 6 inches, while the walls varied in thickness from 18 to 25 inches (Bullen and Bullen 1945). Lucy's cottage clearly fits the 12-foot pattern.

Conclusion

Two features make Black Lucy's Garden distinctive: 1) the site was occupied by an Afro-American, and 2) this individual was poor. Similarly, Parting Ways was occupied by needy Blacks (Deetz 1977: 140-142). The issue, then, is that the patterns visible in the archaeological record may be reflecting poverty and not the presence of Afro-Americans.

For example, as John Otto demonstrated, the same pattern of faunal remains and, to a lesser extent, of ceramic vessels was present at both plantation slave and overseer sites. Since the overseers were white but of modest economic means (Otto 1977: 92), as were the slaves, the similarities in faunal remains and ceramics at the slave and overseer sites may be a function of their shared economic condition.

Presently, 12-foot architectural units, ceramic serving bowls, and chopped faunal remains provide the clearest archaeological visibility of late 18th and 19th

century Afro-Americans. Only research on sites of poor whites, however, will substantiate fully the interpretive value of these three types of data.

Notes

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²*ECPR* is the abbreviation used for the Essex County, Massachusetts probate records, Salem, Massachusetts.

³*SPCR* is the abbreviation used for the South Parish Congregational Church Records, Andover, Massachusetts.

⁴During the first half of the 19th century many northern Blacks, although no longer slaves, remained as laborers and servants (Litwack 1961; Provine 1973).

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