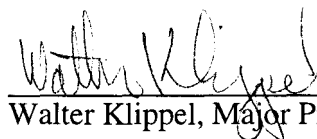


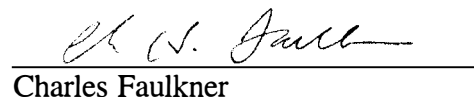
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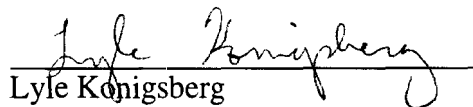
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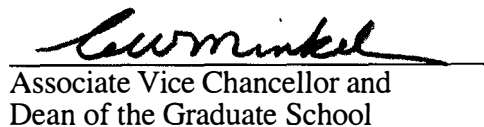
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Lyle Konigsberg

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**URBAN SLAVE DIET IN EARLY KNOXVILLE:  
FAUNAL REMAINS FROM BLOUNT MANSION, KNOXVILLE,  
TENNESSEE**

**A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Carey Lamar Coxe  
August 1998**

**This thesis is dedicated to my wife,  
Elizabeth Cane Cox.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The vertebrate faunal remains recovered during excavations at the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin, located at Blount Mansion, Knoxville, Tennessee provide a rare opportunity to address the dietary refuse from an urban slave context in the Upland South region. The material was analyzed and the data compared to faunal data from three other slave sites on Upland South plantations, Mabry, Locust Grove, and the Hermitage, and one Upland South yeoman farm site, the Gibbs House site. These comparisons revealed that the urban slaves at Blount Mansion appear to have consumed much more fish than rural slaves and farmers in the uplands. Also, in terms of the “quality” of pork cuts, the urban slave pork elements occur in a pattern distinctly different from those of the Upland South rural plantations.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Urban slavery has received much less attention from scholarly and popular writers than rural plantation slavery. Perhaps the reason for this has been that the use of slave labor in the agriculture of the pre-Emancipation South was so conspicuous. Plantations have provided many researchers with discrete population units with which to analyze and compare data. Also, as Woessner (1967) indicates, the records of many plantation owners and managers were more meticulous than those of city dwelling slave owners. Also, the documents of rural plantation slave owners seem to better survive the ravages of time and the threat of discardment. Therefore, much historical data seems to exist for plantation slaves, whereas urban slaves seem to have been less well documented.

Information does exist concerning slavery in the cities. It lies in newspaper advertisements for slave sales or hire, and local ordinances concerning the practice of keeping, selling, hiring, and punishment of slaves. Court documents concerning the trespasses of and on city dwelling slaves provide a glimpse of how the city slaves were dealt with by the law. Federal census data and tax records offer some way to account for slave numbers in the cities. The records of individual slave owners, though sparse, can yield invaluable information concerning the life of urban slaves.

Woessner (1967) suggests that more specific information concerning the movements and habits of slaves in the urban environment were often overlooked by traveling authors. This was most likely due to the "multiplicity" of the urban environment,

as opposed to the more easily comprehended rural plantation situations. However, urban slaves were apparently quite noticeable. Visitors to the southern cities often commented on the distinction between urban slaves and rural slaves (Wade 1964). Those distinctions were usually related to the style and quality of their clothing and the leisure time the slaves seemed to possess.

"Town slavery" has been briefly addressed by some authors while discussing southern slavery in general. These authors devote most of their attention to plantation slavery. They do not adequately distinguish urban slavery from its more familiar rural counterpart (Phillips 1987; Stamp 1956). To date, only two book length historical studies have been conducted on urban slavery in the South (Goldin 1976; Wade 1964). Wade (1964) describes the setting of urban slavery and recognizes a decline in urban slave numbers as a disintegration of the slavery system in the urban South prior to Emancipation. Goldin (1976), takes an even more quantitative approach in determining the change in urban bondsmen numbers relative to economic aspects of the several developing southern cities in the mid-nineteenth century. One less comprehensive study does analyze the condition of urban slavery on a local level (Woessner 1967) in New Orleans, but counters Wade's assertion that slavery was slowly dying by maintaining that Wade's figures were inaccurately drawn. Woessner states that while the numbers of slaves had decreased over a long period, other factors such as foreign immigration, changing industries, and urban growth simply adjusted urban slave populations until an equilibrium had been reached. Slavery in the city was not dying. Rather, it was simply being altered to fit its changing environment, at least as far as the Crescent City was concerned.

The pervasiveness of slavery in the rural setting was linked to the need for human laborers to attend to the needs of the plantation economy, and therefore, to the economy of the South in general. Slavery in the cities was also due to the need for low cost labor, but was less directly related to southern agricultural production, and more related to the rapid

development of urban centers in the South. There was a high demand for skilled laborers to work as carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, etc., to build and maintain the quickly developing towns. There was also a need for domestic servants of all types to tend to the daily needs of the households of the upper classes of these new urban centers.

Zooarchaeological studies of faunal assemblages from historical sites have provided much dietary information about the former occupants of these locations. Such topics as economic status, ethnicity, and environmental changes have been addressed. In the past few years, African-American slave diet in North America has become a focus of many historical zooarchaeologists (Breitburg 1983, 1990; Breitburg and McKee 1992; Fairbanks 1974, 1984; Jolley 1983; Lev-Tov and Young 1995; Moore 1985; Otto 1984; Young 1993).

Historical zooarchaeologists, in addressing slave diet based on archaeological faunal remains, have primarily emphasized the diets of rural plantation slaves regarding the quality and diversity of the meat portion of their diet. A majority of the work has consisted of describing and comparing the faunal assemblages of coastal plantation slaves (Jolley 1983; Moore 1985; Otto 1984) while some study has concerned Upland South plantations (Young 1993). Recently, comparisons have been made between coastal and Upland South plantation slave diets (Young 1993). While urban and rural distinctions in coastal Euro-American diets have been addressed (Reitz 1986), the diet of slaves in the urban environment has not. Although urban slave diet has been briefly discussed by historians (Goldin 1976; Wade 1964; Woessner 1967), this thesis presents the first archaeological analysis and discussion of urban slave diet in the Upland South.

Faunal material from probable slave cabin remains at Blount Mansion, located in downtown Knoxville, Tennessee, offers some information about the meat diet of urban slaves in the Upland South region. Blount Mansion was originally constructed in 1792 by William Blount, the First Governor of the Territory South of the River Ohio. The mansion

grounds contain intact cultural deposits dating from the early 1790s through the beginning of the 20th century. Cultural material around the remains of the slave cabin date from the 1790s to the 1830s. Archaeological and architectural evidence indicates the cabin was moved during the 1830s and attached as a wing on the mansion (Faulkner 1993a). Midden deposits in the Slave Cabin area that date after the 1830s possess material of less certain origins and may reflect general mansion refuse. Another midden area directly to the south of the cabin, dates from the 1790s to the 20th century and may contain material from both slave and mansion contexts. Deposits containing faunal material associated with the Slave Cabin and South Midden were recovered from the 1992, 1993 and 1994 archaeological field seasons.

The study of faunal remains from dated deposits at Blount Mansion allows determination of the availability, procurement, and consumption of meat by slaves who lived at this urban site. By comparing Blount Mansion slave faunal material with faunal material from plantation slave sites of the same region, it is possible to ascertain dietary differences between urban and rural slaves. Such comparisons will likely yield much information about how urban slaves fit into the urban landscape, and how they fared in comparison to their rural plantation counterparts.

A comparison of data from the Blount Mansion urban slave faunal assemblage to rural slave faunal assemblages from Mabry Plantation, Knoxville, Tennessee (Young 1993), Locust Grove Plantation in Kentucky (Lev-Tov and Young 1995), and domestic and field slaves of the Hermitage Plantation (Breitburg 1990; Breitburg and McKee 1992) may indicate differences in meat procurement and consumption between these slave groups. The comparison of Blount Mansion slave diet to that of Mabry, Locust Grove, and the Hermitage slaves offers a chance to view dietary content of rural and urban slaves from the Upland South. There may be dietary differences reflective of the differing conditions imposed by the urban and rural surroundings.

The Blount Mansion slaves and the Hermitage domestic slaves may have shared a similar social station. The Blount Mansion slaves held domestic or artisan positions rather than laborer positions, as did the Hermitage domestic slaves. The comparison of Blount Mansion and Hermitage domestic slaves could show similar dietary practices due to their similar status. The inclusion of Hermitage field slaves in this comparison offers additional indications regarding differences between the diet of slaves in the city and slaves on a large plantation.

A comparison of Blount Mansion slave faunal material with that of the Gibbs House, an 18th to 19th century yeoman farmstead located near Knoxville (Lev-Tov 1994), could reveal dietary differences between yeoman farmers and urban slaves on rural farms and plantations. This comparison may show an important characteristic regarding an urban household living on what may be described as an urban farmstead. It is observed elsewhere that wealthy urban households in the Southeast would often raise and slaughter their own livestock, largely because they had the financial and spatial resources to do so (Elizabeth Reitz, personal communication 1994). Also, a wealthy household that entertained a number of guests was more able to quickly consume large quantities of meat provided by a large animal such as a pig, goat, or cow. Therefore, a wealthy household need not participate fully in an urban food procurement system which would include butchers and meat markets. The archaeological assemblage produced by such an urban household should reflect some degree of dietary self sufficiency. In this way, such an assemblage may resemble that of the farmstead occupied by the Gibbs family.

Following this introductory chapter, this thesis continues with a second chapter briefly reviewing African-American slavery in the urban environment and how it compared with slavery on the rural plantation. The third chapter presents the materials and methods used to analyze and compare the material from Blount Mansion to material from other sites in the region. This chapter consists of a summary of the historical, environmental and

archaeological assemblage information of the sites being compared: Blount Mansion, Mabry Plantation, Locust Grove Plantation, the Hermitage Plantation and the Gibbs House site. The fourth chapter presents the analysis and conclusions of the Blount Mansion slave faunal assemblage with emphasis on taxa utilization and skeletal part utilization. The fifth chapter presents a comparative study of the Blount Mansion slave fauna to the Blount Mansion South Midden assemblage. The sixth chapter considers the material from Blount Mansion, Mabry Plantation, Locust Grove Plantation, the Hermitage and the Gibbs House site. The seventh chapter presents the summary and conclusions of this research.

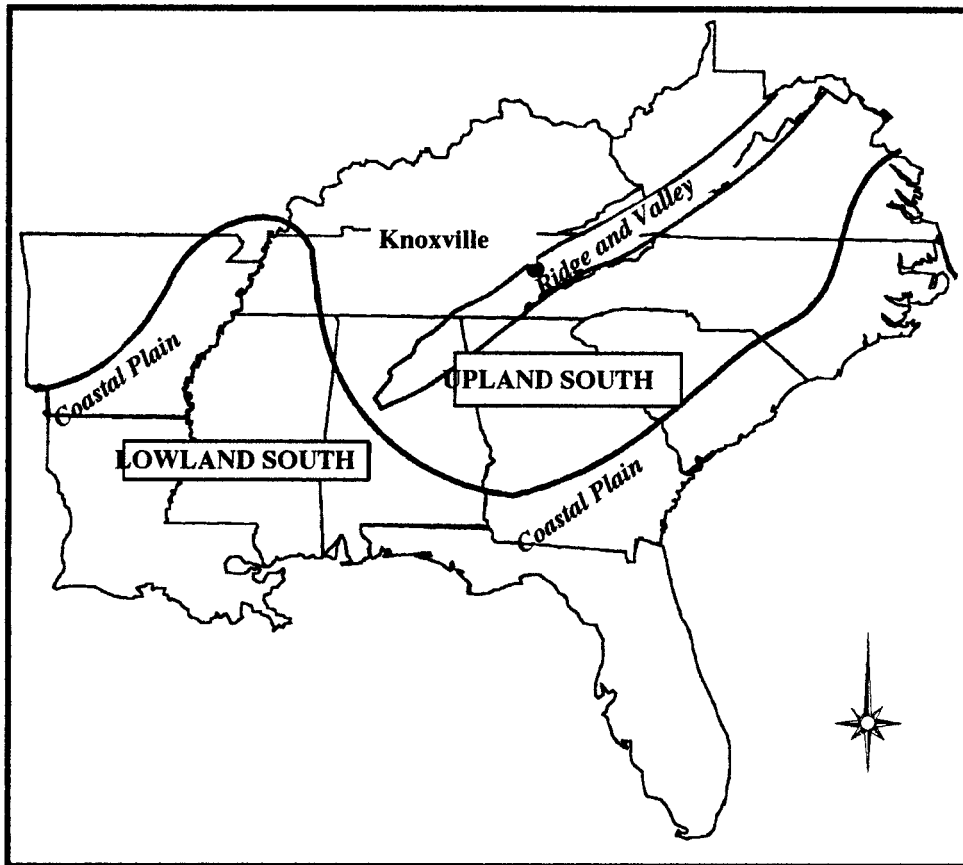
## **CHAPTER 2**

### **URBAN SLAVERY IN THE UPLAND SOUTH**

The importance of slave labor to the economy of the South, and to the wealth of planters and investors, was plainly recognized by southern planters. While the principle of slavery was simple - one man owning another - the practice of that principle was diversely manifested. Slavery from one region to another and from one occupation to another varied considerably. It is likely that slavery on the frontier of the Upland South differed significantly from slavery in the established areas simply due to the nature of the work involved and the management style and idiosyncrasies of the slave owner.

#### **Slavery in the Upland South**

The initial forays of frontiersmen into the Upland South (Figure 2.1) were accompanied by slaves. As early settlers began to found small farms and communities, slaves were needed to clear land and plant crops along the river valleys of the uplands. The number of slaves was small compared to the more established plantations and farms in the low country of the Carolinas and Virginia. The vital role of slaves in the development and protection of the frontier is demonstrated by the participation of slaves in the Revolutionary War's Battle of Kings Mountain in 1780 (Oakley 1993).



**Figure 2.1. Lowland and Upland South Regions of the Southeastern U.S.**  
(after McKelway 1994).

By 1790, the threat of attack by Native American groups and the difficulties encountered in farming the uplands thwarted the massive influx of white settlers. Likewise, investment capital was moderated by these same factors. Many who would have otherwise invested in large farms or plantations in the upland frontier saw greater potential in the Carolina and Virginia lowlands. Consequently, upland farms remained comparatively small and the farmers were interested in survival and safety, rather than in business pursuits. However, some slaves were necessary to establish settlements on the frontier and many farmers owned slaves for these purposes. Slave labor cleared land, planted and harvested the crops, and cleaned the house, often with the assistance of the master. However, few frontier slave owners could be considered to have had major slave holdings (Oakley 1993).

Many of Tennessee's early white settlers were from North Carolina and Virginia. They brought with them not only their slaves, but their attitudes on slavery. These concepts were later codified in the state laws of North Carolina, and later, Tennessee. Civil law interpretations viewed slaves as the personal property of the master. However, common law perceived slaves as people, deserving of humane treatment, an idea the hardships of frontier life seemed to reinforce. Federal law in the Southwest Territory, meanwhile, recognized the importance of slave labor to the development of the frontier and forbade the emancipation of slaves, thus emphasizing the existence of slaves as investment property (Oakley 1993).

Federal laws, while not allowing emancipation, maintained that the slaves had rights, including protection from mistreatment by their masters. When Tennessee became a state, the State Constitution of 1796 overrode the earlier Federal law against emancipation. The new state law granted freedom to those slaves who provided meritorious service, as well as insuring suffrage to free blacks who met the requirements of property ownership. Incidentally, in the following year, the first slave to be given his freedom under this state

law was a barber from Knoxville named Jack, who was released in 1797 for uncertain reasons (Goodstein 1979:73).

Slavery was considered by most planters in the American South to be an absolute necessity to the agrarian economy of the developing nation. Plantations in the fertile coastal plain and larger river deltas contained appropriate soil types to sustain certain cash crops. These plantations were generally large in acreage and required many slaves to operate. The larger scale of agricultural production in the lowlands of the Coastal Plain was also due in part to the flat fertile terrain that accommodated larger fields. In the uplands of Appalachia, farms and plantations remained small, even in the river valleys. The size of the upland farms were limited to a large degree by the hilly, dissected terrain and less fertile soil.

While the river valleys were fertile, they were much smaller than those in the South, and consequently, less profitable to farm. The less favorable environment for large scale agriculture in the uplands kept much investment capital out of the uplands and instead turned to the lowlands of the Coastal Plain and deltas for profitable crops. The smaller plantation size afforded by the Upland South environment required fewer slaves to operate. For example, at the turn of the nineteenth century in Knox County, slave holdings were generally from one to two slaves per owner (Oakley 1993).

Geographical location in the Upland South is not a sufficient criterion for characterizing the Upland South plantation due to variety in the size of plantations in the Upland South, and their agricultural products. The Upper South plantation is defined by diversified agricultural products and services (Inscoc 1989; Otto 1989). The products it produced were able to sustain all of the plantation's inhabitants and provide enough surplus to sell at market (Andrews and Young 1992). Slave numbers were dependent on the size of the plantation and production activity. Due to the diversity of agriculture, the slave labor required had to be diverse as well. Consequently, slaves would not have been organized

into labor gangs (Inscoc 1989). Rather than being permanently divided into field and domestic hands, assigned tasks were relatively temporary, depending on the time of year and the cycle of agricultural production (Andrews and Young 1992; Shclotterbeck 1982:10). Slaves in the task labor system were required to complete a task in whatever amount of time it took. Slaves in the gang labor system had to work a certain number of hours every day. The choice of labor systems was directly influenced by the type of plantation or farm on which the slave worked. The larger, less agriculturally diversified plantations most often used gang labor, which was conducive to large scale, single cropping. Task labor was mostly used on smaller, more diversified plantations to manage the production of several different agricultural products. Task labor would also have been used in an urban situation, where the slaves' responsibilities varied. Presumably the task labor system allowed more free time for slaves to attend their own affairs than the labor system. The amount of time slaves had to themselves was the result of the type of labor system employed by their master- task labor or gang labor.

Andrews and Young (1992), in their development of a plantation model specific to the Uplands of Tennessee and Kentucky, use the social relations between the master and slave as their defining mechanism. They suggest that the number of slaves owned, the acreage of the plantation, and the type of agriculture (monocropping or diversified agriculture) do not sufficiently distinguish large plantations in the lowlands from smaller plantations or farms in the uplands in terms of describing the slave and master relationship. Instead they point to the likely social interactions between each party, and how that might have affected treatment of the slave by the master. This closer working relationship between slave and master is believed by many to have fostered a mutually higher regard between the two (Gray 1933:518; Lamon 1981:6; Mooney 1968). Obviously, the master's favored consideration of the slave would have been most important in terms of benefiting the slave. Though possibly self serving in their desire to boost slave morale to increase

work efforts, the closer working relationship possible on the small plantation may have prompted slave owners to be more accommodating to their slaves in terms of housing and provisions. This treatment could have included at least adequate shelter, food, and clothing, and whatever other advantages the master's favor provided. Consequently, the relationship of master to slave may have resulted in some significant correlation in the material culture.

McKelway (1994) addresses this issue at Mabry Plantation, near Knoxville, and found little distinction in the material culture between slave and master, except for a higher diversity of decorated ceramics in the slave deposits. McKelway (1994) attributes the ceramic diversity to the slaves' piecemeal acquisition of ceramic vessels. He believes this may have been due to the slaves' limited access to complete sets of ceramics, which reflects the slaves' low economic status.

Although plagued by small sample size in her study of the faunal remains from Mabry Plantation, Young (1993) found little contrast between the meat diets of the master and slave. McKelway (1994:229) points out that the relationship between master and slave was far from equitable, in that the master was free and the slave was his property. However, this "impermeable social distinction" was not so apparent in the material culture at Mabry Plantation.

The dietary implication of the perceived more amiable attitude of Upland South masters toward their slaves is that the slaves would have eaten better than slaves of the large lowland plantations. This could be reflected by a more diverse diet, or more likely, better cuts of meat. As pork and beef were the staple meat products for the Ante-bellum Upland South population (Hilliard 1972), it is logical to assume that these two meats comprised the bulk of the meat diet of any slave in the region. Following the above logic, represented pork and beef cuts of upland slaves should reflect some degree of higher quality, relative to slaves of the larger lowland plantations.

Otto (1984) perceived slave diets at Cannon's Point Plantation, in coastal Georgia, as consisting of lower quality pork and beef cuts and planter diet as containing higher quality meat portions. Surprisingly, Young (1993:86) found that Cannon's Point planter diet actually contained more middle yield cuts. However, she found that beef cuts did indeed follow Otto's pattern in that higher yield beef portions were more prevalent in the planter contexts than in the slave contexts. Young did not see this type of distinction between the Mabry Plantation planter and slave fauna (Young 1993: 87).

While Young's research focuses on the degree of contrast between slave and planter diets in the uplands and coastal plantations (Young 1993), she also indicates that upland slave diets were less diverse than coastal slave diets. The factors involved in comparing coastal to upland slave diets in terms of quality are complicated by a number of factors, including access to livestock, the number of slaves, and the different species offered by vastly differing environments. It is therefore difficult to isolate the causal factors resulting in the contrasts or similarities between faunal remains from each region.

### **Urban Slavery**

While the character of slavery appears to have varied from region to region, Wade (1964) has stated that urban slavery was basically the same from city to city. He suggests that the constants of urban life, not the distinctions in "settlements, regions, or age" were the most important influences on the character of urban slavery. His survey of historical documents of several southern cities reveals slaves generally occupied the same jobs from city to city, that city governments were concerned with many similar problems of coping with their slave populations, and masters of urban slaves often resorted to the same techniques of slave management. The characteristics of urban slavery were so universal, and perhaps, so visible, that, in the popular culture of the early nineteenth century, an

urban slave minstrel caricature, Zip Coon, was developed. His “country cousin” from the plantation, Jim Crow, was much less “refined.” The distinction between rural and urban slaves, though terribly stereotyped by these characters, indicates that significant contrasts between the two types of slaves existed (Wade 1964: vii).

Occupations of urban slaves were often quite specific and characterized by domestic service, such as cooking, cleaning, raising the master’s children, tending to the grounds, or seeing to the horses. Many slaves were also highly skilled artisans, such as carpenters, masons, furniture makers, and blacksmiths (Wade 1957; Oakley 1993; Woessner 1967). Such occupations probably brought the slaves into close contact with the master and his family and made the slaves valuable for their talents and skills, and not simply their labor.

When the master did not require a slave’s labor for a time, a common practice was to hire them out to others who were in need of their services. Most slaves who were hired out possessed talents which made them useful to anyone who required their service and could afford to rent them from their owner. A hireable slave was often one way to subsidize a slave’s maintenance and was an important source of income for the widow or children of a deceased master. According to Eaton (1960) some slaves hired out by their master, also began to hire themselves out, thereby exerting control over their own employment and likely reaping some additional monetary benefit. Hiring out was certainly not the sole province of urban slavery; rural slaves were often loaned or hired out to neighboring farms. However, the closer association of urban slaves with an number of potential temporary employers in the city served to make hiring out a more common, and possibly less regulated, practice than in the rural setting (Eaton 1960).

If a slave was hired out, generally, the new master would supervise his temporary slave and provide him with shelter and provisions. But often, with the practice of hiring out, came the arrangement of “living out,” in which the slave lived in care of neither his original master, nor his current master. Instead, the slave lived elsewhere, perhaps in a

room rented from a free black, or an abandoned shed. In this situation, the slave had a certain degree of autonomy, without the master's supervision. Though the slave's own accommodations were probably not as adequate as those provided by the master, the associated liberty of living without white surveillance seemed to be favored by many slaves (Wade 1964).

Wade (1964) generalizes that the typical urban slave cabin was located on the master's house lot near the rear of the lot, behind the main house. The cabin, he states, was probably brick, long and narrow. Though well built, it was not well ventilated and fairly small, measuring probably 10 ft. by 15 ft. There were probably no windows, and heat was provided by a fireplace (Wade 1964:110)

Wade also suggests that housing for the urban slave, though adequate, served to reiterate the slave's bondage by being held close to the master's house and often within a walled or fenced compound. For this reason, he says, slaves often preferred to live out if it was an option, even if the living out quarters were in no way as comfortable as the housing provided by their master. Wade agrees that the slave cabins or quarters in the house and in the house lot, though probably small, were kept clean and presentable because they were located within sight of the master's eye and that of his guests (Wade 1964:111).

Clothing for the urban slave, was usually of much finer quality than the rural slave (Wade 1964:129). To the surprise of many rural whites, town slaves were often dressed better than themselves. Some interpreted this as an expression of pride by the master. Others recognized that the slaves themselves placed a great deal of importance on the quality of their dress. As Wade suggests, finer clothing may have raised the status of the slave, if only in his own mind, and relieved some of the indignity of bondage (Wade 1964:112). Another practical explanation is that slave owners simply did not wish for the aesthetic beauty of their houses, lots, or streets to be marred by shabbily dressed slaves.

According to some historical sources, food, in general, was more diverse and more abundant for the urban slave relative to his rural counterpart. Domestic slaves generally ate out of their master's kitchens, though often what they received were leftovers. This included not only staples of meat and corn, but also vegetables, fruit and bread. Many masters complained that their stores were frequently depleted by many in between meal snacks taken by their slaves. Consequently, the key to the pantry was often kept by the master or mistress (Wade 1964:133).

Owners who had a higher number of slaves may have bought food especially for them, which may have standardized the fare somewhat, making it more monotonous than their master's diet. Even slaves employed in municipal work gangs were required by law to be fed "wholesome food in sufficient quantity such as bread, meat, rice, corn and vegetables," though how fully this stipulation was met is uncertain (Wade 1964:133).

The urban bondsman was not solely dependent on his master for food. If the slave was allowed to have monetary resources, or was able to come by them regardless, the local market certainly could accommodate them. There were probably kitchens, perhaps run by free blacks, that catered to the needs of other free blacks, slaves, and poor whites. The description of slaves as artful scavengers may have been gained through the variety of unconventional ways in which they were able to obtain food (Wade 1964)

City life offered whites, freemen and slaves a variety of opportunities for socialization not available in the rural environment. For the slave there was the possibility to mingle with other slaves, free blacks, as well as wealthy and poor whites. The exchange of ideas and influences were inevitable, despite the intentions of local governments. Though this "liberty" alarmed many whites who felt that slaves should remain unfettered by independence, urban slavery persisted.

Wade (1964) argues that urban slavery throughout the South was on the decline well before the end of the Civil War. He cites paranoid attitudes of whites and the

consequent export of male slaves to the country as an indicator that slavery in the cities was waning. Woessner (1967), in his study of New Orleans slavery contends that urban slavery was not disintegrating but rather that it was adjusting to changes in the urban environment, mostly due to immigration and population increase. He argues that the amount of labor, provided by the slaves, free blacks, and foreign immigrants, exceeded the demand. The decline in urban slave numbers prior to the Civil War was simply an equalization necessary to maintain the social and racial status quo. Woessner points to a period just prior to the war where urban slave populations in New Orleans remained stable, equilibrium having been achieved.

The contrast between the conditions of rural and urban slavery are stark. In terms of occupations, it can be assumed that urban slaves were employed primarily as either domestic servants or skilled laborers or artisans. The presence of a slave in the city almost assured that they would serve in one of these capacities, doing the work that whites felt too arduous or mundane. As such, slaves became indispensable to white society, especially those of the wealthier classes.

The daily placement of a number of slaves in the household in close proximity to the master and his family almost assured the development of strong ties between the two. However, whether urban slaves were better or worse off than rural slaves is difficult to assess. Much of the historical information currently available, though anecdotal, seem to offer similar impressions on slave life in the city as to that of rural slaves, especially as it pertains to the most easily visible manifestations of treatment such as housing, clothing, and food. According to these sources, urban slaves had access to better housing, dress and food than rural slaves (Wade 1964), though it must be kept in mind that these accounts generally came from an upper class white perspective. Slaves may have enjoyed material benefits nearer a par with their masters. According to many historical sources, this was certainly the case in terms of the quality and style of clothing. There is less information

describing the urban slave accommodations. Due either to space limitations on the cramped urban house lot, or to the requirements of their occupation, accommodations were probably for the most part small and always under the close scrutiny of the master. This resulted in a lack of privacy for the slave. The objection of this constant supervision may be indicated by the increase in the practice of living out, even when the quality of the living out quarters were far beneath those provided by the master. While the rural slave may have sought a position in the master's house in hopes of easier work and better accommodations (Wade 1964), the urban slave may have preferred a position that took them outside of the master's view, for the pleasure of autonomy.

Urban slaves, due to spatial constraints on the house lot, may have found it difficult or impossible to have a garden or pens in which to raise livestock. So while urban slaves may have shared many similarities in their diet with their masters, their degree of self sufficiency may have actually been less. It is probable that urban slaves had access to all foods that were available from the market place, whether sampled from their master's stores or obtained elsewhere. Rural slaves may have had access to the master's stock, some elements, such as vegetables and some wild game, were probably easily obtained or grown in their own gardens.

### **Urban Slavery in Knoxville**

Despite Knoxville's emergence as a political and distributional center for the region (Rothrock 1946), a large slave market never developed (Oakley 1993). The lack of a large number of documented slave sales in the town may indicate that most slaves were brought from elsewhere, perhaps Virginia and the Carolinas. However, slaves sales were often documented only by the vendor and not by the city, therefore, slave sales may have been greater than legal documents imply.

In Knox County, most slave owners had one to two slaves. In Knoxville, the number of slaves under a single owner averaged from four to seven (Oakley 1993). Many of the urban slave holdings consisted of families or groups of families. Slaves who moved to town with their masters were first charged with creating and keeping the compound which included the house, lot and associated outbuildings.

Whereas slaves on rural plantations were regulated in their association with slaves from other plantations and farms, urban slaves had ample opportunity to socialize not only in their “free time” but while they carried out their daily duties throughout the city. Apparently, the frequency and size of such meetings quickly developed into a situation that members of the Knoxville local government found disturbing. In 1802, the second Board of Commissioners passed an ordinance that made “assembling in the streets, or in kitchens, or in uninhabited houses, on Sundays, or at night, or getting drunk in the streets, or quarreling, or rioting” illegal. For each offense the perpetrator was to be given ten lashes unless the master intervened, in which case, a fine of fifty cents was charged the owner. While this law may indicate that these activities were a serious problem in the city, white sentiments may also have been stirred by slave revolts, successful and unsuccessful, that had taken place in other nearby southern states. By passing this law, the local government endeavored to quell what they saw as a recipe for a slave rebellion. There is no doubt that slave owners realized the necessities of urban life, which required that their slaves move about town and conduct their master’s business, also meant that their slaves would often commingle with other slaves, free blacks, and whites. The transmission of new ideas, including ideas that were opposed to bondage, was inevitable. As the freed slave Frederick Douglass and many more after him expressed, “Slavery dislikes a dense population” (Douglass 1855 excerpted in Wade 1964). Despite legal restriction, the slaves managed to develop their own community that provided them with a sense of identity and security (Oakley 1993).

By 1817, the practice of hiring out was so prevalent that it began to be abused by the slaves themselves. In that year, Knoxville passed another ordinance, similar to the one passed in 1802, which, in addition to the rules against assemblage it also forbade slaves to live out while not under the supervision of a master. A slave found in such a circumstance was jailed until the owner paid a fine of eight dollars. Oakley's (1993) interpretation of the 1817 expansion of the 1802 ordinance is that the local government mistook slaves living out in abandoned buildings for unlawful congregation.

### **Urban Slavery at Blount Mansion**

William Blount, in 1797, stated that "Negroes are the most valuable property in this country" (Masterson 1954). There is no doubt that he referred to the necessity for slave labor to develop and maintain the frontier.

Blount's assertion was backed by his ownership of 27 slaves, which he eventually sold to his half brother Willie Blount. Ten of these slaves appear to have been particularly close to the household. Oakley (1993) has conducted extensive documentary research on the Blount slaves and has tentatively identified the slaves by name and occupation. In comparison with the other 17 slaves, these ten slaves had a closer association with the Blount household, probably due to the number of years spent under Blount ownership and to their specific occupations which brought them into close working conditions with members of the Blount family. As these ten slaves attended to the personal needs of the household and to the daily details of the house and lot, it is reasonable to suspect that they occupied a favored position in the slave hierarchy and in the minds of the Blounts and their heirs.

At the top of the hierarchy was a 60-70 year old slave woman named Hagar. She was William Blount's wife, Mary Grainger Blount's, nurse and came into the Blount

marriage with her. Hagar's son, Jack, attended to William Blount as his "best man" and accompanied him on his travels, including Blount's first move to the Tennessee frontier (Oakley 1993; Masterson 1954).

A family unit of slaves, made up of a husband and wife, Cupid and Sall, and their two daughters, Nann and Issabella, were instrumental in running the Blount household. Sall was probably the cook and oversaw the kitchen and service areas and was most likely assisted by her daughters in keeping the house. Cupid, along with Hagar's son, Jack, presumably acted as the "butlers" of the mansion, and attended to the serving of meals and the personal needs of the residents and guests of the mansion. Another woman, Venus, who also came with Mrs. Blount into the marriage, helped tend to domestic duties (Oakley 1993).

Three slave men, Sam, Watt, and Will, were probably skilled laborers or artisans. They tended to the heavy labor around the house and lot, such as in the dairy, smokehouse, or stable. If Blount hired out any of his slaves, these three would have been likely candidates.

The remaining 17 slaves under Blount's ownership may have stayed on the Blount's farm (Oakley 1993), which was located near town, possibly in the vicinity of the current location of the University of Tennessee (Charles Faulkner, personal communication 1995). Though they would have been supervised by an overseer, their contact with the Blount household would have been limited, thereby preventing them from being as highly favored as the other ten slaves.

Like many details of historic settlement and development, the components of the diet at Blount Mansion are elusive from a documentary standpoint; but it is likely that domestic mammals and chicken made up the majority of the meat portion of the diet. As the Blounts had a farm nearby, and space was somewhat limited on the town house lot, livestock was probably kept on the farm rather than at the mansion. Reitz (personal

communication 1994) suggests that many wealthy urbanites kept and slaughtered their own livestock because they had the monetary and spatial resources to do so. Therefore, they did not commonly purchase meat from professional butchers. At Blount Mansion, the location of Chisholm's Beef Market next door to the mansion (Advertisement, Knoxville Gazette, June 5, 1794) created an availability of meat that was certainly convenient to the Blount household and their slaves, although convenience may not have been a great factor in market participation. Chicken and fish may have been obtained from a local market as well, though chickens were likely raised on the farm or even kept in the town lot. Likewise, fish may have been taken from the river just a few hundred feet to the south of the mansion.

Part of Wade's (1964) urban slave cabin depiction is commensurate with the current understanding of the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin. Located at the rear of the yard, the cabin measured approximately 15 ft. by 22 ft. Based on architectural studies that identify the west wing of Blount Mansion as the former slave cabin, and on the archaeological occurrence of artifacts, the slave cabin probably had two doors and at least three windows (Charles Faulkner, personal communication 1996; Emrick and Fore 1993). Contrary to Wade's generalization, the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin appears to have been of frame construction rather than brick. While Wade's placement of the cabin within the house lot is correct, his portrayal of the cabin's structure is not. As much of Wade's data comes from larger towns generally of the Southeastern coast, the frontier town slave house may have differed due to population density, regional construction techniques, or even sentiment of urban masters toward their slaves.

If Upland South society really did perpetuate the emphasis of slaves as people, it is likely that this idea was expressed in the architecture of the slave dwellings. That the builders of the cabin were probably slaves may have had an effect on the results of construction. As Oakley (1993:55) has suggested, some of the slaves, particularly the

ones whose occupations were in the mansion, may have had quarters inside the mansion itself. Hence, the cabin may have housed the other slaves who did not need to attend their master's personal needs all of the time, such as the three aforementioned skilled laborers.

Blount Mansion may be regarded as an Upland South entity in terms of master and slave relations. The North Carolina origins of Blount and his family, and probably that of many of his slaves, may have helped set the tone followed by masters and slaves in Knoxville. The attitude toward slaves may have been prevalent not only among rural planters in the Upland South, but among many city dwellers in the region as well. The similarities of urban life in the south, in terms of urban mechanisms involving socialization, commerce and development, may have overwritten prevailing attitudes toward slavery held by rural slave owners. The legal status of slaves in the emerging frontier, viewing slaves as both people and property, retained some of this Upland South flavor (Patterson 1968).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Materials**

##### **History of Blount Mansion**

Blount Mansion is located in downtown Knoxville, Knox County, Tennessee, along the north bank of the Tennessee River (Figure 3.1). It was originally built in 1792 by William Blount, the first Governor of the Territory South of the Ohio River, on a lot measuring 147 ft. by 147 ft. The lot, number 18, was one of 64 half acre lots that were sold by lottery on October 3, 1791. At the time of the mansion's construction, Blount Mansion is said to have been the first frame structure built in this area. While Blount apparently moved into the house in 1792, deed records reveal that it was not until November 1794 that he obtained the title to the lot where the mansion stood. The original mansion complex consisted of the central story and a half dwelling, without the east or west wings, the detached kitchen, office, cool room, a privy and a separate slave cabin (Emrick and Fore 1993; Fauber 1968).

The structural arrangement of the house lot was interesting in that the structures formed a closed compound to the south of the mansion: the kitchen and office were placed behind the mansion and the slave cabin formed the southwest corner of the complex the governor's office forming the southeast corner (Figure 3.2). This complex was completed by a palisade fence that surrounded the yard behind the mansion and was incorporated with

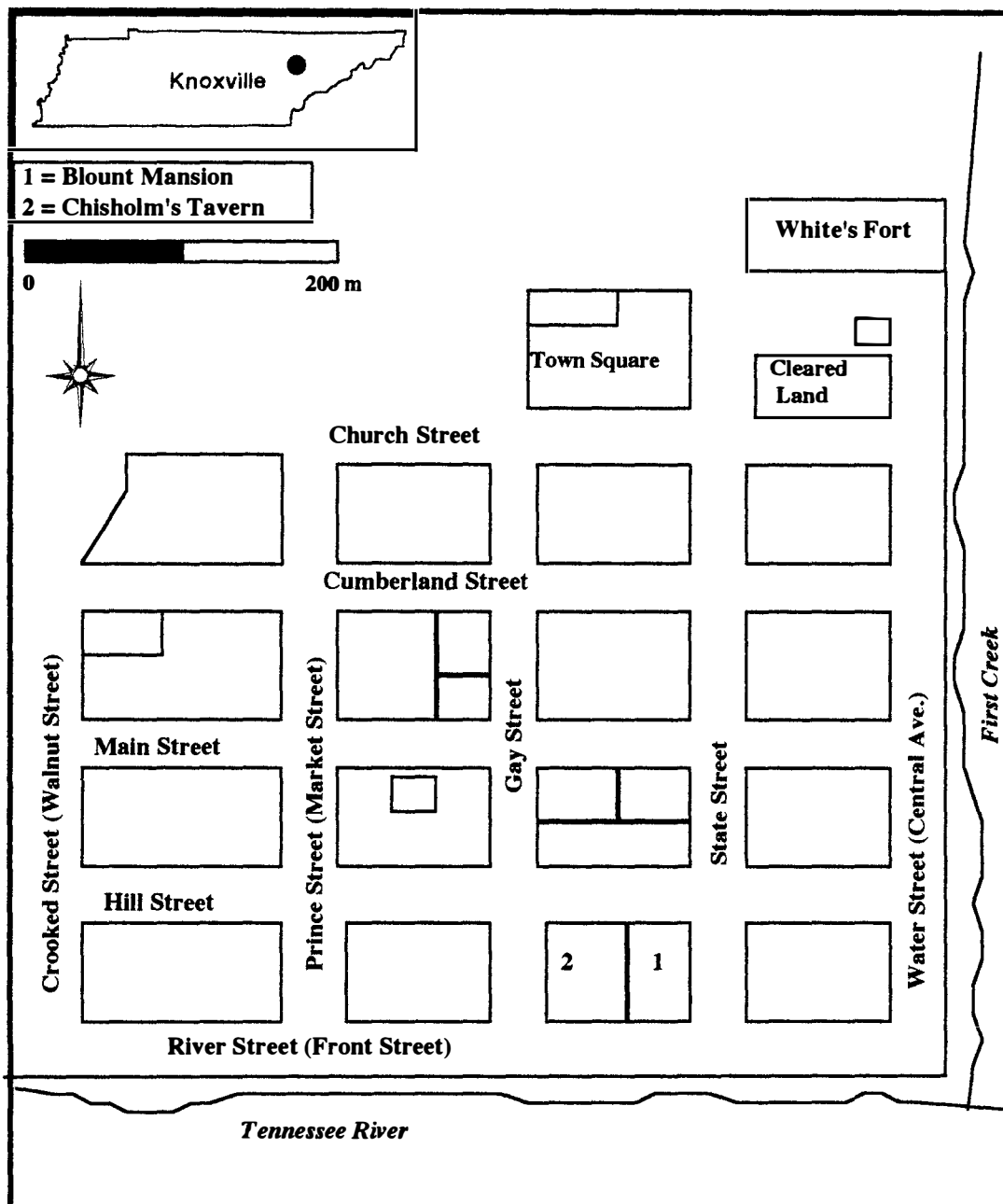


Figure 3.1. Map of Downtown Knoxville, showing Blount Mansion and Chisholm's Tavern locations (adapted from Creekmoore 1958).

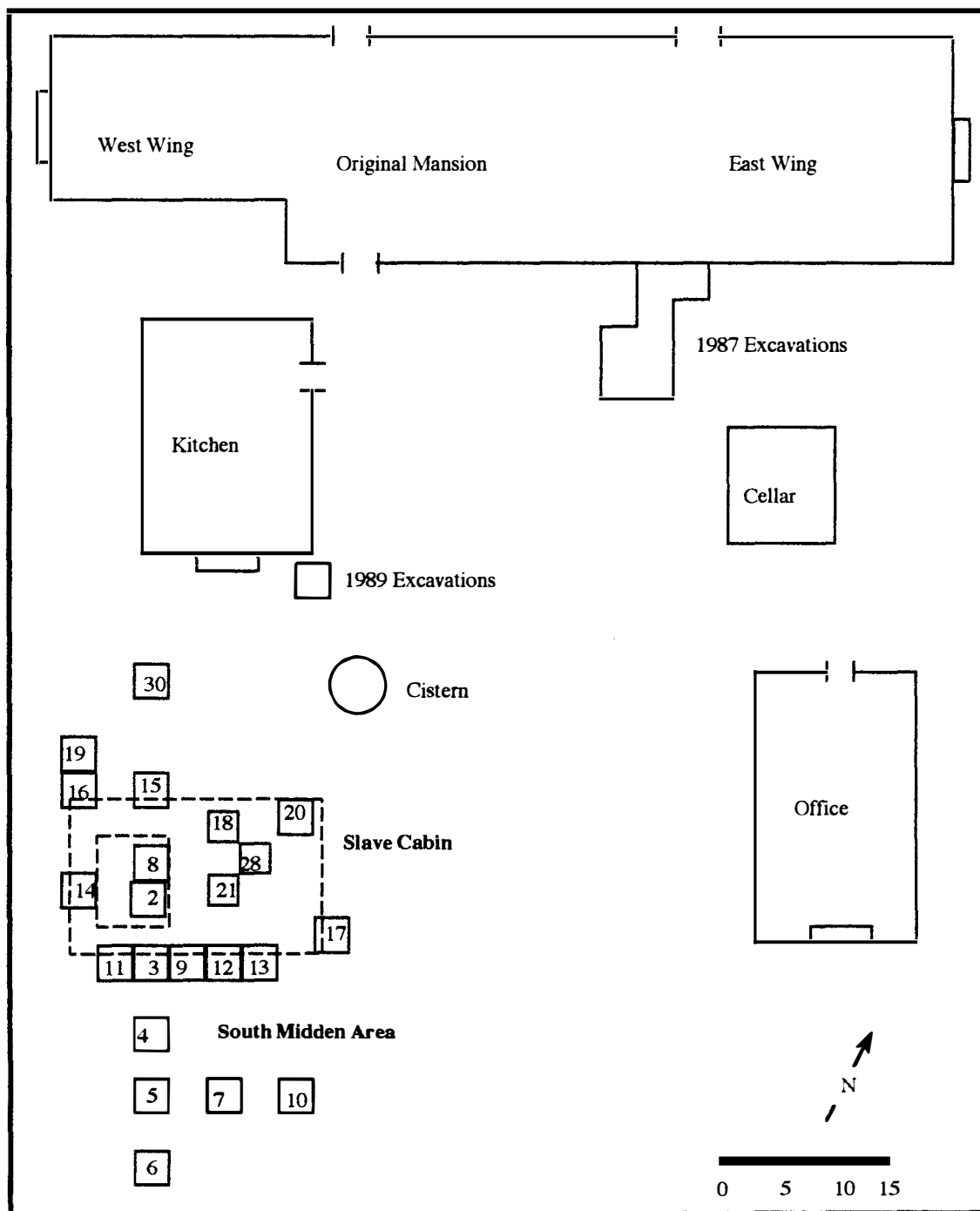


Figure 3.2. Map of Blount Mansion (40KN52), showing excavation units from 1987-1994 field seasons (after Charles Faulkner).

the structures' exterior walls (Faulkner 1993b). There may have been other structures that also acted as part of the palisade. While the yard layout may have held some Georgian symmetrical qualities, it may also have served a more practical purpose. This was still the frontier and the threat of Indian attack was prevalent. The structure of the house lot may have been a defensive measure that was reflective of the dangers of frontier life. The mansion complex resembled more a military garrison rather than a palatial showplace, as the term "mansion" would imply. As it was said to have been the first frame house constructed in the territory (Creekmore 1958), it may have been termed "mansion" by those who contrasted it to the less refined log structures more typical of the time and area.

Blount used his mansion as the center for governing the Territory until he died in 1800. His wife continued to live at the mansion until she died in 1802. After to William Blount's death, Blount Mansion began to pass through the hands of several relatives, including his son, Congressman William Grainger Blount, and William Blount's half brother, Willie Blount, Governor of Tennessee (Table 3.1). After a few more title changes within the Blount family, the property was finally sold to Matthew McClung in 1825, who kept it for ten years, minus a one year hiatus during which the title was assumed by James White. In 1840, McClung sold the house to Mayor Matthew M. Gaines. Gaines sold the mansion to his political successor, Samuel B. Boyd in 1845. The Boyd family owned the house until 1919. During the Boyd ownership, many alterations to the mansion and house lot arrangement took place. At the turn of the twentieth century, still in the ownership of the Boyds, the house was used as rental property and began to fall into disrepair. The mansion continued to be used as rental property until 1926 when it was purchased by the Bonnie Kate Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Blount Mansion Association was formed (Emrick and Fore 1993).

William Blount was born in Bertie County, North Carolina in 1749. He was in the North Carolina Militia during the Revolutionary War and served as paymaster of the

**Table 3.1. Blount Mansion Ownership.**

| <b>Date of Transfer</b> | <b>Vendor-Vendee</b>                                                                                                            | <b>Purpose</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| June 9, 1797            | William Blount to Willie Blount                                                                                                 | Residence      |
| 1818                    | Willie Blount to William Grainger Blount, by assumption                                                                         | Residence      |
| 1820                    | William Grainger Blount to Dr. Edwin Wiatt (Blount in-law)                                                                      | Residence      |
| 1824                    | Dr. Edwin Wiatt to Pleasant Miller (Blount in-law)                                                                              | Residence      |
| 1825                    | Pleasant Miller to Donald McIntosh                                                                                              | Residence      |
| 1825                    | Donald McIntosh to Matthew McClung                                                                                              | Residence      |
| 1830                    | Matthew McClung to James White                                                                                                  | Residence      |
| 1831                    | James White to Matthew McClung                                                                                                  | Residence      |
| 1840                    | Mathew McClung to Matthew M. Gaines (Mayor of Knoxville)                                                                        | Residence      |
| 1845                    | Matthew M. Gaines to Samual B. Boyd (Succeeding Mayor of Knoxville)                                                             | Residence      |
| 1919                    | Boyd Family to Mr. Rambo                                                                                                        | Rental         |
| 1921                    | Mr. Rambo to B.H. Sprankle                                                                                                      | Rental         |
| 1925                    | B.H. Sprankle to the Bonnie Kate Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Blount Mansion Association formed in 1926 | Restoration    |

Source: Emrick and Fore 1993

Continental Army. After the Revolutionary War, Blount was elected to the Continental Congress. William Blount was a North Carolina delegate to the national Constitutional Convention in 1787. In 1789, the North Carolina Assembly elected to cede its rights to its western territory to the Federal Government. In 1790, the Southwest Territory was established by Congress and William Blount was appointed governor of the Territory South of the Ohio by President George Washington (Creekmore 1958). Blount, who was involved in land speculation in the frontier, was also named Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and was charged with negotiating a treaty with the Cherokees. Blount governed the Territory from the home of William Cobb, Rocky Mount, during the first year of the Territory. In 1791, the Treaty of Holston was negotiated by Blount, and signed by the Cherokee at James White's Fort, near the confluence of the Holston and French Broad Rivers. In 1792 Blount moved the administrative center for the Territory from Rocky Mount to the location of White's Fort and named the location Knoxville, in honor of Secretary of War, General Henry Knox (Creekmore 1958).

At that time in Knoxville, fellow North Carolinian, General James White and Francis Ramsey, from Pennsylvania had already begun to settle and conduct business. In 1791, Charles McClung, the son-in-law of James White, surveyed the area in which White's Fort was located, and laid a town grid in 64 half acre lots. The lots were to be sold by lottery (Creekmore 1958). Blount chose lot 18 on which to build his new house and the center for the Territorial government, Blount Mansion.

As of 1792, Knoxville was still little more than a trading post. There was one store owned by Samuel and Nathaniel Cowan, and a tavern owned by John Chisholm. However, by the end of that year, two additional mercantile stores and two new taverns opened (Oakley 1993). A number of professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, also began to establish themselves in the town, certainly due to the location of the territorial capital and to the increasing population.

William Blount governed the Territory from his mansion while the town of Knoxville and Knox County grew. In 1795, Knox County had a total population of 11,573, consisting of 2721 free white adult males, 2723 free males under 16 years, 3664 white females, 100 free blacks, and 2635 slaves (Ramsey 1926). Thirty percent of the county's population were slaves. According to the U. S. Census for 1800, the town of Knoxville's population was 387, of which 146, or 38 percent, were slaves (Oakley 1993). The high ratio of slaves to whites appears to be typical of the time and region, as Nashville, which was growing more quickly than Knoxville, reported nearly 44% of its population as slaves (Goldin 1976; Wade 1964). Such high percentages of slaves were considered necessary to the growth of the urban environment, which included new businesses and demands for skilled artisans and labor.

Blount's tenure in Knoxville was short. He died in 1800, just eight years after building the mansion. He was followed in death by his wife, Mary Grainger Blount, in 1802. The Blount estate, though somewhat depleted due to William Blount's investments and expenditures, was tended by William Blount's half brother Willie Blount. In 1797, three years before William Blount's death, ownership of much of his property, including his mansion and slaves, was transferred to Willie Blount, probably to avoid its seizure by creditors. In the trust deed of this mass sale, dated 9 June 1797, 27 slaves are mentioned. However, ten slaves seem to assume prominent roles as they are mentioned by name in other documentation (Oakley 1993). These are assumed to have been the domestic slaves that served the Blount household. The remainder of slaves probably lived on the Blount farm, which was located nearby, though its exact location is not known (Oakley 1993).

It is uncertain how long after the deaths of William and Mary Blount that the Blount slaves remained at the mansion. As ownership of the slaves was transferred to Willie Blount and later to William Blount's children and in-laws, it is probable that the slaves stayed on at the mansion for as long as the Blount relatives owned the property until

1825 when it was sold to Matthew McClung. It is not known if McClung owned any slaves, but as the McClung family was one of the most prominent in Knoxville and the mansion was still a valuable piece of real estate, it is likely that McClung had slaves.

While ownership of the mansion changed hands often during the early nineteenth century, it is assumed that slaves inhabited the cabin behind the mansion until the cabin's removal sometime in the 1830s (Charles Faulkner, personal communication 1996). The apparent removal of the slave cabin sometime in the 1830s coincides with the middle of McClung's ownership. The Boyd's, whose ownership began in 1845 and lasted into the twentieth century, owned six slaves prior to Emancipation (Faulkner and German 1990). It was during the Boyd period that many of the changes to the house lot and the mansion are believed to have been made (Faulkner and German 1990). The domicile of the McClung and Boyd slaves is uncertain, but they probably resided in the mansion itself, as some of the Blount slaves are believed to have done (Oakley 1993), or in another outbuilding.

### **Archaeological Deposits at Blount Mansion**

The excavations at Blount Mansion focused on a number of questions concerning the placement of structures and fences and the use of space in general within the backlot of the mansion. The 1992 and 1993 field seasons concentrated on locating the structure behind the detached kitchen, visible near the southwest corner of the houselot in an 1865 photograph of Knoxville. Ten 3 ft. by 3 ft. units were placed along a limestone foundation of a previously unknown structure between the rear of the lot and the detached kitchen. This structure, identified as the early slave quarters, measured 22.5 ft. east to west by 15 ft. north to south. Excavation units were also placed at the location of the fire hearth and three units encountered a large crawl space underneath the floor of the cabin. The crawl space contained a large amount of cultural debris related to occupation of the cabin.

Four units were placed to the south of the cabin and encountered a sheet midden dating from the 1790s to the early twentieth century.

Based on archaeological evidence, the Slave Cabin appeared to be a frame structure, sitting on exterior wall foundations of limestone. As the cabin was built on ground that sloped toward the river to the south, the western, southern, and eastern wall foundations consisted of dressed limestone blocks, whereas the northern wall foundation was made up of a layer of limestone rubble. The fire hearth was also comprised of limestone blocks with brick rubble fill. The crawl space under the cabin was not constructed, but rather, created by the slope of the rear yard under the cabin floor. Access to the crawl space was gained through the interior of the cabin, possibly through a trap door or removable floor boards. The occupants were able to deposit household debris into the crawl space, including faunal material, presumably from meal preparation and refuse discard.

Fifteen 3 ft. by 3 ft. units were placed in and around the Slave Cabin, while four 3 ft. by 3 ft. units were placed in the South Midden area. Based on archaeological evidence, the two areas were separated by a fence from 1792 to around the 1830s. After that time the Slave Cabin was moved up to the mansion, where it was attached to serve as the west wing. Also around that time, the fence was removed to create a larger yard. This combined the formerly separated Slave Cabin and South Midden areas, which then received general household refuse material from the mansion and in time formed a sheet midden. The nature of this later midden differed from that of the earlier South Midden in that the South Midden contained material from deliberate dumping of refuse material, whereas discard was probably more casual and inadvertent in the later midden. It is not known if the earlier South Midden received refuse solely from the mansion, the Slave Cabin, or both.

### **Mabry Plantation**

The Mabry Plantation site (40KN86) was located in Knox County, near Knoxville, Tennessee (Figure 3.3). The Mabry farm, in operation from 1830 through the early 20th century, was characterized by diversified agricultural production in which livestock consisted of sheep, cattle, horses, and swine. Cash crops consisted of corn, oats, wheat, flax, sweet potatoes, and hay (Young 1993). Mabry Plantation's owner, George Mabry, owned 18 slaves in 1850 and eight slaves in 1860 (McKelway 1994).

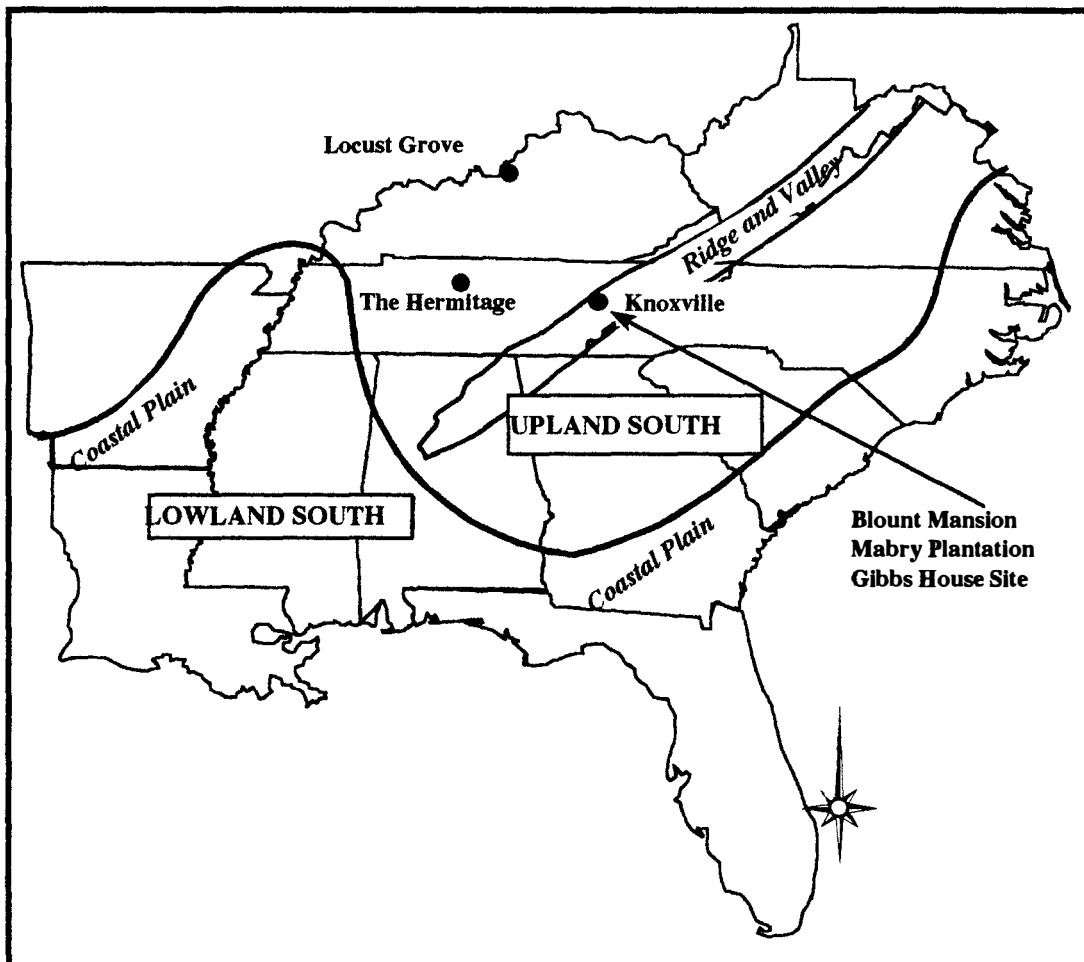
Two slave cabins were located approximately 100 m south of the Mabry mansion ruins. The cabins were situated within ten feet of one another and dated from the 1830s to the 1860s. Faunal remains came from a number of contexts, but most were from a root cellar lying within one of the cabins (Young 1993).

Also at the Mabry site was a stratified midden located closer to the mansion that was interpreted as being associated with refuse from the mansion. Young (1993) compares the faunal remains from the Mabry slave quarters to the Mabry mansion deposits to determine any significant differences between slave and planter diet. She also compares the Mabry slave fauna to fauna from coastal plantation slave sites to look for distinctions between the diets of slaves from the Upland South and coastal regions.

The faunal assemblage from the ante-bellum slave deposits at the Mabry site yielded 498 specimens from both structures. Though the assemblage size is small and consequently may not accurately reflect slave diet, its comparison to the Blount Mansion slave fauna may provide control within a subregion of the Upland South while allowing for a contrast between the diets of urban and rural slaves.

### **Hermitage Plantation**

The Hermitage Plantation is located in Davidson County, 30 miles from Nashville (See Figure 3.3). It was owned by President Andrew Jackson who resided there as early



**Figure 3.3. Locations of Comparative Sites (after McKelway 1994).**

as 1804. The type of agriculture practiced during the ante-bellum period at the Hermitage, unlike that at Mabry or Locust Grove plantations, was less diversified. The Hermitage was chiefly a cotton plantation that benefited from the environment found in the Nashville Basin, which was more conducive to much larger monocropping farms. This large farm required more labor than a smaller farm, which resulted in much larger slave holdings. Jackson owned over one hundred slaves. The Hermitage resembled a delta plantation in size. However, Jackson always noted at least a semantic difference between his "farm" and the plantations of the larger river valleys further south, perhaps to put his occupation in a more egalitarian light (Smith 1976).

Many areas of the Hermitage have been investigated, including formerly standing structures near the mansion and a group of three structures located away from the mansion, known as the "field quarter." One structure located in the rear of the Hermitage mansion is known as the Backyard Cabin and is believed to have housed domestic slaves who tended to the needs of the household. The Backyard Cabin was occupied from the 1820s to the 1860s or 1870s by slaves who tended to the needs of the household much like the Blount slaves. Approximately 1,110 faunal specimens were identified from this area (Breitburg 1990)

Among the field quarters at the Hermitage Plantation is a structure called KES, which served as one of the residences for field slaves. The KES cabin was occupied from around 1800 to the 1820s. Approximately 3,752 faunal specimens were identified from this cabin (Breitburg 1991).

The Hermitage Plantation, though not similar in size, crop diversity, or the size of slave holdings as the other plantations considered here, does offer a sizable assemblage of faunal material associated with slave occupations. Most importantly, the inclusion of material from a domestic slave context from the Backyard Cabin provides the opportunity to compare these animal remains to those of the domestic slaves of Blount Mansion.

Though the distinction between the rural and urban environments and the environments of the Nashville Basin and the Knoxville potentially had a great effect on the diets of the Hermitage and Blount Mansion slaves, the domestic occupations of each slave household may have resulted in some similarities in the faunal diet.

### **Locust Grove Plantation**

Locust Grove Plantation, located near Louisville in Jefferson County, Kentucky (See Figure 3.3) was founded in 1790 by William Croghan. Croghan practiced a diversified type of plantation agriculture, but his plantation home also functioned as a base of operations for him and his son, who were involved in land speculation on the developing frontier (Andrews and Young 1992). Environmentally, the region in which Locust Grove was situated, was similar to that of Mabry Plantation and Blount Mansion, in that the soils and terrain supported smaller, more diversified crops than the environment of the large river delta plantations.

Between 1790 and 1822 the number of slaves at Locust Grove grew from six to 41. Between 1836 and 1849 there were from 17 to 23 slaves. The number of slaves, while substantial, was still smaller than that needed to operate larger river and Coastal Plain plantations (Lev-Tov and Young 1995)

Three slave cabins were investigated at Locust Grove. A number of features and midden areas were excavated resulting in a substantial number of faunal remains. The Locust Grove faunal material offers a substantial sample from an Upland South plantation. Though far removed from the Knoxville area, the environmental and social conditions place Locust Grove in the same Upland South pattern of small plantation size, low slave numbers, and possibly similar master and slave relations, as Mabry Plantation. This will provide another comparison of rural slave fauna to the urban slave from Blount Mansion.

## **Gibbs House Site**

The Gibbs House site (40KN124) is located about 20 miles from Blount Mansion (See Figure 3.3), at the head of Beaver Creek. It was settled by Nicholas Gibbs and his family in the 1790s after they moved to the newly created Territory South of the Ohio from Orange County, North Carolina (Lev-Tov 1994), making Gibbs one of the earliest white inhabitants of Knox County. Nicholas Gibbs built his log cabin on the site in 1792. By 1796, Gibbs had acquired over 1000 acres of land along Beaver Creek. Prior to his death in 1817, Gibbs subdivided his land among his sons (Lev-Tov 1994). The farm was continuously occupied well into the Twentieth Century by his descendants.

Excavations of the Gibbs House site over five field seasons recovered archaeological material associated to the establishment of the farm in the 1790s to the twentieth century. Many features, including a smokehouse cellar, and trash dumps and midden areas were investigated resulting in a large assemblage of faunal remains.

The faunal material from the Gibbs site is not from a plantation slave occupation, but rather, from a white yeoman farmstead that has the unusual benefit of being continuously occupied over more than a century and a half. While yeoman farmer status is not necessarily poor, Nicholas Gibbs did not have status equal to that of the Blounts in Knoxville. There may be dietary contrasts between the rural Gibbs family and that of the urban dwelling Blount slaves as well as some similarities, due to differing urban and rural environments.

## **Methods**

### **Recovery Methods at Blount Mansion**

Sixteen 3 ft. by 3 ft. excavation units were dug by hand in natural or .2 ft. (5 cm) levels in the historic deposits around the Slave Cabin. All excavated soil was dry screened

through 1/4 in. wire mesh. Soil samples were water screened through 1/16 in. screens or processed through flotation. Artifacts were collected and kept separate according to provenience.

Cultural deposits were dated primarily by historic ceramics. The earliest dates of occupation were determined to have been during the 1790s. Subsequent deposits date from the early 1800s through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As it has been determined that the Slave Cabin was moved in the 1830s, cultural deposits from the Slave Cabin area can be separated into slave and post slave categories, i.e. deposits related to the slave occupation and deposits related to general mansion refuse. The deposits from the South Midden area can be segregated into the same temporal categories but due to their more ambiguous context, their origins are less certain and can only be related to general mansion refuse. Therefore, the cultural deposits have been split into three major temporal and functional areas: Slave Cabin 1792-1830; South Midden 1792-1830; Sheet Midden (includes both, Slave Cabin and South Midden areas) 1830-1900. This study will focus on the Slave Cabin and South Midden faunal material.

After the cultural material was sorted into artifact classes and cataloged, the faunal material was analyzed. Each bone or bone fragment was analyzed to determine the taxon, element, element portion, age of taxon, and bone modification (such as burning or use as a tool). Identifications were made using the comparative faunal collections of the University of Tennessee Zooarchaeology Lab, the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science, and the private collections of the author. Taxonomic nomenclature follows that of Burt and Grossenheider (1976), Conat (1975), Peterson (1980), and Page and Burr (1991).

As a number of units were placed within the interior of the cabin and around the immediate periphery of the cabin foundations, the sampling of the cultural deposits in the cabin area can be presumed to be fairly representative. However, a few reservations

should be held regarding the degree to which the faunal assemblage is representative of the Blount slave diet. One consideration is the placement of the excavation units within or immediately outside of the cabin foundations. These units should encompass areas of representative faunal refuse disposal. However, other unexcavated areas may also have received diet related refuse. Therefore, the sample obtained from the excavation units probably does not represent the total faunal assemblage deposited by the slaves. This is partially alleviated by the excavation of units to the south of the cabin, in the South Midden area. These units encountered additional faunal remains. However, it is uncertain as to the origins of this material.

The identifiability of a bone or bone fragment is dependent on a number of variables, which are degree of preservation, degree of completeness of the bone, and the uniqueness of the bone morphology. Preservation is due to taphonomic factors that include all processes acting on the bone from the time of disposal through archaeological recovery. The chief attribute linked to bone preservation is bone density. Bones that are more dense, either due to the taxonomic class or size, survive better than bones of lesser density, provided the depositional environment is held constant (Lyman 1984). Mammal bones generally survive better than the bones of a reptile, fish or bird. Therefore, a pig bone has a better chance of surviving than a chicken bone. Taxon size also affects bone density in that larger taxa usually have more dense bones. For example, a pig bone should preserve better than a squirrel bone. However, the identifiability of a fragment of a pig long bone and a complete squirrel long bone, though both bones are equal in size and weight, could vary. The completeness of the squirrel bone would make it more easily identified than the partial pork long bone because the squirrel bone possesses certain morphological characteristics that, when viewed in total, identify it as squirrel. The pork bone fragment, because the original size of the whole pork bone was much greater, may have none of the characteristic morphological traits present, and could therefore only be

classified as a large mammal. Also, the more unique the bone morphology, the more likely the bone can be accurately identified. For example, the bones of certain fish species, such as a freshwater drum, catfish, gar, and bowfin, are very distinctive, allowing for easy identification, provided an adequate portion of the element is present. The bones of other fish, such as suckers and sun fish, are much less distinctive, often resulting in a more general identification.

Certain portions of the animal skeleton are more easily fragmented which also results in less certain bone identifications. The crania, for example, of all classes of animals are made of several interconnected elements that can become disarticulated during pre-depositional processing, (e.g. butchering), or during post depositional taphonomic processes, (e.g. trampling). The fragmentation of the skull results in several difficult to identify bone fragments.

The fact that all deposits were sifted through 1/4 in. screens helped to alleviate some recovery bias, though bones smaller than 1/4 in. were not recovered by the 1/4 in. screen. The processing of soil samples through 1/16 in. screen and the processing of floatation samples helped to assure that smaller taxa were recovered, but these samples were fractions of the total excavated sample and therefore, the bones recovered through them represent a fraction of what was excavated.

### **Quantitative Measures**

Quantifying represented taxa is typically presented using the number of identified specimens (NISP), the minimum number of individuals (MNI), bone weight per identified taxon, or biomass calculations. NISP is the number of bones identified to a particular taxon. NISP is a number that is constant for a site depending on the aggregation method. Since NISP offers an unchanging number, it is easy to compare taxonomic representation from site to site. One shortcoming of NISP is that it does not take into account the number

of individual animals represented by the bones. For example, though ten recovered beef bones are elements that came from several individual cows, beef bones are still outnumbered by 20 pork bones coming from a single pig, even though individual cows were more prevalent than pigs at the site.

MNI offers a minimum number of individuals of a certain species and can be used to determine how important a certain taxa may have been. MNI is derived by counting the number of paired elements (e.g. the number of left femora), or elements that occur singly (e.g. the number of atlas) to determine the minimum number of individuals of that species that had to be present to result in the observed number of elements (White 1953; Klein and Cruz-Urbe 1984:26-27). The disadvantage of MNI is that it does not take into account the actual representation of taxa and may artificially exaggerate the importance of a taxon (Grayson 1978). Taking the example given above, though the MNI for beef was greater than that for pork, pig bones are still higher in abundance, which may reflect more complete usage of the pork carcass. Also, MNI figures may vary from site to site, depending on the method of calculation used.

Due to the disadvantages of both NISP and MNI, which are extensively discussed by other authors (Klein and Cruz-Urbe 1984; Grayson 1978, 1981, 1984; Binford 1981; Ringrose 1993) it is probably best to consider both figures, depending on the question to be addressed (Klein and Cruz-Urbe 1984:33). While MNI may indicate how intensively a species was exploited, NISP reveals how intensively the individual carcass was used. However, both methods ignore other important concerns such as the actual importance of the taxon to the diet of the site inhabitants.

Another quantitative measure that overcomes the downfalls of NISP and MNI is bone weight per taxon. Like NISP, bone weight is constant and is based only on the specimens present. Bone weight is usually directly related taxon size and may therefore offer a better indication as to the amount of meat contributed to the diet by the taxon.

However, this is not always true, as some of the most dense and heaviest bones are from portions bearing the least amount of meat (e.g. cow metapodials).

Yet another quantification method involves estimating the amount of biomass contributed by each taxon based on bone weight present, and the skeletal weight of whole elements or whole skeletons. One can also multiply the average weight of a species by the MNI figure for that species to arrive at a total meat weight that may have been present (Breitburg 1983). A method used by Reitz (1992), Reitz and Honerkamp (1983), and Reitz and Scarry (1985) uses a formula for scaling body mass to skeletal mass and increase in body size by inserting bone weight into the equation. However, due to the complications involved in this type of measurement, skeletal mass allometry was not considered here.

For this study, NISP is the measure most often used due to the constant nature of NISP and the ease with which assemblages from different sites can be compared. Incidentally, NISP is the measure most often used in previous studies of the Mabry and Locust Grove plantations and Gibbs House material (Young 1993; Lev-Tov 1994; Lev-Tov and Young 1995).

Faunal data from Mabry Plantation (Young 1993), Locust Grove Plantation (Lev-Tov and Young 1995), the Hermitage (Breitburg 1990, 1991, and 1992), and the Gibbs House (Lev-Tov 1994) were taken from published sources, unpublished Masters theses, and data tables obtained from other faunal analysts.

### **Meat Quality**

Meat quality, in this instance, is largely focused on meat from domestic mammals, namely pork and beef, and to a very small extent, mutton. However, quality is difficult to assess because there are a number of variables involved. The amount of meat from a particular portion of the carcass, the fat content, or the appearance of the meat upon

presentation are all factors that affect meat quality (Shultz and Gust 1983). For this study, meat quality was determined by the relative amount of meat available from each particular portion of the carcass. Following the work of O'steen with the Oxen Hill Manor fauna (O'steen 1986), in her classification of pork elements, high yield portions are defined as loin, shoulder butt, picnic shoulder, short cut ham, and ribs. Moderate meat quantity yielding portions consist of crania, and low yield parts contain foot elements. For beef elements, the high yield category contains the short loin, sirloin, round, rump, chuck, and ribs. Moderate yielding portions consist of the crania, neck, foreshank and hindshank. Low yield beef cuts are comprised of the feet.

### **Goals and Hypotheses**

Studies of slave diet have typically concentrated on the diet of rural plantation slaves. The diet of slaves in the urban environment have not been extensively investigated. Consequently, little is known about the faunal component of urban slaves leaving some rather simple questions unaddressed.

The most basic question concerning urban slave diet is which species were exploited and to what degree. As historic period diets are characterized by strong reliance on domesticates, a large part of the faunal assemblage should consist of pig, cow, chicken and even sheep, though sheep should be represented sparingly, as they have been in other faunal assemblages in the Upland South. The Southern diet, as historians and zooarchaeologists have maintained, should reflect a reliance on pork supplemented by beef and chicken. Wild fauna should be slightly represented, especially wild mammals and birds, due to the site's location in a quickly developing urban location. Such a developing city probably resulted in a loss of wild habitat and consequently, a loss of wild game availability. Therefore it is likely that, unless wild game was available from the local

market, wild animals should not be well represented. It is also likely that more cosmopolitan preferences for domestic meats decreased the proportions of wild game exploited by the slaves.

The occupations of urban slaves, as it is portrayed by historians (Oakley 1993, Wade 1964, Woessner 1967), were mainly those of skilled artisans and domestic servants. It is likely that slaves with these types of occupations, especially the house servants, enjoyed a slightly better lifestyle than slaves who worked the fields of a rural plantation, or who were merely laborers. As has been suggested by Oakley (1993), some of the Blount slaves were held in high regard by the Blount family. The same conditions might have persisted for the slaves of the later owners of Blount Mansion. Accompanied along with the high status, not only of being an urban slave, but the slave of such prominent owners, were probably material benefits that included high quality meat cuts. While the meat may not have been as high a quality as that which was consumed by the mansion owners and their guests, it is probable that it would have been better than the meat generally made available to other slaves who did not occupy such an esteemed position. This distinction, if visible, may resemble that between the faunal remains from the Hermitage domestic slaves who resided in the backyard cabin (Breitburg 1991), and the Hermitage field slaves who generated the KES cabin faunal material (Breitburg 1993; Breitburg and McKee 1992; Young 1993).

Other more difficult questions include: 1) were the slaves being provisioned by their master and if so, were they being given the second choice, lower quality cuts of meat; 2) were the slaves given monetary provisions to purchase their own meat; 3) were they allowed to raise their own livestock and hunt their own wild game and fish; 4) did they butcher animals on site; 5) did they participate in the urban food procurement system, i.e. meat and fish market; 6) while there is no slave material definitively identified as such after the 1830s, was there a distinction in faunal remains from the slave and South Midden

sample prior to the 1830s. Some of these questions, while not directly answered by the recovered faunal remains, are important and warrant further investigation into the archaeological record and historical documentation.

The following chapters discuss the diet of urban slaves at Blount Mansion as evidenced by the vertebrate faunal remains. Comparisons are made to the faunal material from other slave sites in the southern interior, and to a yeoman farmer house site near Knoxville. The goal of this research is to illuminate an area of historic sites zooarchaeological research - urban slave diet - that has remained relatively uninvestigated, and place it within a broader framework of regional slave studies.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **BLOUNT MANSION SLAVE CABIN FAUNAL REMAINS: 1790s TO 1830s**

#### **Context**

Faunal remains recovered from sixteen excavation units placed in and around the foundation of the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin date from 1790 to the 1830s. The deposits reflect the Blount slave diet from the time the mansion and cabin were constructed until sometime in the 1830s when the cabin appears to have been removed, presumably to be joined with the mansion as its west wing (Faulkner 1993a). Features excavated include segments of all four limestone wall foundations, a hearth, and a crawl space. Bone was recovered from 1/4 in. screen in all units. Bone was also recovered from 1/16 in. fine screen from one of the units placed in the crawl space (Unit 28).

#### **Taxa Composition**

A total of 4,237 faunal specimens was excavated from the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin deposits, of which 3,284 (77 percent) belonged to vertebrate species, and 953 (23 percent) belonged to invertebrate species (e.g. Gastropods, Mollusks). Of the bones, 387 (12 percent) were identifiable to the taxonomic level of order or a lower category and 2,777 (84 percent) bones were identified to a level of class. The number of individual specimens

(NISP), NISP percentages, and minimum number of individuals (MNI) are tabulated in the species list for these contexts (Table 4.1).

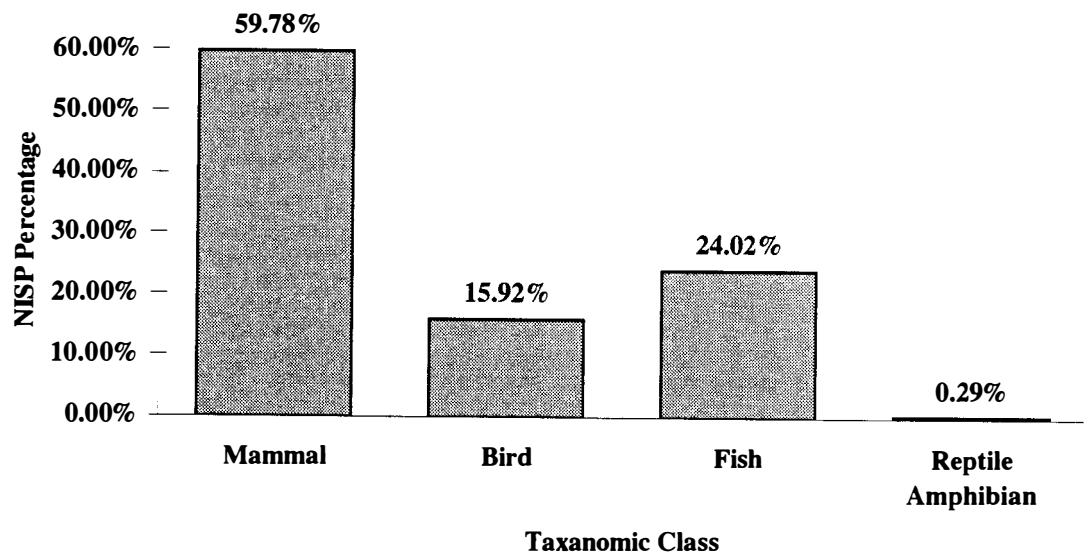
### **Mammals**

Bones identified to the class of mammal number 1,660 and accounted for 60 percent of the vertebrate faunal assemblage (Figure 4.1). Of the mammal bones, 237 (14 percent) could be identified to the level of genus or species. Some 201 bones (55 percent of those identified to species) were attributed to domestic mammals, consisting of pig, cow, and sheep or goat. Pig was the best represented species overall with 171 bones (47 percent of identified species). Cow was represented to a much lesser extent by 29 bones (seven percent of identified species).

A single caprid bone recovered from the earliest (pre-1800) deposits at the Slave Cabin represents a third domestic mammal. The lack of additional caprid elements indicates that this taxon was rarely consumed by the Blount slaves. Sheep and goats occur as a food source only in the earliest frontier contexts in the Upland South (Emanuel Breitburg, personal communication 1994; Lev-Tov 1994). It has also been suggested that domesticated caprids were not well suited to life in the New World due to diseases possibly related to the climate (Reitz and Honerkamp 1983; Lev-Tov 1994) and were consequently eclipsed as a food source fairly early in the history of frontier settlement. The ease with which pigs were raised, and the greater meat yield of pork as opposed to mutton, may have contributed to the infrequent use of mutton as food. Lev-Tov (1994) adds that the backwoods of much of the Upland South were settled by Germanic immigrants, who tended to prefer pork over mutton. The English generally preferred mutton and beef rather than pork. Therefore the prevalence of pork in the diets of Upland South settlers may have been related to this cultural preference. The same favoritism for pork may also have been

**Table 4.1. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Vertebrate Fauna Species List.**

| <b>TAXA</b>                        | <b>COMMON NAME</b>    | <b>NISP</b> | <b>%NISP</b>   | <b>MNI</b> | <b>% MNI</b> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Mammals</b>                     |                       |             | <b>59.78%</b>  |            |              |
| <i>Sus scrofa</i>                  | Domestic Pig          | 171         | 6.16%          | 3          | 8.33%        |
| <i>Bos taurus</i>                  | Domestic Cattle       | 29          | 1.04%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Ovis aries/Capra hirc</i>       | Domestic Sheep/Goat   | 1           | 0.04%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Mephitis mephitis</i>           | Striped Skunk         | 2           | 0.07%          | 2          | 5.56%        |
| <i>Didelphis marsupialis</i>       | Opossum               | 2           | 0.07%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>        | Eastern Gray Squirrel | 2           | 0.07%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>cf. Peromyscus leucopus</i>     | White-footed Mouse    | 26          | 0.94%          | 3          | 8.33%        |
| <i>Neotoma floridana</i>           | Eastern Woodrat       | 2           | 0.07%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>cf. Reithrodontomys humulis</i> | Eastern Harvest Mouse | 1           | 0.04%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Sigmodon hispidus</i>           | Hispid Cotton Rat     | 1           | 0.04%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| Rodent                             |                       | 25          | 0.90%          |            |              |
| Large Mammal                       |                       | 1301        | 46.85%         |            |              |
| Medium Mammal                      |                       | 64          | 2.30%          |            |              |
| Small Mammal                       |                       | 33          | 1.19%          |            |              |
| <b>Birds</b>                       |                       |             | <b>15.92%</b>  |            |              |
| <i>Gallus gallus</i>               | Domestic Chicken      | 62          | 2.23%          | 7          | 19.44%       |
| <i>Phasianidae</i>                 | Chicken-like Bird     | 20          | 0.72%          | 2          | 5.56%        |
| <i>Colinus virginianus</i>         | Bobwhite Quail        | 5           | 0.18%          | 2          | 5.56%        |
| <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>          | Mallard               | 2           | 0.07%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Anas sp. (cf. discors)</i>      | Teal (Blue-Winged)    | 2           | 0.07%          | 2          | 5.56%        |
| <i>Branta canadensis</i>           | Canada Goose          | 1           | 0.04%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| Unidentified Bird                  |                       | 345         | 12.42%         |            |              |
| Unidentified Passerine             | Perching Birds        | 5           | 0.18%          |            |              |
| <b>Fish</b>                        |                       |             | <b>24.02%</b>  |            |              |
| <i>Aplodinotus grunniens</i>       | Freshwater Drum       | 17          | 0.61%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>         | Channel Catfish       | 7           | 0.25%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Lepisosteus sp.</i>             | Gar                   | 2           | 0.07%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>cf. Lepomis macrochirus</i>     | Bluegill              | 1           | 0.04%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Moxostoma carinatum</i>         | River Redhorse        | 1           | 0.04%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| <i>Micropterus sp.</i>             | Bass                  | 1           | 0.04%          | 1          | 2.78%        |
| Centrarchidae                      | Bass Family           | 3           | 0.11%          |            |              |
| Catostomidae                       | Sucker Family         | 1           | 0.04%          |            |              |
| Unidentified Fish                  |                       | 634         | 22.83%         |            |              |
| <b>Reptiles/Amphibians</b>         |                       |             | <b>0.29%</b>   |            |              |
| <i>Rana sp./Bufo sp.</i>           | Frog/Toad             | 7           | 0.25%          |            |              |
| Testudines                         | Turtle                | 1           | 0.04%          |            |              |
| <b>Identified Taxa Total</b>       |                       | <b>2777</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>36</b>  |              |
| <b>Unidentified Bone</b>           |                       | <b>507</b>  |                |            |              |
| <b>Total</b>                       |                       | <b>3284</b> |                |            |              |



**Figure 4.1. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Fauna Taxonomic Composition.**

the reason beef is less common on historical archaeological sites in the Upland South. While these cultural preferences may be likely factors for the taxa composition at Blount Mansion and other sites in the region, the economics of raising livestock probably played a major role.

Wild species were represented by the Virginia opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), and the eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), each contributing two elements. These taxa accounted for only 1.5 percent of the bones identified to species. Elements of non-commensal wild taxa were more prevalent with 8.5 percent identified as New World mice and rat genera *Peromyscus*, *Neotoma*, *Reithrodontomys*, and *Sigmodon*. An additional 25 bones could only be identified to the order rodentia, and consisted of various mouse or rat elements.

All wild mammal remains were recovered from the crawl space. Trace amounts of opossum, skunk, and squirrel were detected. These taxa were probably available from nearby wooded environs and represent occasional hunting activity. Smaller mammal bones may have been more apt to fragment into unrecognizable pieces, resulting in a very small number of identifiable remains. That only traces of these taxa were found reveals that they were not frequently exploited. However, their presence does suggest that the Blount slaves occasionally hunted. As the mansion owners were certainly financially able to supply meat for themselves and their slaves, hunting was probably an infrequent activity.

Other wild mammals were represented by a variety of small rodents, including the white-footed mouse, eastern woodrat, eastern harvest mouse, and the hispid cotton rat. These taxa were recovered from the crawl space beneath the Slave Cabin. Unidentified rodent remains also occurred exclusively in the crawl space. The presence of these small taxa in the crawl space may represent a recovery bias. While all excavated material was sifted through 1/4 in. screen, smaller fine screen soil samples were taken only from the crawl space. The elements of small rodents are usually too small to be caught by the 1/4

in. screens, but would be recovered with smaller screen sizes. The lack of small rodent elements from other areas of the cabin may be entirely due to the processing of crawl space soil samples through fine screens. Differential recovery aside, rodents are likely to have inhabited the crawl space, especially if a plentiful amount of meal refuse was available, as was the case at the Slave Cabin. These rodents probably do not represent dietary activity.

## **Birds**

Of the 442 bird bones recovered (13 percent of the vertebrate bones), 345 were identified simply as bird, and five as small passerine, or perching bird. A total of 92 avian bones was identified to species (25 percent of bones identified to species), including domestic chicken (*Gallus gallus*) (17 percent of bones identified to species), phasianidae or chicken-like bird (5.5 percent), quail (*Colinus virginianus*) (one percent). Elements of the mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), teal (*Anas cf. discours*), and Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) each occurred in quantities of less than one percent (See Table 4.1).

Domestic chicken represents the main avian taxon and constituted a substantial dietary supplement exploited by the slaves. A MNI of seven was calculated from the chicken remains; the highest MNI of any taxon on the site. Quail consisted of at least two individuals, as did teal. Duck and goose were comprised of one individual each.

Avian bones are generally more delicate than mammal bones and their representation may reflect preservation bias. However, the relative frequencies of avian bones belonging to different taxa probably offer a reasonable representation of avian taxa exploited on the site.

The presence of chicken bones in such percentages is associated with frequent dependence on this taxon to supplement the meat portion of the slave diet. It has been documented that slaves, though often not allowed to keep large livestock, grew their own gardens and raised their own chickens for meat and eggs (Genovese 1966) Chickens were

often raised on site and could be killed and processed with relatively little trouble. Chicken, like other fowl, was not preserved easily, and therefore, had to be consumed soon after killing. A single chicken would feed only a few people, while large mammal carcasses would have had to be widely distributed or preserved before spoilage.

All other birds represented in the Slave Cabin fauna were wild species, with the possible exception of phasianids, or chicken-like birds. Bones identified only to phasianid resembled chicken or other gallinacious bird elements such as the ruffed grouse or ring-necked pheasant, the former of which occurred naturally in this area at one time (Peterson 1980), and the later of which may have been raised or provided by the commercial market. However, due to size variability and the similarity of many gallinacious bird bones, these bones were classified only as being within the chicken-like bird family.

Another wild bird represented is the quail, a gallinacious bird resembling the chicken in skeletal morphology in many aspects except size; the quail is much smaller. Canada goose, mallard-sized duck, and teal were represented by only one or two bones each. Five passerine, or small perching bird bones were also recovered. Given that the passerine bones were found in the crawl space, it seems unlikely that these birds occurred as non-commensal taxa, and instead, were consumed. While passerine birds do not usually comprise a great part of the diet in historical faunal deposits, there is a tradition of eating them in the Upland South (Lev-Tov 1994).

All of the wild avian taxa, with the probable exception of the passerines, could have been either hunted or obtained from a commercial butcher. The environs of the nearby Tennessee River certainly provided abundant wild fowl to individual hunters and commercial meat markets alike.

Egg shell was recovered almost exclusively from the crawl space. The presence of egg shell indicates that eggs were a frequent staple of the slave diet. Eggs were a renewable resource that provided protein. The shell and other meal refuse, was then

deposited in the crawl space. Another explanation for the concentration of egg shell in the crawl space is that this "protected" context may have protected the shell, from the exposure and trampling common in other areas of the site.

The distribution of bird remains across the site correlates with patterns of bone disposal in general. The majority of avian bone was recovered from units placed in the crawl space (Units 18, 21, and 28) while a fair amount of avian bone was also found in the unit placed along the location of the door and window on the north wall (Unit 15). Similar quantities of bone were deposited in units from the chimney, southeast foundation, northeast foundation and the fire hearth (Unit 8). Chicken bones generally followed the same pattern of distribution. Chicken elements were most dense in the crawl space, followed by the exterior of the door on the north wall (Unit 15), as well as around the cabin foundation. The crawl space, which yielded the most chicken and avian bones also yielded the most diverse array of avian bones in relation to the rest of the site. This assemblage included chicken, quail, duck, teal, and passerine. With the exception of the north door area (Unit 15) which produced chicken, quail and teal, and the fire hearth, which produced chicken and a Canada Goose bone, the other Slave Cabin units yielded only chicken and unidentifiable bird remains. This indicates intensive deposition of bird bones within the crawl space, while bones were also tossed out of the front door and through some windows.

Due to the frailty of bird bones, it is possible that bones deposited outside of the cabin were more prone to breakage than those thrown into the crawl space. Bones outside the cabin would have been subject to heavier fragmentation due to trampling, especially those bones found in units near the doorways. However, ratios of unidentified to identified bird bone were approximately the same for most of the units, both inside and outside the cabin. The highest proportion of identified to unidentified bone of came from the hearth (Unit 8), which only produced ten avian bones. Identified bones outnumbered

unidentified bones by four times in Unit 8. However, this proportion cannot accurately reflect patterns of destruction due to trampling or other activity because of the low number of bones found in the majority of excavation units. Most avian bones found in the Slave Cabin came from Units 15 and 28. This is certainly reflective of discard patterns moderated by access to refuse areas. Yet, in both units, unidentified bones outnumbered identified bones by eight times. Such pronounced disparity probably has less to do with foot traffic and is more attributable to the fragility of bird bones.

### **Fish**

Fish were represented by 667 bones (20 percent of vertebrate bones), of which 33 were identifiable to family or lower category, including Freshwater Drum (*Aplodinotus grunniens*), Channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*), various suckers (Catostomidae), sunfish/bass (Centrarchidae) and gar (*Lepisosteus sp.*) (See Table 4.1). All of these fish were available from the waters of the Tennessee River, over which the mansion and cabin stood.

The small percentage of identifiable fish remains (nine percent of bones identified to species and five percent of the total fish assemblage) may be due to a number of factors. In general, only cranial fish remains can be identified to a category beyond Osteichthyes. Post-cranial fish elements are often impossible to identify more specifically, with the exception of the vertebra and scales of a few taxa (e.g. *Lepisosteus sp.* - gar fish). Also, the skull of the fish is fairly complicated and consists of many more elements than do the skulls of mammals or birds. The greater number of cranial elements are likely to become disarticulated and fragmented over time, resulting in fish remains that are difficult to identify. Fish remains are also fragile and perishable, resulting in possible under representation. However, fish remains overall ranked fairly high among represented taxa, which was probably due to the site's location near the Tennessee River.

The vast majority of fish remains were found in the crawl space (Units 18, 20, and 28) and outside the cabin near the door on the north wall (Unit 15). This distribution is in keeping with that of nearly every other taxon represented at the site. Apparently, refuse disposal into the crawl space and within the cabin, did not produce a significantly foul odor.

### **Reptiles and Amphibians**

Reptiles were represented by a single unidentifiable turtle carapace fragment (see Table 4.1). Seven bones attributed to frog or toad were recovered from the cabin. Amphibian bones also do not preserve well due to their fragile nature (see Table 4.1). This paucity of turtle and amphibian bones is nonetheless odd, given the proximity of the site to the Tennessee River. These taxa were easily accessible along the banks of the river. As fish remains were present in some numbers in the cabin, it would seem reasonable that the slaves also collected other aquatic taxa. However, the lack of turtle and amphibian bones indicate that the slaves rarely hunted the river bank for food. That the frog and turtle remains were recovered only from the crawl space reveals that remains of these taxa were deposited under the cabin after consumption, strongly suggesting their consumption took place in the cabin.

In summary, mammals made up the majority of the fauna represented in the Slave Cabin deposits, especially domestic pig, and cow. Sheep or goat occurred in only trace quantities, as did wild mammals, such as skunk, opossum, and squirrel. Domestic chicken comprised most of the avian taxa, but wild birds, such as quail, ducks, geese, and even small perching birds were also present. Fish, including freshwater drum, channel catfish, and various suckers and sunfish, provided a substantial portion of the diet. Other aquatic taxa, constituted a very small fraction of the fauna represented.

## **Depositional Areas**

Sixteen excavation units were placed in and around the Slave Cabin area, resulting in the recovery of material along the interior and exterior of the cabin wall foundations, near the chimney, in the fire hearth, and in the crawl space. The cabin itself was moved from the site sometime between 1830 and 1840, shortly after the McClungs acquired ownership. The cabin is believed to have been attached to the mansion as a west wing. An architectural study of the Blount Mansion (Emrick and Fore 1993) suggests that the cabin apparently possessed a number of windows and doors. A door and window were located on the north side of the cabin, opposite the hearth, a window on the north side, near the northeast corner, a window and door on the east side in the northeast corner, and two windows on the south side, near both corners. The amounts of bone recovered from each unit are probably associated with the locations of these openings. The taxa represented and the skeletal portions of certain well represented taxa may also be related to specialized dumping activity dictated by the locations of doors and windows. The remains of certain taxa or skeletal portions may have been discarded in certain areas and not in others.

Unit 15 contained the most bone, probably due to the north wall window and door once located in the vicinity. The second largest bone assemblage came from units in the crawl space (Units 18, 21, and 28). The fine screen sample from Unit 28 also yielded a large number of bones smaller than 1/4 inch in size. While the disposal of such organic material within the cabin may have created an odor problem due to organic decomposition, and a pest problem due to rodent and insect activity, the crawl space appears to have received an abundance of refuse material. The slaves probably had ready access to the crawl space through a trap door. However, the utilization of the crawl space in addition to areas outside the cabin for refuse disposal is interesting and requires more intensive research into disposal habits than can be considered here.

The third largest assemblage of bone came from Unit 17, at the intersection of the palisaded fence and the eastern wall. Although this unit was located a few feet south of where a cabin window and door are believed to have been, its placement near the wall and the fence suggest that faunal waste may have been deliberately disposed there. Three other units, placed near the northeast (Unit 20) and northwest (Units 16 and 19) corners of the cabin yielded a moderate amount of bone, probably indicating casual and inadvertent refuse disposal. Units placed in the hearth (Units 2 and 8) yielded the least bone, probably due to the regular removal of ashes and debris during hearth cleaning. Only one unit along the south wall (Unit 13) yielded any bone at all, and it contained less bone than any of the other Slave Cabin units. The presence of bone in Unit 13 may be due to a window location near the southeast corner. However, the low bone count may also be due to the very close proximity of the unit to the cabin foundation.

### **Skeletal Portions and Butchering**

In addition to indicating the presence of a particular taxon, skeletal portions of well represented taxa identify which parts of the animal were butchered, the butchering method employed, and which cuts of meat were obtained and consumed by the site occupants. This information may also indicate whether an animal was butchered on or off site, thereby suggesting the extent to which the site occupants supplied their own meat or participated in the meat retail system. Skeletal portions may also indicate the relative economic status of the site occupants. However, factors such as market availability, on site butchering, and personal preferences can obscure such determinations.

Butchering marks exhibited by faunal elements give an indication of what techniques were used to disarticulate the elements from the carcass and prepare the meat for cooking. Typical butchering methods include sawing or chopping with a cleaver to

separate elements into portions or to separate joined elements, and cutting with a knife to remove meat from the bone. Saw marks are distinctive in that they exhibit a number of striations due to the back and forth cutting motion of the saw. The use of a cleaver would leave deep, even marks, indicative of the powerful blows necessary to disarticulate an element from the carcass or to divide an element. Such hacking would often inadvertently remove chips of bone adjacent to the point of impact, as well as produce spiral fractures on the fresh bone shaft. Knife marks are typically superficial and rarely penetrate through the cortical bone. While the use of all three butchering instruments on large mammal carcasses is expected, knife marks are often the only butchering evidence found on birds and smaller mammals.

### **Pork**

Pig was represented by 171 bones or bone fragments. Portions of the head, shoulder, upper and lower forelimb, back, ribs, rump, lower hindlimb, and feet were present (Figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and Tables 4.2, 4.3). Virtually every part of the pig was present except the upper hindlimb. Included among the cranial elements were a number of individual teeth and fragments of the mandible, maxilla, frontal, occipital, and nuchal regions of the skull.

Butchery of hog carcasses is discussed in a late-eighteenth century cookbook "The Young Ladies School of Arts" (Robertson 1766, excerpted in Osteen 1986) and describes the process of cutting off the hog's head, splitting the carcass longitudinally, removing the jaw from the head and dividing it in to halves, then removing the ears and brains. The brains were then used to make the gravy which was poured over the carcass. While this publication predates the Blount slave deposits by at least thirty-five years and is geared toward dressing and roasting a whole pig rather than butchering it into smaller pieces, the archaeological sample appears to reflect the same method of processing the crania. The

**Table 4.2. Definition and Estimated Weight of Butchering Units for Beef and Pork.**

| <b>Beef</b>                |                        |                                                                                            |                                                 |                          |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Relative Meat Yield</b> | <b>Butchering Unit</b> | <b>Skeletal Elements</b>                                                                   | <b>Carcass Weight (lbs) per Butchering Unit</b> | <b>% Consumable Meat</b> |
| High                       | short loin             | lumbar vertebrae                                                                           | 6.8                                             | 62.8                     |
| High                       | sirloin                | illum, sacrum                                                                              | 4.8                                             | 62.8                     |
| High                       | round                  | femur shaft, distal femur                                                                  | 9.6                                             | 60.5                     |
| High                       | rump                   | proximal femur, ischium, pubis, acetabulum                                                 | 2.2                                             | 52                       |
| High                       | chuck                  | thoracic vertebrae 1-5, dorsal & medial ribs 1-5, scapula, proximal humerus, humerus shaft | 17.2                                            | 65.4                     |
| High                       | ribs                   | thoracic vertebrae 6-12, dorsal ribs 6-12                                                  | 4.3                                             | 75.6                     |
| High                       | short ribs             | medial ribs 6-12                                                                           | 1.8                                             | 75.6                     |
| High                       | full plate             | ventral ribs 1-12                                                                          | 8.2                                             | 58.7                     |
| Moderate                   | crania                 | crania                                                                                     |                                                 |                          |
| Moderate                   | neck                   | cervical vertebrae                                                                         | 0.5                                             | 57.1                     |
| Moderate                   | foreshank              | radius, ulna, distal humerus, carpals                                                      | 2.7                                             | 57.1                     |
| Moderate                   | hindshank              | tibia, patella, tarsals                                                                    | 4.2                                             | 42.9                     |
| Low                        | feet                   | metapodials, phalanges                                                                     |                                                 |                          |

| <b>Pork</b>                |                        |                                                                  |                                                 |                          |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Relative Meat Yield</b> | <b>Butchering Unit</b> | <b>Skeletal Elements</b>                                         | <b>Carcass Weight (lbs) per Butchering Unit</b> | <b>% Consumable Meat</b> |
| High                       | short cut ham          | acetabulum, pubis, ischium, femur, proximal tibia, tibia shaft   | 4                                               | 55.3                     |
| High                       | loin                   | thoracic vertebrae, lumbar vertebrae, dorsal ribs, illum, sacrum | 11.6                                            | 67.3                     |
| High                       | picnic shoulder        | distal scapula, humerus, radius, ulna                            | 2.6                                             | 45.8                     |
| High                       | shoulder butt          | cervical vertebra, scapula blade                                 | 2                                               | 50                       |
| High                       | rib                    | medial and ventral ribs                                          | 9.9                                             | 69.6                     |
| Moderate                   | crania                 | crania                                                           |                                                 |                          |
| Low                        | feet                   | distal tibia, carpals, tarsals, metapodials, phalanges           | 0.8                                             | 25                       |

Sources: Lyman 1979; Table 3, Eakins 1924, Kelley 1982, O'steen 1986.

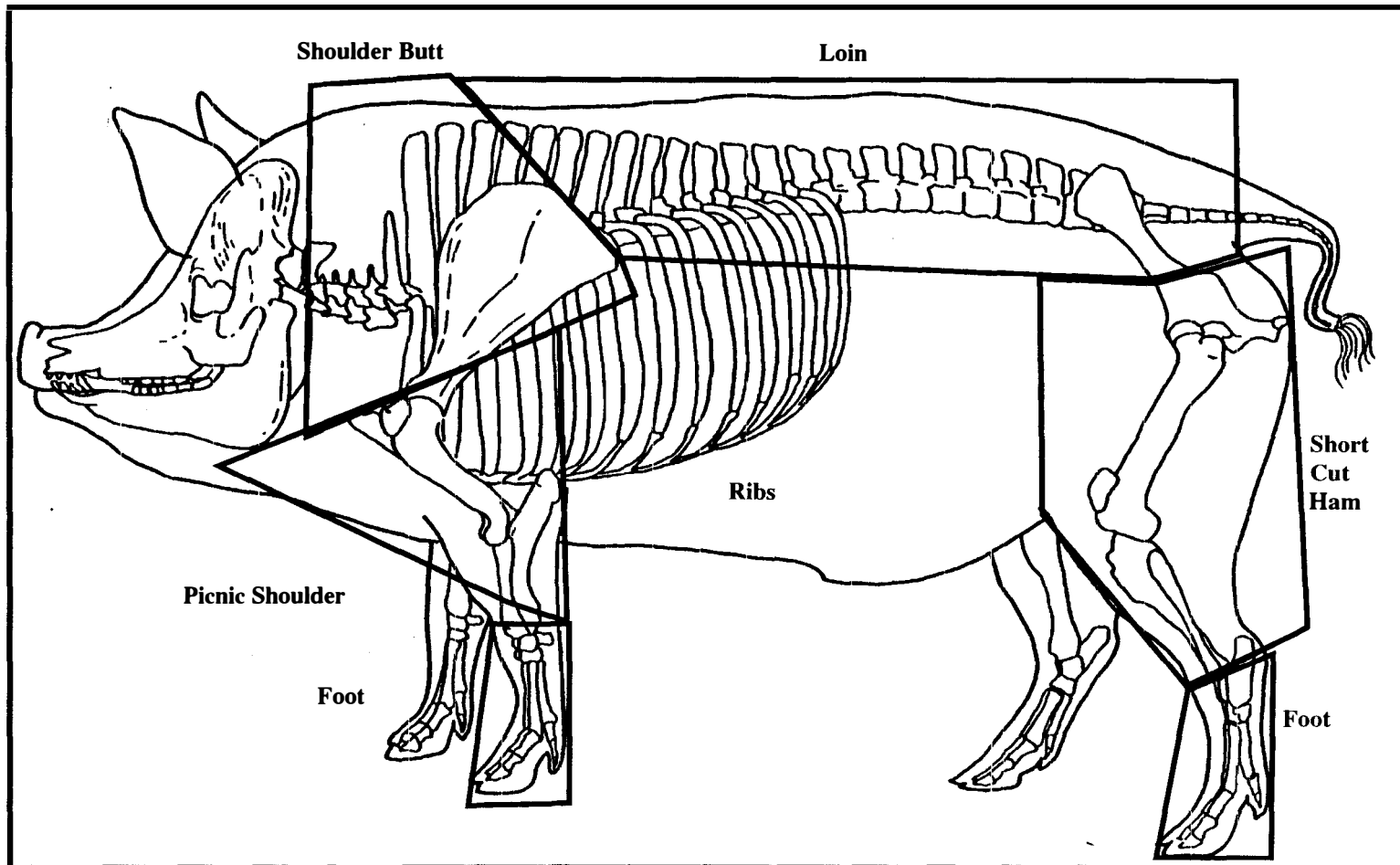


Figure 4.2. General Butchering Portions for Pork (Skeletal Schematic adapted from Elizabeth Reitz).

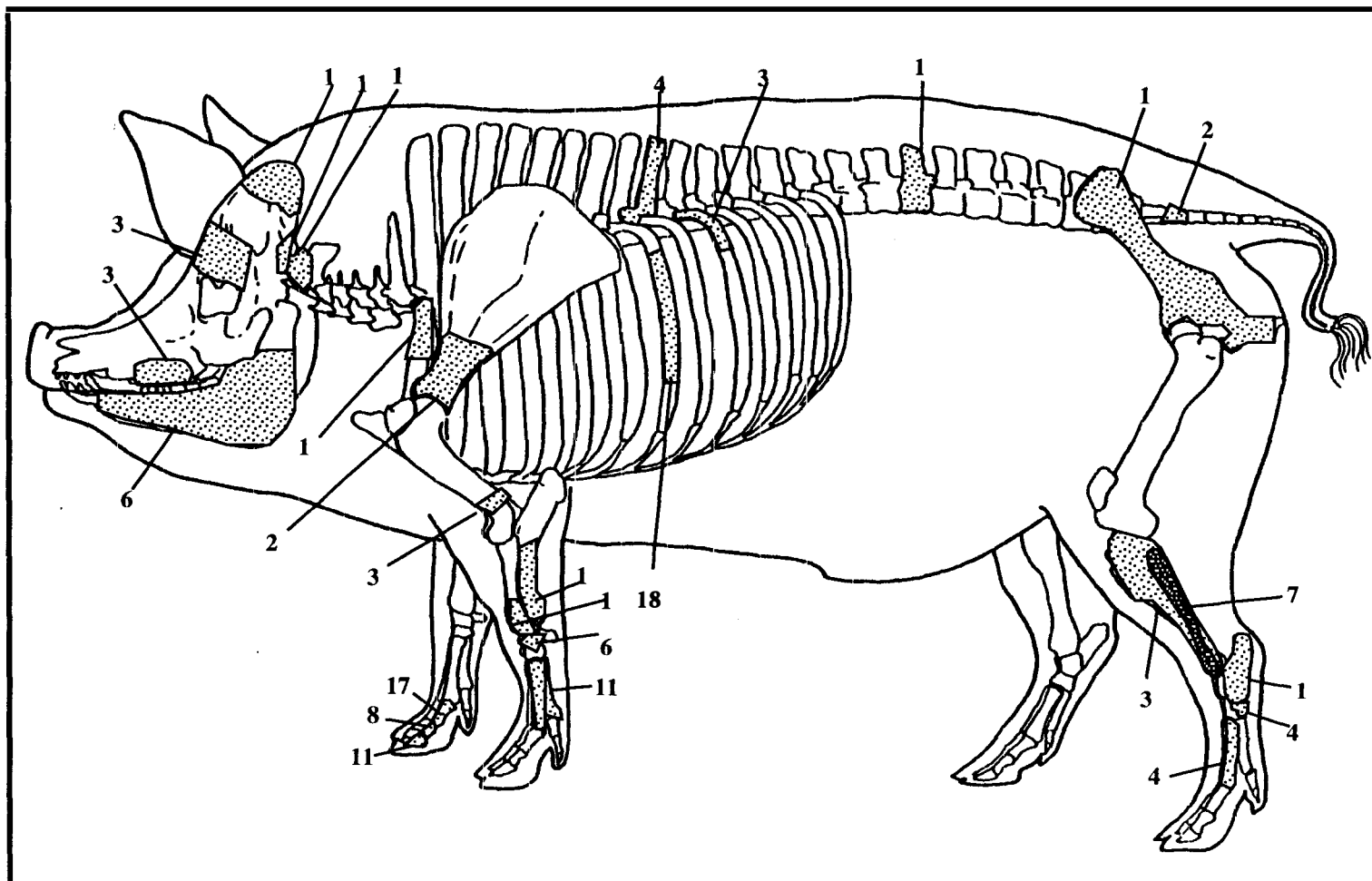
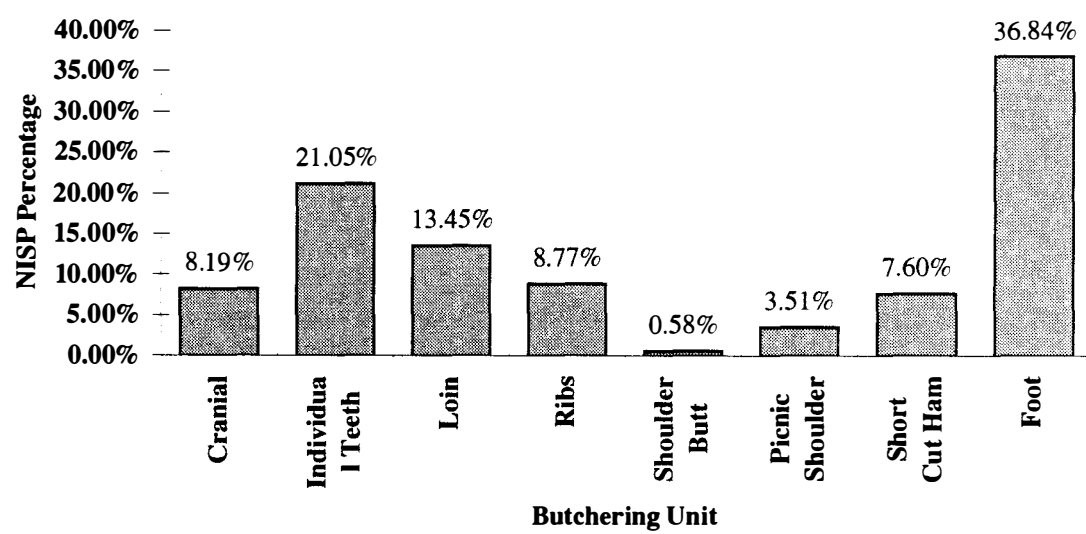


Figure 4.3. Pork elements from Blount Slave Cabin, not shown are 36 individual teeth, and 11 indeterminate vertebral fragments (Skeletal Schematic adapted from Elizabeth Reitz).



**Figure 4.4. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Pork Butchering Unit Percentages.**

**Table 4.3. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Pork Butchering Units.**

| BUTCHERING UNIT         | EXCAVATION UNIT |          |          |           |          |           |           |          |          |          |           | NISP Total | % NISP        |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|---------------|
|                         | 8               | 13       | 14       | 15        | 16       | 17        | 18        | 19       | 20       | 21       | 28        |            |               |
| <b>Cranial</b>          |                 |          |          | 2         |          |           |           |          |          |          | 12        | <b>14</b>  | <b>8.19%</b>  |
| <b>Individual Teeth</b> |                 |          | 3        | 1         |          | 3         | 12        |          | 1        | 4        | 12        | <b>36</b>  | <b>21.05%</b> |
| <b>Loin</b>             | 3               | 1        | 1        | 5         |          | 3         |           |          |          | 1        | 9         | <b>23</b>  | <b>13.45%</b> |
| <b>Ribs</b>             | 3               |          |          | 4         |          | 1         | 3         |          |          | 2        | 2         | <b>15</b>  | <b>8.77%</b>  |
| <b>Shoulder Butt</b>    | 1               |          |          |           |          |           |           |          |          |          |           | <b>1</b>   | <b>0.58%</b>  |
| <b>Picnic Shoulder</b>  |                 |          |          | 3         | 1        | 1         |           |          |          | 1        |           | <b>6</b>   | <b>3.51%</b>  |
| <b>Short Cut Ham</b>    | 2               |          |          | 1         | 2        |           | 1         | 1        |          |          | 6         | <b>13</b>  | <b>7.60%</b>  |
| <b>Foot</b>             |                 |          | 1        | 2         |          | 3         | 7         |          | 1        | 1        | 48        | <b>63</b>  | <b>36.84%</b> |
| <b>NISP Total</b>       | <b>9</b>        | <b>1</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>89</b> | <b>171</b> |               |

nuchal, occipital, and frontal portions of the skull suggest disarticulation and dismantling of the head, probably to access the brains. The mandible fragments probably resulted from removal of the jaw from the skull to obtain the jowl meat.

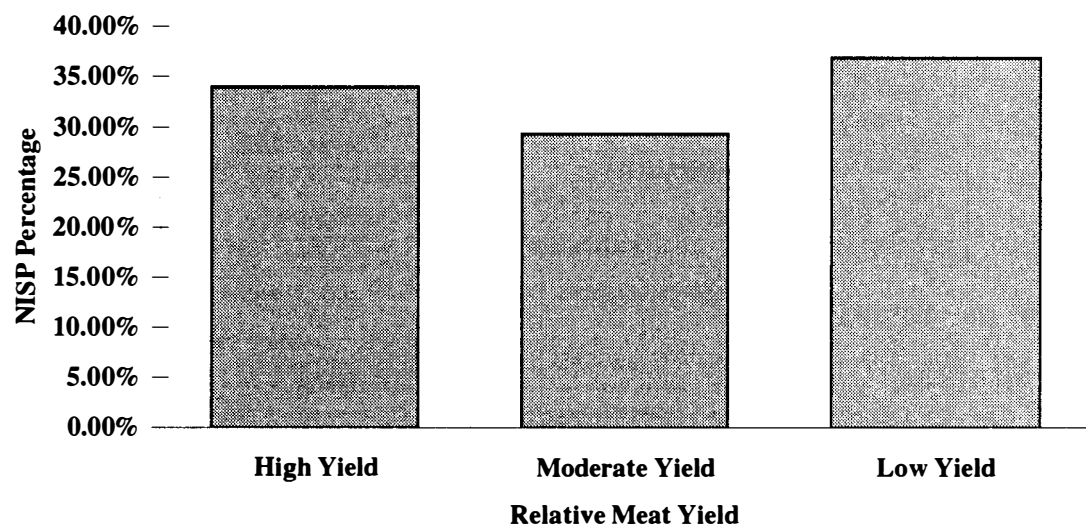
Other portions of the pig represent a number of different pork cuts. The proximal scapula probably represents a shoulder roast. The shoulder, or scapula, has no bone attachments to the rest of the skeleton, and thus does not require violent separation from the carcass, except when it is necessary to cut the muscle and sinew attaching it. However, once separated, it may have been desirable to cleave the blade from the proximal portion of the scapula, with meat included, to form a shoulder butt. The humerus, radius, ulna, and carpal fragments represent a shank or picnic shoulder roast. The metacarpals and phalanges were the remains of pigs feet, which were commonly eaten after being pickled in brine or put into a stew or some other dish. The inornate and caudal vertebra were associated with the rump of the hog which would have yielded a large short cut ham or loin. The tibia and fibula represent a shank ham or roast, while the metatarsals were again the remains of the feet. The vertebra from the thoracic and lumbar areas produced the loin, chops, and fatback. Proximal rib fragments may have been included with the loin and chops, while spare ribs may be represented by the mid-shaft rib fragments. Fragments of the vertebra and proximal ribs may also have been the result of splitting the carcass into halves, which was often done by striking an axe along one side of the vertebral column. This practice was common prior to the use of saws for carcass butchery, which served to more carefully section carcass sides (Wigginton 1972).

Most of the hog elements recovered from the slave deposits were considered separate cuts. However, seven pig elements from one level of the crawl space (Unit 28) represented the right fore foot of a single hog, including the distal epiphysis of the radius, the carpals, metacarpals and one first phalanx. None of the fore foot bones showed any sign of butchery or burning. The unfused epiphysis of the radius, metacarpal bones, and

phalanx aged the hog to under two years (Silver 1963). These indicate that whole hog feet were consumed by the slaves, probably after being cooked or pickled.

The skeletal elements of the pig carcass were collapsed into broader categories of relative meat yield to determine the general quality of the pork consumed by the slaves. Elements were placed into high, moderate, and low, meat yield categories (See Table 4.2). This analysis revealed that portions from each yield category were nearly equal. This indicated that the slaves had access to all portions of the pig carcass, including the best and worst cuts (Figure 4.5).

Specific butchering methods can only be determined by examining butchery marks themselves (Table 4.4). Direct evidence of pig butchering was found on only seven elements coming from the jaw, neck, shoulder, upper forelimb, lower hindlimb, and ribs. Butchering techniques included chopping of the shoulder (scapula) and lower hindlimb (tibia). Saws were used on the upper forelimb (humerus) and ribs. Knives were used to cut the jaw (mandible), neck (atlas) and ribs. As mentioned above, the distal scapula was separated from the blade to yield two meat portions: a picnic shoulder, which included the humerus; and a shoulder butt, which included the scapula blade. However, the latter portion was not represented. The upper forelimb (humerus) was sawn into picnic shoulder steaks, one of them 1/4 inch thick. The lower hindlimb (tibia), which would have yielded a short shank ham, was chopped at midshaft. The saw marks on the midshaft of ribs reveal that the rib sections were sawn, probably into upper and lower racks. The knife marks on the mandible were related to the removal of meat from the jaw. The knife marks on the atlas reflects the method of cranial disarticulation from the rest of the carcass, which required cutting of the muscle and sinew along the vertebral column which may have been done more efficiently with a knife than with a powerful chop from an axe or cleaver. The proximal rib fragment with knife marks may have been the result of removing the meat from the rib bone, either in preparation for cooking or during consumption. One area of



**Figure 4.5. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Relative Meat Yield of Pork Cuts.**

**Table 4.4. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Pork Elements Exhibiting Butchering Marks.**

| <b>Unit</b>       | <b>Element</b> | <b>Butchery Type</b> | <b>NISP</b> |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 15                | Scapula        | Chop                 | 1           |
| 8                 | Tibia          | Chop                 | 1           |
| 14                | Rib            | Knife                | 1           |
| 28                | Mandible       | Knife                | 1           |
| 8                 | Atlas          | Knife                | 1           |
| 18                | Rib            | Saw                  | 1           |
| 21                | Humerus        | Saw                  | 1           |
| <b>Total NISP</b> |                |                      | <b>7</b>    |

inquiry concerning historic faunal deposits resulting in few conclusive findings is differentiating butchering locations from consumption refuse locations. Which skeletal portions represent butchering activity waste or consumption refuse has not been determined with any confidence. Bones coming from the less meaty portions of an animal, such as the head and feet, were formerly interpreted as butchery waste, due to the lower nutritional value of those portions (Lyman 1987; Stephenson 1974). However, it has been suggested elsewhere (Reitz 1987) that less meaty portions, including bovid crania, were consumed nonetheless, and manifest the dietary strategy of people of lower economic status. Pig crania were often purchased from the urban market in Charleston, South Carolina and therefore, hog cranial elements from sites in that area could represent either on-site butchering or consumption (Calhoun 1984). In his survey of faunal data from early historic sites in the Boston area, Landon (1996) surmises that the feet of cattle and sheep and to some degree, pigs, were usually removed and discarded by urban butchers, resulting in lower numbers of foot portions in household deposits. However, if pig, cattle, and caprid feet were commercially available, the distinction of butchery and consumption waste would be obscured in the archaeological record.

The pig bones from the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin contained a considerable number of foot and cranial elements, including 36 individual teeth and 14 skull and mandible fragments. Together, cranial and foot elements comprised over 65 percent of the pig bones found in the Slave Cabin deposits. The remaining 35 percent of the pig bones consisted of vertebra, ribs, and forelimb and hindlimb fragments (see Table 4.2).

### **Distribution of Pig Bones**

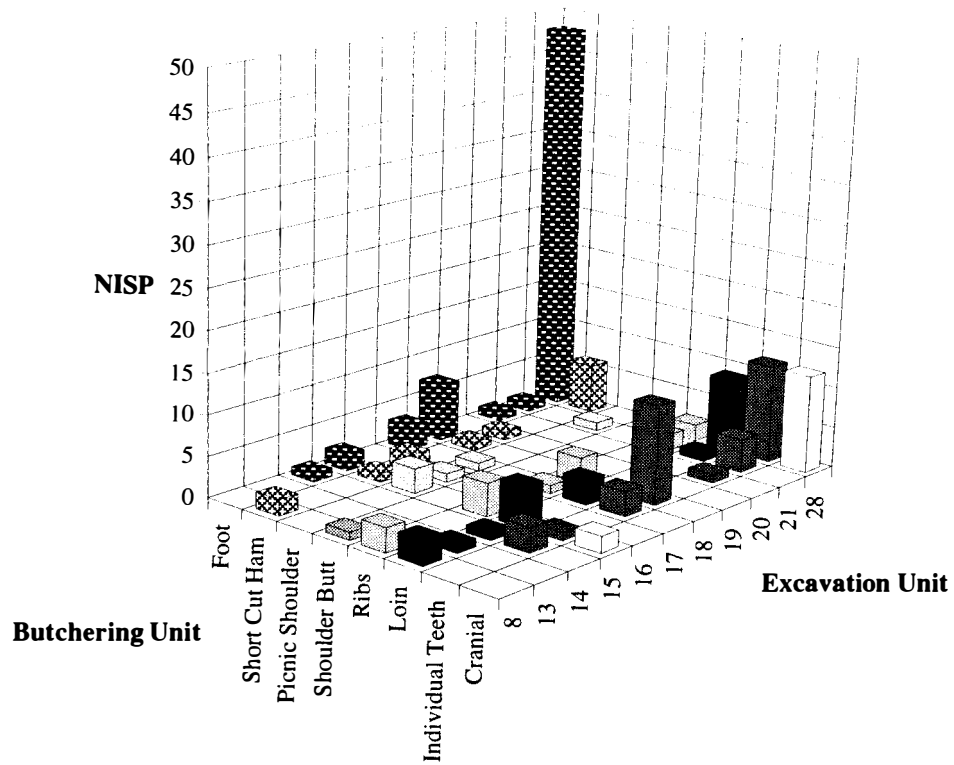
Analysis of distribution of pig bones may provide a better indication of which bones represent butchering waste and which consumption waste. The amount of pig bone in the excavation units corresponds to the amount of total bone found in the units. The

differential occurrence of all bone in the Slave Cabin site was most likely due to differential deposition with modification by taphonomic factors.

The occurrence of pig bone in the cabin was highest in two of the units from the crawl space (Units 28 and 18) (See Table 4.3, Figure 4.6). The second highest number of pork bones was recovered from Unit 15, near where a doorway and window are believed to have been. Pork bones were also recovered in moderate amounts from the unit in the southeast corner of the cabin (Unit 17) and from the hearth area (Unit 14). Pork bones occur in lesser amounts around the chimney (Unit 14), and along and outside the northern and southern wall foundations.

The high number of pork bones found in the crawl space supports the assertion that debris was deliberately deposited into the crawl space. Among the pork bones recovered from the crawl space were vertebra and ribs and the highest frequency of bones from the upper and lower hindlimb. Most of the cranial fragments, individual teeth, and foot elements were also located here. Foot elements from the crawl space, followed by cranial fragments and teeth, greatly outnumbered other skeletal portions found both in the crawl space and throughout the rest of the cabin. The number of elements that comprise the foot (approximately 22) and the number of teeth a single hog possesses (42 for the adult hog) certainly contribute to the frequency of both. However, cranial fragments and teeth and foot elements far outnumber other portions, and may indicate greater consumption of these portions.

It is unlikely that butchering waste would have been brought into the cabin for deposit in the crawl space when, presumably, more favorable disposal areas existed outside the cabin. Perhaps all of the pork bones within the crawl space represent consumption refuse, or at least, post-butchering refuse. While many of these portions may have been processed further at the cooking hearth after being separated from the carcass, apparently, they were not related to the initial butchering of the hog.



**Figure 4.6. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Pork Cuts Per Excavation Unit.**

## **Beef**

The number of bovid elements recovered from the Slave Cabin deposits was small. With an NISP of 29, the cattle bones accounted for over seven percent of the identified fauna, compared to 46 percent for hog elements. There are a number of possible reasons that cattle bones occurred with much less frequency than pig bones, including personal or cultural preferences, beef availability, different depositional location, etc.

In discussing the methods of carcass partitioning, many zooarchaeologists have referred to early cookbooks explaining butchering and meat preparation (Landon 1996; Lev-Tov 1994; Osteen 1986). The historic accounts by Bradley (1755, excerpted in Osteen 1986), describe general butchering units of the bovid commercially available in London during the mid-eighteenth century. Osteen (1986) found that there may have been slight variations in where the cuts were made for the large beef portions, and for further division of the large beef cuts. However, the large beef portions represented in the material from the contemporary Oxen Hill Manor in Maryland, did not differ greatly from Bradley's 1755 account from London. The separation of the bovid carcass can be summarized as follows: the crania and feet were removed and the carcass portioned. The axial skeleton would form the neck, ribs, short ribs, short loin, and sirloin; the forelimb would comprise the chuck and foreshank; the hindlimb consisted of the sirloin, rump, round, and hindshank (Figure 4.7). According to Bradley (1755, excerpted in Osteen 1986), the sirloin, rump and round were the "finest pieces". The feet were not mentioned and probably were considered waste items, as was the crania.

Despite the low number of bovid bones recovered from the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin, some patterns arise in the skeletal portions represented (Table 4.5, Figure 4.8). Foot bones were the most common, followed by bones from the hindshank, sirloin, round and ribs. Bones from other portions, including the short loin, rump, chuck, short ribs, full plate, foreshank, and neck, occurred sparingly.

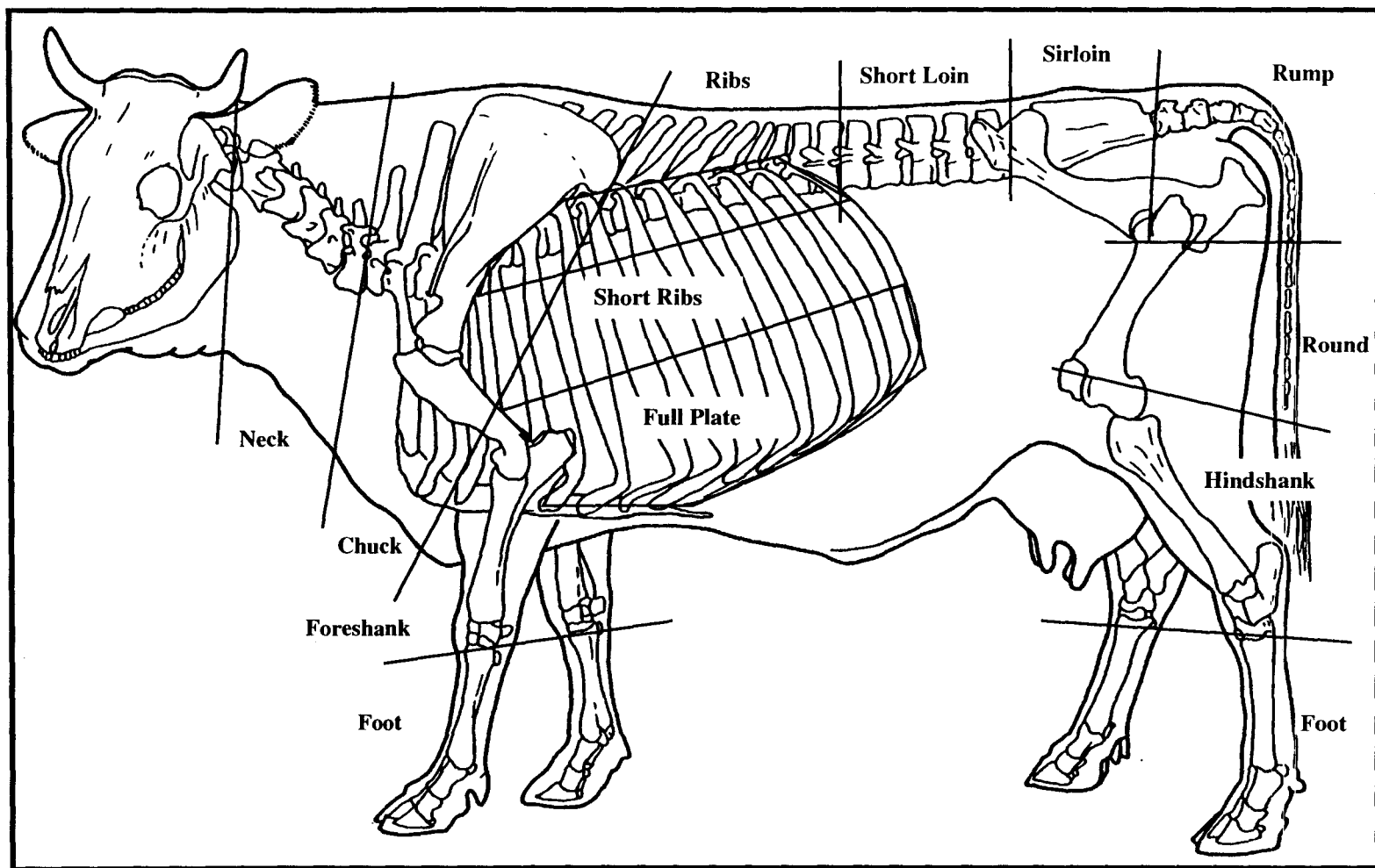


Figure 4.7. Generalized Cattle Butchering Units (skeletal schematic adapted from Elizabeth Reitz).

**Table 4.5. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Cattle Butchering Portions.**

| <b>Skeletal Portion</b> | <b>NISP per Excavation Unit</b> |           |           |           |           |           | <b>NISP<br/>Total</b> | <b>NISP<br/>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
|                         | <b>15</b>                       | <b>17</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>28</b> |                       |                            |
| <b>Cranial</b>          |                                 |           |           |           |           |           |                       |                            |
| <b>Neck</b>             |                                 |           | 1         |           |           |           | <b>1</b>              | <b>3.45%</b>               |
| <b>Short Loin</b>       |                                 |           |           |           |           | 1         | <b>1</b>              | <b>3.45%</b>               |
| <b>Ribs</b>             | 1                               |           | 1         |           |           | 1         | <b>3</b>              | <b>10.34%</b>              |
| <b>Sirloin</b>          | 2                               |           |           |           |           | 1         | <b>3</b>              | <b>10.34%</b>              |
| <b>Round</b>            | 2                               |           |           |           |           | 1         | <b>3</b>              | <b>10.34%</b>              |
| <b>Rump</b>             | 1                               |           |           |           |           |           | <b>1</b>              | <b>3.45%</b>               |
| <b>Chuck</b>            | 1                               |           |           |           |           |           | <b>1</b>              | <b>3.45%</b>               |
| <b>Short Ribs</b>       |                                 |           | 1         |           |           |           | <b>1</b>              | <b>3.45%</b>               |
| <b>Full Plate</b>       |                                 |           |           |           |           |           |                       |                            |
| <b>Foreshank</b>        |                                 |           |           | 1         |           |           | <b>1</b>              | <b>3.45%</b>               |
| <b>Hindshank</b>        | 3                               |           |           |           |           | 1         | <b>4</b>              | <b>13.79%</b>              |
| <b>Foot</b>             | 6                               | 1         |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | <b>10</b>             | <b>34.48%</b>              |
| <b>NISP Total</b>       | <b>16</b>                       | <b>1</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>1</b>  | <b>6</b>  | <b>29</b>             |                            |

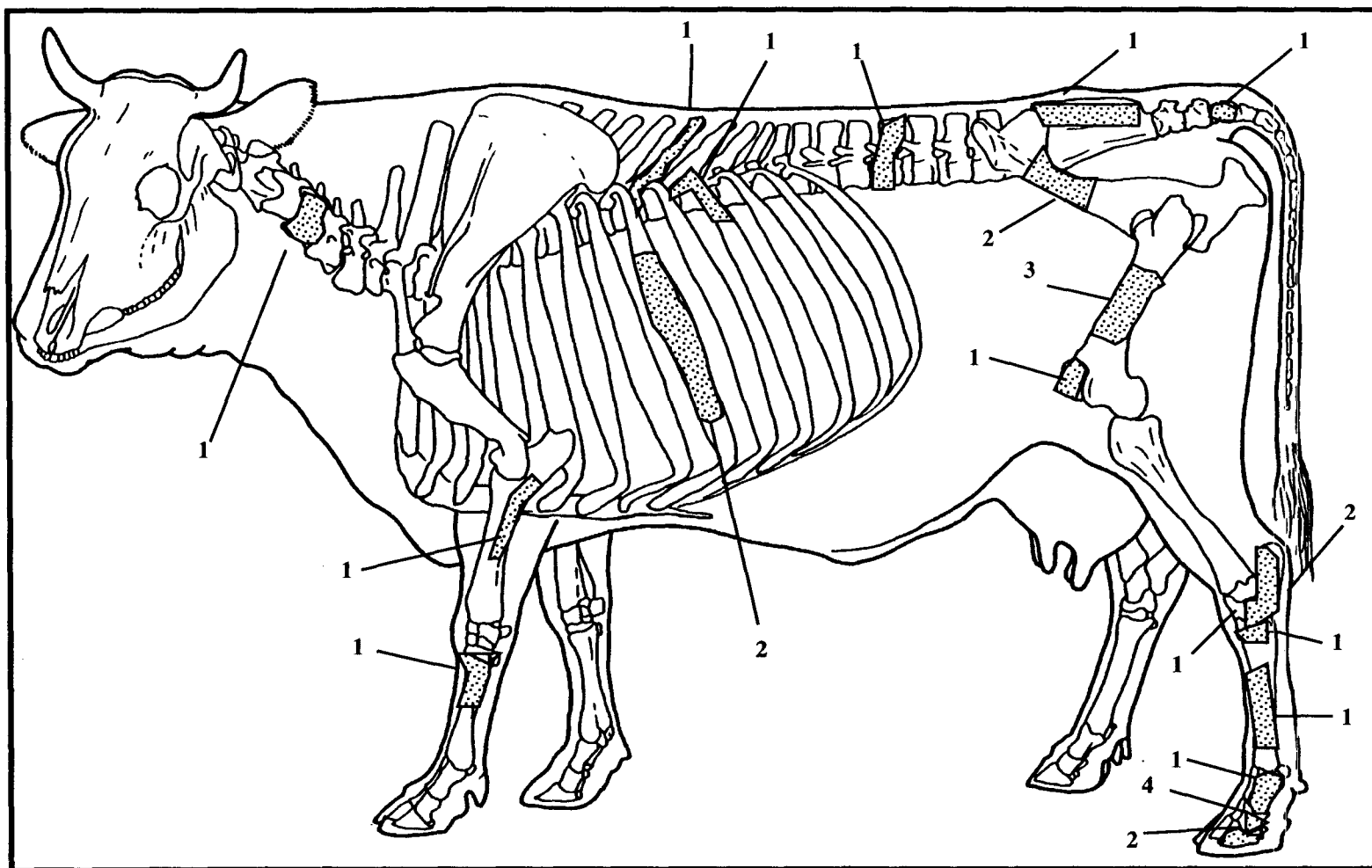
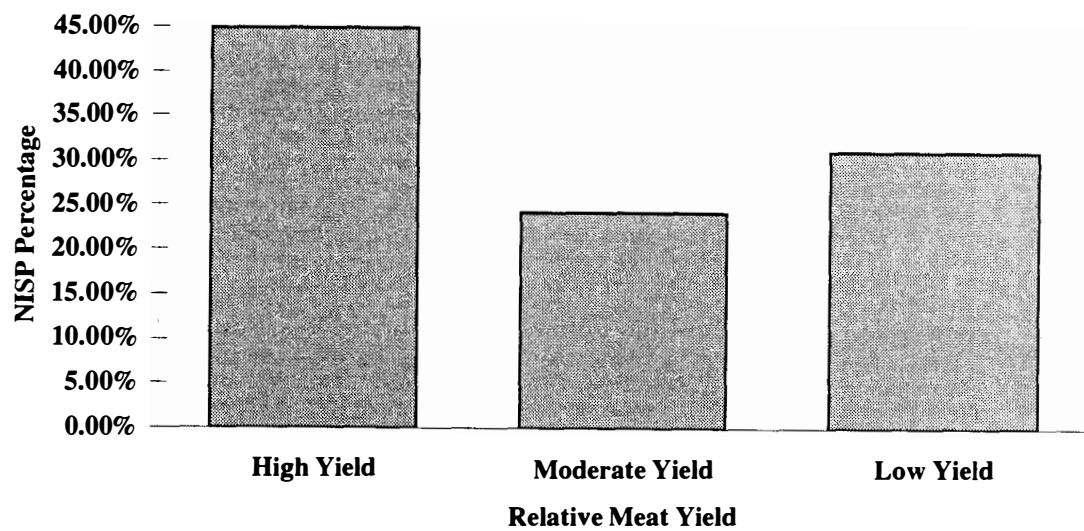


Figure 4.8. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin cattle elements (skeletal schematic adapted from Elizabeth Reitz).

When the beef elements are further collapsed into relative meat yield categories of high, moderate, and low, the high yield categories were the most common, followed by the low and moderate yield categories (Figure 4.9). Evidently, when the slaves ate beef, they consumed some of the best cuts, but they also frequently consumed the lesser quality portions.

Distinguishing butchery waste among beef bones poses problems similar to those with pork bones. Historical and archaeological evidence of pork usage reveals that across a number of historical sites, almost every portion of the hog was processed and consumed. The same cannot be said for beef. However, the processing of beef crania and feet for consumption has been determined, although not commonly recognized in the archaeological record. Rietz (1987) has indicated that cattle crania were consumed by some less affluent households in early Charleston. Landon (1996) found that not only were the crania processed to extract the jowl meat and tongue, but the feet were also consumed. Landon cites a recipe book from the late eighteenth century (Simmons 1958 [1796] in Landon 1996:68) that instructs the cook to boil the bovine head to soften the meat. He also cites recipes from the period that call for the preparation of the bovid foot for making "Foot Pie" or neats foot (Landon 1996:82). Landon suggests that, while the metapodials did not yield much meat, they could be processed for the marrow they contained or for the bone grease that could be boiled out of them (Landon 1996:82-95). This may also have been the case for the cattle foot elements from the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin. If so, it would be difficult to discern butchery waste from those bones attributable to consumption.

Although the distinction between butchery waste and consumption refuse remains elusive, other conclusions can be drawn from the presence of cattle elements. The fact that the majority of the cattle bones represented consisted of foot elements suggests that these portions were either being butchered or consumed on the site. The absence of recognizable



**Figure 4.9. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Relative Meat Yield of Beef Cuts.**

cattle cranial elements, including teeth, reveals that this portion was not present at the site either as butchering waste or a consumable. The butchery of a complete bovid carcass probably did not occur at the site. However, further processing of larger cuts of beef did. As the butchering of a bovid from the hoof would have been a process resulting in a mess probably unsuitable for the yard so close to the mansion, the initial butchering may have occurred outside of the mansion yard. One possible location was the nearby Blount farm, located west of the mansion, down the Tennessee River. At that location the animal could have been slaughtered, the head removed, and the carcass dressed and cut into sides or other large portions. The large portions were brought to the site for further separation into more specific beef cuts. The feet may have been removed and discarded at that point or retained and consumed. The foot portion containing the phalanges may have been split and made into a "pie" as mentioned by Landon (1996:82) and the metapodials fractured and boiled to access the marrow and bone grease.

The probability of off-site butchering begs one interesting question that deserves some consideration: where was the source of the beef? While butchering a cow would not have been outside the financial grasp of the Blounts, it did propose a preservation concern. The beef had to be promptly preserved after slaughter to prevent spoilage, or quickly distributed among several households, since one bovid provides more meat than a single family can typically consume. In rural areas, it was common for households to take turns slaughtering beef and distributing the meat to one another. If the mansion occupants were having their own cattle slaughtered, they would probably have shared the meat with the mansion slaves and slaves occupying the Blount farm. Another possible source of beef was the Chisholm Beef Market, located within a few hundred feet of the mansion. At times, it may have been more economical for the mansion household to purchase cuts of meat from the market. A combination of both sources could also have been possible; the Blounts may have had their animals butchered by the professionals at Chisholm's market.

While the meat could certainly have been purchased by the mansion and then distributed to the slaves, given the degree of freedom urban slaves were often allowed, the slaves could have made their beef purchases directly. This practice would be difficult to identify in the archaeological record, and would be more effectively illustrated through a review of historic documents such as expense and agricultural records kept by the Blount household, Blount tax records, records kept by the operators of Chisholm's market, etc. However, such an undertaking is currently beyond the scope of this research.

The only butchery marks exhibited on cattle elements from the Slave Cabin were chop marks that resulted in spiral fractures of the bone along the bone shaft (Table 4.6). Of six bones that exhibited this kind of butchery, three were foot elements, while the other bones belonged to the upper hindlimb. The chop marks occurred toward proximal or distal ends of the bone, but left a spiral fracture along the diaphysis of the element. A heavy instrument, such a cleaver, was most likely used to separate the element from a larger portion of the carcass. As mentioned above, a heavy blow with an axe or cleaver was often necessary to partition a cut of meat. This is especially true when processing a bovid carcass, as the bones are quite robust and difficult to section otherwise. The occurrence of the marks near the epiphyses of the elements correspond to portions of beef being divided at the joints.

No other butchery marks were represented on the cattle remains. While this may be due in part to the small sample size of bovid elements, it may also reflect a single method of beef cut preparation. Lighter butchery tools, such as knives, may have been of little use for such robust meat cuts. Butchery with a saw would seem more appropriate for the size of meat cuts the beef carcass would provide. The fact that saw marks are present among the hog elements indicated that saws were used in carcass preparation at the site. However, use of this method was apparently restricted to pork butchering at the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin.

**Table 4.6. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Cattle Elements Exhibiting Butchery Marks.**

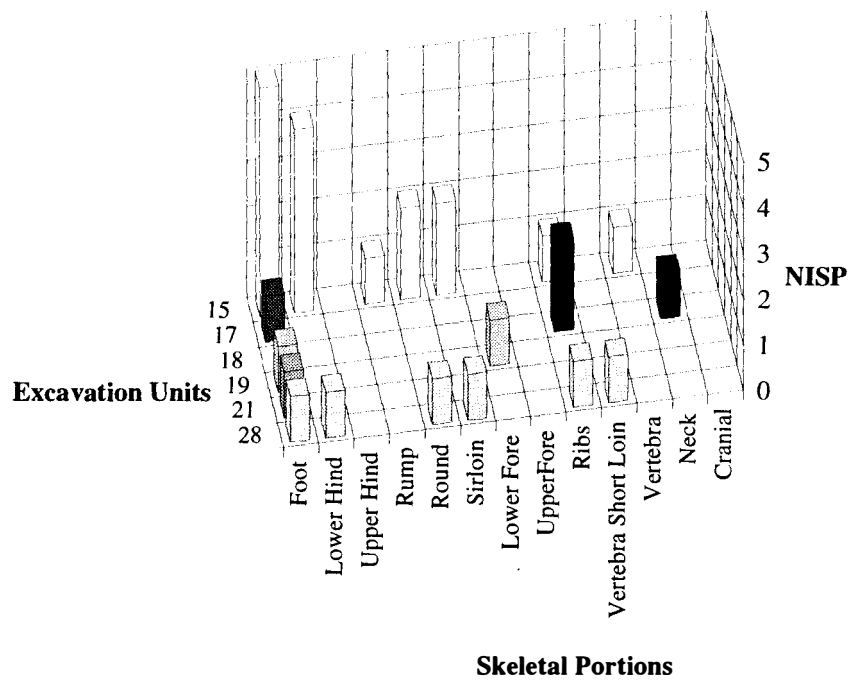
| Unit  | Element          | Butchery Type | NISP |
|-------|------------------|---------------|------|
| 15    | Calcaneus        | Chop/Spiral   | 1    |
| 17    | Metacarpal       | Chop/Spiral   | 1    |
| 15    | Inominate-Illium | Chop/Spiral   | 2    |
| 28    | Femur            | Chop/Spiral   | 1    |
| 21    | Metatarsal       | Chop/Spiral   | 1    |
| Total |                  |               | 6    |

### **Distribution of Beef Bone**

Most of the cattle elements were recovered from Unit 15, near the approximate locations of a door and window. Large amounts of bone of all types was found in this area and probably reflect refuse disposal through an opening convenient to the hearth, presumably around which meat preparation, cooking, and eating would have occurred. Among the cattle elements present in Unit 15 were bone fragments from the ribs and upper forelimb, upper and lower hindlimb and foot (Figure 4.10). The crawl space (Units 18, 21, and 28) yielded bones from the neck, ribs, upper hindlimb and foot. This sample differs only slightly from the sample from Unit 15. Other units (Units 17 and 19) produced foreshank and foot bones in very small amounts.

### **Age at Death Indicators**

Determining the age at death of well represented species in an archaeological assemblage provides information on a number of issues, including the type of economy employed by the site occupants (Wapnish and Hesse 1985), the manner in which a herd was managed, and alternative uses for animals aside from meat production. Mortality information may be indicated in a variety of ways, such as the fusion states of epiphyses and sutures of certain elements and tooth eruption. The epiphyseal bones of several domestic species fuse when the animal is fairly young. For pigs and bovids, most of the epiphyses fuse with their bone shafts by two to three years of age. A few elements of either species fuse from three to three and one half years. Tooth eruption likewise occurs early in the animal's life. The approximate age of an animal may be determined based on the degree of fusion or eruption. These methods are useful in indicating the approximate age of an immature animal whose bones have yet to completely fuse, or whose teeth have



**Figure 4.10. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Cattle Butchering Units Per Excavation Unit.**

not yet fully erupted. However, once fusion or eruption is complete, there is little to suggest the age of the animal beyond full maturity. This limitation is mitigated by the general fact that most animals raised for meat production were slaughtered near the age of maturity, when the animal's growth rate had slowed in relation to how much it consumed. When an animal is young, it must be fed increasing amounts, and its weight gain is rapid. As the animal approaches adulthood, its growth rate decreases but its consumption remains high. The optimum time to slaughter an animal raised for meat is when the cost of feeding it no longer achieves substantial weight gain. For pigs this age is usually around two years. For cattle the age is usually around three to four years. While animals raised for meat production are killed upon maturity, some stock are kept longer for breeding purposes, or milk production.

The age at death of some of the Blount hogs was determined from 36 hog elements and was based on known tooth eruption sequences and rates of epiphyseal fusion of certain elements published by Sisson and Grossman (1953) and Silver (1963) (Table 4.7). One mandible was aged to older than 17-22 months (Silver 1963). Bones aged from epiphyseal fusion rates consisted of fragments of the radius, tibia, fibula, metapodial and phalanges. Either one or both epiphyses of these elements were in a state of fusion with the bone shaft which indicates the maturity of the individual. None of the elements are from pigs younger than one year of age. Most of the elements belonged to individual pigs of less than two years of age. Pig bones older than two years comprised the second most common age class. A few bones indicate individuals that were less than two and one half and three and one-half years of age. However, as there was no indication of their minimum age, these pigs may have been much younger. The minimum age range of all pigs represented lies between one and three and one-half years, with the majority being around two years of age. Due to the fact that the different elements of a pig fuse at different rates, these ages are revealed only by the epiphyseal fusion of individual elements and do not necessarily

**Table 4.7. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin Ageable Pork Elements.**

| <b>Age</b>   | <b>NISP</b> |
|--------------|-------------|
| <1-2 Years   | 2           |
| <2 Years     | 20          |
| <2.5 Years   | 2           |
| <3.5 Years   | 2           |
| >1 Year      | 4           |
| >2 Years     | 8           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>38</b>   |

represent several individual pigs. However, two right metacarpal IV bones from the crawl space came from a single pig older than two years, and another was from a single pig younger than two years.

Age estimations were obtained from only two bovine elements; an unfused calcaneus and a fused second phalanx. The calcaneus indicated a bovid less than three to three and one-half years old (Sisson and Grossman 1953), while the second phalanx was from a bovid over two and a half years old. A third element, an unfused sacral medial crest, also suggests a young animal. However, age data have not been published for the bovine sacrum so a more specific age approximation is not possible.

### **Evidence of Burning**

Only one percent of the total bone assemblage from the slave deposits showed evidence of burning (NISP 51). Ten fragments were burned and 41 fragments were calcined. There were two burned pig bones; a calcined third phalanx from Unit 17, and a calcined tooth fragment from Unit 28 in the crawl space. Two burned fish vertebra also came from the crawl space. The remaining burned bone belonged to unidentified mammals. Charring and calcination may have occurred when the bones were thrown into a fire after the meat had been removed through processing or consumption.

The spatial distribution of the burned bone suggests a cleaning episode. Burned bone was recovered chiefly the crawl space (Units 18 and 28), hearth (Unit 8), the suggested locations of a doorway and window (near Unit 15), and other openings (Unit 17 and 20). This spatial occurrence may represent cleaning of debris from the hearth and subsequent refuse deposition in the crawl space and through doors and windows.

## Summary

The meat portion of the Blount slave diet was based predominantly on domestic mammals, chiefly pork and some beef, supplemented with chicken and to a very small extent, sheep or goat. In addition to domestic fare, a small amount of wild game was procured, including skunk, opossum, squirrel, quail, duck and goose. Fish were a fairly common dietary component, and included freshwater drum, channel catfish, and various species of sunfish and suckers. Other aquatic animals, such as turtles and frogs, were seldom exploited. Eggs also provided some nutrition.

Hog cranial and foot elements were the highest represented portions of pork. However, all parts of the pig were present, especially the ribs and vertebrae. Forelimb and hindlimb quarters were less well represented. The slaves then had access to the less meaty foot and cranial portions of the hog as well as to the more meaty pork cuts, such as the loin, short cut ham, and picnic shoulder. Most of the pork bones came from the crawl space and near the door on the north wall of the cabin.

Though much less plentiful, beef cuts represent almost every part of the cow, except the crania and upper forelimb. The most abundant elements came from meatiest cuts, but portions from the least meaty sections were also present. These data suggest that the slaves had infrequent access to all beef cuts. Most of the beef elements were recovered from the door on the north wall of the cabin and the crawl space.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **BLOUNT MANSION SOUTH MIDDEN FAUNAL REMAINS: 1790s-1830s**

#### **Context**

The area immediately to the south of the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin was separated from the mansion yard by a fence from the time the mansion and cabin were constructed, in 1792 to sometime in the 1830s. While this was a palisade fence during the early 1790s, it may have been made less substantial by the early 1800s, after the threat of Native American attack had subsided. The cabin functioned as part of the barrier, with the southern and western walls of the cabin being incorporated into the palisade. To the south of the fence the ground sloped downward toward the Tennessee River. While probably a defensive device at first, the barrier separated the mansion yard and cabin area from the outside and defined the boundaries of the mansion yard, which, presumably, would have been kept relatively clean of conspicuous trash. The fence also set apart the riverward area, which apparently was used for dumping mansion compound refuse (See Figure 3.2).

While the Blount Mansion South Midden area functioned as a dump, some refuse was also discarded within the mansion yard. Deliberate dumping activities involving more substantial amounts of material probably took place to the south of the fence. Material found in the yard, when not associated with a feature, probably reflects less concentrated, more inadvertent refuse disposal. The presence of the Blount Mansion South Midden

shows that at least some of the garbage generated within the mansion compound was taken outside the fence and dumped down the hillside.

The archaeological deposits recovered from the South Midden consisted of cultural material dating from the 1790s to the twentieth century. The Slave Cabin was removed in the 1830s along with the palisaded fence that separated the mansion yard and Slave Cabin from the South Midden. The faunal material from the South Midden deposits dating from the 1790s to the 1830s were considered as a separate context from the cabin area. After the 1830s, the cabin area and the South Midden area were no longer separated. Both areas continued to receive refuse from the mansion compound, creating what could be considered as a single context of mid nineteenth to early twentieth century material.

Five three ft. by three ft. excavation units (Units 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10) were placed to the south of the cabin foundations, in the South Midden area (See Figure 3.2). Units 7 and 10 encountered recent fill and therefore produced no usable data for this analysis. Unit 4 yielded no material dating prior to the mid to late nineteenth century. Only units 5 and 6 produced stratified archaeological deposits dating from the 1790s to the 1830s.

The fauna material from these deposits contained 372 bones; far fewer bones than were recovered from the Slave Cabin deposits of the same period. Reasons for the disparity in bone quantities are probably related to the greater number of excavation units placed in the cabin area, (N = 16) than in the South Midden (N = 2). The scattered, less concentrated nature of South Midden deposits relative to dense feature fill does not seem to have been a contributing factor to this contrast in bone quantities, since the two units in the South Midden (Units 5 and 6) yielded more bone than other units in the cabin and South Midden areas.

Bone preservation was not as good in the South Midden as it was in the Slave Cabin area. This factor is probably related to the exposed nature of the South Midden versus the somewhat protected environment of the cabin features and deposits.

Interestingly, this did not result in a high percentage of unidentified bone in the South Midden. In fact, only two percent of the South Midden bones were unidentifiable to a taxonomic class. Even within taxonomic classes, a relatively high number of bones were identified to family, genus or species. Forty percent of the mammal bones, 35% of the bird remains, and 50% of the fish remains, were identifiable to genus or species.

## **Taxa Composition**

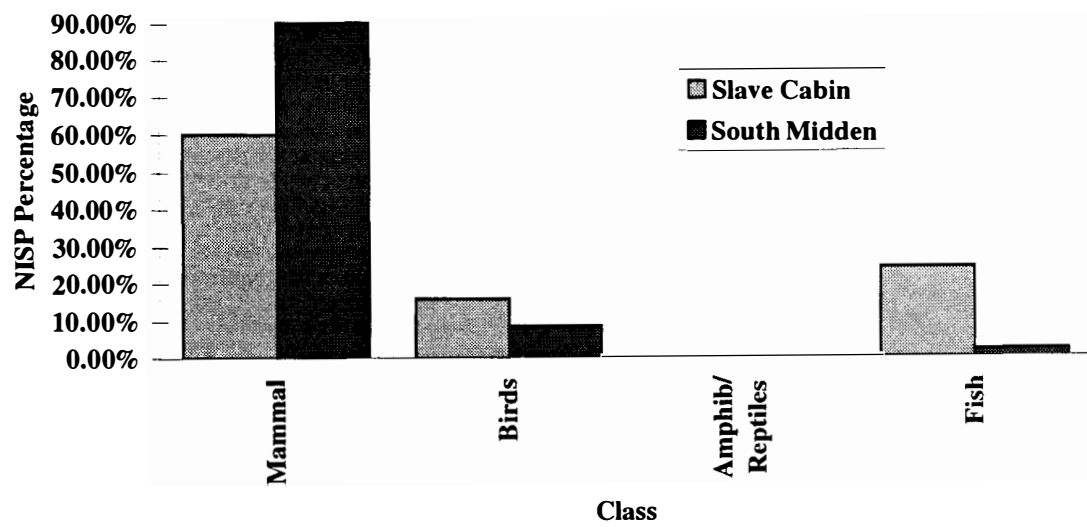
### **Mammals**

Mammals comprised 89.81 percent of the assemblage from the South Midden area (Table 5.1, Figure 5.1). Of the mammals, only three species were identified: domestic pig (27.71% of identified taxa), domestic cow (6.05% of identified taxa), and domestic sheep or goat (.64% of identified taxa). The preponderance of pork bones is in keeping with the pattern seen in the Slave Cabin assemblage. However, pork was more prevalent in the South Midden than at the cabin in terms of percentages. The same is true for the percentage representation of cow. The MNI for pig was three, while the MNI for cattle was one. The smaller overall assemblage doubtlessly inflates the percentages for the comparatively fewer taxa in the South Midden. The presence of pig and cow in such disparate percentages to the virtual exclusion of all other mammalian taxa also fits the pattern of nearly total reliance on these two domestic mammals observed in the Slave Cabin assemblage.

The trace quantity of caprid remains again reveals the limited dietary presence of sheep and goats even in the earliest deposits of the frontier era. Though one of the rarest taxon in the assemblage, the caprines offered an MNI of two, which placed the caprine in between the pig (MNI = 3) and the cow (MNI = 1) in terms of individuals represented by this assemblage. This result highlights one of the shortcomings of using MNI as an index

**Table 5.1. Blount Mansion South Midden Vertebrate Fauna Taxa.**

| <b>Taxa</b>                       | <b>Common Name</b>  | <b>NISP</b> | <b>NISP %</b>  | <b>MNI</b> | <b>MNI %</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| <b>Mammal</b>                     |                     |             | <b>89.81%</b>  |            |                |
| <i>Sus scrofa</i>                 | Domestic Pig        | 87          | 27.71%         | 3          | 25.00%         |
| <i>Bos taurus</i>                 | Domestic Cow        | 19          | 6.05%          | 1          | 8.33%          |
| <i>Ovis aries/Capra hircus</i>    | Domestic Sheep/Goat | 2           | 0.64%          | 2          | 16.67%         |
| Unidentified Mammal               |                     | 174         | 55.41%         |            |                |
| <b>Bird</b>                       |                     |             | <b>8.28%</b>   |            |                |
| <i>Gallus gallus</i>              | Domestic Chicken    | 7           | 2.23%          | 1          | 8.33%          |
| <i>Phasianidae</i>                | Chicken-like Bird   | 1           | 0.32%          | 1          | 8.33%          |
| <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>        | Turkey              | 1           | 0.32%          | 1          | 8.33%          |
| Unidentified Bird                 |                     | 17          | 5.41%          |            |                |
| <b>Fish</b>                       |                     |             | <b>1.91%</b>   |            |                |
| <i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>        | Channel Catfish     | 1           | 0.32%          | 1          | 8.33%          |
| <i>cf. Moxostoma carinatum</i>    | River Redhorse      | 1           | 0.32%          | 1          | 8.33%          |
| <i>Lepisosteus sp.</i>            | Gar                 | 1           | 0.32%          | 1          | 8.33%          |
| Unidentified Fish                 |                     | 3           | 0.96%          |            |                |
| <b>Total Identified Specimens</b> |                     | <b>314</b>  | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>12</b>  | <b>100.00%</b> |
| Unidentified Bone                 |                     | 6           |                |            |                |
| <b>Total Specimens</b>            |                     | <b>320</b>  |                |            |                |



**Figure 5.1. Blount Mansion South Midden Taxonomic Class Percentages**

of relative dietary importance; the two caprid bones represented two individuals, whereas the 87 pig bones represented only three individuals (See Table 5.1).

No wild mammalian taxa were identified in the South Midden. Their absence may be due in part to a small overall assemblage, though this is unlikely since, as mentioned above, bone counts in the South Midden units were some of the highest on the entire site. The lack of wild mammals may also be due to preservation bias against more easily fragmented and degradable small mammal bones. The unprotected environment of the South Midden, as opposed to the more enclosed environment of the Slave Cabin and associated features, likely resulted in a greater rate of decomposition of the bone in the South Midden. The wild mammal remains from the Slave Cabin tended to be those of smaller taxa, which are generally more easily broken by taphonomic processes, such as trampling and decomposition due to exposure. The exposure of the South Midden material upon deposition certainly contributed to the physical decomposition of the bones, especially smaller, more fragile bones of smaller taxa, to the point of rendering them unrecognizable. However, if wild mammal remains were dumped into the South Midden, some small indication, of them should, presumably, survive. Even bird bones, which are more susceptible to fragmentation, were present in the South Midden to some extent.

It is possible that the remains of wild mammals were not thrown into the South Midden deposits, or that they were not utilized by those responsible for the South Midden refuse. Perhaps the bones of small wild game were not substantial enough in size to bother tossing them in the South Midden. Rather, their small size made them only a negligible nuisance when discarded within the mansion yard or around the cabin foundations. As the Slave Cabin sample shows that the slaves consumed some wild game, one could speculate that the South Midden sample represents the refuse of the mansion inhabitants, who may have preferred domestic meat to small wild game. This could suggest that the slaves were not discarding refuse into the South Midden after all. The

slave material in and around the cabin contained a number of small mammal remains. If the slaves did use the South Midden, why did they not toss these wild animal remains into the South Midden with the rest of their meat refuse?

It will be assumed for this analysis that wild mammal remains were not deposited into the South Midden due to lack of consumption. Who was responsible for the South Midden deposits is still in question. The assertion that the South Midden is associated with the mansion rather than the cabin cannot currently be supported by the data gathered from other artifact classes or historical documentation. Further excavations and research into the South Midden area deposits may shed more light on its origins.

### **Birds**

Bird remains were represented by 26 bones, or approximately eight percent of the South Midden assemblage. The fragile nature of bird bones and the exposed environment of the South Midden may have contributed to this low number of avian remains. The assemblage was comprised mostly of domestic chicken plus some uncertain phasianid and a trace of turkey. The phasianid element belonged to a small chicken or perhaps even a ruffed grouse. It was impossible to determine if the turkey element was from a domestic or wild turkey. No wild avian taxa were identified, except for the possible wild turkey or ruffed grouse. The low numbers of unidentified bird remains, and the correspondingly high percentage of bird remains identified to family, genus or species may be an indication that very few bird carcasses were discarded into the South Midden area.

### **Fish**

Fish remains occurred only in trace quantities. Only six elements were identified as fish. Three of them were identified more specifically (See Table 5.1). Identified taxa consisted of channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*), suckers (Catostomidae), and gar

(*Lepisosteus sp.*). The dearth of fish remains, like that of the small mammals and birds, may be the result of a preservation bias against them. However, like the birds, the low quantity of unidentified fish remains, and the high rate of the fish remains seem to indicate that only a small number of fish bones were discarded into the South Midden. This is interesting because the high number of fish remains identified from the Slave Cabin deposits clearly indicate that fish provided a substantial portion of the slave diet. Preservation bias could be in part responsible. However, the scarcity of fish remains was so pronounced, that it seems unlikely that differential preservation is wholly to blame.

In summary, the vertebrate taxa represented in the South Midden fauna overwhelmingly consisted of domestic mammal, including hog, cow, and to a very small extent, sheep or goat. Avian fauna were comprised almost entirely of domestic chicken, except for a trace of wild or domestic turkey. Fish provided a very small percentage of the meat diet. The near lack of wild fauna indicates that domestic taxa, especially pig and cow, were exploited almost exclusively.

## **Skeletal Portions and Butchering**

### **Pork**

The hog skeleton was represented by 87 bones or bone fragments from every area of the pig carcass, except the upper hindlimb. Bones from the lower jaw, neck, shoulder, lower forelimb, back, ribs, lower hindlimb and feet were recovered. These portions represent the butchering units of the loin, ribs, shoulder butt, picnic shoulder, short cut ham and the foot (Table 5.2, Figure 5.2). Foot elements comprised the majority of pig bones, followed by rib fragments and vertebra from the loin cut. The vertebra probably resulted from the initial splitting of the hog carcass or from later processing or consumption of the loin. Cranial elements, including nuchal and frontal portions of the skull, as well as

**Table 5.2. Blount Mansion South Midden Pork Butchering Portions.**

| <b>BUTCHERING PORTION</b> | <b>UNIT</b>   |               | <b>NISP</b> | <b>NISP %</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
|                           | <b>UNIT 5</b> | <b>UNIT 6</b> |             |               |
| <b>Cranial</b>            | 9             | 2             | 11          | 12.64%        |
| <b>Individual Teeth</b>   | 5             | 2             | 7           | 8.05%         |
| <b>Loin</b>               | 8             | 4             | 12          | 13.79%        |
| <b>Ribs</b>               | 11            | 8             | 19          | 21.84%        |
| <b>Shoulder Butt</b>      | 1             |               | 1           | 1.15%         |
| <b>Picnic Shouder</b>     | 5             | 5             | 10          | 11.49%        |
| <b>Short Cut Ham</b>      | 2             | 4             | 6           | 6.90%         |
| <b>Foot</b>               | 12            | 9             | 21          | 24.14%        |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>53</b>     | <b>34</b>     | <b>87</b>   |               |

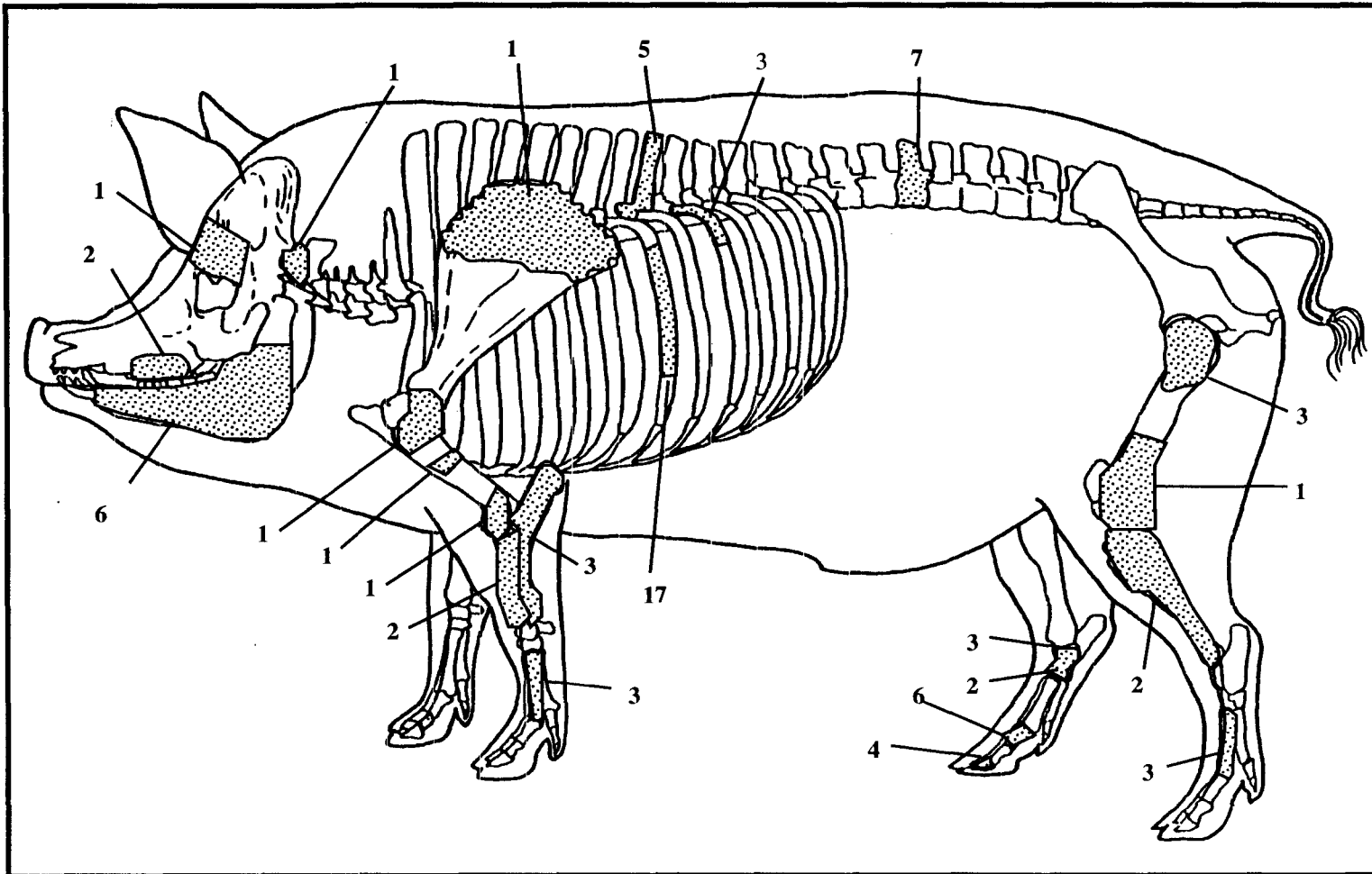


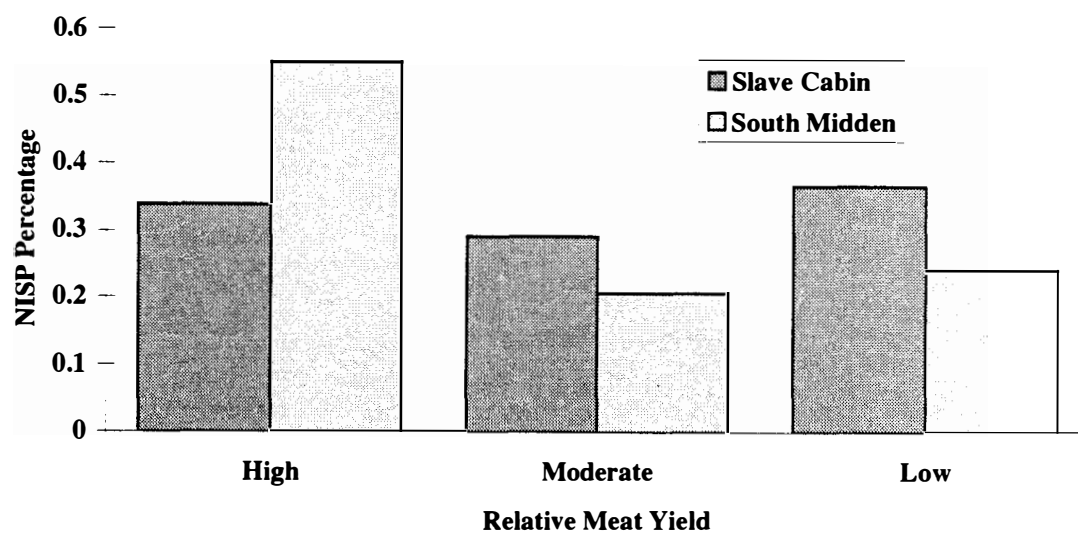
Figure 5.2. Blount Mansion South Midden pork elements, not shown are seven individual teeth (skeletal schematic adapted from Elizabeth Reitz).

a number of mandible fragments and individual teeth, comprised a substantial portion of the hog skeleton in the South Midden. This demonstrates that hog heads were being processed somewhere within the mansion lot and some of the resulting refuse was dumped into the South Midden. The butchery of the crania probably occurred in the same manner as mentioned in the previous chapter, with the removal of the mandible, cleaning of the sinus passages, and dismantling of the skull for access to the brain. Fragments from every element in the picnic shoulder were also present and are followed in abundance by the lower hindlimb, which would have contributed the short cut ham. Elements related to the shoulder butt were scarce, but were nonetheless, represented.

When the pork elements from the Blount Mansion South Midden are placed into general relative meat yield categories, the high yield portions percentage is twice that of the moderate and low yield portions (Figure 5.3). This indicates that higher quality pork cuts, in terms of yield amount, were more often consumed than those of lesser quality.

Ten of the pork elements exhibited some butchering marks (Table 5.3). Chop marks on two humeri and a metacarpal were probably produced during portioning of the picnic shoulder and during separation of the foot from the picnic shoulder. Knife cut marks appearing on a femur fragment indicated that more delicate butchery was used on this element, possibly during the last stage of butchery of a portion of a short cut ham. Saw marks occurred on humeri, femora, and rib fragments. The saw marks on the long bones were the result of creating cuts of the picnic shoulder and short cut ham portions of the hog, while those on the ribs resulted from separating the rib rack from the vertebral column and from separating the ribs into upper and lower portions.

A few elements offered some indication of the ages of the individual hogs. These ageable pig elements suggested that slightly immature pigs and possibly fully mature pigs were processed. Three elements indicated that pigs just under the age of maturity were butchered. A deciduous incisor, probably from a pig 12 to 20 months in age, indicated an



**Figure 5.3. Blount Mansion South Midden Relative Meat Yield of Pork Elements.**

**Table 5.3. Blount Mansion South Midden Pork Elements With Butchering Marks.**

| <b>Unit</b>       | <b>Element</b> | <b>Butchery Type</b> | <b>NISP</b> |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 5                 | Humerus        | Chop                 | 1           |
| 5                 | Meta Carpal    | Chop                 | 1           |
| 6                 | Humerus        | Chop                 | 1           |
| 5                 | Femur          | Knife                | 1           |
| 5                 | Rib            | Saw                  | 1           |
| 6                 | Humerus        | Saw                  | 1           |
| 6                 | Femur          | Saw                  | 1           |
| 6                 | Rib            | Saw                  | 3           |
| <b>Total NISP</b> |                |                      | <b>10</b>   |

immature pig. Individual teeth are not reliable indicators of slaughtering age, unless the roots are present, since teeth can be extruded by the permanent dentition as the pig matures. The age of one mandible was determined based on tooth eruption sequences and was found to be that of a twelve to sixteen month old pig (Silver 1963). An unfused third phalanx also indicated an individual at under one to two years of age. A radius with an unfused epiphysis came from a pig slaughtered under 3.5 years of age (Silver 1963). While the radius came from an individual under three and one half years old, that pig may have been well over two years old, the age at which maturity is usually recognized in terms of growth rates. While age estimates based on tooth eruption sequences and epiphyseal fusion offer good age indications for immature pigs, elements from older pigs are often difficult to distinguish. Other elements may have come from fully mature pigs, but do not possess important age at death indicators.

The ageable elements indicate that pigs just under full maturity were butchered. This represents an economical slaughtering practice of butchering hogs as soon as they reached optimal size, that is, once their weight gain stabilized in relation to the amount of food they consumed. After that point, weight gain would no longer have been substantial, and keeping the hog longer for reasons other than breeding or lard production would have been considered impractical.

## **Beef**

Only 19 cow bones were recovered from the early South Midden sample, representing 6.05 percent of the identified assemblage (See Table 5.1). Virtually every portion of the cow was represented in the butchering units of the crania (represented by individual teeth), neck, ribs, round, rump, chuck, and feet (Table 5.4, Figure 5.4). The individual cow teeth may indicate processing of the cattle head or mandible. The cow's head was commonly processed and consumed by households in Charleston (Rietz 1987)

**Table 5.4. Blount Mansion South Midden Beef Butchering Portions.**

| <b>BUTCHERING PORTION</b> | <b>UNIT</b> |           | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>NISP %</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
|                           | <b>5</b>    | <b>6</b>  |              |               |
| <b>Cranial</b>            |             | 2         | <b>2</b>     | <b>10.53%</b> |
| <b>Neck</b>               | 2           | 1         | <b>3</b>     | <b>15.79%</b> |
| <b>Short Loin</b>         |             |           |              |               |
| <b>Ribs</b>               |             | 1         | <b>1</b>     | <b>5.26%</b>  |
| <b>Sirloin</b>            |             |           |              |               |
| <b>Round</b>              |             | 1         | <b>1</b>     | <b>5.26%</b>  |
| <b>Rump</b>               | 2           |           | <b>2</b>     | <b>10.53%</b> |
| <b>Chuck</b>              |             | 1         | <b>1</b>     | <b>5.26%</b>  |
| <b>Short Ribs</b>         | 1           | 1         | <b>2</b>     | <b>10.53%</b> |
| <b>Full Plate</b>         |             |           |              |               |
| <b>Foreshank</b>          |             | 1         | <b>1</b>     | <b>5.26%</b>  |
| <b>Hindshank</b>          | 2           |           | <b>2</b>     | <b>10.53%</b> |
| <b>Foot</b>               | 2           | 2         | <b>4</b>     | <b>21.05%</b> |
|                           | <b>9</b>    | <b>10</b> | <b>19</b>    |               |

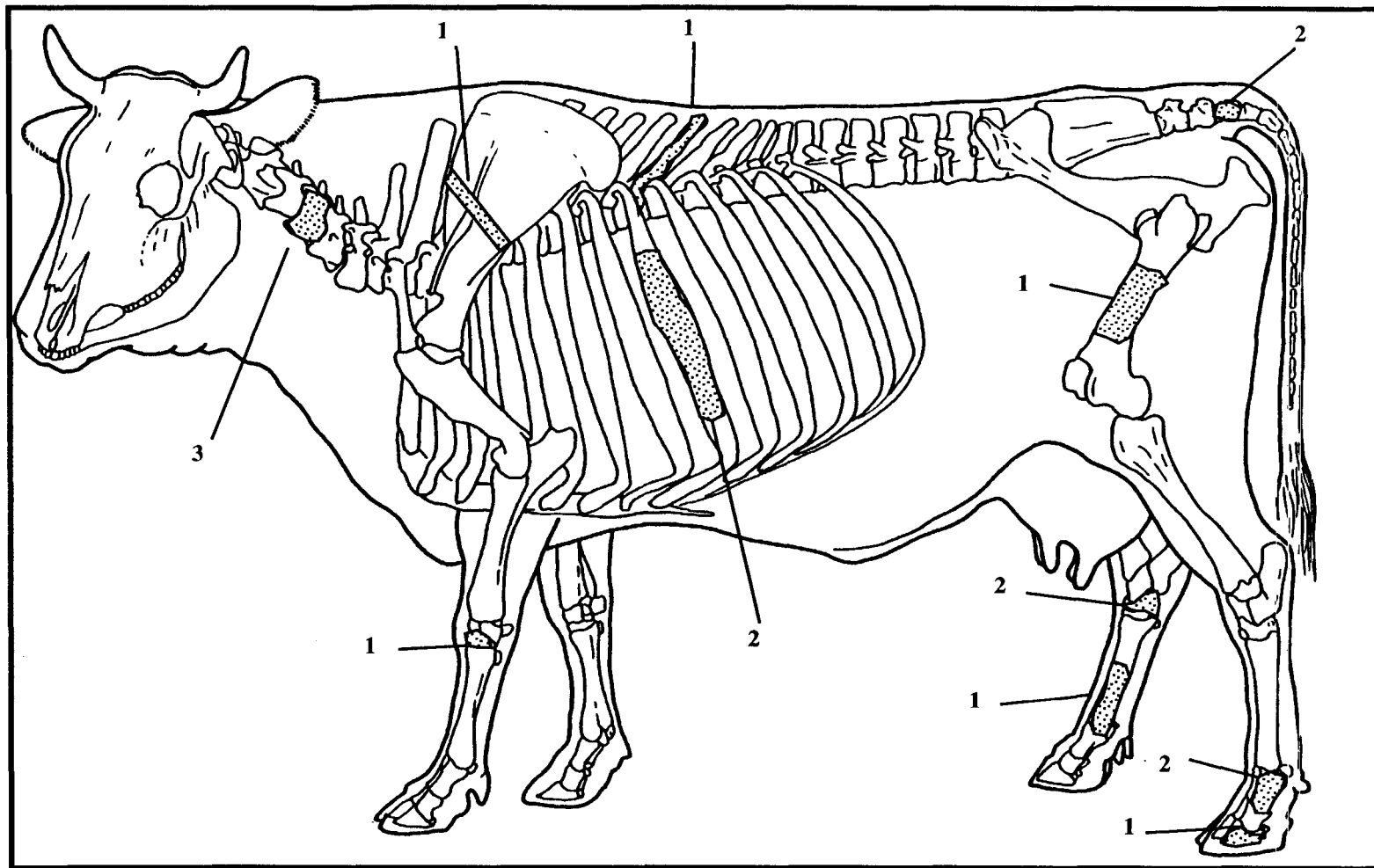


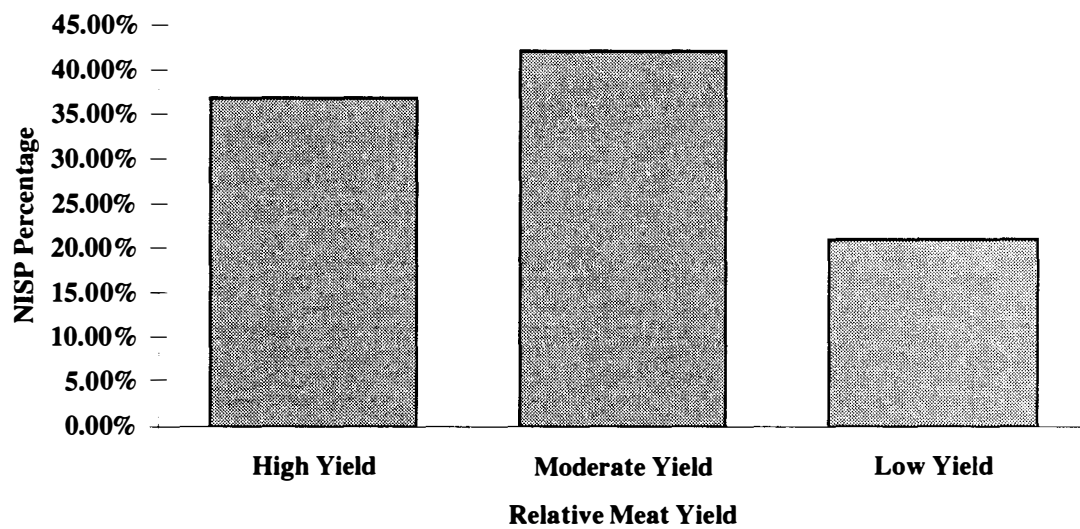
Figure 5.4. Blount Mansion South Midden Cattle Elements (skeletal schematic adapted from Elizabeth Reitz).

and does not solely reflect butchering activity. Other bovine cranial portions were not present in any great quantities. The foot elements indicate either that cow feet were being consumed or that they were being removed from the lower limbs during processing of beef portions. Other portions of the cow in this assemblage probably represent consumption refuse, especially the elements showing signs of butchery.

Collapsing the beef elements into general categories of relative meat yield reveals that moderate and high yield cuts rank the highest (Figure 5.5). This indicates that the portions, such as the sirloin, rump, round, chuck, and ribs were more often consumed than the low yield beef cuts, such as the crania and feet.

Only four cow elements offered any sign of butchery (Table 5.5). Chop marks on a rib and metatarsal indicated that these bones were separated by powerful blows. Chop marks on the ribs reflect separation from the vertebral column by cleaver or ax rather than by saw, the same butchering technique that was used to separate pork ribs. The chop mark on the metatarsal was probably produced when the metatarsal was removed from the hindlimb to separate the hind shank and foot portions. Saw marks on the scapula and femur suggest that these portions were more carefully processed during the final butchering stages, to produce steaks from the chuck and round portions of beef.

The few cattle bones found strongly suggest that cows were not butchered in the mansion lot, or at least, that the butchering waste was not deposited into the South Midden. This seems reasonable, as the mansion yard was not very large and the butchery of a cow would have resulted in a substantial amount of waste material. It is interesting that the cow skeleton is so well represented by single or small numbers of bones from each butchering portion, rather than by higher numbers of bones from fewer portions. The cow bones probably represent late stage butchering of large portions of beef, if not individually purchased cuts. Most of the elements were from what would be considered fairly high quality beef cuts, except for the hoof elements. Foot bones comprised such a high



**Figure 5.5. Blount Mansion South Midden Relative Meat Yield of Beef Cuts.**

**Table 5.5. Blount Mansion South Midden Cattle Elements With Butchering Marks.**

| <b>Unit</b>  | <b>Element</b> | <b>Butchery Type</b> | <b>NISP</b> |
|--------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 5            | Rib            | Chop                 | 1           |
| 6            | Metatarsal     | Chop                 | 1           |
| 6            | Scapula        | Saw                  | 1           |
| 6            | Femur          | Saw                  | 1           |
| <b>Total</b> |                |                      | <b>4</b>    |

percentage of the cow bone assemblage that they were probably either consumed or processed in the mansion compound. They may have been removed from the limb during the last phases of processing, and perhaps were discarded or offered to the slaves. Consumption by the mansion occupants is possible, but seems unlikely, as cow's feet are a fairly low quality meat.

Only two cow elements offered any indication of bovine age: an unfused cervical vertebral centrum epiphysis, and a fused tarsal. The unfused vertebral centrum epiphysis was that of a cow under five years of age (Silver 1968). No information concerning epiphyseal fusion rates tarsals has so far been published, but the fused tarsal probably represents a mature cow.

### **Comparison of Slave Cabin and South Midden**

#### **Faunal Assemblages: 1790s-1830s**

The separate contexts of the Slave Cabin and the South Midden deposits would provide a tidy comparison of contemporary faunal assemblages if it were clear exactly who deposited waste in the South Midden. The proximity of the South Midden to the Slave Cabin does suggest that the South Midden might be associated with the Slave Cabin occupants. However, the presence of the fence raises the possibility that the South Midden material could have been generated by someone else, perhaps by the mansion household. An even more complicated possibility is that the faunal remains result from dumping by both households. As domestic slaves probably prepared food for the mansion, and for themselves, it stands to reason that trash from the mansion and cabin could have been dumped in the same place. The location of the dump, at the exterior of the mansion yard and down the hillside toward the river, made it an area ideal for refuse disposal, possibly to the exclusion of other dumping places in proximity. However, due to the uncertain

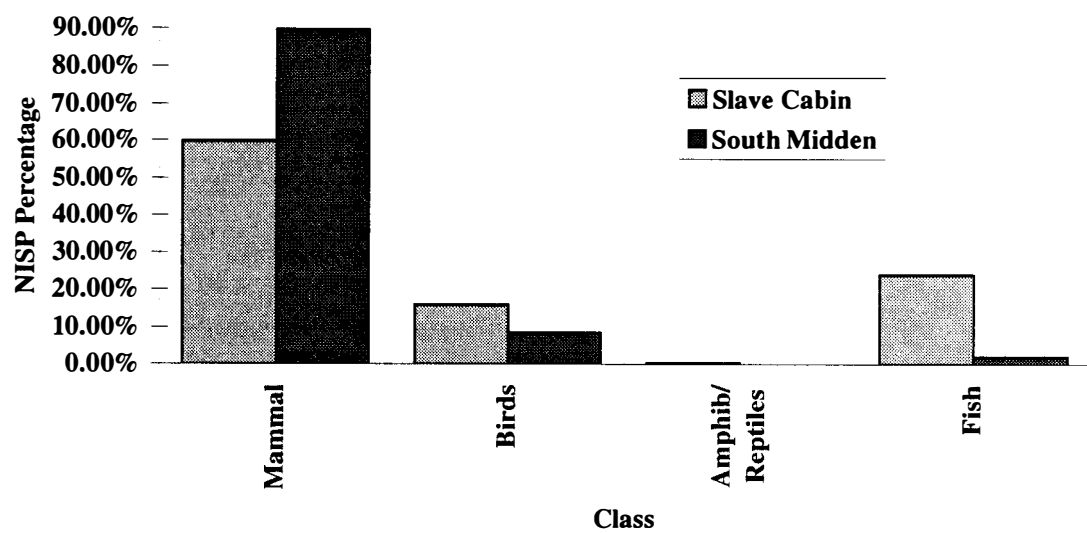
origins of the faunal material, no direct comparisons of urban slave fauna to urban master fauna can be made with any confidence. Nevertheless, a comparison of the faunal South Midden material with that from the Slave Cabin area along with information from other artifact classes, provides data that may help determine to whom the South Midden deposits should be credited.

### **General Taxa Comparison**

In terms of the sheer quantity of bones, the Slave Cabin assemblage contained ten times more bone than the South Midden assemblage. The Slave Cabin contained 35.5 bones per cubic foot (bpf<sup>3</sup>) whereas the South Midden yielded only 9.9 bpf<sup>3</sup>. The nature of the South Midden versus that of the cabin features, probably had an effect on bone numbers. The cabin sample, recovered mostly from features was somewhat protected from exposure and decomposition, while bone in the South Midden was directly exposed to the elements upon deposit, prompting quicker deterioration.

In both assemblages, 40 percent of mammal bones, 35 percent of bird bones, and 50 percent of fish bones were identifiable at least to family. Ironically, within taxonomic classes, the percentage of bones identifiable at least to family was much greater in the South Midden than the cabin. While 85 percent of the bones from the cabin were identifiable to class, only 16 percent of the mammal bones, 21 percent of the bird bones, and five percent of the fish bones were identifiable to family, genus, or species. Low quantities of fish and bird bone from the South Midden are chiefly responsible for the high identifiable rate of those classes.

At the class level, mammals were predominant in both contexts, though the percentage of identified taxa for mammals was nearly 90 percent for the South Midden and sixty percent for the cabin (Figure 5.6). Undoubtedly, preservation bias against the more



**Figure 5.6. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin and South Midden Taxonomic Class Percentages.**

fragile bird and fish elements, may have boosted the percentage of mammal bones. Fish and birds were more common in the Slave Cabin sample, yet fish rank second in number in the cabin, whereas fish rank third in the South Midden. The scarcity of fish remains in the South Midden is remarkable when compared to the Slave Cabin sample, and is probably due to factors other than preservation bias. While other aquatic taxa, such as amphibians and reptiles, were rare in the slave sample, they were nonexistent in the South Midden. The lower quantities of bird remains in the South Midden could be partially due to preservation bias, but such a pronounced difference in numbers between the two contexts suggests that other factors also played a role.

The contrast in species diversity between the two assemblages is stark. For the three classes of animals represented (mammals, birds, and fish), the number of species present in the cabin is higher than in the South Midden. Both assemblages contained substantial amounts of domestic taxa in the same order of relative abundance; pig, cow and a trace of sheep or goat. While the total bone counts from the South Midden sample were a tenth of the cabin's, the number of pig bones in the South Midden equaled half of the pig NISP in the cabin. The cow NISP in the South Midden was about 65 percent of that in the cabin. Interestingly, the number of caprid in the South Midden sample were double that of the cabin sample.

The Slave Cabin contained a few small mammals, as well as a number of rodents. The small mammals, namely squirrel, skunk, and opossum, indicated that a small amount of wild taxa was consumed to supplement a diet dominated by pork and beef. The absence of small wild taxa in the South Midden may be related to preservation bias, but may also indicate that these species were not exploited. The presence of rodents in the Slave Cabin reflect the closed conditions of the crawl space. Rodents are more likely to live and die in a cavity like a crawl space than in the open environment of the South Midden.

Bird taxa comprise a greater portion of the cabin assemblage than the South Midden. The South Midden sample included solely chicken and a single turkey element, possibly making the avian portion of the assemblage completely domestic. The cabin sample, while mostly comprised of domestic chicken, also contained a few wild species, including quail, duck, Canada Goose, and perching birds.

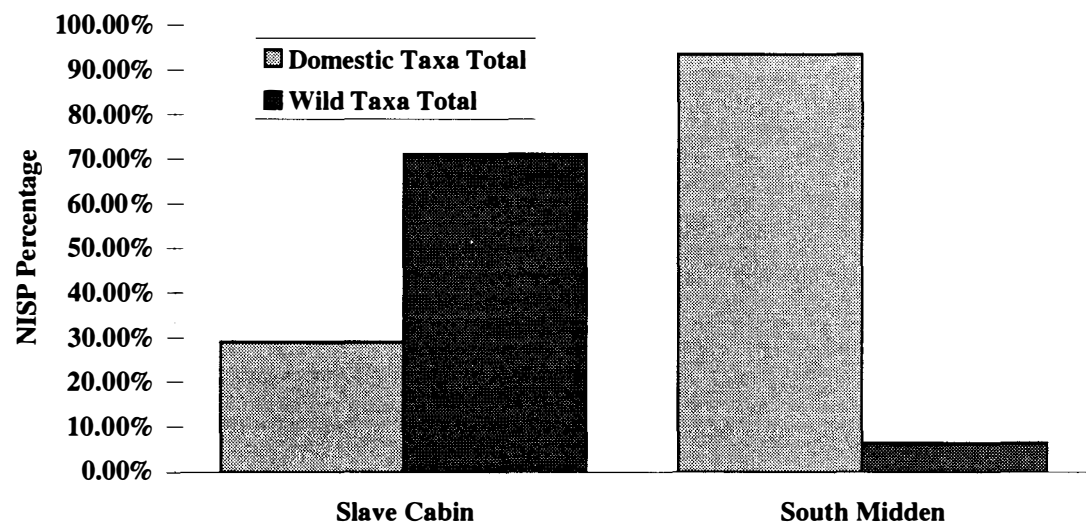
In general, the wild taxa elements greatly outnumber the domestic taxa, due mainly to the preponderance of fish remains recovered from the crawl space (Figure 5.7). The situation is quite the reverse in the South Midden assemblage, where wild taxa are barely represented. Chi-square test results comparing the amounts of wild versus domestic fauna from the two areas supported this somewhat obvious distinction (Table 5.6).

### **Skeletal Representation**

#### **Pork**

Percentages in the butchered portions of pork revealed similarities between the two assemblages. The percentage of cranial, loin, shoulder butt, and short cut ham in the two assemblages were almost identical. The percentage of individual teeth was more than twice as high for the cabin area, while ribs counts were less than half of that found in the South Midden. Picnic shoulder percentages were higher in the South Midden area, but foot elements were lower in the South Midden.

It appears as though cranial remains were being discarded with the same frequency in both areas. However, the higher number of individual teeth found in the cabin area suggests that more hogs' heads and jowls were processed within the Slave Cabin. Loin cuts were consumed in both contexts, but ribs were less common in the Slave Cabin. Neither the cabin nor South Midden areas produced much shoulder butt, but the South Midden sample contained more picnic shoulder remains. The short cut ham was equally



**Figure 5.7. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin and South Midden Wild and Domestic Taxa Percentages.**

**Table 5.6. Chi-square Test Results of Blount Mansion Assemblages.**

| <b>DATA</b>            | <b>Df</b> | <b>CHI-SQUARE<br/>VALUE</b> |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Domestic vs. Wild Taxa | 1         | 197.293 *                   |
| Pork                   | 2         | 10.798 *                    |
| Cow                    | 2         | 1.784                       |

\* = Significance at  $p < .05$

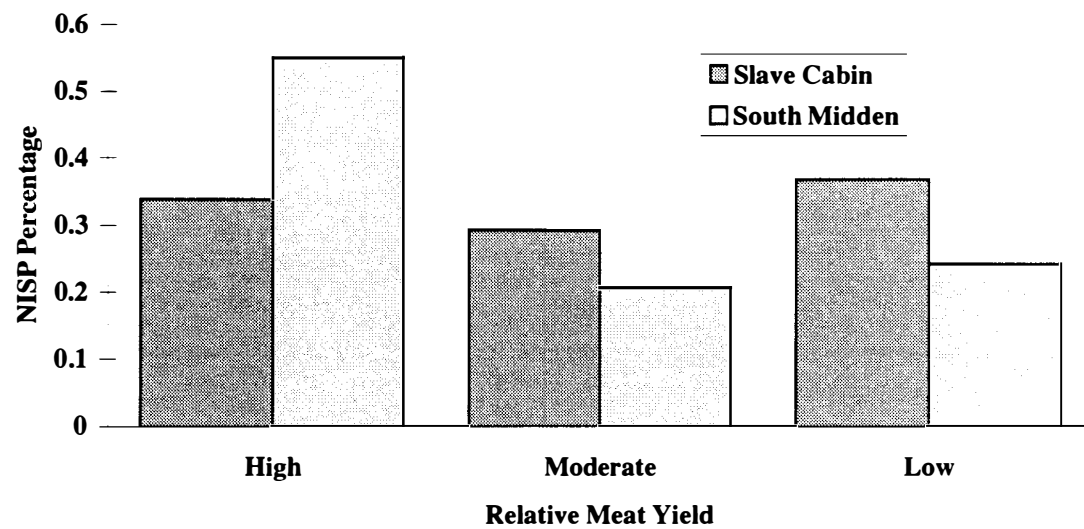
represented in the South Midden and the cabin. However, the higher percentages of foot remains in the slave deposits indicate that the slaves processed and consumed more pigs feet. Such slight differences do little to indicate to whom the South Midden bones should be associated, as both assemblages contain high numbers of high and lower quality pork cuts.

In terms of general meat yield categories, the cabin contained relatively even percentages of high, moderate, and low yield elements. However, the South Midden sample contained a much higher percentage of high yield portions, but almost equal amounts of moderate and low yield cuts. This suggests that while the slave diet was characterized by nearly equal access to all parts of the pig, the South Midden sample reflects greater consumption of the high yielding pork (Figure 5.8). Chi square test results comparing the pork cuts of the two assemblages supported this distinction (See Table 5.6).

### **Beef**

While cow elements for both the South Midden and cabin area were few in number, some patterns were visible in the data. In general, both contexts yielded elements from most areas of the bovine skeleton. In terms of butchering units, foot elements were best represented in both contexts. Hind shank portions also ranked highly in both assemblages. Neck portions were more frequent in the South Midden sample, but rump and round portions are more frequent in the cabin sample. No chuck was represented in the cabin material, but a chuck steak bone occurred in the South Midden. Cranial portions, absent in the cabin sample, were represented only by two teeth in the South Midden sample.

Many of these differences in cow butchering portions may be due to small sample sizes. However, the low frequency of cow bones overall is revealing in itself. That beef was consumed much less frequently than pork is obvious. In both contexts, most portions of the bovine carcass were represented, albeit, in very low quantities. The slaves



**Figure 5.8. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin and South Midden Relative Meat Yield of Pork Cuts.**

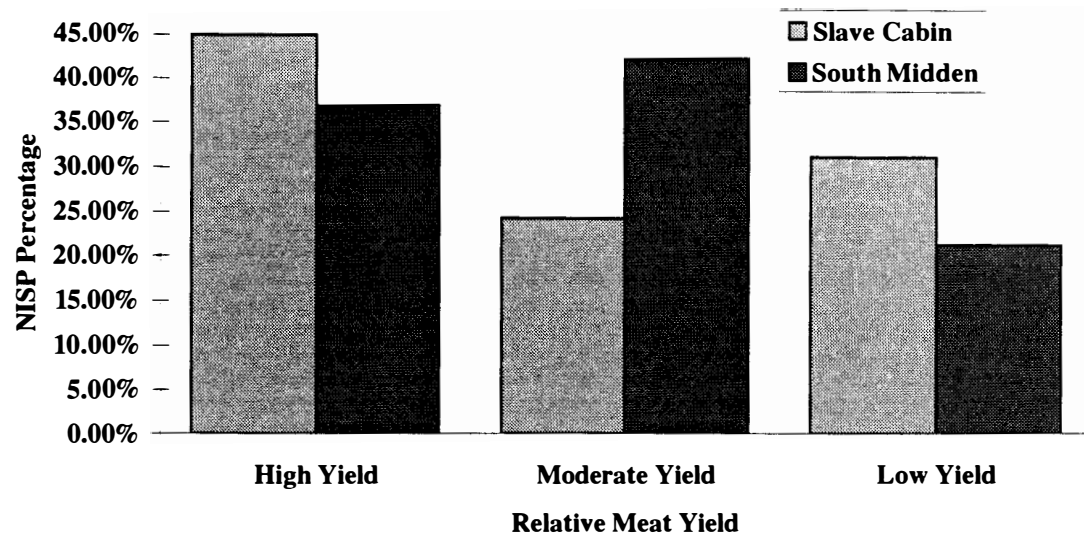
apparently had access to the higher quality cuts of the rump, round, and sirloin, in addition to the less meaty portions of the shanks and feet, as did those responsible for the South Midden deposit. By comparison the South Midden deposit reflected the best access was to the moderate and high yield cuts (Figure 5.9). There was no good evidence in either the cabin or South Midden deposits to indicate consumption of the crania, though the two cow teeth from the South Midden suggest that some processing of the crania or mandible may have been conducted somewhere on the mansion grounds. Chi-square tests did not indicate a significant difference between the beef cut representations of the two assemblages (See Table 5.6).

### **Summary**

The scarcity of fish, bird and wild mammal remains in the South Midden sample was the only obvious difference between the two assemblages. Sampling and preservation biases can only partially explain this difference. Perhaps the South Midden bones came from the mansion kitchen, while the Slave Cabin sample is certainly associated with the slaves' kitchen.

The skeletal representation of the best represented species, namely, pig and cow, were less distinct between the two contexts. The South Midden sample produced more picnic shoulder portions of pork and about the same portions of beef as the cabin sample. In general, the diet of the slaves contained equal amounts of high, moderate, and low yielding pork portions, but high amounts of high yielding beef cuts. In contrast, the South Midden sample reflects better access to high yield pork cuts, and high and moderate yield beef pieces.

The interpretation of ethnic and socioeconomic standing of site occupants from faunal remains alone is a somewhat speculative endeavor. Should future research at Blount



**Figure 5.9. Blount Mansion Slave Cabin and South Midden Relative Meat Yield of Beef Cuts.**

Mansion recover additional evidence, clarifying the origins of the South Midden refuse, this comparison may prove more enlightening.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **COMPARISON OF SELECTED UPLAND SOUTH FAUNAL ASSEMBLAGES**

Comparisons have recently been made between slave faunal assemblages from the Hermitage and Mabry plantations, in Tennessee, and the coastal plantations of Cannon's Point and Kingsley (Young 1993). The comparisons have provided useful results in terms of delimiting the distinction of slave diet in either the upland south and coastal south regions. These distinctions were mainly due to the differing environments of each region, where each yielded its own suite of vertebrate taxa for exploitation. As Lev-Tov has pointed out, both environments were able to supply more or less equal amounts of faunal diversity (Lev-Tov 1994).

Studies of faunal material from slave sites have generally been restricted to plantations in the rural Coastal Plain. However, recent research at the Hermitage and Mabry plantations in middle and eastern Tennessee (Breitburg 1990, 1991, 1992; Young 1993) and at Locust Grove Plantation, in Kentucky (Young and Lev-Tov 1995) have examined slave diet in the Upland South. While currently, no other urban slave sites have been discussed in terms of faunal exploitation, comparisons of the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin faunal data to that from the three other slave sites provide contrasts that may distinguish the diets of the urban slaves in early Knoxville from those of rural slaves in the Upland South and those of the Nashville Basin.

Blount Mansion and Mabry Plantation are located near Knoxville, and Locust Grove is located near Louisville Kentucky. While the Hermitage slaves were located on a much larger plantation, the status of the Hermitage domestic slaves may have resembled that of the Blount Mansion domestic slaves, by virtue of their closer relationship to the master's household. The Hermitage field slave faunal material is useful to include as it helps provide additional comparisons that distinguish the Hermitage field slave diet from domestic slave diet.

The Gibbs House site, located near Knoxville, though not a slave site, was home to a yeoman farmer who led a much more modest existence than the prominent Blount Mansion residents. The economic status of the Gibbs may have resulted in some similarities in the diet to the Blount Mansion slaves who also had a more modest diet.

It is anticipated that similarities exist between the Upland South rural slave site assemblages due to their location in similar environments and to the site occupants' slave status. It is expected for the Hermitage domestic slave fauna to differ from the field slave's in that domestic slave diets should reflect access to better meat cuts and possibly a more diverse array of taxa. The faunal material from both Hermitage contexts are expected to differ from the Mabry and Locust Grove sites due to the differing sizes of the plantations. Blount Mansion slave fauna should resemble that of the domestic Hermitage slaves, but should there be a distinction from all of the rural slave sites due to differing rural and urban environments? Should such differences include less wild fauna in the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin material, and therefore, less diversity and should the Blount Mansion slave fauna also contain better cuts of meat than the rural slave assemblages, due to their status as domestic slaves and their location in the city? However, the location of rural slaves on plantations may have given them better access to all portions of the carcass. Due to the distinction evident in the Blount Mansion South Midden fauna when compared to the

Blount Mansion slave fauna, the South Midden material will also be considered in these comparisons.

Below, faunal data from the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin and South Midden and three upland plantation sites, Mabry, Locust Grove, and the Hermitage domestic and field slave contexts, and the Upland South yeoman farmer Gibbs House site are compared in terms of compositions of taxonomic class, wild and domestic taxa, and pork and beef butchering portions (Table 6.1).

### **Sample Size**

The sample sizes of the faunal assemblages from each site are large enough to be considered fair representations of the faunal deposits. The one exception is the Mabry slave faunal material, which is probably too small to accurately reflect faunal exploitation. The Mabry sample will nonetheless be included in these comparisons due to the lack of other slave faunal data in close proximity to Knoxville and Blount Mansion.

### **Taxa Comparisons**

Among all seven assemblages mammal remains comprised the majority of the faunal material. Mammals made up between 60 to 90 percent of the fauna, the lowest level belonging to the Blount Mansion slave context. The highest frequencies of mammals were from the Hermitage slave sites and Locust Grove Plantation. Mabry Plantation, the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin, and the Gibbs House site produced mammal remains in roughly similar percentages (Table 6.2, Figure 6.1)

Bird remains occurred in nearly equal proportions at each site except for Mabry Plantation, where birds accounted for nearly 30 percent of the assemblage. The high

**Table 6.1. Selected Faunal Assemblages from the Upland South.**

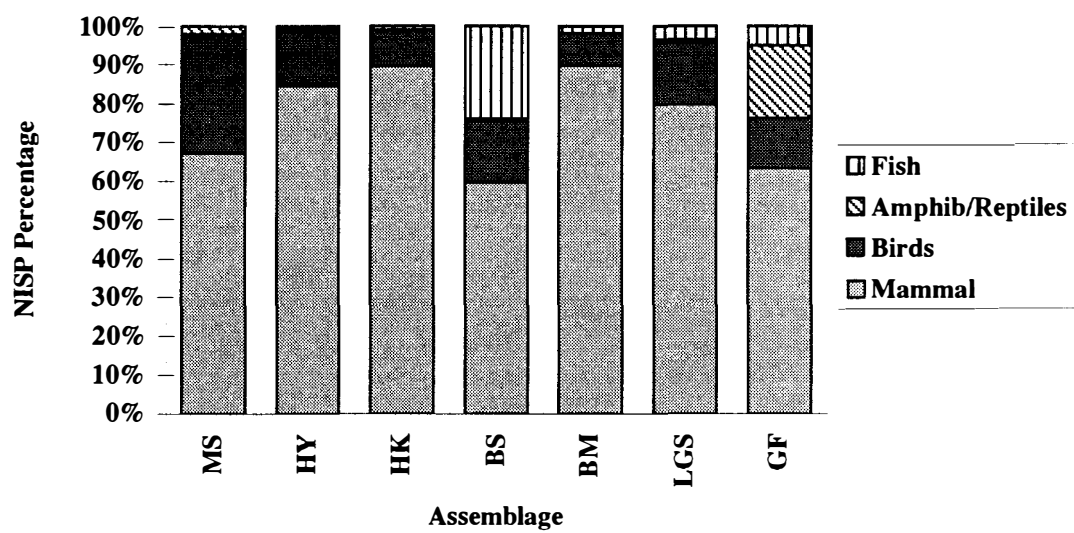
| <b>Assemblage (abbreviation)</b>         | <b>Region</b>       | <b>Environment</b> | <b>Social Context</b> |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Blount Mansion Slave Cabin (BS)          | Upland South, TN    | Urban              | Slave                 |
| Blount Mansion South Midden (BM)         | Upland South, TN    | Urban              | Undetermined          |
| Mabry Plantation Slave (MS)              | Upland South, TN    | Rural              | Field Slave           |
| Locust Grove Plantation (LG)             | Upland South, KY    | Rural              | Field Slave           |
| Hermitage Plantation KES Cabin (HK)      | Nashville Basin, TN | Rural              | Field Slave           |
| Hermitage Plantation Backyard Cabin (HY) | Nashville Basin, TN | Rural              | Domestic Slave        |
| Gibbs House (GF)                         | Upland South, TN    | Rural              | Yeoman Farmer         |

**Table 6.2. Taxonomic Class Representation.**

| <b>NISP</b>                |            |             |             |             |            |             |             |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Taxa</b>                | <b>MS</b>  | <b>HY</b>   | <b>HK</b>   | <b>BS</b>   | <b>BM</b>  | <b>LG</b>   | <b>GF</b>   |
| <b>Mammals</b>             | 138        | 938         | 3518        | 1660        | 282        | 2056        | 2025        |
| <b>Birds</b>               | 63         | 155         | 217         | 442         | 26         | 411         | 408         |
| <b>Amphibians/Reptiles</b> | 4          | 8           | 12          | 7           |            | 20          | 6           |
| <b>Fish</b>                | 2          | 9           | 5           | 667         | 6          | 93          | 163         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>207</b> | <b>1110</b> | <b>3752</b> | <b>2776</b> | <b>314</b> | <b>2580</b> | <b>2602</b> |

| <b>NISP PERCENTAGE</b>     |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Taxa</b>                | <b>MS</b> | <b>HY</b> | <b>HK</b> | <b>BS</b> | <b>BM</b> | <b>LG</b> | <b>GF</b> |
| <b>Mammals</b>             | 66.67%    | 84.50%    | 89.58%    | 59.80%    | 89.81%    | 79.69%    | 77.82%    |
| <b>Birds</b>               | 30.43%    | 13.96%    | 9.33%     | 15.92%    | 8.28%     | 15.93%    | 15.68%    |
| <b>Amphibians/Reptiles</b> | 1.94%     | 0.72%     | 1.00%     | 0.25%     |           | 0.78%     | 0.23%     |
| <b>Fish</b>                |           | 0.81%     | 0.08%     | 24.03%    | 1.91%     | 3.60%     | 6.26%     |

MS = Mabry Plantation Slave, HY = Hermitage Plantation Domestic Slave,  
 HK = Hermitage Plantation Field Slave, BS = Blount Mansion Slave,  
 BM = Blount Mansion South Midden, LG = Locust Grove Plantation Slave, GF = Gibbs House



**Figure 6.1. Taxonomic Class Representation.**

percentage of birds at Mabry may be skewed due to insufficient sample size. Most of the bird remains at each site consisted of domestic chicken, but some wild birds were represented as well.

Fish remains comprised a small portion of every assemblage except the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin and the Gibbs House site. Amphibians and reptiles occurred in very small amounts at each site, except for the Gibbs House site, in which they made up nearly twenty percent of the assemblage. The Gibbs evidently made good use of the nearby aquatic environs by extracting fish and reptiles and some amphibians. However, the Blount Mansion slaves only partook of fish.

Recovery techniques used during the excavation of each site may be partially responsible for the higher number of fish remains at Blount Mansion. Fish remains can be caught by the 1/4 in. screens, but most fish remains are smaller than 1/4 in. It would require smaller screens to recover such remains. Often, when 1/8 in. or 1/16 in. screens are used, only samples of the excavated deposits are processed through them. This creates complications when calculating NISP for a site because the numbers generated from the smaller than 1/4 in. material must be multiplied by the total volume of the excavated provenience to arrive at extrapolated numbers that can be added or compared to the 1/4 in material.

While 1/4 in. screens were used at all sites to recover artifacts, at Blount Mansion, the Gibbs House site and the Hermitage, soil samples from features were processed through smaller screen sizes. This was not done at Mabry Plantation or Locust Grove. This may have diminished the detection of fish remains from those two sites. Since the Blount Mansion and Gibbs House site material were excavated by the same methods under Dr. Charles Faulkner, there should not be any differences in recovery bias between these two sites. At the Hermitage, although soil samples were taken from features, there may have been differences in the processing methods or the size of the sample take. This may

have introduced some recovery bias against fish remains. However, it is reported that fish played a minor role in the diets of the Hermitage slaves (Lawrence McKee, personal communication 1998).

Contextual bias does not seem to have been a factor for the disparity of fish remains between the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin and the other sites. Faunal remains from each site included material from feature and non feature contexts (i. e. sheet midden).

It is unlikely that the representation of fish remains at any of the sites considered here were due to the proximity of the sites to the aquatic environs. While the low number of fish remains from the Blount Mansion South Midden is probably related to the lack of features containing bones, no soil samples from that area were processed, biasing the sample somewhat. Gibbs House site was at the head of Beaver Creek, which is somewhat reflected by the number of fish remains recovered (See Figure 6.1). The amount and diversity of fish that could be taken from Beaver Creek versus the Tennessee River may have contributed to lower numbers of fish remains at the Gibbs House site. The Mabry Plantation slave quarters were located near Sinking Creek, which would have the closest source of fish. Both the KES and Backyard cabins at the Hermitage Plantation were approximately 20 minutes from the Cumberland River, though slaves would have to have crossed property lines to get to the river (Lawrence McKee, personal communication 1998). Therefore, all sites were within a fairly close distance to the creeks or rivers, which presumably would have promoted access to fish.

Another possibility may be related to the marketing of freshwater fish in the town. Most likely a fish market did not exist in the rural settings of Mabry, the Hermitage, and Locust Grove, so if fish were to be obtained, they would have to be caught by the slaves themselves. According to the representation of fish remains in these assemblages, fishing was barely practiced by the Hermitage field or domestic slaves and only slightly more by the Locust Grove slaves. There were no fish bones in the Mabry material, but this could

be due to small sampling size and preservation bias against fish remains. Determination of whether fish were obtained by the Blount Mansion slaves from the river or from a fish vendor would require more research into the operation of the local fish market. This would aid in discerning the degrees to which the Blount Mansion slaves were involved in the local food market economy as opposed to providing their own resources.

Though speculative, yet another possible explanation for the fish at Blount Mansion may be related to the amount of “free time” the slaves may have had to fish. It was typical for slaves in the cities to move about town, conducting their master’s business. The result of the task labor system, under which the Blount Mansion slaves were undoubtedly held, may have made them somewhat more autonomous than rural slaves. If this resulted in a period of time where urban slaves were not required by their masters, some of this time may have been spent fishing. However, this seems too simplistic a model, as surely rural slaves enjoyed some leisure time. Rather, the presence of fish at Blount Mansion is probably related to market availability of fish coupled with close proximity to those markets, assuming they were near the river, and Blount Mansion.

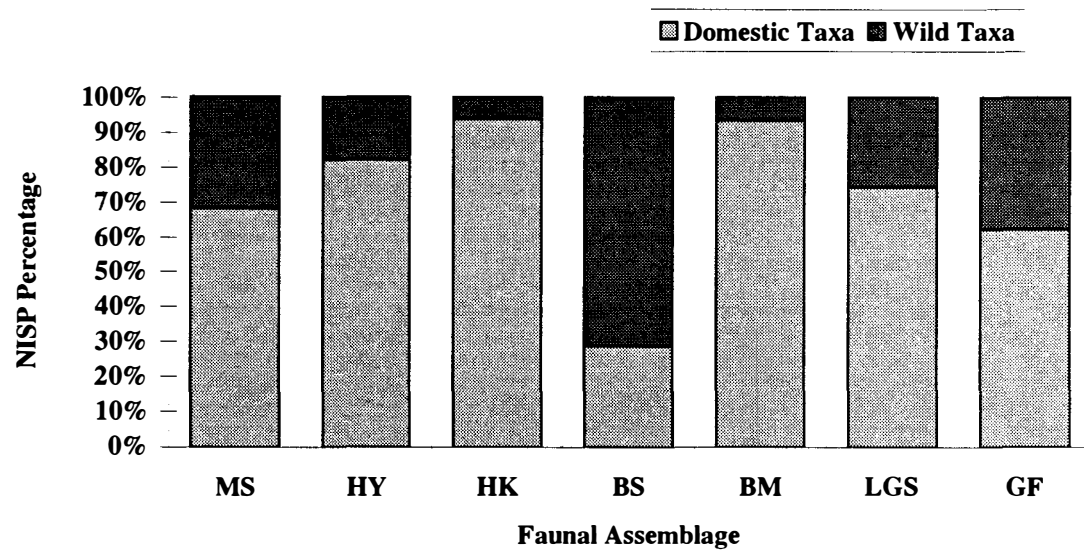
Reptiles, namely, turtles, did not occur in the Blount Mansion sample. This is interesting, considering that there was an overwhelming amount of fish remains present. Obviously the Blount Mansion slaves had access to fish, an aquatic taxa, either through their own industry or through a local market, but they did not exploit turtles. Turtles would surely have been available from the banks of the river, but may not have been much of a market item. Perhaps the Blount Mansion slaves did not consider turtle meat a suitable food. This may be true for slaves throughout the Upland South, for turtle remains account for less than one percent of each slave related faunal assemblage.

### **Domestic versus Wild Taxa**

Domestic mammals, consisting of pig, cow, sheep and goats, and domestic chicken, far outnumbered wild taxa in each of the slave faunal assemblages with the exception of the Blount Mansion slave faunal material. The assemblages from Mabry, the Hermitage, and Locust Grove contained from 68 to 95 percent domestic fauna. The Blount Mansion slave fauna contained only 29 percent domestic taxa (Figure 6.2). Such a high wild taxa percentage is due to the preponderance of fish remains.

Heavy representation of domestic taxa is a common pattern in historic sites faunal assemblages. Reliance on pork, beef and chicken, and to a small degree, mutton, over wild mammals, birds, fish, and reptiles characterizes many historic period faunal assemblages regardless of the site's location in either urban or rural settings. However, instead of the urban character of frontier Knoxville emphasizing domesticates, the opposite occurred. The rural slave faunal assemblages of Mabry, the Hermitage, and Locust Grove were chiefly represented by domesticated taxa. The influence of the urban environment should have dampened the abundance of wild taxa due to lessened availability in the affected vicinity of the town or due to more cosmopolitan tastes for domestic meats. Reitz (1987), in her study of contrasts between urban and rural faunal assemblages from the southern Atlantic coast, found that urban diets were comprised mostly of domesticates and were somewhat monotonous in terms of diversity. In contrast, rural assemblages contained a wider variety of wild taxa, including large amounts of fish. This pattern runs counter to the pattern shown by the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin fauna and that from the other sites considered here. The most parsimonious factors are probably environmentally related. Proximity to a major water body, such as the Tennessee River, certainly provided the proper environment from which to obtain fish.

While fish may have been commonly available from the market place, they may also have been caught by the Blount Mansion slaves themselves from the Tennessee River



**Figure 6.2. Percentages of Wild and Domestic Taxa.**

during times when they were not engaged in work affairs. Speculative as it may be, if the number of fish remains were any indication of the degree of latitude a rural slave had, a near lack of fish remains may suggest that rural slaves did not have a great deal of time to fish. However, urban availability of fish, proximity to fish markets seems the best explanation for the abundance of fish in the Blount Mansion slave deposits, and the shortage of them at Mabry, the Hermitage and Locust Grove.

Chi square tests indicate significant differences between all but three assemblage comparisons, in terms of the amounts of wild versus domestic fauna. The Mabry fauna was not significantly distinct from the Locust Grove or Gibbs House fauna. This may suggest similarities in domestic versus wild faunal exploitation among smaller farms and plantations in rural settings of the Upland South. The Hermitage field slave material did not differ significantly from the Blount Mansion South Midden material, due mainly to the very low numbers of wild fauna in both assemblages (Table 6.3).

As the fish remains from the Blount Mansion slave deposits skewed the percentages of wild and domestic fauna, subtracting fish from the assemblage offered an indication as to how important domestic taxa actually were in the urban slave diet. Domestic fauna at Blount Mansion rose to nearly 90 percent; commensurate with the domestic taxa percentage at the rural slave sites, which ranged from 82 to 94 percent. The domestic fauna at Mabry was only 68 percent, but skewing due to small sample size was probably a significant factor.

Of the domestic mammals, pork dominated every assemblage over beef and mutton remains. Excepting the Mabry sample for reasons of insufficient sample size, pig remains comprised 82 to 97 percent of the slave assemblages, while beef made up one to 15 percent. Caprid remains accounted for one to seven percent of the domestic mammals and in all cases except for the Locust Grove sample, rank below beef in abundance (Figure 6.3).

**Table 6.3. Chi-square Test Results of Wild Versus Domestic Taxa from Assemblages**

| ASSEMBLAGE 1 | ASSEMBLAGE 2 | CHI-SQUARE<br>VALUE |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| MS           | HY           | 8.779 *             |
| MS           | HK           | 71.601 *            |
| MS           | BS           | 55.431 *            |
| MS           | BM           | 22.917 *            |
| MS           | LG           | 1.499               |
| MS           | GF           | 1.131               |
| HY           | HK           | 54.693 *            |
| HY           | BS           | 376.989 *           |
| HY           | BM           | 9.708 *             |
| HY           | LG           | 11.509 *            |
| HY           | GF           | 56.922 *            |
| HK           | BS           | 937.441 *           |
| HK           | BM           | 0.044               |
| HK           | LG           | 154.766 *           |
| HK           | GF           | 292.604 *           |
| BS           | BM           | 197.293 *           |
| BS           | LG           | 411.078 *           |
| BS           | GF           | 197.621 *           |
| BM           | LG           | 22.386 *            |
| BM           | GF           | 46.294 *            |
| LG           | GF           | 29.546 *            |

\* = Significance at  $p < .05$

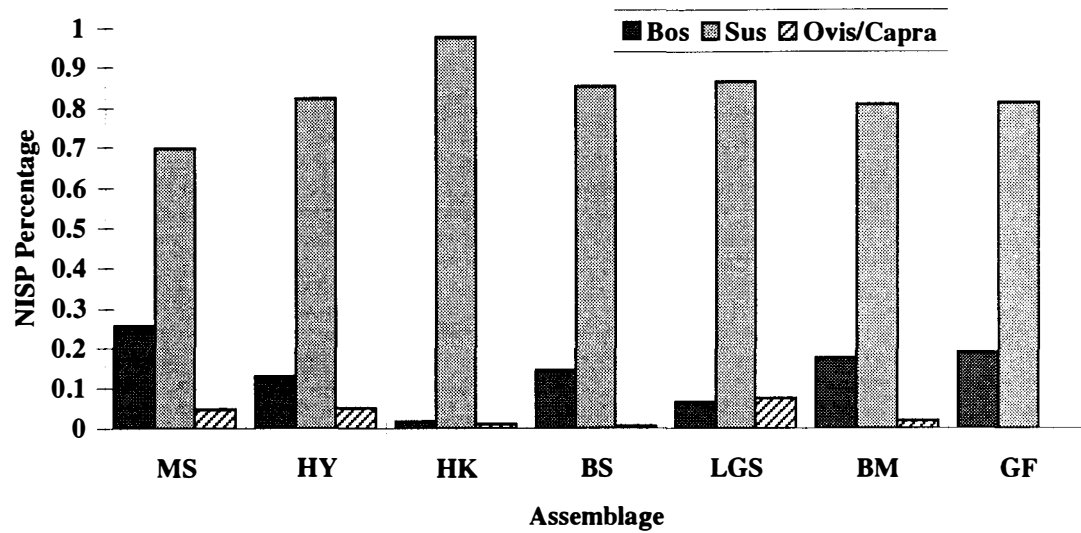
Df=1,  $p < .05 = 3.841$

MS = Mabry Plantation Slave, HY = Hermitage Plantation Domestic Slave,

HK = Hermitage Plantation Field Slave, BS = Blount Mansion Slave,

BM = Blount Mansion South Midden, LG = Locust Grove Plantation Slave,

GF = Gibbs House



**Figure 6.3. Composition of Domestic Mammals.**

## **Pork Portions**

Pig elements were assigned to general butchering units which were used to identify the frequency with which certain portions of the pig carcass were consumed. The low number of pork elements from the Mabry sample (N = 30) skewed the representation of skeletal portions. Consequently, the pork bones from Mabry may not accurately reflect the degree to which high, moderate, or low yield pork cuts were consumed. Assemblages from Blount Mansion, the Hermitage, Locust Grove, and the Gibbs site provided more adequate samples from which to draw conclusions concerning pork usage.

Cranial elements, including individual teeth, made up from 22 to 29 percent of the pig elements recovered from each site (Table 6.4). Loin elements ranged from 8 to 17 percent, while shoulder butt, picnic shoulder, and short cut ham portions were within commensurate percentages between the four sites. Ribs were lowest in percentage at Blount Mansion, but foot elements had the highest frequency. This suggests that while the Blount Mansion slaves had similar access to the crania, loin, forequarter and hind quarter as the rural slaves, their consumption of pigs feet was elevated, but they ate fewer pork ribs.

The high representation of crania and foot portions may indicate that hog butchery was practiced at or near all of these sites. It is possible that the entire hog carcass or major portions of it were processed near the excavated areas. It is also likely that the head and feet were the most well consumed part of the pig among urban and rural slaves in general, followed by the ribs, loin, short cut ham, and shoulder cuts.

For some reason, the Blount Mansion slaves did not partake of as much rib meat as rural slaves, but had more than their share of pigs feet. One possibility for this pattern is that as a single household containing probably a small number of individuals, the Blount Mansion slaves may not have had direct access to the entire pig carcass. On the rural plantations, where there were a greater number of slaves, a whole hog could have been

**Table 6.4. Relative Meat Yield of Pork Cuts.**

|                       | <b>ASSEMBLAGE</b> |           |           |           |           |           |           |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                       | <b>MS</b>         | <b>HY</b> | <b>HK</b> | <b>BS</b> | <b>BM</b> | <b>LG</b> | <b>GF</b> |
| <b>High Yield</b>     | 10.00%            | 59.64%    | 49.45%    | 33.92%    | 55.17%    | 29.85%    | 24.32%    |
| <b>Moderate Yield</b> | 83.33%            | 22.50%    | 29.49%    | 29.24%    | 20.69%    | 47.91%    | 53.24%    |
| <b>Low Yield</b>      | 6.67%             | 17.86%    | 21.06%    | 36.84%    | 24.14%    | 22.24%    | 22.43%    |

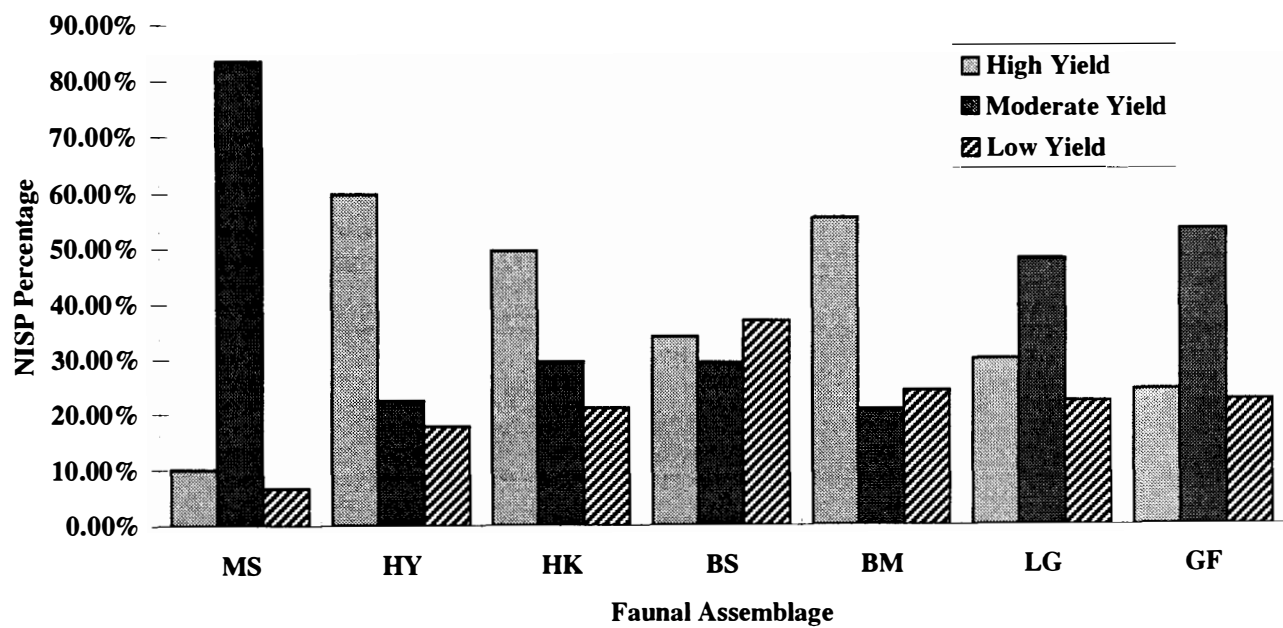
MS = Mabry Plantation Slave, HY = Hermitage Plantation Domestic Slave,  
HK = Hermitage Plantation Field Slave, BS = Blount Mansion Slave,  
BM = Blount Mansion South Midden, LG = Locust Grove Plantation Slave, GF = Gibbs House

distributed among them. At Blount Mansion, the slaves would probably have shared a pig with the mansion occupants. This may have occasionally left the less meatier portions for the slaves, while the mansion occupants took the meatier cuts. Also, if the mansion slaves were given the monetary resources to purchase their own pork, to stretch that budget, the cheaper cuts of pigs feet and head would have been a very economical choice. When coupled with fish, which may have been taken freely from the river, the budget could have been extended or even redirected to fund some other necessity or extravagance. When butchering units were collapsed into more general categories of high, moderate, and low yielding meat quantities, more distinct patterns became evident (Figure 6.4, see Table 6.4). While high yield portions contained the most numerous elements, those elements were the least well represented over all of the slave sites. Likewise, the best represented butchering units, crania and feet, are the sole members of the moderate and low yield categories, respectively.

Analysis revealed that the faunal assemblages from the other sites were more similar to one another than to the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin sample. Three patterns in relative meat yield representation were apparent. For each assemblage there was one category that dominated while the other two ranked far below, but at nearly equal levels to one another, usually within a ten to fifteen percent difference.

Chi-square tests revealed significant differences in the representation of high, moderate, and low yield portions in all but three assemblage comparisons (Table 6.5). There were no significant differences between the Blount Mansion South Midden pork bones and either of the Hermitage assemblages. Nor was there a significant distinction between the Locust Grove and Gibbs House fauna.

Only the Hermitage and Blount Mansion South Midden assemblages were characterized by a high percentage of high yield portions and low levels of moderate and



**Figure 6.4. Pork Cut Representation.**

**Table 6.5. Chi-square Test Results of Pork Data from Assemblages.**

| ASSEMBLAGE 1 | ASSEMBLAGE 2 | CHI-SQUARE<br>VALUE |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| MS           | HY           | 49.525 *            |
| MS           | HK           | 39.258 *            |
| MS           | BS           | 32.012 *            |
| MS           | BM           | 37.726 *            |
| MS           | LG           | 14.252 *            |
| MS           | GF           | 10.222 *            |
| HY           | HK           | 9.117 *             |
| HY           | BS           | 31.279 *            |
| HY           | BM           | 1.678               |
| HY           | LG           | 72.236 *            |
| HY           | GF           | 89.575 *            |
| HK           | BS           | 22.558 *            |
| HK           | BM           | 3.012               |
| HK           | LG           | 61.507 *            |
| HK           | GF           | 80.193 *            |
| BS           | BM           | 10.798 *            |
| BS           | LG           | 21.723 *            |
| BS           | GF           | 27.692 *            |
| BM           | LG           | 26.992 *            |
| BM           | GF           | 38.154 *            |
| LG           | GF           | 3.641               |

\* = Significance at  $p < .05$

Df = 2,  $p < .05 = 5.991$

MS = Mabry Plantation Slave, HY = Hermitage Plantation Domestic Slave,

HK = Hermitage Plantation Field Slave, BS = Blount Mansion Slave,

BM = Blount Mansion South Midden, LG = Locust Grove Plantation Slave,

GF = Gibbs House

low yield pork. The distribution of the three categories was similar for both Hermitage assemblages, suggesting that there was not a significant amount of differential access to better cuts of meat by the Hermitage domestic slaves compared to the field slaves.

Among the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin pig bones, there was an almost equal representation of high, moderate, and low yield portions. This pattern was not duplicated in the pork bones of any other of the considered sites. This indicates that the Blount Mansion slaves had relatively equal access to all portions of the pig carcass, but that some of the best pork cuts were consumed nearly as often as those of lesser quality.

Interestingly, the Gibbs house and Locust Grove Plantation pork elements shared a similar representation. In both assemblages, the moderate yield portions dominated and the high and low yield portions occurred at nearly equal levels. The pork bones from the Mabry sample, though small in number, were similarly distributed. Since the moderate yield category consists solely of cranial elements, the high levels of moderate yield portions may be indicative of butchery as well as consumption. This may indicate a rural Upland South pattern of pork consumption, in which the butchering waste and consumption refuse of the crania is well represented, while the high and low yield portions are restricted somewhat.

At smaller farms and plantations of the Upland South, where slave habitations were fewer and the farm lot was perhaps smaller (Andrews and Young 1992), hog butchering may have occurred in locations near the slave cabins. This would have resulted in a certain amount of butchering waste as well as consumption refuse being deposited in those butchering locations. A larger plantation, such as the Hermitage, may have contained a more centralized system of hog butchering and pork distribution which would have resulted in the concentration of butchering waste at a single location, while the refuse from the consumed pork cuts would be deposited near the Slave Cabin. This may help explain the contrast in relative meat yield percentages between Mabry and Locust Grove slave sites and the Hermitage slave sites.

The representation of the Blount Mansion South Midden pork, which was similar to the Hermitage pattern, may also reflect lessened deposit of butchering waste and it was unlikely for a whole hog to be butchered in the mansion lot. Also, the better representation of high yield portions may be related to pork consumption of social class of those responsible for the South Midden sample, which may have been the Blount Mansion household, although, as discussed in Chapter 5, the origins of these deposits is uncertain.

It can be summarized that the Hermitage domestic and field slaves ate the higher yielding, and perhaps better, pork portions than the Blount Mansion slaves, the slaves of the Mabry and Locust Grove plantations and the yeoman farmer Gibbs. The Blount Mansion slaves, though the percentages of high, moderate, and low yield portions were roughly equal, ate as much high yield pork as the Locust Grove Plantation slaves and the Gibbs family. The representation of low and moderate yield portions suggests that the Blount Mansion slaves did not fare significantly better than the rural slaves of the Upland South.

### **Beef Portions**

Cattle elements were so low in number at most of the sites that their representation of the beef carcass may be significantly skewed. The skeletal representation of beef cuts for Locust Grove Plantation could not be obtained for this analysis. However, there were two patterns of relative meat yield categories representation (Table 6.6, Figure 6.5). The assemblages from Mabry, the Hermitage field slaves, the Blount Mansion slaves, and the Gibbs House occupants all contained mostly high yield beef cuts. The cattle elements from the Hermitage domestic slave and the Blount Mansion South Midden assemblages are dominated by moderate yield portions, followed by the high yield cuts. The lower frequency of high yield portions from the Hermitage domestic slaves is interesting in that it counters what was hypothesized about the effects of “favored” status of the domestic

**Table 6.6. Relative Meat Yield of Beef Cuts.**

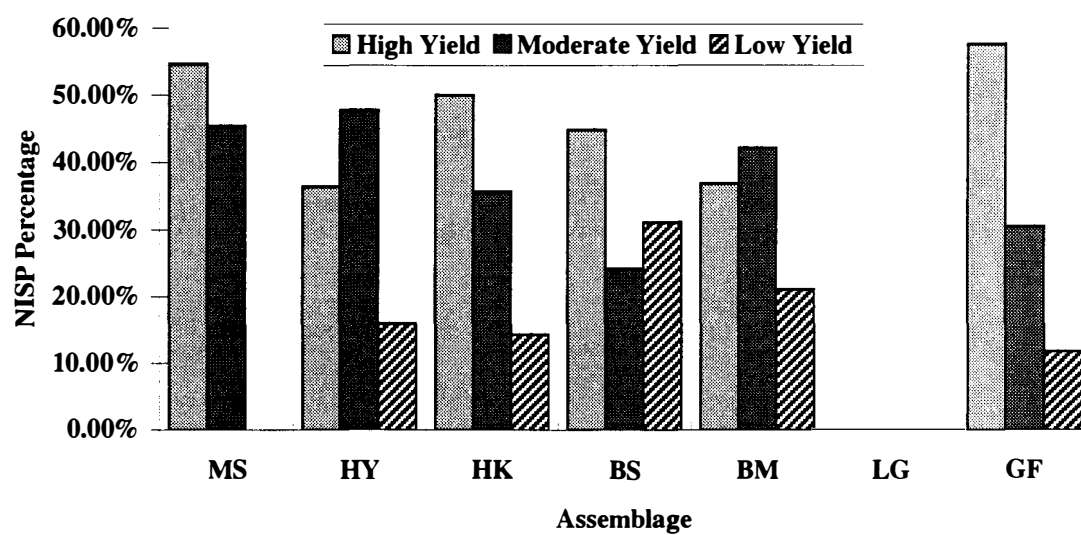
|                       | ASSEMBLAGE |        |        |        |        |     |        |
|-----------------------|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----|--------|
|                       | MS         | HY     | HK     | BS     | BM     | LG  | GF     |
| <b>High Yield</b>     | 54.55%     | 36.36% | 50.00% | 44.83% | 36.84% | NA* | 57.65% |
| <b>Moderate Yield</b> | 45.45%     | 47.73% | 35.71% | 24.14% | 42.11% | NA* | 30.59% |
| <b>Low Yield</b>      |            | 15.91% | 14.29% | 31.03% | 21.05% | NA* | 11.76% |

MS = Mabry Plantation Slave, HY = Hermitage Plantation Domestic Slave,

HK = Hermitage Plantation Field Slave, BS = Blount Mansion Slave,

BM = Blount Mansion South Midden, LG = Locust Grove Plantation Slave, GF = Gibbs House

NA\* = Data Not Available



**Figure 6.5. Beef Cut Representation.**

slaves in terms of access to meat. Chi-square test results showed no significant differences between the representations of high, moderate, or low yield beef portions (Table 6.7).

### **Summary**

The ratio of wild to domestic fauna among the seven contexts that were considered were roughly similar with one exception: domestic fauna in the Blount Mansion slave context was a minority. On a finer scale, chi-square test results indicated significant differences between all but three assemblages, suggesting similarities of faunal exploitation between the smaller farms of the Upland South. The main difference between the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin material and that of the other sites considered was the large amount of fish remains. No other slave site produced nearly the same amount of fish remains as the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin. Only the Gibbs House site yielded a significant amount of fish remains. This is interesting in that it counters the hypothesis that the urban environment should have discouraged the exploitation of wild fauna. However, the location of Blount Mansion along the Tennessee River may have resulted in the high numbers of fish remains from the Slave Cabin and the presence of local fish markets may also have contributed. Therefore, the notion of restricted access to wild taxa in urban areas must be altered to account for wild taxa available from aquatic environments that run through the town.

While the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin contributed the most wild fauna, due to the excessive amount of fish remains, the amount of other wild fauna, including wild mammals and birds, were excelled at the rural slave sites and the Gibbs House site. This is in keeping with what was hypothesized: the amount of wild mammals and birds should have been greater in the rural samples due to better access to suitable habitats for wild taxa. In terms of diversity, barring the array of fish species, the Blount Mansion slaves appear to

**Table 6.7. Chi-square Test Results of Beef Data from Assemblages.**

| ASSEMBLAGE 1 | ASSEMBLAGE 2 | CHI-SQUARE<br>VALUE |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| MS           | HY           | 2.487               |
| MS           | HK           | 1.742               |
| MS           | BS           | 4.782               |
| MS           | BM           | 2.838               |
| MS           | GF           | 1.977               |
| HY           | HK           | 0.858               |
| HY           | BS           | 4.676               |
| HY           | BM           | 0.293               |
| HY           | GF           | 5.322               |
| HK           | BS           | 1.543               |
| HK           | BM           | 0.616               |
| HK           | GF           | 0.288               |
| BS           | BM           | 1.784               |
| BS           | GF           | 5.782               |
| BM           | GF           | 2.873               |

\* = Significance at  $p < .05$

Df = 2,  $p < .05 = 5.991$

MS = Mabry Plantation Slave, HY = Hermitage Plantation Domestic Slave,

HK = Hermitage Plantation Field Slave, BS = Blount Mansion Slave,

BM = Blount Mansion South Midden, GF = Gibbs House

Locust Grove Plantation Data Not Available.

have had an even more mundane diet than rural slaves from the Upland South, and from the Hermitage.

The domestic mammal constituents of each site were overwhelmingly comprised of pork remains, followed far behind by beef and some caprid. This is commensurate with what other zooarchaeologists have found in the Upland South: pork was the basis of the Upland South diet, while beef contributed a small portion and mutton contributed an even smaller amount.

The skeletal representation of the pig carcass from site to site revealed a number of interesting patterns. The slaves of the Hermitage Plantation seemed to have the best access to the high yielding pork cuts, though there was little distinction between the pork cuts of the field and domestic slaves. Evidently, the domestic slaves did not fare much better than the field hands. A pattern which favored the moderate pork cuts, namely the crania, was apparent among the Upland South plantations of Mabry, Locust Grove, and the Gibbs House. This suggests that the smaller farm environment and food provisioning system may have been a unifying factor that had more of an effect than the social status of slave or yeoman farmer. The Blount Mansion slaves had equal access to all portions of pork, but consumed no more high yield portions than the slaves or occupants of the upland farms. The hypothesis that urban slaves, due to their closer ties to the master's household, or presence in the city, should have had better access to higher quality pork cuts than rural slaves in the Upland South is therefore rejected.

The diet of the Blount Mansion slaves contained little variety, except for fish, and the very occasional wild mammal or bird. Their access to high yield pork was equal to that of moderate and low yield pork. In essence, neither their status as domestic slaves, nor their presence in the urban environment seems to have provided them dietary benefits beyond what was experienced by rural slaves from the Upland South.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The focus of this thesis was the diet of the urban slaves at Blount Mansion as evidenced by vertebrate faunal remains recovered from excavations of the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin. The components of the meat diet were identified, including taxon and skeletal occurrence of well represented species. The Slave Cabin fauna was then compared to the Blount Mansion South Midden fauna, which dated to the same time period. The South Midden material was of less certain origins but was compared to assess differences in the fauna of the two areas. The Blount Mansion Slave Cabin fauna was compared to other slave sites and a yeoman farmer site in the Upland South, to determine the similarities and differences between the diets of rural slaves, urban slaves, and the yeoman farmer.

The Blount Mansion Slave Cabin faunal remains reflect a reliance on domestic mammals for the meat portion of the diet, which is typical for historic faunal assemblages in the Upland South. Pork was the predominant taxon represented, followed by sparing amounts of beef. Only trace amounts of sheep or goat were present, which is a fairly common regional occurrence, as caprids were more or less abandoned as a meat source near the turn of the nineteenth century. Chicken and freshwater fish formed a substantial part of the diet. Small mammals, such as raccoon, skunk and opossum were occasionally eaten, along with some waterfowl.

While many of the domestic taxa could have been procured from the local markets, the wealthy status of the Blount Mansion residents through the late eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries probably provided the resources to keep and slaughter their own animals. The slaves in the household would most likely have consumed such animals. The sources of domestic taxa, namely, pork and beef, probably originated from the nearby Blount farm. However, the close proximity of Chisholm's Beef Market to the mansion may also have been a potential source of meat, especially beef. The animals could have been slaughtered and butchered at the Blount farm, so as not intrude upon the appearance of the mansion lot. It is possible that large portions of pork and beef were brought to the mansion and further divided. Chickens may have been kept on the mansion lot because they could be raised and slaughtered in the lot without sullying the mansion grounds. Chickens also provided eggs, which were an important part of the slave diet. Fish could have been taken from the nearby river, just a few hundred feet away, or purchased from a local vendor.

Pig bones from the Slave Cabin consisted of nearly equal amounts of high, middle and low yield pork portions. This suggests that the slaves had access to all portions of the pork carcass, including the best and worst quality cuts. The quantity of pork remains may indicate that the pork carcass was processed, at least partially, in the mansion yard near the Slave Cabin. While pigs were probably not slaughtered within the mansion lot, due to spatial constraints, they may have been initially butchered elsewhere and further processed around the Slave Cabin.

Beef, which itself may represent a high quality, "restricted access" meat, was represented by nearly all portions of the bovine. However, high yield beef cuts comprised the majority of the cattle elements. The low number of beef elements suggests that beef was not slaughtered on the mansion lot, although large beef portions may have been further processed there. Access to any portion of beef was somewhat limited, but when beef was available, the better quality portions were consumed.

In terms of species utilized, the diet of the Blount Mansion slaves did not differ greatly from that of rural slaves in the Upland South, such as those at Locust Grove, Mabry, and the Hermitage plantations. The only exception was the comparatively high quantity of fish consumed by the Blount Mansion slaves, including freshwater drum, catfish, gar, and various sunfish/bass and suckers. No other site considered in this research contained more fish remains than the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin fauna. A major factor may have been Blount Mansion's location in the urban environment, where urban fish markets may have existed. Young (1993) suggests that the presence of fish remains may be indicative of the amount of "free" time, (referring to time not engaged in the affairs of the master) that slaves had to pursue activities such as hunting and fishing. The amount of time slaves had to themselves was the result of the type of labor system employed by their master- task labor or gang labor. Presumably the task labor system allowed more free time for slaves to attend their own affairs than the labor system. According to Young's (1993) theory, the slaves of the Upland South plantations would not have had much spare time, while it would appear that the Blount Mansion slaves did. However, the market availability of fish in Knoxville probably resulted in the Blount Mansion slaves, and their masters, partaking of these taxa. The lack of turtle and amphibian remains in the Blount Mansion slave sample may also indicate that the Blount Mansion slaves did not exploit the aquatic environs themselves. Rural slaves evidently did not often collect turtles or frogs either. The Upland South yeoman farmers at the Gibbs House consumed these aquatic taxa quite often. Whether the high level of fish remains at the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin is indicative of necessary supplementation, market participation, or leisure time fishing is uncertain.

A comparison was made of general meat yielding pork portions from the Blount Mansion, Mabry, Locust Grove, and Hermitage plantations slave deposits and the yeoman farmer Gibbs House site. This analysis revealed three patterns that may be attributable to

environmental or socio-economic status factors. First, the Hermitage domestic and field slaves shared a similar pattern of pork consumption. The majority of pork elements were from the high yield category, while low and moderate yield portions were about equal to one another. This indicates that field and domestic Hermitage slaves had similar access to high, moderate, and low yield pork cuts. The equity of pork distribution among the field slaves and the domestic slaves suggests that neither group was favored over the other and that both groups partook of the entire hog. This may also insinuate that slaves did not share a carcass with the master, perhaps because the large number of slaves on the Hermitage Plantation necessitated exclusive use of a whole pig.

Secondly, the Upland South plantations of Mabry and Locust Grove, and the Gibbs House site heavily emphasized the moderate yield pork, while the high and low yield elements were at equal levels. The high numbers of moderate yield specimens may have been the result of some amount of butchering waste included in with the consumption refuse. As the Upland South plantations usually had smaller numbers of slaves, and consequently, more confined farm lots, it is likely that butchering activity took place near the slave habitations. This could have resulted in a higher number of moderate yield elements. It is possible that the Upland South slaves shared a pork carcass with the master, and the master took the high quality portions. However, since the Gibbs House also had high numbers of moderate pork cuts, it is possible that some of the best pork cuts were sold off the premises at all three sites. Regardless of the reason for the preponderance of moderate yield pork cuts, this appears to be an Upland South pattern which should be addressed on other Upland South sites.

Thirdly, the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin fauna exhibited the most unusual pattern of pork representation relative to the other sites. There were nearly equal amounts of high, moderate, and low yield pork. Apparently, the Blount Mansion slaves had equal access to all portions of pork. While the slaves consumed the best pork portions frequently, they ate

the lesser quality portions as often. This may have been due to the slaves' close association with the Blount Mansion household that enabled them to partake of high and moderate yield pork. However, their low economic status is reflected by the amount of low yield pork they consumed.

Beef cuts showed less differentiation between the sites considered. Most sites contained mostly high yield beef cuts, suggesting that when beef was consumed, the best portions were eaten. Only the Hermitage domestic slaves consumed more moderate yield portions and high yield beef cuts. This was contrary to what was anticipated for the Hermitage domestic slaves. It was expected that the slaves would have had better access to higher quality beef. However it must be recognized that the low numbers of beef elements in most samples may have skewed the analysis results.

Contrary to what was hypothesized, the Blount Mansion slaves did not fare better than rural slaves of the Upland South in terms of the quality of pork and beef in their diet. Neither their status as domestic slaves nor their location in the urban environment seems to have benefited them in this respect. Their diet did contain more fish than any of the slaves or farmers in the Upland South that were considered here. Consequently, the Blount Mansion slave diet may have been slightly more diverse than that of rural slaves, which is the opposite of what was anticipated. It was believed that the urban environment, due to a shortage of nearby habitat suitable to wild taxa, would have resulted in a limited amount of wild taxa in the Blount Mansion slave diet. It can be argued that in the early nineteenth century, Knoxville was less affected environmentally than the outlying plantations. Plantation fields were clear cut, while Knoxville may have had some wooded areas surrounding it. Although the town of Knoxville probably did not suffer extensive loss of wild habitat until several years after its establishment, eventually the effects of development took its toll. The presence of the Tennessee River, which provided plentiful wild aquatic

taxa, mitigated some of the effects the urban environment had on the rest of the “untamed” landscape.

In general, the Blount Mansion Slave Cabin fauna is a reflection of the diet of people with an underclass status, but who were associated closely with members of the prominent upper class. The location of the slaves in a developing frontier town after several years of settlement resulted in limited access to wild mammals and birds due to loss of habitat. However, due to the urban environment, there was better availability to pork, chicken, and beef, and fish. Therefore, the environment may have influenced the slaves’ diet more than their low social standing.

Discovering the sources from which the slaves obtained their meat, fowl and fish may help illuminate the conditions of urban slavery. Future investigation in this area should focus on the products that were available from the local market and the documentary evidence that exists concerning provisioning of the Blount Mansion household and their slaves. From that point, by using the available faunal and historical documentary data, a more accurate scenario may be presented as to the basic characteristics of urban slave diet at Blount Mansion.

The analysis of faunal remains from other late eighteenth to early nineteenth sites in Knoxville would help address questions concerning the milieu of faunal exploitation in the city. Such research would allow for the idiosyncrasies of faunal consumption in the developing town to be discovered, along with the market availability of certain taxa. Further research into the topic of urban slave diet in other Southern cities would, likewise, help discern the environmental factors from social factors that influenced the diet of slaves in the cities.

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## VITA

Carey Lamar Coxe was born on June 1, 1967 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He attended Broadmoor Elementary, Shenandoah Elementary, Southeast Middle, Woodlawn High and Christian Life Academy schools. He graduated high school in May, 1985 and began his undergraduate degree the following August at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. In college, he majored in Anthropology and minored in Photography. While in college, he was introduced to archaeological field work and southeastern archaeology.

Upon graduating from LSU in August, 1989 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology, Carey became employed with Coastal Environments, Inc., a cultural resources management company located in Baton Rouge. The wide array of archaeological projects in which he participated nourished his interest in archaeology and cultural resources management. Predictably, after two years with the company, he saw the need for an advanced degree. He entered the graduate program in Anthropology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in August, 1991, where he concentrated in zooarchaeology and urban archaeology. During this time, he worked part time for the Transportation Center doing cultural resources management projects. During the summers of 1992 and 1993, Carey was awarded a teaching position by the Governor's School for Tennessee Studies at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee.

After completing his course work, Carey left Knoxville to assume a position in the cultural resources management field with Garrow and Associates, Inc., in Atlanta, and later, Coastal Environments, Inc., in Baton Rouge. He earned a Master of Arts degree with a major in Anthropology from the University of Tennessee in August, 1998.