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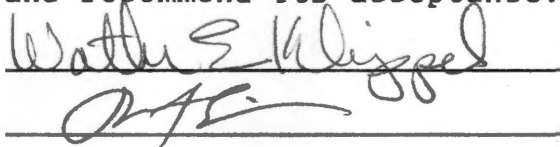
I am submitting herewith a Master of Arts thesis written by Susan C. Andrews entitled "Spatial Analysis of an East Tennessee Plantation Houselot." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Anthropology.



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Dr. Charles H. Faulkner, Major  
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We have read this thesis  
and recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:



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Associate Vice Chancellor and  
Dean of The Graduate School

SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF AN  
EAST TENNESSEE PLANTATION HOUSELOT

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts  
Degree  
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Susan C. Andrews

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## ABSTRACT

Houselot patterning studies have become important in historical archaeology. Usually these studies involve an artifact distributional analysis of plowed contexts, or a labor intensive program of surface collection and small unit excavations over often what are large areas. The research in this thesis has focused on some alternative field methods that were tested on an unplowed plantation houselot in East Tennessee. In an effort to discern houselot use patterns including activity areas, and how these patterns changed over time, a program of bucket auger sampling was instituted that would provide coordinate and artifactual data suitable for creating frequency distribution maps. Not only is the field method easy to apply, but it is also maintained that data derived in this manner are comparable to data derived from more intensive field methods.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRASITE SPATIAL ANALYSES IN HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

#### Introduction

According to Deagan (1988:7), historical archaeology is a combination of history and anthropology, "inheriting the capability to address historical or scientific questions, and to use historical or scientific methods." In order to address these questions historical archaeology has access to many forms of evidence which include the spoken word, written word, observed behavior, and preserved behavior (Schuyler 1977). There is always the need, however, for developing strategies for answering questions for which there is inadequate documentation. The houselot is one area where the spatial organization and dynamics of activity areas are seldom contained in historical documents.

The term "housselot" is generally accepted to mean the area containing a dwelling house and its outbuildings (Keeler 1978). Considered a separate part of the entire farm holding, the houselot contained the domestic end of the farm family's life and labor (Keeler 1978:17). Beaudry (1984) has called for an approach to the study of the historical household which would combine the archaeology of the houselot, analysis of the household's changing form over time, and analysis of the changing relationship of the

household with the external world on local, regional, and global levels. Wilk and Rathje (1982:618) called for "moving downward in specificity to the household unit" because this can "bridge the midlevel theory gap" by enhancing theories of change in household organization and is at the level where it "articulates directly with economic processes". As such, alterations in the development of the changing domestic group will result in concomitant changes in the archaeological record as manifested by the manipulation of space within the houselot (Beaudry 1984; Stewart-Abernathy 1986). Subsequently, shifts in dumping patterns, outbuilding function and location, and activity loci will result from shifts in household economics, membership, and organization (Keeler 1978; Neiman 1980; Beaudry 1984; Stewart-Abernathy 1986).

That humans consciously manipulate space and create functional divisions of space is a precept of intrasite spatial analysis. A popular area of research in prehistoric archaeology for several decades, intrasite spatial analyses have been concerned with the development of statistical tests of artifact distributions (e.g. Whallon 1973, 1974; Hodder and Orton 1976; Hietala and Larson 1979; Hietala, ed. 1984). Spatial analysis in historical archaeology is relatively new and does not have the same constraints under which prehistoric archaeologists labor. Historical documents tend to clarify some artifact patterns

and functions and not surprisingly, most research on this subject has relied on historic documents. Though these documents are invaluable, they can be biased, inaccurate, and incomplete. Within the houselot "areas are bounded conceptually and physically to specify particular areas for particular activities" with walls and fences serving as boundaries, and roads and paths serving as connectors of manipulated space (Keeler 1978:14). Those everyday activities accomplished by persons living in and around the house were often too mundane to be recorded in historical documents. Consequently, new methods and analyses need to be developed in order to discern activity areas and outbuilding function and location, as well as areas of disposal on the houselot.

This thesis will investigate the locations of activity areas, disposal areas, and outbuildings comprising a plantation houselot in East Tennessee. The Brabson Ferry plantation located in Sevier County, Tennessee along the French Broad River was a large Upland South plantation involved in mixed farming and light industry. The houselot of the plantation would have contained the main house and numerous outbuildings. The early houselot utilized by John Brabson II and his family from 1800-1890 will be explored using data retrieved by auger sampling. Such studies usually involve intensive labor and invasive field methods often taking years to complete. The results of such costly

studies are sometimes tentative and marginal. In an effort to ameliorate the time and expense of sampling large areas without compromising the quality of data collection or quantity of data needed to explore questions of intra-site spatial organization, an alternative field strategy was developed. The strategy uses a manual bucket auger that can sample a large area in a timely manner, gathering data on site size, soil texture, and site formation processes, and also collecting artifactual material. The use of manual augering in archaeology, though not new to the field, has heretofore not been used in houselot patterning analyses.

In plantation studies to date, research strategies that center on the spatial patterning of the plantation houselot have concentrated in one physiographic area-- the Chesapeake Tidewater (Keeler 1978; Neiman 1980; Stone 1982; Miller 1986; Miller and King 1987; Pogue 1988; King 1990). Though successful in many respects, the results have been overshadowed by extensive field work lasting years with great expense in labor and money. Houselot studies in the Upland South have also met with limited success (Wesler 1984; Roberts 1986). The field methods and their results will be compared and contrasted with the results and field methods applied in this thesis. The excavation methods and analysis of five plantation houselots in the Chesapeake Tidewater and two plantation houselots in the Upland South will be discussed.

## Plantation Houselot Research

The spatial arrangement and uses of the plantation houselot have become an important area of inquiry (Keeler 1978; Neiman 1980; Miller and King 1987; Pogue 1988; King 1990). These studies, however, have focused on the development of the plantation household and houselot in the seventeenth century Chesapeake Tidewater where the society was overwhelmingly plantation oriented (Pogue 1988). These studies have relied on plowzone-derived artifacts, as well as extensive excavations to uncover the plantation core and surviving subsurface features. Artifact distributions and midden contents are used to delineate refuse disposal patterns, and the layout and functional use of the plantation houselot. Analyses of various sites have shown that a distinct change in houselot usage occurred during the seventeenth century in the Chesapeake characterized by a gradual shift away from the main house as the center for household activities by both masters and servants (Neiman 1980; Pogue 1988). This diachronic shift indicates that the separation between servant and master became more polarized as attitudes toward slavery changed.

### St. John's Site

St. John's is a tobacco plantation located in St. Mary's City, Maryland. The site was excavated from 1972 through 1976 (Keeler 1978) and again in 1982 (Stone 1982).

Having been extensively plowed, the site was systematically surface collected. Twenty-nine percent of the plowzone was excavated using a judgement sample of both 5 by 5 foot and 10 by 10 foot units. Artifact distribution analysis using the SYMAP computer mapping program revealed a concentration of refuse between the main house and slave quarter indicating that the side yard (the connecting yard between slave quarters and main house) was a common work area. A marked difference between the front and back yards was also noted, and it was surmised that the front yard acted as a courtyard with a more formal connotation, whereas the back yard and fore yard were areas where activities took place.

#### Patuxent Point Site

The remains of this tobacco plantation located in Maryland was excavated in 1989-1990 by the Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum (Gibb and King 1991). The plowzone was excavated with 5 by 5 foot units systematically placed at 15 foot intervals for a total of 72 units. The plantation main house and associated features were uncovered and broad diachronic trends in houselot usage were inferred from artifact density maps and soil chemical analysis.

#### Compton Site

This site, a tobacco plantation located in Solomon, Maryland, was excavated by Louis Berger and Associates in

1988 (Gibb and King 1991). The plowzone was excavated in 2.5 by 2.5 foot units systematically placed at 10 foot intervals for a total of 162 units covering 6.25% of the site. Larger units were judgmentally placed in areas of high artifact concentration. The analysis of artifact concentrations mirrored yard patterns already discerned from previous plantation houselot studies in the area.

#### King's Reach Site

This tobacco plantation located in Maryland was excavated in 1984-1985 (Pogue 1988). After a systematic surface collection, 144 units measuring 2 meters square were excavated over the site with 116 units exposing the site core and 28 units placed systematically around the core area. All features were excavated. The artifact distribution analysis included SYMAP computer mapping. The analysis revealed that the fore yard was an activity area utilized by the main house and the slave quarter. Though no outbuildings were discovered during testing it was thought possible that a quarter was located some distance from the main house.

#### Van Sweringen Site

This houselot is not a plantation site but an urban residence that subsequently became rural after the capital of Maryland was moved from St. Mary's City. The houselot

was excavated from 1974 through 1978 and again from 1982 through 1985 using 5 by 5 foot units to remove the plowzone. Spatial analysis revealed that room function could be inferred using midden deposits and that a formal yard was present and associated with the parlor.

All of the studies above are characterized by extensive field work often lasting years. The studies have several methods in common for retrieving information on activity and disposal areas. These strategies include a systematic surface collection, a program of small unit sampling with larger units judgmentally placed, exposure of the plantation core, and excavation of features. In all studies, soil analysis is used in an effort to discern activity areas with inconclusive results. By using the SYMAP software to generate artifact distribution maps of the plowzone material, analysis of these houselots has revealed that:

1. The side yard between the slave quarter and the main house was a work area as shown by overlapping patterns of artifacts.
2. Room function can be inferred from associated midden contents.
3. A formal yard in the front of the house was inferred from a lack of artifacts in that area.
4. Garden areas were inferred by the lack of artifacts and the placement of that area to the rear or side of the main house in association with a water source.

5. Structural remains such as bricks, nails, and window glass were indicative of building placement.

Two plantation houselot studies in the Upland South, specifically Kentucky and Tennessee have yielded similar results. Both studies (Wesler 1984; Roberts 1986) used manual posthole diggers to sample the sites, judgmentally placing larger units in areas of high artifact densities or where potential features were encountered. At Whitehaven, a mid-nineteenth century plantation in Kentucky, Wesler (1984) found that formal areas, such as the garden and front yard exhibited few artifacts much like corresponding yard areas in early Chesapeake. In Tennessee, Roberts (1986) used posthole diggers in an attempt to find and define outbuildings on the Ramsey houselot, a late eighteenth century plantation outside Knoxville. In a systematic testing of the rear yard, Roberts discovered several features. After further testing, many of these features proved to be remains of outbuildings.

### Conclusions

Plantation houselot studies in historical archaeology are few and have been largely temporally restricted to the seventeenth century and primarily focused on the Tidewater or Chesapeake area (Keeler 1978; Neiman 1980; King and Miller 1986; King 1988; Pogue 1988). Each of these studies base their analysis on plowzone-derived artifacts and

extensive removal of overburden to reveal and eventually excavate features. Usually surface distributions are correlated with subsurface features and diachronic changes in houselot dumping patterns are revealed. Research on plantation houselots in the Chesapeake are patterned after Keeler's work in 1978. Keeler (1978) stressed organization of the houselot and the temporal sequence of its change and development as the Tidewater frontier evolved.

Plantation houselot research in Tennessee and Kentucky have utilized posthole diggers to find and define potential outbuildings and activity areas (Wesler 1984; Roberts 1986). These studies using somewhat less invasive techniques have yielded some information on the Upland South plantation houselot. More studies centered on the spatial dynamics of the houselot need to be completed if questions concerning the evolution of the Upland South plantation and its place in southern history are to be answered.

It is maintained that the auger sampling with subsequent generation of artifact distributions on the Brabson Ferry plantation houselot provide adequate information for the delineation of middens, activity areas, and outbuilding locations and functions. The technique, though new to houselot patterning studies, yields information consistent with houselot studies that have utilized extensive field work taking years to complete at great expense in money, labor, and time.

Conservation in archaeology has been an often discussed topic in recent years. The movement toward less invasive field techniques that are productive enable more of a site to be left undisturbed for later generations of archaeologists. Though this is not often possible in contract archaeology, it is hoped that more efficient field and laboratory methods will yield even more viable information. As every archaeologist knows, the act of excavating a site also destroys that site.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BRABSON FERRY PLANTATION

#### Introduction

Family tradition maintains that the Brabson Ferry Plantation was composed of 10,000 acres, part of a land grant from North Carolina to John Brabson II in 1794 (Brabson 1975). A portion of this land, about 250 acres, has remained in the Brabson family since that time. Located in Sevier County, Tennessee the acreage abuts the west bank of the French Broad River at the confluence of Boyd's Creek. The plantation was located along what were once the main thoroughfares in East Tennessee; the Warford and Indian Warpath road and the Knoxville-Sevierville Pike (Brabson 1975). Its location along these thoroughfares made the plantation and its many commercial enterprises (tannery, saw mills, flour mills, blacksmith shop, and store house) very prosperous.

According to historical documents and informants, the Brabson houselot (40SV41) once contained the original main house, smoke house, slave house, well, and garden (Brabson Papers). Extant structures on the houselot under investigation are the braced frame slave house and the limestone lined well. The braced frame structure faces the road once known as the Great Indian Warpath. This road was

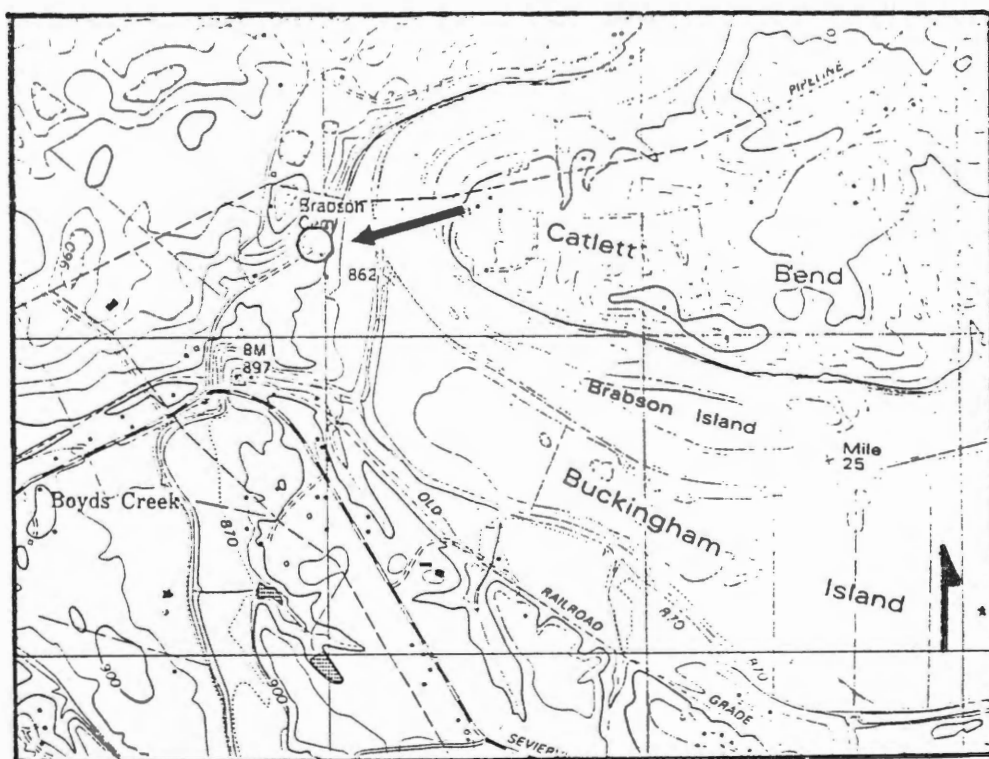


Figure 1. Topographic map showing the Brabson Plantation. The circled area is the study area where slave house and main house are located. (United States Geological Survey, Boyd's Creek Quadrangle, 1986).

also known by many other names including the Brabson Ferry Road, the Warford or the "Great road from Norfolk to the Gulf of Mexico" (Brabson 1975). Aligned roughly east-west, it merges with the old Knoxville-Sevierville Pike where the pike crosses the French Broad River at Brabsons Ferry located just below Buckingham Island (see Figure 1). Directly southwest of the slave house and across the road stands the Ben Brabson home, Glen Villa, and numerous associated outbuildings. This house was built by Benjamin Brabson, the elder son of John Brabson II, in 1856. Located directly behind the braced frame structure to the north, on top of the ridge, is the Brabson cemetery (Figure 1). According to family tradition and oral history, the original main house or homestead occupied by John Brabson II stood on the east side of the slave structure approximately 40 feet away. This structure also faced the main thoroughfare and had at least one outbuilding in the rear yard--the smoke house.

Before the Civil War, the Brabson Ferry and Plantation complex resembled a small community with numerous buildings associated with the enterprise. The plantation functioned as an economic center providing services and products to the surrounding area. Of the buildings belonging to the original plantation core, the only one that remains standing is the one and one half story braced frame structure. It is composed of two pens and is 40 feet long by 17 feet 8 inches

wide, with both pens being approximately the same size. Two doors, as well as two windows are situated in the facade or southern side of the house. No doors or windows are evident in the gable ends or in the rear of the building. A brick chimney measuring 4 feet 4 inches by 7 feet 2 inches dominates the center of the structure and has fire places on both sides for both the ground floor and the half story above. In the southeast and southwest corners, boxed stairs lead up to the half story. Although no doors or window panes remain, remnants of the original exterior siding are present.

The structure has a continuous limestone foundation. Though no mortar is present (except for modern repairs) the foundation in the front consists of rectangular blocks of a regular shape and continuity suggesting that they had been dressed. A relatively modern cistern (c. 1920) is located on the east side of the house and its construction, as well as foundation repairs may be factors in interpreting artifact distributions in this area. In constructing or repairing the foundation the builder dug into the hillside preparing a level area for the foundation. There are numerous blocks of stone against the embankment, no doubt placed there to impede erosion. What rear foundation is present has been obscured by this stone fill. A rudimentary foundation still exists on the east side of the structure, although this area has undergone repairs as well.

In order to date and assign a function to the standing structure a detailed analysis of the building was undertaken. This analysis revealed that the timber frame construction of the house, referred to as braced frame construction, has evolved from a framing system of English-American tradition. This type of construction in the southern mountains is derived from the Tidewater South (Glassie 1965:89). In this technique the foundation was built first. Hewn sills were half-lapped at the corners of the building and held in place by the tenons of the vertical posts.

The framing techniques and timber sizes of the Brabson structure closely resemble what Upton (1979) calls the "Virginia framing technique". This technique, developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was remarkably adaptable to any type of building regardless of size or function since the builders tended to limit the dimensions of their timbers to two or three sizes (Upton 1979:76). Often major supporting members measured 4 by 8 inches while smaller members tended to be 3 inches by 4 inches (Upton 1979:76). Smaller members were always sawn. Logs were hewn square with members pit or mill sawn leaving saw marks on most of the surfaces (Upton 1979:76).

Even though the timbers may have been somewhat standardized, the joinery required specialized care. Each mortise fit a particular tenon and consequently members and

joints were numbered. In the Brabson structure Roman numerals are present on many of the posts and studs. Given this slight complication, however, members could still be erected on a random order. Consequently, it is not unusual to find mortises for floor joists, like those in the Brabson structure, in stairwells or in other parts of the building (Upton 1979:76).

One might say that this framing technique developed in part from a desire to save labor. According to Upton:

Post building and the quick, easy jointing of standardized parts were both ways of saving labor, the one by eliminating more costly materials and time-consuming preparation, and the other by enabling the efficient organization of labor and the rapid framing and assembly of a house (1979:93).

Beams were hewn or sawn, and mortised and pinned together on the ground. After the foundation and sills were lain, the sides were pushed into place by groups of workers, and secured with tie beams. The building of the structure was thus quickly and efficiently accomplished.

Frame construction in the southern mountains enjoyed a somewhat later debut than in the Virginia Tidewater. Log construction dominated in the mountains well into the twentieth century. But even the first years of settlement in Tennessee saw the construction of frame dwellings as evidenced by Blount Mansion built in the late 1700s (Rothrock, ed. 1946). Westward migration and the amalgamation of cultural traits from the Chesapeake

Tidewater and Pennsylvania made frame construction common throughout the region during the nineteenth century.

Although no absolute construction date can be ascribed to the Brabson structure, a firm relative date range can be inferred. Though the bricks, siding style, and construction technique may have occurred during the 1850s; the nails and sash saw marks can reliably push that date back to the 1820s-1830s. It seems likely that the structure was built during this time by John Brabson to house his slaves because of the use of modern machine-cut nails dating from 1830 and the likelihood of the availability of sash sawn lumber.

To determine the history and original function of the structure, the history of the Brabson Plantation was reconstructed. Of particular interest was the period prior to the Civil War from 1800-1860. As previously discussed, the structure was certainly built before the Civil War and most probably before 1840. There are several reasons why the structure could have been and probably was a slave house. The style and construction of the house as compared to other slave structures and the concept of slavery and the treatment of slaves in East Tennessee suggest that the structure was originally built as a slave house. According to Glassie (1965), this braced frame structure having two pens, two front doors, and a central chimney is termed a standard saddlebag house. In the standardized saddlebag house both units are of equal height and size with both

being built at the same time. Two front doors and often two windows are present. Glassie (1965:165) maintains that the saddlebag house seems to have developed in two areas namely the Tidewater and Watauga, North Carolina.

In the Tidewater, this style of house was largely used for slave quarters (Glassie 1965:165). From Watauga, the standardized saddlebag house spread westward through Tennessee, Kentucky, and southward along the Tennessee-North Carolina Blue Ridge into Georgia (Glassie 1965:165). In the Deep South, this spread reinforced the slave quarter, saddlebag house of the coast so that the standardized saddlebag of frame was/is very common in the South (Glassie 1965:165).

Slave houses at Butler Point and Retreat Plantation in Georgia are standardized saddlebags (Wight and Cate 1955) as are slave houses at Prestwoud Plantation in Virginia (Carson 1986:59). The slave houses at Prestwoud, built in the 1790s, are frame and have no back doors--similar to the Brabson slave house. In Mississippi, early slave houses tended to be small log structures, some with and some without chimneys and usually without floors; they were generally without chinking as well (Sydnor 1933:40). As time passed, however, there was a gradual improvement in houses to larger frame structures containing two rooms with a loft above (Sydnor 1933:42).

The construction, style, and proximity to the main house seems consistent with slave houses in the Tidewater and the South. The structure could have been quickly and inexpensively built and was covered with beaded siding, a siding commonly used on dwellings in the eighteenth and early to mid-nineteenth centuries. The interior of the slave structure had no interior wall board and showed evidence of numerous whitewashings-- a practice not uncommon of well intentioned masters (Sydnor 1933:39). Its proximity to the main house probably indicates that the structure was the residence of house slaves.

Family tradition maintains that the original homestead stood on the north side of the Brabson Ferry Road directly east of the braced frame slave house. This area is characterized by depressions, and eroding banks (Plate 1). According to Estalena Brabson, the original dwelling was log and had a cellar (personal communication, October 1988). It was thought that the depressions and uneven topography were caused by the cellar and later efforts to dismantle the structure in the late nineteenth century. A cursory survey of the eroded areas yielded brick fragments.

This thesis will investigate the spatial arrangement of the early Brabson houselot (1798-1890) including the main house and slave houselots. A comparison of slave and owner material culture and use of space will also be undertaken, hopefully generating information needed to answer questions



Plate 1. The site of the original Brabson homestead.

concerning Upland South plantations. To accomplish these goals, a systematic subsurface sampling strategy was applied.

#### Plantation Outbuilding Patterns

The overall pattern of the plantation closely resembles the Upland South Model (Weaver and Doster 1982). This is a model of farm outbuilding patterns and its social meanings

in the southern Appalachians, a pattern believed to have evolved from a blending of elements from the Tidewater English with the Pennsylvania German. The social system characterized by such a pattern would have been family based and local. And indeed the plantation was self-sufficient and family organized and operated.

Order in this model was determined by the owner's changing ideas about the function and importance of an outbuilding in relation to the dwelling. These changing notions about outbuilding importance on the Brabson plantation are evidenced by two dramatic shifts in structure placement before 1900. According to family tradition, the original dwelling stood on the north side of the ferry road approximately 40 feet from the braced frame slave quarter. The earliest barn stood on the south side of the road west of the original dwelling. Distance between the original dwelling and the barn was over 100 feet. The houselot around the main house in all likelihood contained numerous outbuildings and activity areas where everyday household jobs were accomplished.

By 1856, however, Benjamin Brabson had gained control of the farm and built a new residence on the south side of the road directly across from the original Brabson homestead still occupied by his mother. Ben Brabson also constructed stables and other outbuildings directly behind his home, Glen Villa. Original structures associated with the Ben

Brabson home still exist. They are the barn, corn crib, smoke house and shed. During the late 1850s and early 1860s there were two distinct houselots on the Brabson plantation--one on either side of the road.

By the late 1880s the farm layout experienced another shift probably associated with a new owner. During this period the older barn, original dwelling, stables and numerous slave quarters were dismantled and their lumber and logs used to construct a new barn behind (south) the 1856 residence.

Although seemingly unordered, the Upland South pattern is not. Outbuildings were arranged according to activities in the house with male and female activity-oriented buildings evident (Weaver and Doster 1982). Poultry houses, wells, privies, and smoke houses were located closer to the house and were female activity areas. Sheds, barns and stables were male areas and were placed some distance from the house. In all three Brabson farm patterns, the barn and stables were some distance from the main house, while smoke houses, wells and other small outbuildings as well as associated activity and dumping areas are within the houselot.

### Site History

Family tradition maintains that John Brabson II received a land grant from North Carolina in 1794 for land

near what was known as Buckingham Island (Brabson 1975). Although this 1794 grant is unsubstantiated, it is clear through documents that Brabson bought 260 acres including the ferry along the French Broad River in 1798. Prior to 1798, John Brabson II and his brother were joint owners of the Mill Creek Plantation located near Beckley, West Virginia (Brabson 1975). In a 1796 document, John Brabson sells his interest in the plantation to his brother and is most likely living somewhere on the 260 acres bought in 1798.

The ferry, then known as Evan's Ferry, was in the Andrew Evans family's possession in 1794. In an early Knoxville, Tennessee newspaper, Andrew Evans proposes to rent his "plantation" stating that "There is an excellent flat of the river, and several acres of cleared land...said plantation is a good stand for a store and tavern...and will be rented for one or more years" (Knoxville Gazette, August 6, 1794). Evans was evidently successful, because in an article dated June 6, 1795, James Armstrong is advertising the recent shipment of an "assortment of Dry Goods; also cutlery, pewter, and salt, which he is now opening at Evan's Ferry" (Knoxville Gazette, June 6, 1795). It is also in this article that he requests all those indebted to him to call at his store and make payment, "as he is about to quit the mercantile business and no longer indulgences can be given" (Knoxville Gazette, June 6, 1795).

It is evidently not until 1798 that John Brabson II has control of the ferry. In a document dated April 16, 1798 Joseph and Nathaniel Evans (probable relatives of Andrew) "hath bargained and sold unto John Brabson the improvement rights" to a tract of 260 acres extending from the mouth of Boyd's Creek on the north side of the French Broad River to a "bluff of rocks" below the ferry (Brabson Papers). This tract of land included the ferry.

In 1808 John Brabson married Elizabeth Davis. They were the parents of ten children: Benjamin Davis, Ephraim, Thomas Croyn, Reese Bowen, Mary Reese, Priscilla Jones, Lucy Dodson, Elizabeth, John P. and Penelope Camilla Brabson (Brabson 1975). All but two of the children (John P. and Ephraim) outlived their father. The remaining children were named in John Brabson's will of October 27, 1848. Between 1808 and 1848 little is known concerning land improvements and related agricultural production. The acquisition of land is apparent, however. In the Sevier County Surveyor's Book for 1830 John Brabson is listed eleven times as having land surveyed. Between 1824 and 1838 land totaling one thousand and one acres was surveyed along Knob Creek, Boyd Creek, Panther Creek, Flat Creek, Middle Creek, Tuckahoe Creek, the north side of the French Broad River and along the public road. Other allusions to agricultural activities and land improvements concerning John Brabson's mills are

made in the surveys and in a petition to the Tennessee legislature (Brabson 1975; Brabson Papers).

By the time of his death in 1848, John Brabson had amassed over 5000 acres of land and had established many businesses. Not only did he increase his land holdings in and around the plantation and ferry, but he also owned land, residences, and commercial establishments in Maryville and Sevierville, and over 300 acres in Gibson County, Tennessee. On his plantation he had several enterprises including the tanyard, blacksmith shop, saw mills, flour mills, ferry, and mercantile store. In Maryville and Sevierville he and his sons operated mercantile stores. It is safe to assume that the period between 1808 and 1848 was a fruitful one in which Brabson was buying property, farming, and operating many businesses.

Such a large plantation required much labor and John Brabson owned slaves and had tenants for this purpose. Many tenants are mentioned throughout the will. In the first article where he makes provisions for his wife he wills all the "crops on hands (sic) at my death including those in the ground or gathered...also all provisions on hand, the crop is to include all the rents coming from my tenants" (John Brabson II Will Book 1848:2). Also willed to Elizabeth are "all the rents that may be made on the Shamblin Place, the Amos Galyon Place and where James White lives" (John Brabson II Will Book 1848:2-8).

The number and sex of slaves John Brabson may have had prior to 1848 is uncertain. In the 1830 census John Brabson is listed as having eight persons in the household and sixteen slaves--all males (United States Census for Sevier County, Tennessee 1830:90). This entry of all male slaves is suspect since the listing occurred at the bottom of the census page, inserted into an inadequate space. By 1840, however, the household has increased to ten individuals but no slaves are mentioned (United States Census for Sevier County, Tennessee 1840).

Although Brabson mentions his "negro stock" frequently in his will no exact number is given. In this document, however, he does make provisions to free one slave and to give thirteen others to his children including Henry who worked in the tanyard and Charles the blacksmith. Near the end of the will he disposes of the remainder of his "negroes" in lots. He makes provisions for two large lots of negroes; one lot containing 14 negroes and the other lot consisting of at least eight but could have contained many more. Consequently, John Brabson owned at least 36 slaves but probably owned many more at the time of his death in 1848.

After John's death in 1848, Elizabeth continued farming. In the 1850 Census Elizabeth Brabson and her youngest daughter Penelope are the only members listed in the household and the estimated value of her property is

\$10,000 (United States Census for Sevier County, Tennessee 1850:767). The agriculture census for that year lists 200 improved acres, and 800 unimproved acres producing 200 bushels of wheat, 5 bushels of rye, 1500 bushels of Indian corn, 200 bushels of oats, 20 bushels sweet potatoes, and 2 tons of hay. Livestock consisting of 9 horses, 6 mules, 4 milk cows producing 20 pounds of butter, 2 working oxen, 9 other cattle, 29 sheep producing 20 pounds of wool, and 80 swine were also documented (Seventh Agricultural Census for Sevier County, Tennessee 1850). Elizabeth Brabson, an unknown number of tenants, and 24 slaves (Slave Schedule for Sevier County, Tennessee 1850) continued to successfully operate the farm after her husbands death.

By 1854, Elizabeth who was 63 years old and in poor health relinquished her land in a deed transfer to her son Benjamin. Within this document is perhaps the most intriguing information concerning the houselot area under study. The agreement drawn up on May 14, 1854 transfers tracts of land described in the will of John Brabson, "the homestead and ferry there to attached together with sundry negro slaves therein" to Benjamin D. Brabson. These lands and negroes, under the provisions of John Brabson's will were to be "held, used and enjoyed" by Elizabeth until her death whereby these lands and negroes would be given to Ben Brabson or his heirs. The transfer was to occur under certain conditions:

But said relinquishment is made to the said Benjamin D. Brabson upon the terms and conditions following (to wit) the said Elizabeth is to remain in the use and occupation of the Dwelling House in which she now resides with the enclosier these to (sic) immediately attached embracing the Smoke House Negro house Garden.

As it reads (though there is no punctuation) the houselot in 1854 consisted of the dwelling house, smoke house, negro house and garden. The houselot was also enclosed or fenced.

Elizabeth Brabson continued to live in the original dwelling house until 1865. However, by 1863 Benjamin Brabson had given back to his mother all the land and responsibility for the management of the plantation. In a letter dated 1865, Elizabeth Brabson writes to her son Benjamin to ask for money and tell her son how she has had to leave her home because of antagonism from locals. She moved to Knoxville to live with her daughter and died there in 1868. Benjamin Brabson had also moved away, choosing to migrate to Texas, but he died in Winchester, Tennessee in 1866.

In the 1870 Agriculture Census, Elizabeth Brabson is listed as the owner with 375 improved acres and 700 wooded acres valued at \$15,000.000. This Elizabeth may be John Brabson's widow, although Brabson (1975) states that she died in 1868. Perhaps someone was managing the farm while Elizabeth Brabson's estate was being settled although the census data are unclear on this (United States Census for Sevier County, Tennessee 1870). There are 6 horses, 1 mule,

2 milk cows, 5 other cattle and 25 swine listed as total livestock (Ninth Agricultural Census for Sevier County, Tennessee 1870). Crops and products included 525 bushels of winter wheat, 100 bushels of rye, 1500 bushels of Indian corn, 300 bushels of oats, 42 pounds of wool, 30 pounds of butter and 29 gallons of molasses (Ninth Agricultural Census for Sevier County, Tennessee 1870).

By 1880 an Elizabeth Brabson is listed as owner with two renters, both sons of Benjamin Brabson. This Elizabeth is Benjamin's widow who came back to the plantation after her husband's death in 1866 (United States Census for Sevier County Tennessee 1880). Elizabeth's property included 130 improved acres, 10 acres in permanent meadows or pasture and 50 unimproved wooded acres (Tenth Agricultural Census of Sevier County, Tennessee 1880). The value of the farm including livestock and farm products was \$4860.00. Livestock owned by Elizabeth included 3 milk cows, 3 other cattle, 1 calf, 75 poultry and 40 swine. Crops and products included 150 pounds of butter, 200 dozen eggs, 1500 bushels of wheat, and 50 cords of cut wood (Tenth Agricultural Census of Sevier County, Tennessee 1880). Benjamin's son John rented for a share of products but is only listed as having livestock valued at \$250.00 and a small sorghum crop of 3/4 acres (Tenth Agricultural Census for Sevier County, Tennessee 1880). William Brabson is listed as the other son renting for a share of products. He has 202 improved acres

and 400 unimproved wooded acres with the farm and livestock valued at \$7900.00 (Tenth Agricultural Census of Sevier County, Tennessee 1880). He was paid \$175.00 including board for 52 weeks of farm labor excluding house work. His share of products includes 5 horses, 2 working oxen, 1 milk cow, and 1 calf. Mown grass, 7 tons of hay, 3 bushels clover seed, 4 bushels grass seed, 1700 bushels Indian corn, 250 bushels oats, 380 bushels wheat, 25 cords of wood and a small sorghum crop are listed as his share of the crops raised (Tenth Agricultural Census of Sevier County, Tennessee 1880).

It was sometime in the late 1880s that the original homestead and outbuildings were razed. According to Estalena Brabson (personal communication October 1988) the homestead, outbuildings, and two slave quarters some distance from the house were razed and a new barn built behind (south) of Glen Villa, Benjamin Brabson's residence built in 1856. The braced frame structure continued to function as a tenant house and later modifications such as the cistern substantiate this. Consequently, at least by 1890 the original homestead and surrounding houselot ceased to be the center of operations for the early Brabson plantation.

## Conclusions

The Brabson Ferry Plantation established in 1798 by John Brabson II was a large and profitable enterprize. At the time of his death the plantation consisted of over 5000 acres of improved, unimproved and wooded land. The plantation boasted a tannery, blacksmith shop, store house, ferry, quarry, flour mills, and saw mills and was much like a small community. The early Brabson plantation houselot was an adaptive entity changing when local and regional economics and politics fluctuated. The original houselot contained the homestead, smoke house, slave house, and garden and was enclosed or fenced (Brabson Papers). Immediately prior to and during the Civil War the Brabson family succumbed to economic and political pressures. Benjamin Brabson and Thomas Brabson moved away from the family home leaving their elderly mother to operate the plantation. In 1865, she also left after being terrorized by Union sympathizers. These episodes are marked by changes in the houselot as plantation management shifted to farm management and younger family members took over operation of the farm.

## CHAPTER III

### AUGERING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

#### Introduction

According to Stein (1986:523) systematic augering "facilitates the definition of subsurface units, provides a clear view of the buried surfaces on which occupations took place, enables the estimation of volumes of site components, and determines the areal extent of the site." All sites can be cored or augered successfully, especially those sites with easily noticeable color variations in the soil stratigraphy (Stein 1978, 1986).

Coring and augering, however, are two different sampling processes using different devices. The corer is a small tubular implement that extracts a continuous, minimally disturbed column of soil when pushed (either manually or by machine) into the substrate. There are several types of corers, the one used most often is the split spoon auger, a T-shaped tube with part of the metal casing cut-away to reveal the soil column. This auger when pushed into the ground extracts a column of soil for visual inspection. Since a sample retrieved in this manner is not disturbed, soil texture and stratigraphy can be readily determined.

An auger is a device that obtains soil by drilling. The auger cuts into the substrate using a rotary motion and consequently, the sediments retrieved can be mixed. The auger used in this research was a manually operated bucket



Plate 2. A manual bucket auger.

auger measuring 7 inches long by 4 inches wide (Plate 2). This auger was chosen because it allows for the acquisition of artifacts within the bucket as well as soil information.

## Augering in Archaeology: Past and Present

Coring and augering have been used for many years by archaeologists. As early as 1935 coring was used to compare the stratigraphic relations of archaeological deposits to a chronology developed for the Mississippi River by geologists (Stein 1986). The goal of coring during this period followed the goal of archaeology at that time, the establishment of chronology. Augering as a part of archaeological excavation was first used by James A. Ford on several WPA funded sites (see Stein 1986). Still the purpose was to establish stratigraphy and infer chronology by relating the archaeological deposits to the geologic sediments. They did not auger/core to obtain artifacts; this method was used to trace archaeological strata. In 1951, Ford used a corer to define archaeological layers and to determine where to place trenches (Stein 1986). According to Stein (1986) it was not until 1955 that augering or coring was actually used to examine archaeological sediments for artifact content. After the advent of radiocarbon dating, coring was no longer needed to obtain the relative age of the site, but continued to be used in obtaining information for developing typological chronologies. Again, following the development of new theoretical orientations and methodological goals in American archaeology, augering during the 1960s and 1970s was used as a tool for site reconstruction (Stein 1986). In

order to reconstruct the environment surrounding a site, or the processes involved in mound construction, augering or coring collected faunal and floral remains and established stratigraphic relationships. In mound exploration, coring helped to establish the construction stages of Monk's Mound (Reed et al. 1968). These stages were then used to estimate the population of the Cahokia settlement (Reed et al. 1968). Augering as a survey tool continued through this period as well. The Dade County, Florida Archaeological Survey used augering and small test pits to reconstruct subsistence patterns and to chronologically place sites in order to evaluate cultural resources for preservation (SEAC Newsletter 1978).

Stein's (1978) early work in Kentucky perhaps epitomizes the uses of augering as a tool in reconstructing past environments through the collection of faunal and botanical remains. In using a split spoon auger in sampling the Carlston Annis Shell Mound (15BT5) she found that the original landscape could be reconstructed, the discovery of subsurface features was possible, and buried cultural horizons could be discovered (Stein 1978).

Currently, though still used for reconstructing past environments, augering has been deemed a survey tool (McManamon 1984). Schuldenrein (1991) advocates coring and augering since these techniques are more attuned to cultural resource management and preservation, providing a rapid and

relatively accurate means for delineating the size, extent, and composition of archaeological strata.

As both Schuldenrein (1991) and Stein (1986, 1991) note the auger is quick, relatively reliable, inexpensive, and less invasive to use than excavation; its use in historical archaeology, however, has been less obvious. Of those published studies utilizing augers or corers, all were designed to find and define site areas (Deagan 1981; Klingelhofer and Henry 1985; Thomas 1987). In Deagan's (1981) research, augering proved to be an adequate survey technique. A mechanical power auger was used in an urban context to punch through pavement and gravel finding the underlying archaeological sediments. In this instance, the artifacts thrown out of the drill hole by the auger were collected and used in constructing artifact distributions (Deagan 1981). Similarly, in searching for the mission of Santa Catalina de Guale, Thomas (1987) employed several survey methods. Part of the search involved a systematic auger test survey on a high probability area--much like Deagan's search for early St. Augustine. Using a large drill bit that produced a hole 32 cm in diameter, auger tests were initiated every 10 meters across the site. The soil thrown out of the hole was screened and the artifacts used to create distribution maps. Thomas' (1987) search was successful in that the expedient auger testing narrowed the focus of further testing from 10 hectares to one hectare.

Klingelhofer and Henry (1985) used a split spoon auger in finding grave sites. An auger was deemed appropriate because the churchyard was overgrown inhibiting any visual inspection, the exact location of the graveyard was not known, and an excavation technique that was less invasive had to be used (Klingelhofer and Henry 1985).

In all instances, augering in historical archaeology has been used to find and define site areas for further testing. Deagan (1981), Klingelhofer and Henry (1985), and Thomas (1987) found that augering was an expedient and reliable way to define sites. Augering, however, is usually chosen as a survey method only if extenuating circumstances like thick ground cover, a large survey area, or impassable substrate (pavement) are encountered.

In historical archaeology, other methods of subsurface sampling have been used with variable results. These methods include sampling with a posthole digger and shovel-dug test pits. Sampling with a posthole digger has provided meaningful results on several sites (South and Widmer 1977; Wesler 1984; Roberts 1986). South and Widmer (1977) found that a systematic subsurface survey conducted with a manual posthole digger could adequately define the size and extent of the archaeological deposits provided the samples were taken every 2 to 5 meters (South and Widmer 1977). Both Wesler (1984) and Roberts (1986) patterned their houselot studies after South and Widmer (1977) with similar results.

A methodology utilizing the posthole digger is in some respects similar to auger sampling in that it disturbs a relatively small area per sample. Sampling using a posthole digger also can sample large areas in a timely manner as compared to larger shovel-dug test pits. There are two short-comings that inhibit its use, however. These short-comings include difficulty of use, and the mixing of sediments. The posthole digger, composed of two curved blades, extracts soil using a forceful downward motion. This motion cuts the soil with each downward stroke. The more force behind the stroke-- the deeper the cut. Manual power needed to cut into the soil depends upon soil type and content. Consequently, a clayey soil is difficult to penetrate and extract using a posthole digger. If there are numerous artifacts, colluvium, and/or alluvium; the difficulty increases. On the Brabson houselot, the amount of limestone present over much of the site would have prohibited use of the posthole digger. The rotary motion of the auger allows it to pass through many types of substrates, including gravel, with relative ease. Mixing of sediment and subsequently the context of artifacts is also a problem with using a posthole digger. The chopping motion used to cut and the pinching of the blades to extract soil, mixes then compacts the sediment and artifacts. Though the auger does mix sediment somewhat, chunks of undisturbed soil do occur in the bucket. The techniques applied in this

thesis were designed to ameliorate the mixing of sediment and were successful. Though field strategies involving posthole testing and test pitting may retrieve more artifacts (i.e. bigger holes) they can be time consuming and difficult to complete costing more in time and money with variable results.

#### Augering the Brabson Houselot

Auger testing on the Brabson Plantation (40SV41) was undertaken with several basic assumptions. The first was that the subsurface remains encountered would be indicative of the occupation (Schiffer 1976). Subsurface structural remains and midden deposits were expected in the proposed area of the original main house and behind the slave house. The second assumption had to do with methodology and the reliability of a systematically collected subsurface sample to detect subsurface patterning and occupation boundaries. Previous studies using close interval testing proved fruitful especially if the test intervals were 2 to 5 meters apart (South and Widmer 1977; Wesler 1984). A systematic sample was also deemed appropriate as the SURFER software program uses grid point data.

According to historical documents and informants, other assumptions concerning the early Brabson houselot were made. If the main house was situated just east of the slave house as family tradition maintained, then the lot area probably

contained the smoke house, a garden, a slave house, and an enclosure or fenced area (Brabson Papers). It was also known that site formation processes due to the construction and razing of structures had occurred and were evident in auger samples. Other site formation processes were caused by plowing. Although the houselot had not been plowed, the hillside behind it had been cultivated for a number of years. This resulted in some colluvial deposition but this was easily recognized in the auger by inclusions of irregularly shaped chert, shale, and limestone.

#### Field Methods

A grid was established over the houselot areas and a program of auger sampling was instituted. Because circulation areas, activity areas, and dumping patterns occurring outside dwellings are to be analyzed, a sampling procedure that could cover a large area in a timely manner was utilized. The areas around the standing structure and the traditional location of the original main house were divided into 10 foot units. Elevations and auger samples were taken at each 10 foot node resulting in 227 auger samples. Based on artifact frequency and topography, the area extended 230 feet east-west by 120 feet north-south.

The protocol for the auger sampling was kept simple and efficient (Plate 3). The manual bucket auger measures seven inches long by four inches in diameter; consequently, small amounts of soil are removed with each bucket. At the same time, however, some mixing of the sediment does occur (Stein 1991). To alleviate this, each bucket sample was removed as carefully as possible and each successive sample was placed on a sheet of black plastic (Plate 4). In this manner soil color and texture differences were apparent and could be measured and noted for each sample in an effort to delineate stratigraphy and reconstruct site formation processes. Since relatively small amounts of soil are removed with each sample, undisturbed chunks of soil were preserved in the bucket enabling more accurate observations on changes in texture and composition. Each bucket of soil was dry screened through 1/4 inch mesh hardware cloth and all material remaining in the screen was bagged according to provenience (Plate 5). After each individual bucket sample, depth measurements were taken (Plate 6). An auger sampling form specifically designed for the study was completed for each ten foot grid point (Figure 2). In cases where cultural debris was too dense to allow penetration of the auger or when an atypical soil horizon was encountered, the sample was taken at the closest five foot interval around that ten foot grid point.



Plate 3. The equipment used for auger sampling on the Brabson Plantation houselot.



Plate 4. Retrieval of soil sample from auger.



Plate 5. Dry screening auger sample for artifacts.



Plate 6. Taking depth measurements for each auger sample.

AUGER SAMPLING FORM

SITE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

AUGER TEST \_\_\_\_\_ RECORDED BY \_\_\_\_\_

INSTRUMENT HEIGHT \_\_\_\_\_

SURFACE ELEVATION \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL DEPTH OF TEST \_\_\_\_\_

HOW MANY SOIL LAYERS ARE PRESENT? \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION OF LAYERS:

LAYER \_\_\_\_\_ (numeric)

MATRIX VISUAL DESCRIPTION (include color, texture, consistency)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DEPTH OF LAYER \_\_\_\_\_

ARTIFACTS PRESENT (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS (please include ideas, observations, and any pertinent info)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

.....

LAYER \_\_\_\_\_ (numeric)

MATRIX VISUAL DESCRIPTION

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DEPTH OF LAYER \_\_\_\_\_

ARTIFACTS PRESENT (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 2. A reduced example (65%) of the auger sampling form for the Brabson Plantation, 40SV41.

## Laboratory Methods

The analysis of the materials from the auger sampling was used to construct artifact frequency contour maps. Architectural and kitchen-related artifacts were used to construct frequency maps. These artifacts included limestone, bricks, mortar, ceramics, window glass, cut nails, and faunal remains. It was thought that structures would be spatially defined using distributions of nails, window glass, bricks, mortar, and limestone. Ceramic sherds and faunal remains, on the other hand, were used to detect middens and activity areas associated with household activities. Distribution maps were constructed with only those artifacts that could be reliably dated to 1800-1890, thus restricting the analysis to the early Brabson houselot. Though wire and cut nails were recovered in auger samples, only the cut nails were utilized as these nails were manufactured from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. Window glass thickness was measured and those sherds having thicknesses of less than 2.0mm were used. It has been found that window glass gradually became thicker throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Roenke 1973). Sherds less than 2.0mm in thickness were manufactured in the nineteenth century (Roenke 1973).

Ceramics included in the distributional analysis were redware, stoneware, creamware, pearlware, and whiteware. The redware, creamware, and pearlware can be reliably dated

within the 1800-1890 date range, however; whiteware and stoneware persisted into the twentieth century. The size of the bucket auger only allowed small samples and small artifacts to be collected. As a result, the size and condition of sherds prohibited more accurate dating on whitewares as decoration was not discernable or absent on many sherds. This restriction limited comparisons of the main and slave houselots since few interpretations concerning vessel shape and type could be made with such small sample sizes.

Limestone, brick, mortar, and faunal remains were weighed and artifact distribution maps constructed. Ceramics, cut nails, and window glass were plotted by weight. Areas where atypical soil horizons were encountered--those areas having buried A horizons or where soil color and texture were different (deeper, darker, sandier, mottled, etc.) from the overall site soil profile were noted for associations with structures or middens. Those areas where concentrations of limestone and brick inhibited the auger sampling were included in the mapping since the likelihood of such rock features being naturally occurring are virtually nonexistent based on site geomorphology.

It is maintained that the auger sampling and subsequent artifact distributions on the Brabson Plantation houselot will provide adequate information for the delineation of

middens, activity areas and outbuilding locations and functions. The technique although new to houselot studies will yield information consistent with houselot studies that have utilized extensive field work, taking years to complete at great expense in money, labor, and time.

### Site Soils

The Brabson Ferry Plantation is located on a second terrace of the French Broad River. The landscape is undulating and hilly. On these high terraces, the Cumberland-Waynesboro soil association dominates. This association consists of alluvial soils along the French Broad and Little Pigeon rivers and occurs on steep slopes (12-25%) (Odom et al. 1945). From three soil samples taken on the extreme east, north, and west of the houselot, a typical soil horizon was constructed for the site.

The site is dominated by both the Waynesboro loam, eroded hilly phase and the Cumberland silty clay loam, eroded hilly phase (Odom et al. 1945). Both soils occur on the steeper slopes of old stream terraces. The Waynesboro phase is derived from old stream terraces. The old alluvium has been washed from uplands underlain by sandstone, quartzite, shale, and limestone in some areas (Odom et al. 1945:111). In auger samples, the soil across the site had variable amounts of alluvium that was easily distinguishable

as rounded, water-worn pebbles of sandstone, quartzite, and limestone.

The Cumberland silty clay loam, eroded hilly phase is generally more variable in color, texture, stoniness, and depth (Odom et al. 1945:36). Surface runoff can be rapid and small severely eroded spots are common (Odom et al. 1945:36).

The soil profile across the Brabson Plantation was remarkably similar. The profile consists of four easily distinguishable layers of variable thickness.

#### Soil Profile

|              |                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0-4 inches   | Ap horizon- loam with root mass<br>7.5 YR 3\4 dark brown                                                                                                  |
| 4-11 inches  | A horizon- silty loam<br>5 YR 3\3 dark reddish brown                                                                                                      |
| 11-17 inches | B\A horizon- light clay loam 28-32% clay<br>A portion- 5 YR 3\2 dark reddish brown<br>B portion- 2.5 YR 4\4 reddish brown                                 |
| 17-42 inches | Bt1 horizon- clay loam with manganese<br>concretions<br>2.5 YR 3\6 dark red<br><br>Bt2 horizon- clay loam with manganese<br>concretions<br>2.5 YR 4\6 red |

#### Conclusions

Augering has been an under-utilized part of archaeological excavations since 1955. With the advent of radiocarbon dating augering is now used for a variety of

purposes including finding and delineating subsurface archaeological deposits and collecting faunal and floral samples for environmental reconstruction. This less invasive and less expensive sampling technique can yield quality cultural information. In order to provide the quality information and areal coverage of an augering program other test excavations would be massive and costly--as previous houselot studies can attest. Augering, unlike intensive surface collections can conclusively demonstrate subsurface and sub-plowzone features. Bucket augers can penetrate clayey soils having concentrations of artifacts and rock with relative ease as compared to posthole diggers. Though some field situations may require that a site be extensively excavated, those sites that are not slated for destruction are candidates for augering as an analytical tool. It was in this respect that augering was used for the sampling and analysis of the early Brabson Plantation houselot.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTERPRETING ARTIFACT PATTERNS

#### Introduction

The archaeological record on the earlier Brabson Plantation houselot is an accumulation of cultural material representing activities that occurred from the late eighteenth century through 1890. Artifact patterning within the houselot is assumed to reflect the spatial organization of activities and outbuildings. In order to interpret the archaeological record, however, an understanding of the processes that produced and altered it are critical.

According to Schiffer (1976), natural and cultural processes integrate to form and alter the archaeological record. Both of these processes were in evidence on the Brabson houselot. The natural processes ranged from organic deterioration and oxidation to erosion and deposition. Soil erosion and deposition were evident over the site. One area in particular seems to have been affected by erosion more than others and is characterized by a lack of artifacts and poor Ap and A horizon development. Erosional activity was also compounded by cultural processes, specifically plowing. Although the houselot had not been plowed--the hill immediately above it had. The increased colluvial deposition over the site resulted in variable thicknesses of

Ap and A horizons. In many instances, zones of irregularly shaped shale, limestone, chert, and sandstone were encountered during the augering, probably moved as a result of erosional episodes to be deposited below. These zones were easily identified in the auger sampling and presented minimal problems in interpreting artifact distributions.

The cultural processes involved in the formation of the archaeological record on the Brabson houselot were abandonment, loss, and discard (Schiffer 1976). These processes were most apparent in the architectural remains. Limestone flakes, bricks, mortar, nails, and window glass were left behind as a result of construction, repair, and demolition. On the Brabson houselot construction and demolition activity was evident as dense clusters of limestone flakes, with some fragments so large that they inhibited the passage of the auger. Around this cluster of building debris, secondary refuse probably thrown from doors or windows may be used to interpret building function. Discard is the deposition of waste material as primary or secondary refuse (Schiffer 1976). Clusters of artifacts resulting from disposal behaviors can occur outside entrances and even windows of structures (South 1977). Cluster contents can be analyzed and interpretations of room or building function, door placement, or structure size may be made. Functional associations of artifacts within a cluster can aid in interpretation as well. Activity areas

can be represented by clusters of related artifacts. This association of artifacts, however, is seldom clear on historic sites because of overlapping activities or dumping by various groups of people over time.

On the Brabson Plantation several assumptions can be made about the content of the houselot based on historical documents, informants, and comparisons with similar plantation houselots. According to oral tradition the houselot consisted of the main dwelling located 40 feet from the standing braced frame structure. The dwelling was purportedly a log structure with full cellar and large chimney. Given this description, it was anticipated that a concentration of brick, mortar, and limestone flakes would be detected with the auger. If a cellar was present, soil discoloration combined with some sort of cellar fill (organic, ash, etc.) would be expected. According to South (1977) a generalized artifact pattern featuring ceramic, bone, and glass (Carolina Pattern) would surround the kitchen (detached) and/or back entrance to the dwelling. Middens containing kitchen oriented debris are likely to occur at the rear of the service entrance (back or side door) to the dwelling and the kitchen entrance (South 1979). The front yard of the main house should be relatively clear of artifacts. South (1979) and others (see Keeler 1978; Wesler 1984; Pogue 1988) have found that the front yards of plantation dwellings were intentionally kept clear of

artifacts through sweeping. This yard apparently served a formal purpose while side and back yards were work areas. Historical documents indicate that the houselot contained other outbuildings and a smoke house was particularly mentioned. The smoke house would be detectable as a cluster of building debris but should exhibit virtually no refuse provided no secondary dumping occurred there (South 1979).

The distribution of artifacts, other than limestone and brick on the Brabson Plantation (40SV41), suggests that these patterns are the result of what Binford (1978) described as tossing and dumping. The interpretation of artifact concentrations can be problematical as they are affected by field work intensity, artifact survival conditions, and post-depositional processes (Hodder and Orton 1976:20-29). These problems can be ameliorated, however, by using comparative analyses, integrating document or ethnoarchaeological data, and understanding possible site formation processes.

#### Spatial Analysis of the Brabson Houselot

The analysis of the Brabson Plantation houselot involved the interpretation of several artifact density maps. These maps were generated by the SURFER software program using the grid point data of 227 bucket auger samples. Artifact classes for this analysis include limestone, bricks and mortar, ceramics, window glass, cut

nails, and faunal material. While artifact classes were mapped individually, mapped distributions of functionally associated and distinct combinations of artifacts proved the most useful in interpreting the houselot.

#### Distribution of Limestone

Limestone flakes were plotted by weight. Those areas where large limestone debris inhibited penetration of the auger were given the highest weight designation; in this manner subsurface foundation remains could be predicted. As Figure 3 shows there are six distinct concentrations of limestone on the plantation houselot. The main house is represented by concentration A. This area is also characterized by deep strata (1-2 feet) composed of ash, brick, mortar, and charcoal with debris so thick the auger could not pass through in many instances. The result of close interval augering indicates that the major concentration is the remains of the original main house, most probably the chimney pad and associated cellar. The concentrations to the rear of the main house and slave house designated as B and C are thought to be the remains of outbuildings. In both instances dense limestone debris was encountered. Large flat limestone blocks were encountered in an auger test near the well and thought to be foundation or cellar remains. The area next to the well is characterized by a subsurface cluster of limestone and brick

## 40SV41: DISTRIBUTION OF LIMESTONE

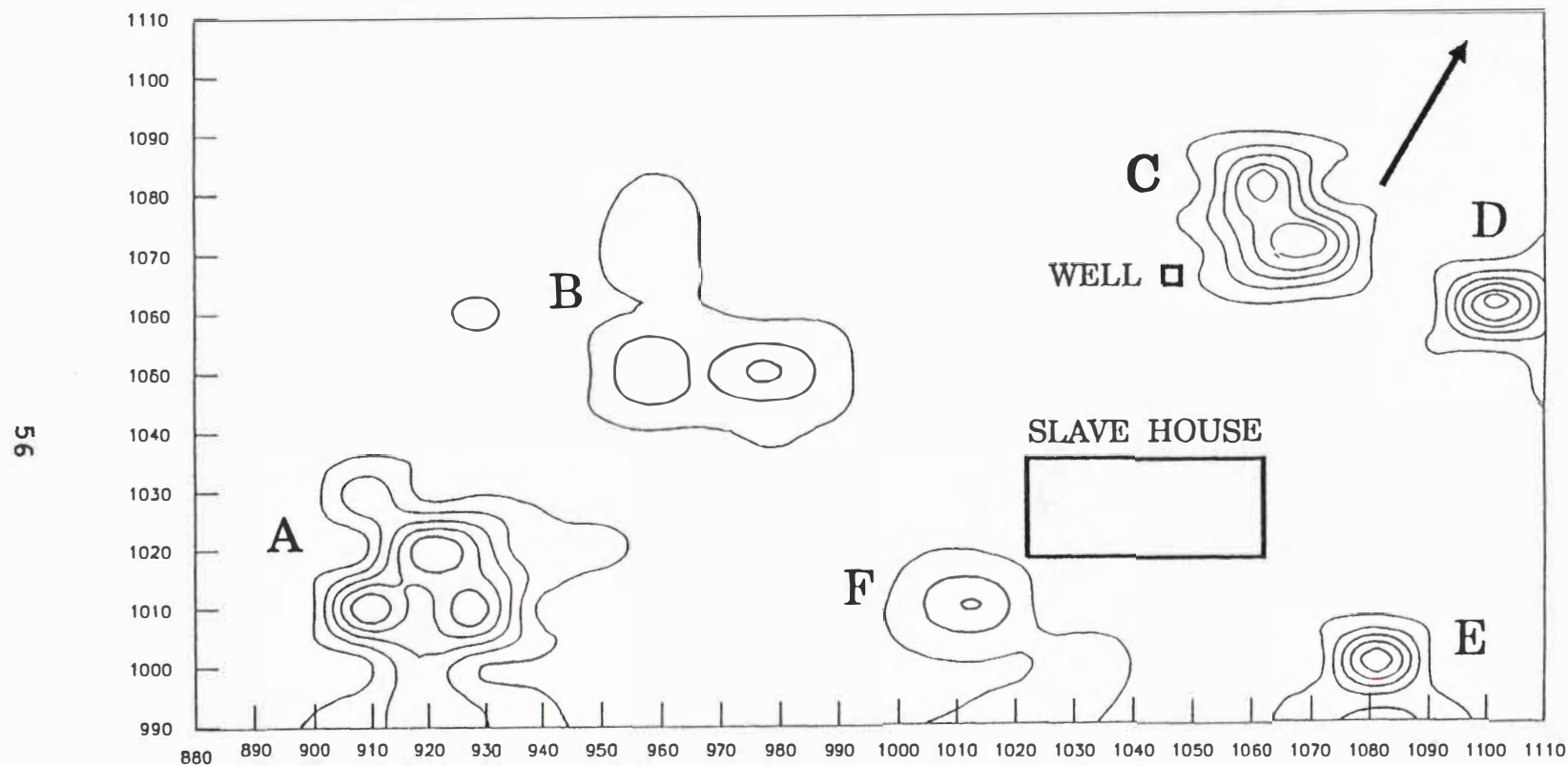


Figure 3. Frequency isopleth map of limestone detected on the house lot.

and a rectangular depression measuring six by eight feet. The area is not marked by heavy artifact concentrations although ceramics and bone are present. The digging of the well has produced a suite of distinct soil layers composed of a recently formed Ap horizon which overlies an A horizon mixed with hard clay from deeper layers. It is thought that the majority of the soil generated from the well digging was taken off-site; however, some soil was intentionally spread or trampled around the well producing a unique soil horizon. Under this mixed zone is a buried A horizon containing early (1800-1830) artifacts. Dating of these artifacts has revealed that the structure may predate the well which appears to have been built before 1830. The function of this structure is unknown at this time as too few artifacts were retrieved from the auger tests. Documentary evidence indicates that the property was owned and inhabited as early as 1794 and may have been occupied earlier. There is every possibility that the Brabson houselot may overlie an earlier houselot as some artifacts seem to indicate. The smaller concentrations of limestone in the front and rear yards of the slave house- D, E, and F are probably the result of demolition or erosion. Erosion was evident in the front yard of the slave house as foundation stones were washed out in two places on the facade. The soil also showed evidence of disturbance and erosion. According to oral history, the main house and outbuildings were razed in the late

nineteenth century and their structural remains used to build a barn. This situation complicates the distributional analyses, but by plotting architectural remains separately and comparing ceramic and bone distributions, more meaningful patterns are discernible. Since auger sampling tends to recover relatively small artifacts, these distributions may represent building activity such as the flaking of limestone blocks for foundations or chimney pads. The slave house has a continuous limestone foundation and it would not be unreasonable to expect the main house to have had one as well.

#### Distribution of Brick and Mortar

Auger testing of the Brabson houselot revealed five brick and mortar concentrations roughly conforming to the limestone distributions (Figure 4). Concentration A corresponds with the location of the main house. The small concentration of brick and mortar in the rear yard, B, is somewhat problematical as it does not correspond to the proposed outbuilding location. The demolition of structures during the late 19th century may be the cause. Concentration D in the extreme north corner of the houselot behind the slave house occurs between the limestone concentrations discussed earlier. Other smaller concentrations occur around the well, C and E, and are thought to be associated with the structure already

# 40SV41: DISTRIBUTION OF BRICK & MORTAR

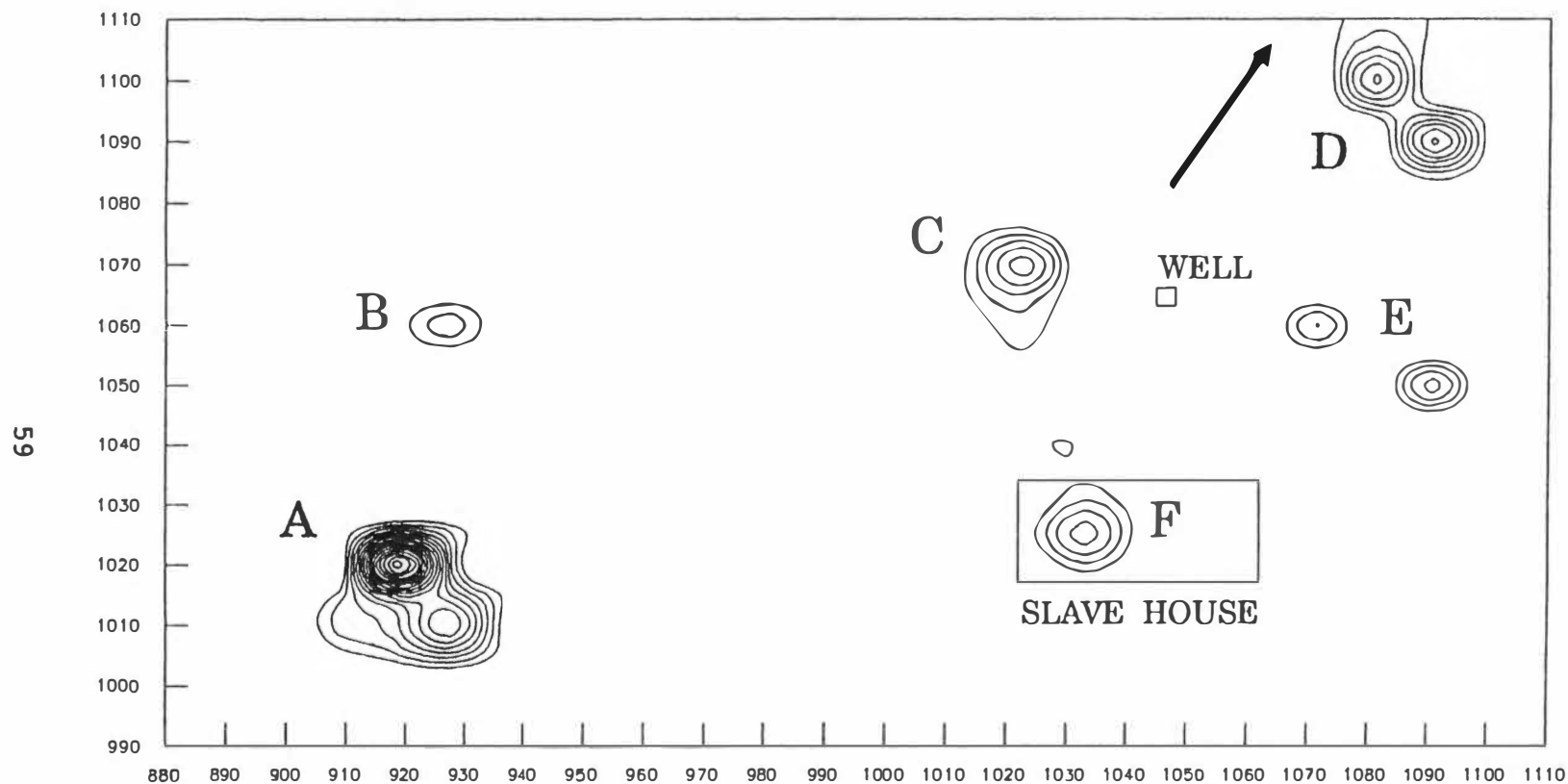


Figure 4. Frequency isopleth map of brick and mortar recovered from the houselot.

identified. The brick concentration found within the slave house is representative of one auger test at the base of the chimney. Consequently, the presence of brick in this sample was not surprising.

#### Distribution of Architectural Remains

The distribution of cut nails reinforces the general patterns of limestone, and brick and mortar. Figure 5 shows a distinct concentration around the main house, concentration A, and a smaller concentration to the rear of the main house, concentration B. Concentration B is intriguing in that though no limestone or brick remains were recovered in this area, small artifacts like pins and buttons, and an atypical soil horizon were encountered. Between .4 and .6 feet below the surface an unconsolidated, sandy loam was encountered having charcoal, mortar, and ash within the matrix. The presence of these small artifacts with ash indicates that some dumping was occurring. Small artifacts like pins and buttons were often swept into the hearth and removed as refuse along with the ash of the fireplace. Perhaps this cluster of artifacts represents an area where ashes were dumped some distance from the house. The presence of window glass is somewhat problematical for this interpretation, however. Concentration C between the main house and the slave house is perhaps a product of the razing of the main house, general building maintenance, or

# 40SV41: DISTRIBUTION OF CUT NAILS

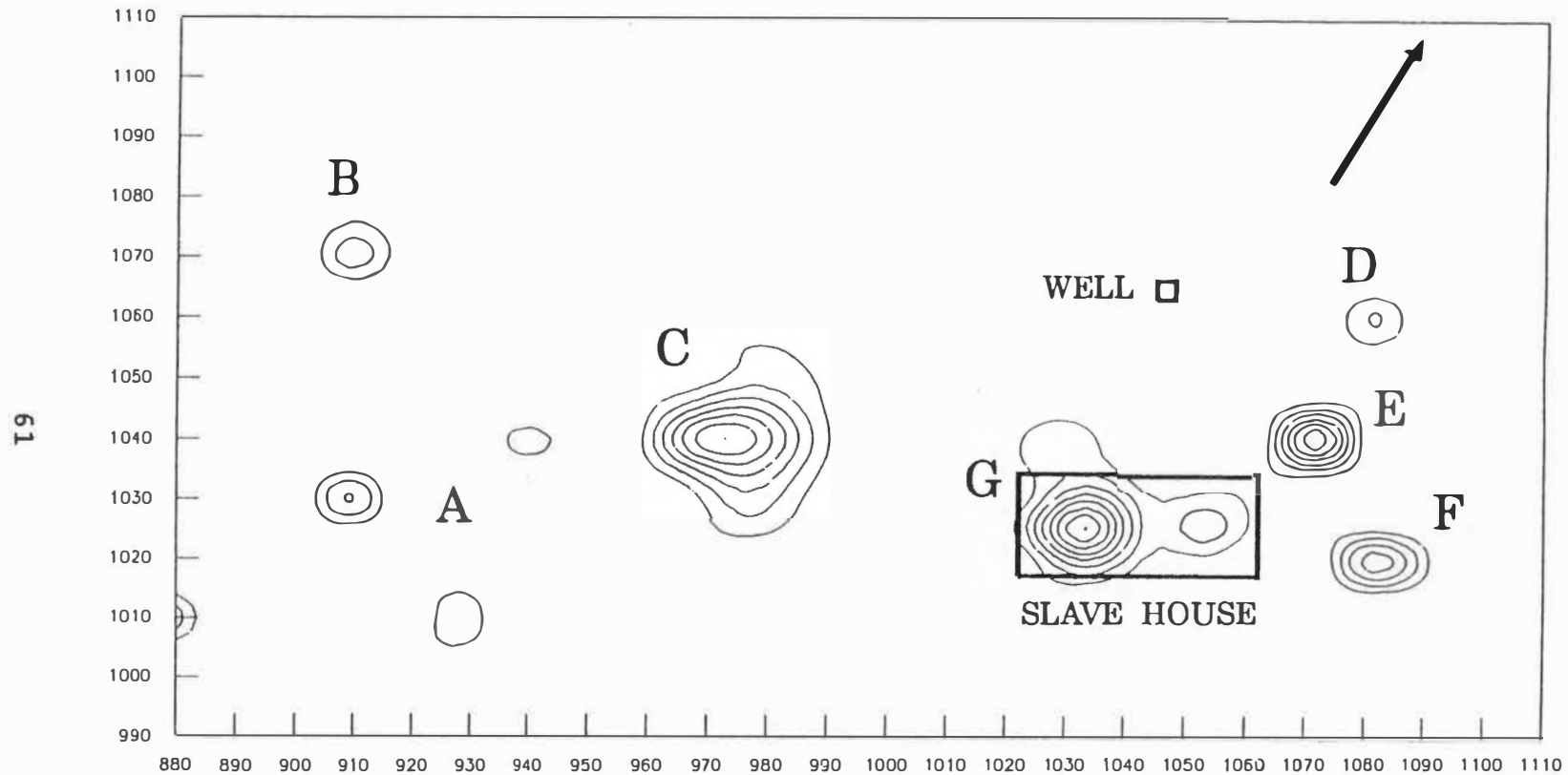


Figure 5. Frequency isopleth map of cut nails recovered from the houselot.

the remains of the structure defined by the limestone concentration in the rear main house yard. Concentrations D, E, and F located in the rear and side yard of the slave house are likely products of repair as the slave house continued to be used as a tenant house into the 1920s. Concentration D may be associated with the structure identified next to the well. The razing of this structure apparently scattered building debris over the rear yard of the slave house. Concentration G represents nails retrieved from the auger sample near the chimney of the slave house.

Window glass concentrations reflect the general patterns defined by other architectural debris (Figure 6). There is a small concentration at the main house, A, and one in the rear yard of the main house, B. Concentration C located between the main house and the slave house may be the result of the building and razing of structures on the houselot. This area also contained nails and ceramics, however, which may indicate this yard was multifunctional. Concentration D, in the side yard of the slave house is likely the result of razing or repairing the slave house. This area is characterized by steep slopes with apparent erosion. Consequently, artifacts recovered in this area may have originated from the rear side yard. The light scatter of nails and window glass around the slave structure and proposed outbuildings seem atypical for a frame structure built in the late 1820s, repaired, and occupied into the

## 40SV41: DISTRIBUTION OF WINDOW GLASS

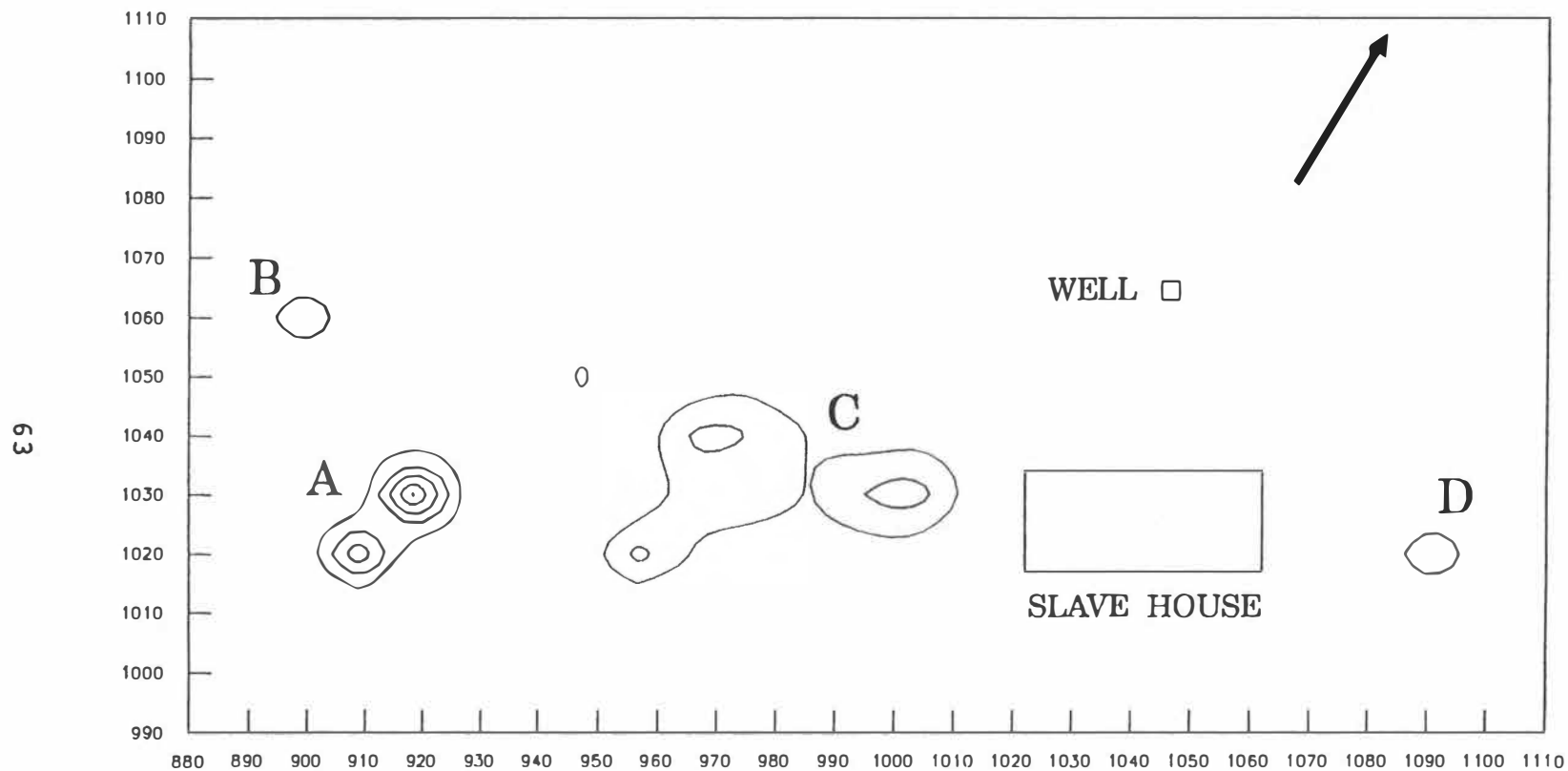


Figure 6. Frequency isopleth map of window glass recovered from the houselot.

late 1920s. Given such a long occupation with documented repairs, compounded by the presence of at least one other outbuilding, this scatter of nails and window glass seems low. As previously discussed, the outbuilding in the rear slave house lot may represent an earlier dwelling or associated outbuilding. An alternative explanation for the lack of nails and window glass may be indicative of the structure's method of construction (i.e. hewn log manufacture).

#### Distribution of Ceramics

Though few ceramic sherds were recovered in the auger sampling an examination of their distribution reveals some patterns. Ceramics recovered from auger sampling include creamware, pearlware, whiteware, redware, and stoneware located in seven concentrations: concentrations A and B located in the east side yard of the main house, concentration C in the rear yard of the main house, concentrations D and E between the main house and slave house, concentration F in the extreme rear yard of the slave house, and concentration G in the front yard of the slave house (Figure 7). The density of ceramics coupled with the soil texture and color noted in auger samples indicate that a refuse midden is located behind the main house and may have been used throughout the site's occupation. The concentration of ceramic sherds between the main house and

## 40SV41: DISTRIBUTION OF CERAMICS

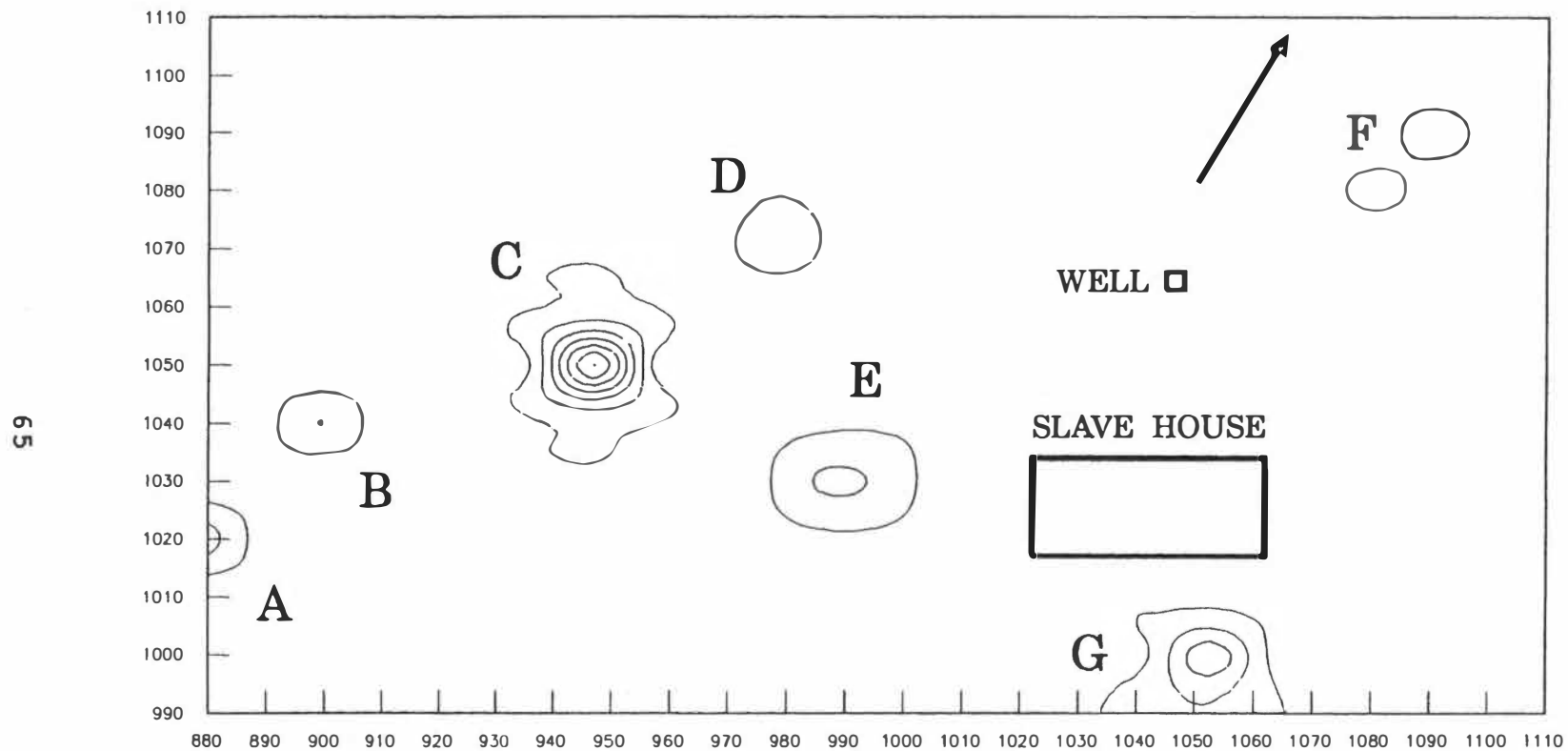


Figure 7. Frequency isopleth map of ceramics recovered from the houselot.

slave house appears to represent disposal behavior as well. The presence of ceramics and structural remains between the main house and slave house may be indicative of a connective side yard used as a work area. Other plantation house lot studies have found that side yards between the main and servants (slave) houses were often activity and dumping areas (Keeler 1978; Pogue 1988). The scatter of ceramic sherds behind the slave house are most likely the product of refuse disposal from the hypothesized structure next to the well. This area is difficult to define in terms of spatial patterning because of the presence of the well which post-dates the structure and the absence of any back doors in the slave house. Preliminary artifact analysis and soil stratigraphy indicate that the structure predates the well and the slave house and was probably built before 1830. It is likely that what artifactual remains were encountered behind the slave house may be associated with the structure next to the well. Concentration G is likely the product of disposal behavior as there are two front doors located in the slave house.

Though concentrations of ceramics are readily apparent, the lack of artifacts can also be indicative of specific behaviors. Clusters of ceramics occur to the rear of both structures and a small scatter is present in the front yard of the slave house. The front yard of the main house, on the other hand, is characterized by a lack of ceramics and

other artifacts. The front yard of the main house is limited in size and in all likelihood faced the road as does the slave structure. This area, although small, exhibited one ceramic artifact and the limestone scatter associated with the ruin of the house. This evidence suggests that: (1) the front yard was not a heavy traffic area and consequently fewer opportunities for discard occurred; (2) trash was not dumped outside the front door; or (3) the front yard was swept or periodically cleaned (South 1979). That the front yard at the Brabson Plantation was maintained for a more formal use is not inconsistent with findings at other plantation house lots (Keeler 1978; Neiman 1980; Wesler 1984; Pogue 1988). John Brabson was a wealthy businessman and probably entertained many guests.

#### Distribution of Faunal Remains

Faunal remains recovered through the auger sampling were few and many were in poor condition. Faunal remains on historic sites usually occur in disposal situations and co-occur with other kitchen related refuse (South 1977). Faunal remains on the Brabson house lot occur behind the main house as concentrations A and B (see Figure 8). These concentrations are likely middens associated with the outbuilding defined by limestone and other building debris. Concentrations C and D are probably disposal areas associated with the slave house or more likely the structure

# 40SV41: DISTRIBUTION OF FAUNAL REMAINS

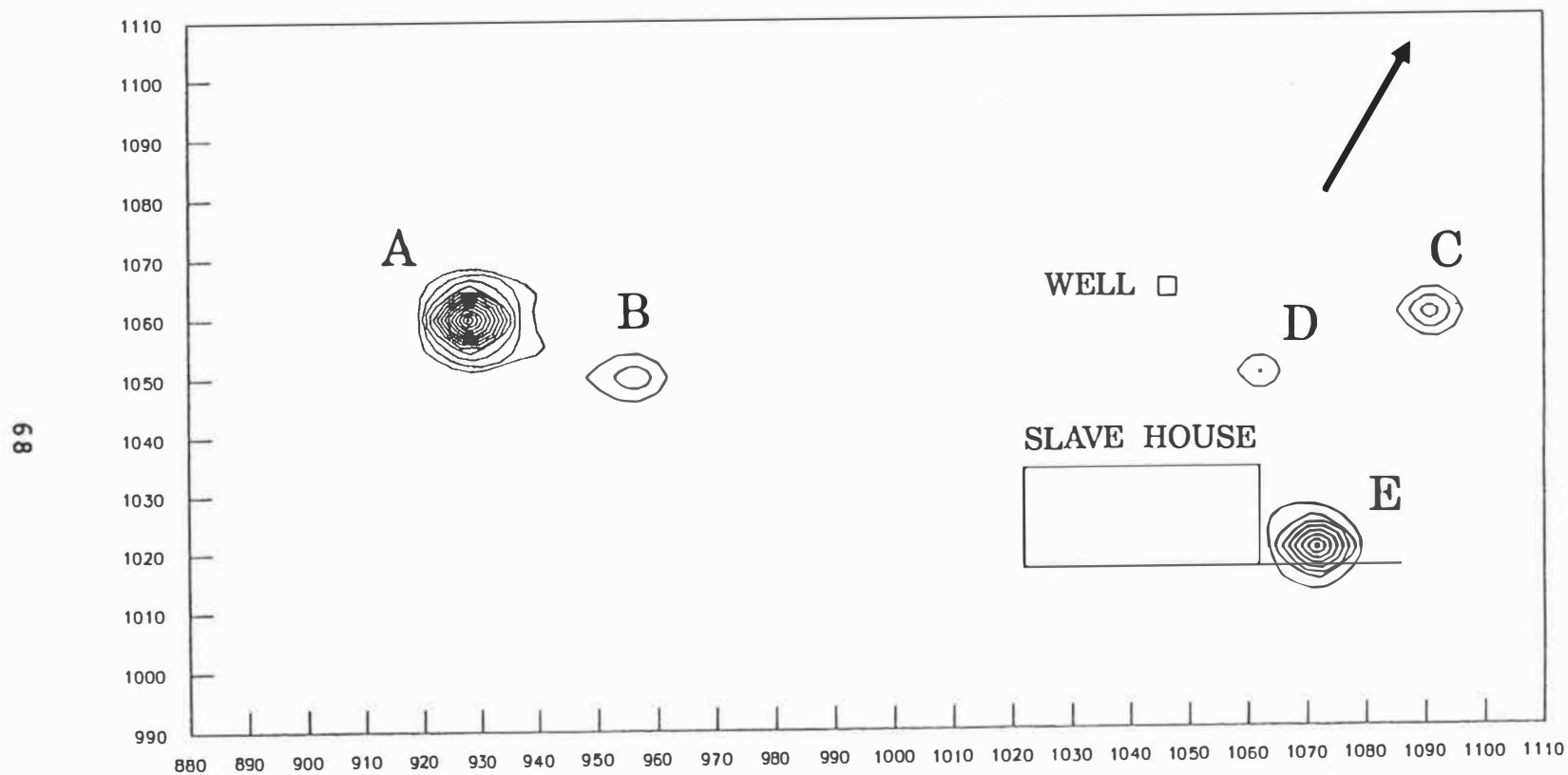


Figure 8. Frequency isopleth map of faunal remains recovered from the houselot.

next to the well. Concentration E is the product of disposal originating from the slave structure. Bone was also recovered in the auger tests within the slave house in what appears to be small root cellars. In all instances the faunal remains co-occur with ceramics indicating that these areas are disposal areas where kitchen refuse was tossed outside doors and along heavy traffic areas. As Figures 3, 7, and 8 indicate, a midden containing many ceramics and large bone fragments was located just east of the limestone concentration thought to be the remains of the smoke house. This building apparently faced east and as the Brabsons and their slaves entered or exited the building, trash was dumped around the door. As already discussed previously, the smoke house would be characterized by a lack of artifacts unless secondary deposition occurred there. The pattern of refuse disposal shown here, however, seems more consistent with a detached kitchen. Four interpretations for this area are possible: (1) the structural and associated midden remains represent a smoke house with secondary deposition along heavy traffic areas; (2) the structure represents a detached kitchen with associated kitchen refuse; (3) the structure is a multipurpose building; (4) the outbuilding changed functions over time from smoke house to kitchen or vice versa; (5) more than one outbuilding is represented by the concentrations of architectural remains, ceramic sherds, and bone. In any

case, the back yard and side yard of the main house are clearly work and traffic areas where many activities necessary to the operation of the plantation occurred. The scatter of faunal remains and ceramics around the slave structure are also consistent with previous interpretations.

### Conclusions

An analysis of the Brabson Plantation houselot has yielded important information concerning the placement and function of structures, activity areas, and yard traffic patterns. These data and interpretations are comparable to other houselot studies that have used expensive, invasive, and time consuming field methods. Previous plantation houselot studies have identified structures, middens, activity areas, and outbuildings (Keeler 1978; Neiman 1980; King and Miller 1986; Pogue 1988). From midden refuse building function, door placement, or room function has been identified (see Keeler 1978). In this study, an analysis of the artifact distributions generated from 227 auger samples and associated soil horizons enabled interpretations of the Brabson Plantation houselot. Distributions of architectural debris delineated structures, including the main house and outbuildings. Ceramic and faunal remains defined disposal and work areas, outbuilding function, and entrance placement. The back yard of the main house was an area of

refuse disposal and contained at least one outbuilding where some household activity took place. The side yard served as a connecting link between the main house and slave house and may have been fenced as historic documents indicate. The front yard of the main house served as a formal area for the reception of guests.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Houselot patterning studies have become important in historic archaeology. Usually these studies involve an artifact distributional analysis of plowed contexts, or a labor intensive program of surface collection and small unit excavations over often what are large areas. The research in this thesis has focused on some alternative field methods that were tested on an unplowed plantation houselot in East Tennessee. In an effort to discern houselot use patterns including activity areas, and how these patterns changed over time, a program of bucket auger sampling was instituted that would provide coordinate and artifactual information suitable for the SURFER software program. This program produces artifact density maps that can be used as a tool in interpreting houselot patterning. Not only is the field method easy to apply, but it is also maintained that data derived in this manner are comparable to data derived from more intensive methods.

Over the past two decades the spatial arrangement and uses of houselots have become an increasingly popular field of inquiry among historical archaeologists (Keeler 1978; King and Miller 1986; Neiman 1980; Noble 1983; Wesler 1984; Roberts 1986; Pogue 1988). Early research on this subject

has relied on historical documents rather than the development or modification of field or laboratory methods as in prehistoric archaeology. Although historic documents are invaluable in these interpretations, caution must be taken as documents can be biased, incomplete, and even contradictory. The "questions that count" in historic archaeology are those questions that cannot be answered fully by historic documents (Deagan 1988). The assumption that there is a direct relationship among artifacts, their spatial context, and activities (Rubertone 1982:125) demands that there be a movement to smaller and more specific units of analysis like the houselot. These units contain information on behaviors usually not contained in historical documents. The archaeological record, as Rubertone points out, "is the product of complex processes of artifact generation, selection, and deposition operating through a series of cultural filters" (1982:125). In order for historical archaeologists to test hypotheses and make viable conclusions concerning intra-site spatial analyses, new field and laboratory methodologies need to be explored.

Research centered on the layout and function of the plantation houselot has become an important area of study in the Tidewater region, an area where plantations were dominant economic units that shaped society. Using extensive and invasive field methods, the results of such studies have met with variable success in delineating

activity areas and outbuilding location and function. Differentiating activity and disposal areas has been problematic in historical archaeology as numerous activities occurring at different times among different groups of people can obscure their functional identification (King 1988). Techniques for recovering data on houselot usage include systematic surface collections from the plowzone, close interval small unit testing, judgmentally placed larger units that uncover features and the plantation core, and the excavation of features. In Tennessee and Kentucky, studies have used posthole diggers to sample houselots with similar results (Wesler 1984; Roberts 1986). These strategies are used in various combinations, but all are relatively expensive, labor intensive, and archaeologically invasive.

In an effort to ameliorate the time and expense of sampling large site areas without compromising the quality of data collection or the quantity of data needed to explore questions of intra-site spatial analyses, a new strategy was developed and applied in this thesis. Augering and coring have been used to sample large areas with apparent success in finding sites and delineating site size (see Schuldenrein 1991; Stein 1986, 1991). Though not new to prehistoric archaeology, auger sampling has had limited use in historical archaeology. Published studies indicate that the auger is an adequate survey tool (Deagan 1981; Thomas 1987)

but its use as an analytical tool has not been tested. In this research, it was felt that a method employing auger sampling would provide information not only on site size but also adequately sample the houselot. The strategy was organized so that coordinate and artifactual information suitable for the SURFER software program would be recorded for each sample. The SURFER program draws topographic maps using artifact frequencies, visually displaying temporal and spatial changes in houselot dumping patterns, activity areas, and structures.

The method was applied on a plantation houselot in East Tennessee. The Brabson Ferry Plantation is located along the French Broad River in Sevier County, Tennessee. The plantation founded by John Brabson II in 1798, once comprised over 5000 acres and consisted not only of agricultural lands, but also flour mills, saw mills, tannery, blacksmith shop, ferry, rock quarry, and mercantile store (John Brabson II Will Book 1848; Brabson 1975). Documentation indicates that the plantation underwent many changes from 1798 through 1880 as the economy and political atmosphere of East Tennessee changed. It was hoped that these changes would be reflected in the houselot as changes in outbuilding function or location, and shifts in yard traffic and dumping patterns.

The auger-derived data were successful in determining structure locations and disposal areas. Locations of

subsurface concentrations of limestone and brick from structural remains were clearly defined on the houselot. With the aid of historic documents and informants, structure function was assigned. The houselot area behind the slave quarter shows evidence of two structures that may represent earlier occupations of the plantation. The presence of early ceramics (creamware and redware) in the buried A horizon around the well tentatively date the construction of the well and the structure. There is little doubt that the well was built before 1830 and that the structure was present before the well was excavated. The position of the well so close to the structural remains also supports this interpretation. The standing braced frame structure functioned as a slave house when it was built by 1830 (Andrews 1988) yet John Brabson owned at least 16 slaves in 1820 (Slave Schedule for Sevier County, Tennessee, 1820). Consequently, it is possible that this earlier structure functioned as a slave house for John Brabson II.

The subsurface remains of the main house occupied by John Brabson II were discovered by the auger sampling. According to informants, the log structure had multiple rooms and a full cellar. Auger data indicated that the structure had a large, probable central chimney and associated cellar. The frequencies of cut nails and window glass around these structural remains may be indicative of log construction although more data are needed to confirm

this. An outbuilding in the rear yard of the main house was clearly defined through limestone concentrations. Frequencies of kitchen related artifacts and their placement around the entrance to the structure indicated that the structure probably faced east and was used for household activities.

Comparative research and documentary evidence have indicated that the plantation houselot was divided into distinct yards. The auger sampling provided the necessary data to define these areas on the Brabson Plantation. Refuse associated with disposal and activities were scattered throughout the back and fore (side) yard of the main house and slave house. Based on artifact patterning, the back yard served as a work and traffic area between the main house and outbuilding(s). The side yard also served as a connecting work area between the main house and the slave house. The front yard of the main house, however, was clean and apparently served a formal function on the plantation. The houselot around the standing braced frame structure, on the other hand, was characterized by a scatter of artifacts over each yard. No middens, or artifact concentrations like those behind the main house were encountered around the this structure.

The auger sampling of the Brabson Plantation houselot has provided some provocative results. It has been demonstrated that a program of manual bucket auger sampling

can yield important information on intra-site spatial analyses. A methodology that includes bucket augering provides a relatively accurate means for determining the size, extent, soil composition, stratigraphic variation, and spatial organization of sites. When used in a houselot patterning study, the data can successfully define the subsurface locations of structures, middens, and activity areas.

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