OLD SITES, NEW QUESTIONS

RETURNING TO THE HEYWARD-WASHINGTON HOUSE LEGACY COLLECTIONS

Sarah E. Platt and Ronald W. Anthony

Sarah E. Platt is an archaeological analyst for the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS) and a PhD candidate at Syracuse University. Ronald W. Anthony is an archaeologist for the Charleston Museum.

In 2019, the Heyward-Washington House—a historic house museum owned and operated by the Charleston Museum—passed its 90-year anniversary of opening to the public. The museum was the first of its kind in Charleston (Weyeneth 2000:8). Through the joint effort of the Charleston Museum and the Society for Preservation of Old Dwellings, preservationists saved the house from being dismantled for its interior woodwork in the late 1920s. The classic Georgian double home faces Church Street, sitting on a long narrow lot with original brick dependencies and twentieth-century ornamental gardens (Figure 1). The public interpretation of the house, from its early opening at the height of the interwar historic preservation movement to today, is focused primarily on the occupation of the family for which the house is named. Heyward-Washington refers to two illustrious residents, declaration of independence signer Thomas Heyward Jr., who purchased the lot in 1771 and lived there along with both his family and those he enslaved, and President George Washington, who stayed in the home for eight days during his tour of southern states in 1791.

Figure 1. The front of the Heyward-Washington House facing 87 Church Street, Charleston, South Carolina. Photograph courtesy of Sarah E. Platt.

However, the location of the 87 Church Street lot in the heart of the oldest part of the Charleston peninsula, where it would have been enclosed within the original city walls, means the Heywards and Washington were among scores of people, both free and enslaved, that passed through this particular property. The built landscape they lived on and dwelled in was only one of many. The house that currently stands is at least the third on this property, and the two earlier structures are now only visible archaeologically. Other occupants and passers-through include a gunsmithing family, indigenous delegations, attendees of a girls' school, the family of famed abolitionist sisters Sarah and Elizabeth Grimke, tenement residents, a baker and his family, and countless—some named, some made anonymous—enslaved men, women, and children.

Researchers are learning more about these lives and landscapes through archaeology. Or, rather, by returning to old archaeology with new questions. Along with having been under continuous archival research since its acquisition in the 1920s, the Heyward-Washington property has been the subject of multiple archaeological excavations, producing one of the largest archaeological collections held in the storeroom of the Charleston Museum. A substantial portion of these collections, however, are legacy collections—assemblages previously excavated and analyzed by archaeologists whom, for whatever reason, are no longer present. These collections

are often curated in challenging ways and lack crucial paperwork. New collaborative research produced over the course of dissertation research by Sarah E. Platt, continuing research of museum archaeologists Ronald W. Anthony and Martha Zierden, and upcoming studies of the wider Lowcountry colonial environment and landscape (Zierden et al., this issue) and colonoware analyses (Sattes and Platt, this issue) have indicated that these old collections still have very much to say and are worth returning to with new questions.

Heyward-Washington Archaeology

The first archaeological recovery at 87 Church Street occurred in 1971, when museum curator Albert Sanders collected artifacts from the substantial privy deposit during the installation of utility lines. Full systematic archaeological excavations were undertaken in 1973 when Elaine Herold lent her time and expertise and led a team of volunteers in a four-year investigation of the property (Figure 2). Herold spearheaded a tradition of urban archaeology in Charleston propelled by staff and curators at the Charleston Museum for the next 46 years, a tradition that continues today and is stewarded by institutions and individuals across the city (Pemberton, this issue; Zierden et al. 2019). Over four years of volunteering, Herold excavated substantial portions of the property, uncovering approximately 88,000 artifacts (though recent analysis has suggested this is a low estimate). She and a small army of volunteers meticulously washed and labeled each recovered artifact with provenience information, then cross-sorted by class and type. Herold continued to work on the site and collections after her departure from the museum, producing a brief preliminary report (Herold 1978). Although she always intended to complete a write-up of the site, she passed away in 2015 before achieving this goal. Much of her notes, maps, and paperwork never made it back to the museum, as had been expected.

Martha Zierden, curator of historical archaeology at the Charleston Museum, led test excavations in 1991 and a full investigation into the interior of the stable building in 2002 in preparation for interior renovations (Zierden and Reitz 2007). Zierden's excavations allowed for a full study and recording of the site stratigraphy and associated material culture. She and her colleagues identified phases of occupation beneath and within the stable building, and although full reanalysis of the Herold collections did not occur at that time, her report frequently addresses Herold's work and relates the 2002 investigations to Herold's findings (Figure 3). Although Herold's (1978) report largely focuses on the occupation of the Heywards, the 2002 excavations reveal a great deal about the earlier period on the property—the occupation of a gunsmithing family known as the Milners and the men, women, and children they enslaved on site.

Figure 2. One of Elaine Herold's volunteers cross-mending clear table glass likely in the late 1970s. Photograph courtesy of the Charleston Museum.

Platt returned to the collections as a PhD candidate pursuing dissertation research in 2017. She first cataloged the 1991 and 2002 assemblages into the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS), where the data will launch on their website following the completion of her dissertation and be free and available to the public. She then turned to the substantial, and challenging, Herold legacy collections. Although the collections had been fully cataloged, they were tabulated and recorded in the same manner as the physical artifacts themselves had been organized—by class and type. Herold carefully maintained and recorded provenience; however, a close reading of her report suggests her primary initial goal was to vesselize the ceramic and glass assemblages. While these efforts have produced a remarkable collection of reconstructed ceramics displayed throughout the museum, it has long made the collection a challenge to work with in modern context-centered approaches.

Full reorganization of the collection was beyond the manpower of a single PhD researcher and two museum staff members. To begin to access what the Herold assemblages had to offer, Platt and museum archaeologists and volunteers turned to the ceramics. By entering sherd counts made both by Herold and her team in the 1970s and those made by museum volunteers in 2018, Platt utilized the museum's PastPerfect software to digitally reorganize and tabulate ceramic ware types by provenience. The result is a dataset of 60,769 ceramic sherds with associated spatial data. Researchers can now pull lists of ceramic ware types and counts by archaeological context, allowing for more intensive

Figure 3. A map of the excavations at the 87 Church Street property. All excavations in gray within and along the exterior of the stable building were conducted by Martha Zierden in 1991 and 2002. The various colors of features indicate different time periods as distinguished by Elaine Herold; orange and purple features are related to the Milner family. Map by Sarah E. Platt.

investigation of changes in the ceramic assemblages on the property through time.

One of the most startling outcomes of this exercise was the rediscovery of Heyward-Washington's substantial and remarkable colonoware collection, unlike any other excavated in Charleston (Zierden et al. 2019). Colonoware, a locally made low-fired and hand-built coarse earthenware, is found in both urban and rural Lowcountry contexts (Figure 4). It is viewed by many as a product of syncretism and by most as a product of various cultural encounters. Colonoware analysis under the DAACS system and protocols is still ongoing for the 1991/2002 component (results to be discussed in Platt's forthcoming dissertation at Syracuse University), and examples from Herold contexts are currently included in a broader analysis of communities of practice in colonoware production in the Lowcountry spearheaded by Jon Bernard Marcoux and Corey Sattes. However, cataloging and analysis of the complete colonoware assemblage under the Charleston Museum protocols, led by Anthony, was fully undertaken by museum archaeologists and volunteers in 2019. Museum research of the colonoware assemblage has been particularly revealing in terms of the diversity of the human lives that passed through this Church Street property.

Figure 4. Colonoware sherds excavated at the Heyward-Washington House. Photograph courtesy of Sarah E. Platt.

Heyward-Washington Colonoware

At least four Lowcountry colonoware varieties, as identified by Anthony and others, are found within the Heyward-Washington assemblage: Yaughan, Lesesne, River Burnished, and the most recently defined variety, Stobo, all named, except for River Burnished, after plantation sites in the region (see Anthony 1986, 2016; Ferguson 1989; Wheaton et al. 1983). Excavations at the Heyward-Washington House have also yielded a notable number of colonial period Native American complicated stamped, incised, and red-filmed ceramics (Zierden et al. 2019). Additionally, a number of colonoware sherds from the property in mid-eighteenth-century contexts appear to have a particular style of rouletted surface decorations (Sattes and Platt, this issue). This possibly is the first evidence found to date in North America demonstrating an identifiable African potting tradition on colonoware (Sattes and Platt, this issue).

Briefly, the majority of the Yaughan variety is believed to have been manufactured and used primarily by rural enslaved Africans and African-descended people. Yaughan vessels are likely a utilitarian pottery, often with crudely smoothed and/or burnished surfaces and exhibiting a laminar fine to medium sandy paste. These vessels, primarily occurring as hemispherical bowls and globular jars, may not have uniform wall thicknesses. Lesesne colonoware, a probable market ware, appears to be the oldest of the currently defined varieties. In rural areas it is associated, more so than the Yaughan type, with higher socioeconomic status occupations. In downtown Charleston, it is the most frequently found colonoware variety. Lesesne exhibits thinner and more uniform vessel wall thicknesses and is more well finished than Yaughan. Well smoothed and burnished, Lesesne is virtually temperless and often shows burnishing marks. Although dominated numerically by bowl and jar forms, Lesesne assemblages appear the most diverse, with several containing vessels exhibiting European attributes such as "ring bases," support podes, and coggled rims, among others.

Unlike the case with Lesesne, the producers of River Burnished colonoware are known. River Burnished, a late eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth-century form of colonoware, was produced by the Catawba indigenous community. This association is supported archaeologically and historically. Like Lesesne, it is primarily a market ware. River Burnished is normally characterized by well-burnished, often polished surfaces that at times exhibit reddish and black paint. This pottery is well fired with a micaceous paste. It is usually thinner, harder, and burnished more completely and evenly than the Lesesne type (Anthony 2016; Cranford 2016; Ferguson 1989; Zierden et al. 2019).

Figure 5. A cross section of the Stobo colonoware type. Photograph courtesy of Ronald W. Anthony.

Stobo colonoware, recovered consistently since the 1980s in downtown Charleston, is characterized by many of the physical attributes associated with Lesesne colonoware, with the obvious exception of its defining coarse to very coarse temper and paste (Figure 5). Temper frequency can vary on rural sites; however, in Charleston, this variety is most often thin, well fired, and has a reduced, dark colored paste (Anthony 2016; Zierden et al. 2019). Due primarily to observed morphological characteristics, Stobo colonoware is believed to be a colonial market ware associated with Native Americans potters, quite possibly groups referred to in primary historic records as "neighbor or settlement Indians" (Anthony 2016; Nyman 2011; Steen 2012). It may have been produced by enslaved Native Americans on plantations as well (Anthony 2016).

The colonoware encountered at the Heyward-Washington House supports chronological inferences from other sites regarding the age and/or popularity of various colonoware varieties. Intact contexts suggest that Lesesne colonoware is likely the oldest and the most popular variety diachronically in downtown Charleston, while Yaughan is found to generally gain popularity by the mid-eighteenth century, existing at least until the early nineteenth century.

Preliminary tabulations of these types have indicated that the earliest assemblages on the property, associated with the Milners, are dominated by the Stobo variety and comparatively high numbers of identifiable Native American wares relative to other Charleston sites (Zierden et al. 2019). Stobo, while remaining the least frequently encountered variety overall at urban Charleston sites, seems to have surged in use and popularity in the early to mid-eighteenth century, disappearing by the 1780s at Heyward-Washington. Stobo and the stamped and red-filmed Native American ceramics at the Heyward-Washington House support the contention of a substantial presence of indigenous communities in the Lowcountry during the eighteenth century. This is at odds with the traditional belief that most had fled the region following the Yamasee War (Anthony 2016; Nyman 2011; Steen 2012).

This high proportion of Native American wares in the earliest archaeological deposits on the Heyward-Washington property is intriguing when considered alongside recent research by Charleston County Public Libraries historian Nic Butler (2019). The first owner of 87 Church Street to physically occupy the property was gunsmith John Milner Sr., who also served as royal armorer for the colonial government. Over the course of his own research on the early administrative documents of Charleston's colonial government, Butler uncovered records indicating visiting Native American delegations had likely been sent to Milner to have their guns repaired (Zierden et al. 2019). While the relationship between the ceramic deposits and these interactions documented in the archival record still need to be fully unpacked, by opening old boxes and pawing through yellowed catalog cards, exciting new research avenues have been uncovered.

Conclusion

The Heyward-Washington House archaeological collections will make an appearance in a number of the articles in this special section, including those by Sattes and Platt and by Zierden and others. The ongoing work with this legacy collection remains highly collaborative, as archaeologists across numerous institutions mobilize the Heyward-Washington House as a useful microcosm of Charleston society across multiple ethnic and economic class lines. Exciting new research continues to complicate and expand understandings of this crucial southern socioeconomic and political waypoint in the Atlantic World, but some of the most startling discoveries have come from the results of excavations already 50 years old.

References Cited

Anthony, Ronald W.
1986 Colono Ware. In *Home Upriver: Rural Life on Daniel's Island*, by Martha Zierden, Lesley Drucker, and Jeanne Calhoun, pp. 7-22–7-51. Report on file, South Carolina Department of Highways and Public Transportation, Columbia.
2016 Revisiting Colono Ware Variety in the South Carolina Lowcountry. *South Carolina Antiquities* 48:27–39.

Butler, Nic
2019 The Story Behind Ropemaker's Lane. *Charleston Time Machine* (blog), January 18, 2019. https://www.ccpl.org/charleston-time-machine/story-behind-ropemakers-lane, accessed April 13, 2020.

Cranford, David J.
2016 Trends and Techniques of Catawba Colonoware, ca. 1760–1800. Paper presented at the 81st Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Orlando, Florida.

Ferguson, Leland G.
1989 Lowcountry Plantations, the Catawba Nation, and River Burnished Pottery. In *Studies in South Carolina Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Stephenson*, edited by Albert C. Goodyear and Glen T. Hanson, pp. 185–192. Anthropological Studies 9. South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Herold, Elaine B.
1978 *Preliminary Report on the Research at the Heyward-Washington House*. Report prepared for the Charleston Museum, Charleston, South Carolina.

Nyman, James A.
2011 The Ashley Series as Native American Persistence: Lowcountry Indians in the Period of European Expansion. Master's thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Steen, Carl
2012 An Archaeology of the Settlement Indians of the South Carolina Lowcountry. *South Carolina Antiquities* 44:19–34.

Weyeneth, Robert R.
2000 *Historic Preservation for a Living City: Historic Charleston Foundation, 1947–1997*. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia.

Wheaton, Thomas R., Amy Friedlander, and Patrick H. Garrow
1983 *Yaughan and Curriboo Plantations: Studies in Afro-American Archaeology*. Soil Systems Inc., Marietta, Georgia. Report on file with the National Park Service, Atlanta, Georgia.

Zierden, Martha, Ron Anthony, Nic Butler, Jon Marcoux, and Sarah Platt
2019 The Royal Armorer, Visiting Indian Delegations, and Colonoware at the Heyward-Washington House: Tales from a Legacy Collection. Paper presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Jackson, Mississippi.

Zierden, Martha A., and Elizabeth J. Reitz
2007 *Charleston through the Eighteenth Century: Archaeology at the Heyward-Washington House Stable*. Archaeological Contributions 39. Charleston Museum, Charleston, South Carolina.