

SUMMARY

Rice Cultivation

This study provides the first thorough overview of eighteenth century rice cultivation, processing, and marketing for the South Carolina region. While there is perhaps more that could be found with further research, this synthesis provides a very effective context for understanding the development of Carolina's dependence on rice in the eighteenth century. It traces the history of rice cultivation through upland cultivation (which continued as a means of providing "pure" seed well into the nineteenth century) to rainfed lowland cultivation to irrigated cultivation.

While most see the role African Americans played in the introduction of rice cultivation as a central question, we believe that this detracts from other significant issues, such as the role of seed improvement and the role of mechanized processing. In addition, while it is perhaps intriguing to speculate on the role the enslaved played in this commercialization of this crop, there has yet to be any thorough research on cultivation techniques already well understood by Europeans from Portugal, Spain, or Italy. Until these antecedents are carefully documented, it is gratuitous to attribute rice cultivation techniques to African Americans. Research time could be far better spent researching and proving, or disproving, European origins.

Another significant, but often overlooked issue, is the late eighteenth century evolution from inland swamps with reservoirs to the use of tidal irrigation. While previous researchers have well described the technology, there has been little interest in understanding why, or how, this change took place. We have found that Chaplin (1993) provides an imminently reasonable explanation, explaining

that the social and economic upheaval of the American Revolution provided a springboard for the abandonment of old processes and the adoption of new ideas. In essence Carney explains that change in Carolina's well established and conservative planting community took place only in the face of crisis. And it was the crisis of the Revolution, taking its toll on established rice plantations, that turned ambitious rice planters away from their moderately successful inland fields to vast new uncleared tidal tracts.

This process first involved the wealthiest planters, not because they were any more forward thinking, but rather because they had the capital - enslaved African Americans - against which to borrow the funds necessary to enter this era. For many the choice came down to either rebuilding inland plantations, where the limits of profitability were well known and the process well understood, or building new plantations where the possibilities appeared boundless.

Chaplin notes that with each step of the process, each expansion from dry to swamp and from swamp to tidal, there was the requirement for a greater infusion of labor, and that required more investment of capital in African American slaves. This demand created, and then maintained, the black majority along the Carolina coast. But it had other affects as well. For example, with each advancement the working conditions deteriorated, causing more slaves to run-off, persistently eroding whites' authority over their property. Further authority was given up with the development of the task system. And with the task system came questions of fairness and equality of the tasks assigned - causing yet further erosion in the power of white masters over their black slaves. Even as the system expanded, became more

productive, and created greater wealth, the seeds of its own destruction had already been sown. Moreover, as the economic discussion reveals, while some made great fortunes, by the second quarter of the nineteenth century rice had entered an economic slump from which it would never recover.

History of the Mazyck Tract

In spite of their early prominence, the Mazyck's left few accounts of their social history and no plantation records. Even the land records are difficult to interpret since no eighteenth century plats exist and the land was retained in the same family, resulting in vague descriptions of boundaries. Consequently, the reconstruction of activities on what came to be known as the Liberty Hall tract are sketchy at best. Nevertheless, we have found indications that support our context of eighteenth century rice cultivation.

Isaac Mazyck arrived in Charleston 1686 and by 1700 was clearly prosperous as a merchant. Exemplifying the trend for retiring merchants to become gentlemen planters, Mazyck used his commercial fortune to buy plantation land in Goose Creek – an easy trip from Charleston and the favored rural neighborhood of many early Huguenot families. The Liberty Hall parcel seems to have been acquired by 1726 and was at least raising cattle, if not rice.

At his death in 1736, much of his large estate was left to be sold for distribution among his heirs. In 1737 Benjamin Mazyck acquired the 900 acre Liberty Hall tract for £5,200. There is some evidence that, like other early plantation owners, Benjamin pursued a mixture of endeavors on his Foster's Creek plantation, including rice, brick making, cutting timber, and probably ranching. The Liberty Hall tract, however, never seems to have been a country seat, but was always a working plantation. There is good evidence that the neighboring Springfield Plantation, owned by Benjamin's

nephew Stephen Mazyck, was considered the family retreat.

During the Revolution the Mazycks actively supported the American forces and, at the conclusion of the war, Benjamin submitted a claim for £428.5.5 that included rice (straw, cleaned, and rough), wood, corn blades, sheep, beef, and lead balls. This gives some additional indication of the activities taking place on Benjamin's tracts.

We speculate that while Benjamin recovered from the economic setbacks of the Revolution he was middle aged and does not appear to have chosen to invest in the new tidal lands – he apparently chose the conservative path of maintaining his existing properties rather than seeking additional fortune elsewhere. It seems unlikely, however, that much effort was spent in rejuvenating the existing rice lands.

With Benjamin's death in 1800, the property passed to son Stephen as a trust. He provided Stephen with the benefits of the property, but prevented the tract from being encumbered by his debts. After Stephen's death his wife would have use of the property, and it would then pass to Stephen's children.

We note that Stephen seems to have justified his father's caution. Either unwise or unlucky, Stephen failed to add to his inheritance and died in 1808 with heavy debts. The Liberty Hall tract – almost certainly unprofitable – passed to Stephen's three children, Benjamin, Alexander Stephen, and Paul. By 1827 a case was brought to divide or dispose of the property. Heard in 1834, all of Stephen's children were dead and the plantation was ordered to be sold. The advertisement portrays a plantation where the early inland reserve system was still in place, but one that may not have been planted in recent years. The plantation was probably not being heavily cultivated, although new slave cabins had recently been constructed – indicating that there was some activity on the

tract. The property was acquired by Mazyck's son-in-law, Charles L. Desel, a wealthy Charleston merchant.

There is no more information concerning his activities on the parcel than there had been for earlier residents. We are, however, inclined to believe that this represents one last, and largely vain, attempt to keep the property in family hands and to maintain a way of life that had already passed them by.

The historical account suggests that the Mazyck's were unable, or unwilling, to adopt to the new technologies and changes that accompanied the Revolution. They sought to maintain the status quo - with predictable economic results.

The Archaeological Studies

The archaeological research at 38BK1900 revealed two distinct occupations. The earliest on the site, at Areas B and D (the two most western), yielded mean ceramic dates of 1734 and 1736. These dates suggest occupation began during the initial ownership of Isaac Mazyck and extended into the period of his son, Benjamin's, ownership. The recovered materials strongly suggest that both sites were abandoned by the time of the American Revolution - perhaps earlier.

While the dates are nearly identical, the two sites are otherwise very different. The materials found in Area B include architectural remains such as window glass, plaster, and abundant brick - all suggesting a relatively higher status dwelling. The ceramics are primarily European, although Colono wares are found in the assemblage. These Colono wares closely resemble those found at other Goose Creek locations. The paste consistently includes a relatively large proportion of grit, although it is well smoothed. Rim diameters range from 5 to 14 inches divided between jar and shallow bowl forms, with the greatest number being about 8 inches in diameter. Charring or sooting is

common on the bowls, suggests their use in fire for cooking, perhaps as "Dutch ovens." This slave-made pottery accounts for 43% of the ceramic assemblage - far exceeding anything found at Broom Hall or Crowfield. It is likely that these results reflect both the economics of the times, as well as the status of the individuals at Area B.

Utilitarian wares represent slightly over 29% of the collection - a very high percentage compared to other eighteenth century sites in the area. The tableware vessels found are almost exclusively hollow ware - indicative of stews and other one-pot meals.

Area B also produced arms-related items, personal goods, a very large quantity of tobacco items, and at least a few clothing and toy items. This results in an artifact pattern that closely resembles the Revised Carolina Artifact Pattern - suggestive of whites during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The faunal remains from Area B are unique in that they include a very large quantity of cow, but no evidence of other domestic mammals. Wild species, such as possum, raccoon, are all suggestive of opportunistic catches in close proximity to the settlement. The cow remains exhibit a range of cuts and provide clear evidence through hack marks of on-site butchering. This suggests that cattle were a common commodity on the plantation and comprised a bulk of the meat for the residents at Area B.

We believe that Area B represents the dwelling for a white overseer's family in the very early eighteenth century. This may be the only well-documented eighteenth century overseer in the Charleston area and it provides a unique glimpse of the life of those working on a rice plantation. The settlement was situated on the edge of the rice swamp - but was on the highest ground available for settlement. The structure did include enough brick for piers and probably a chimney, but was other of frame

construction. The occupant, based on the artifacts and especially the ceramics and faunal remains, was certainly not of planter status.

In contrast, Area D provides a very different picture. The site was occupied at the same time as the overseer's dwelling, but the remains are very different. There is almost no indication of architectural remains, suggesting ephemeral, ground-fast construction. European ceramics are nearly absent, while Colono wares are abundant, comprising 85% of the kitchen collection. These Colono wares are indistinguishable from those recovered at the overseer's structure in Area B. They, too, have a gritty paste, evidence of sooting, and both jar and bowl vessel forms (with most having a diameter of about 7 inches). Arms artifacts are absent, as are clothing items, personal goods, and toys. Even tobacco related items are found in low numbers. The assemblage, in all regards, is impoverished.

When the artifact pattern is examined we find that it closely resembles that of the Carolina Slave Pattern - typically found at eighteenth century slave sites.

These data strongly suggest that we have a small, very early eighteenth century slave settlement associated with the rice fields at Liberty Hall. The settlement was located on very low land, situated within a protective dike.

These two settlements provide a clear juxtaposition of lifeways - overseer and slave - on early eighteenth century rice plantations. While we are accustomed to recognizing slavery as an evil institution, we rarely have the opportunity to compare and contrast early eighteenth century settlements in this fashion. And, as mentioned earlier, there are even fewer opportunities to examine the lifeways of an early eighteenth century overseer. This is particularly troubling since Morgan (1998:326) estimates that far more than one in two plantations in the eighteenth century low country were operated not by owners, but by

white overseers. This class of poor whites - in spite of its large numbers - has been even more invisible in archaeological research than the ubiquitous African American slave. The results of this study reveal a family over very limited means living on middling and lower cuts of meat, virtually all prepared as stews, and all butchered on site. The family had a very large number of storage vessels, but almost no plates or other fineries.

In addition to these early eighteenth century settlements, we investigated two very early nineteenth century loci. Identified as Areas A and C, both were located to the east on higher and drier ground than Area D. Both have a mean ceramic date of 1804, suggesting contemporaneous occupation. Both were settled shortly after the Revolution, perhaps about 1790, and both were abandoned about 1830. The settlement period suggests a reorganization of the plantation after the Revolution - perhaps associated with the death of Benjamin Mazyck or perhaps only with the end of hostilities and an effort to renew plantation activities. The termination of the two settlements appears to coincide with the suit brought to dispose of the property. We know that by 1854 (the date of the only plat available) a new settlement had been constructed southeast of Areas A and C. We believe that Desel, with his acquisition of the plantation in 1834, shifted the core of the plantation - building for the first time a main house and relocating all of the slave settlements in a nucleated row.

The two settlements found in Areas A and C appear very similar and, we believe, are likely the location of individual slave structures. At both we found primarily European ceramics (comprising and 60-64% of the kitchen artifacts); with relatively small quantities of Colono ware pottery. Pearlwares are most common in both collections and whitewares are entirely absent (supporting the abandonment of these locations around 1830). While the samples of Colono ware are hardly sufficient to make any detailed

observations, they appear indistinguishable from those found at the far earlier settlements.

Other artifacts are relatively uncommon. Architectural remains are limited to nails, with very low quantities of brick. This suggests that the structures at the site continue to represent earthfast and relatively ephemeral buildings. Tobacco, arms, and clothing items are scarce. While personal items are also uncommon, two specimens at Area C - a blue bead and fragment of mirror - may represent African American activities that may go unrecognized in archaeological studies.

The artifact pattern from Areas A and C - especially in the key groups of kitchen and architecture - are in line with the Carolina Slave Artifact Pattern in spite of the nineteenth century date. This suggests that efforts at ameliorating the conditions of slavery had not yet reached this particular Goose Creek plantation and that conditions were still very much as they had been in the early eighteenth century, nearly 100 years earlier.

While these investigations failed to reveal intact architectural remains or to provide faunal remains outside the overseer's quarter, the findings are still very significant for our understanding of rice plantations in the Goose Creek area. Not only do we have data from an early eighteenth century overseer, but we also have data that suggest conditions did not radically improve during the first third of the nineteenth century for at least some enslaved African Americans. Coupled with the historic overview of rice cultivation, 38BK1900 has provided important information concerning the early history of Goose Creek.

