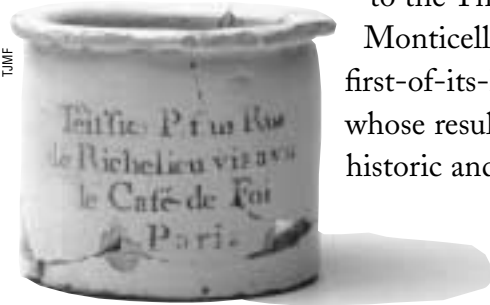




Digital Archaeological Archive First of Its Kind

The Digital Archaeological Archive of Chesapeake Slavery is off and running. A \$600,600 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation and the Monticello Archaeology Department has made possible this first-of-its-kind project in the field of archaeology, a project whose results are likely to have far-reaching impact on both historic and prehistoric archaeology. The digital archive's significance lies in its innovative design and the



French apothecary jar found at the site of one of the slave dwellings along Monticello's Mulberry Row.
















opportunity it provides for comparative archaeological research over the Internet.

Over the next four years DAAC Project Manager Jillian Galle and two archaeological analysts will catalog artifactual, textual, and geo-spatial data from 20 excavated slave sites in the Chesapeake region. Galle estimates that by the end 2003 she and the archaeological analysts will have cataloged close to a million artifacts.

"This is the first time that artifacts from such important sites as Monticello, Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, and Poplar Forest will be brought together and placed on the same analytical plane," Galle said. "By putting the archive on the Internet, we will also be making these data fully comparable and accessible to the entire archaeological community and the public."

Not only will the comparative data allow archaeologists and historians to

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probe social and cultural change among enslaved populations in the Chesapeake, but the archive also will provide the public with glimpses of some of the most significant and surprising artifacts to be found to date at slave sites. Images of objects such as European trade beads, coins, children's toys, and objects with possible spiritual properties, will be part of the archive. In addition to raw data and artifact images, the Web site also

will contain multi-layered, "clickable" CAD (Computer

Aided Design) site plans that will give users another way to navigate the archive.

*Digital Archaeological Archive
of Chesapeake Slavery*



Since the beginning of the project in early May, Galle and Foundation Director of Archaeology Fraser Neiman have been designing the backbone of the archive, an SQL (Structured Query Language) database. This massive database is designed to contain data on more than a million artifacts, ranging from ceramics, glass, beads, buttons, and tobacco pipes to nails, hardware, and architectural artifacts. One major design challenge has been in reconciling the information from six institutions that use a variety of artifact-cataloging systems. In addition, Galle has discovered that each institution describes artifacts in slightly, and sometimes drastically, different ways.

"One surprising aspect of this project is seeing just how differently archaeologists working within a 100-mile radius talk about artifacts," Galle said. "The greatest contribution the archive can make will be the standardization it brings to the way artifacts are analyzed in the Chesapeake. We also hope archaeologists working in other regions will adopt this cataloging system, especially after the data structures are made available over the Internet."

One way the daac is guaranteeing widespread acceptance is by involving its Steering Committee every step of the way. In October, DAAC Steering Committee members convened at Kenwood, home of the International Center for Jefferson Studies, for a two-day workshop.

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“The purpose of the Steering Committee workshop was to bring together 25 of the region’s most active and influential archaeologists and historians to discuss the design and goals of the archive,” said Neiman. “By using a consensus-building process, we will make sure that the archive meets the analytical needs of the region’s archaeological programs. We also hope that these programs will both endorse and use the archive’s database in their own laboratories.”

The archive also will have an impact on the understanding of slavery at Monticello. “I am certain that the archive will help us grasp how Monticello slavery differed from slavery on other farms and plantations in the Chesapeake,” said Archaeology Field Manager Sara Bon-Harper. “The data in the archive will also contribute to our understanding of Monticello slave dwelling sites that we are just now discovering through the Plantation Survey.”

After Neiman and Galle have finalized the design of the archive’s database, data entry will begin. The intensive work on the artifact collections will not begin until January 2001, when the two archaeological analysts will start cataloging eight sites from Monticello and Williamsburg. Galle and the analysts will then set their sights on the spring of 2002, when the Digital Archaeological Archive of Chesapeake Slavery is to be placed on the Internet.

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