

Th: Jefferson

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Monticello Archaeologists Discover Jefferson-era Artifacts, Slave Homes, and Other Dwellings on Farm Near Monticello

Monticello archaeologists have discovered two previously unknown archaeological sites that contain nineteenth century artifacts including remains of slave homes—some from Jefferson’s time. The sites were discovered at Tufton, historically significant as one of Thomas Jefferson’s four quarter farms located about a mile and a quarter east of Monticello.

Monticello archaeologists discovered the sites in April while conducting survey work at Tufton as part of an ongoing research initiative: the Monticello Plantation Archaeological Survey.

A preliminary assessment of the artifacts indicates the earlier of the two sites was occupied in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, most likely by enslaved field laborers who worked on the Tufton farm.

Archaeologists recovered significant Jefferson-era artifacts including a padlock that matches one found on Mulberry Row, a glass bead, a slate pencil, a metal coat button, and scores of datable ceramic sherds in refined English earthenware and some

Chinese porcelain.

The archaeological sites are significant in size. The site with the earlier artifacts measures about 875 by 500 feet, the later 750 by 200 feet.

“This is the biggest cluster of Jefferson-era artifacts we have found since we discovered Site 8 in 1998,” said Fraser Neiman, director of Archaeology at Monticello.

“We believe there is still more to discover at Tufton, including the location of houses of slaves and overseers from the mid-eighteenth century, when the property was farmed by Thomas Jefferson’s father Peter, and from the late eighteenth century, when Thomas Jefferson assumed management of the property,” said Neiman.

In last year’s survey work at Tufton, archaeologists discovered a small late-eighteenth-century site adjacent to the Macon’s antebellum mansion. Jefferson’s survey plats reveal that Elizabeth Hemings, the matriarch of Monticello’s Hemings family, lived there in the early 1790s.

RIGHT: This padlock discovered by archaeologists matches one previously found on Mulberry Row.



BELOW: Artifacts recovered at two newly discovered sites: a slate pencil, a brass button, a glass bead, a Chinese porcelain plate fragment, and a sherd of a pearlware teapot lid.

