

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING OF PORTIONS OF THE MEADOWMONT PROPERTY,
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL**

by

I. Randolph Daniel, Jr.

Technical Report No. 24

**Research Laboratories of Anthropology
University of North Carolina
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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

During the June of 1996, the Research Laboratories of Anthropology conducted archaeological testing on portions of a 27 ac tract east of Chapel Hill known as Meadowmont. Included on the property is a 34-room mansion built in 1933 by David St. Pierre DuBose. The mansion and grounds are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. DuBose bequeathed the property to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1988. This property was also the former location of the Barbee family plantation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Two historic features associated with the plantation (designated 31Dh628**), were evaluated archaeologically in a recent study by the Research Laboratories of Anthropology. The two features include a cemetery containing Barbee family members and slaves as well as the stone foundation that was tentatively identified as the remains of Christopher Barbee's house.

A substantial portion of the property is slated for development by the university. The potential impact of this construction on the archaeological and historic remains in three areas of the property identified in a previous study were evaluated during this project. Each of the three areas was examined by close interval shovel testing. Both prehistoric and historic remains, but primarily the latter, were recovered during this testing. Areas 2 and 3 contain low density artifact scatters on a heavily landscaped portion of the grounds. While no further archaeological work is recommended for these two areas, it is recommended that an archaeologist be allowed to monitor ground disturbing activities in a small corner of the area for the potential presence of subsurface features or other significant archaeological remains. Area 1, on the other hand, contains a fairly extensive scatter of historic remains associated with a stone foundation. Since this area will be minimally impacted during construction, no further archaeological work is recommended. Archaeological monitoring, however, is also recommended for those portions of Area 1 that will be impacted by ground disturbing activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several people aided in the undertaking of this project. Michael Berry and Gordon Rutherford of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill helped facilitate the fieldwork at Meadowmont. Dolores Hall provided advice through the Office of State Archaeology. Fieldwork and report preparation were completed with the logistical support of the Research Laboratories of Anthropology. Tom Maher assisted with the fieldwork. Trawick Ward guided the implementation of the project and commented on a draft of this report. Finally, Estella Stansbury and Brenda Moore provided secretarial support.

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The purpose of this report is to present the results of an archaeological survey of certain portions of the Meadowmont property owned by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Meadowmont covers approximately 27 acres on a hilltop that lies about 3 miles east of the university along NC 54 just inside the Durham County line (Figure 1). Included on the property is the 34-room mansion built in 1933 by the late David St. Pierre DuBose. DuBose bequeathed the property to his alma mater in 1988. The mansion and grounds are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Two historic features are also located on the property that predate the DuBose ownership: a nineteenth century cemetery and a nearby stone foundation (31Dh628**, RLA Dh369). Since a substantial portion of the property is slated for development, these remains were the subject of a recent preliminary archaeological evaluation (Daniel 1996). This work defined the limits of the cemetery, located and mapped its grave sites, and conducted documentary research that placed the cemetery and stone foundation in historical context. Recommendations concerning the preservation of the cemetery and foundation were also made. In addition, a reconnaissance survey was also conducted to identify any other potential archaeological or historical remains that might be present on the property. This reconnaissance suggested that intact archaeological remains were most likely present in three areas in the northeast corner of the property. Since portions of this area are designated for hotel construction and driveway expansion, further subsurface investigation by shovel testing was proposed for this area (Daniel 1996). The results of this work are presented below.

BACKGROUND

Meadowmont was originally part of the Barbee family plantation established in the mid to late eighteenth century. Although no known documents indicate the exact number or locations of structures that existed on the plantation, sketchy documentary evidence indicates that in addition to the main residence, there would also have been a detached kitchen, barn, and other outbuildings. Several slave quarters would also have been present, although it is uncertain whether they would have been located on the mountain top itself. What does remain includes the family cemetery located on the east edge of the hilltop and a nearby stone foundation. The cemetery contains at least 120 individuals including Barbee family members and their slaves. Historical research suggests that the foundation represents the remains of Christopher Barbee's home (Daniel 1996). Christopher, of course, is of particular significance to the university community as he offered the trustees of the University of North Carolina 221 ac in 1792 on which to build the university (Battle 1974:23).

Meadowmont was acquired initially as part of a several hundred acre land grant by William Barbee who emigrated from Virginia in the early 1750s. William died shortly after his arrival in the area, and the property was divided among his children. Eventually, one of William's sons, Christopher, acquired the portion of the tract that now includes the Meadowmont property. By the 1780s Christopher owned over 2,000 ac in the area. In 1831, one year prior to his death, Christopher sold the Meadowmont tract to

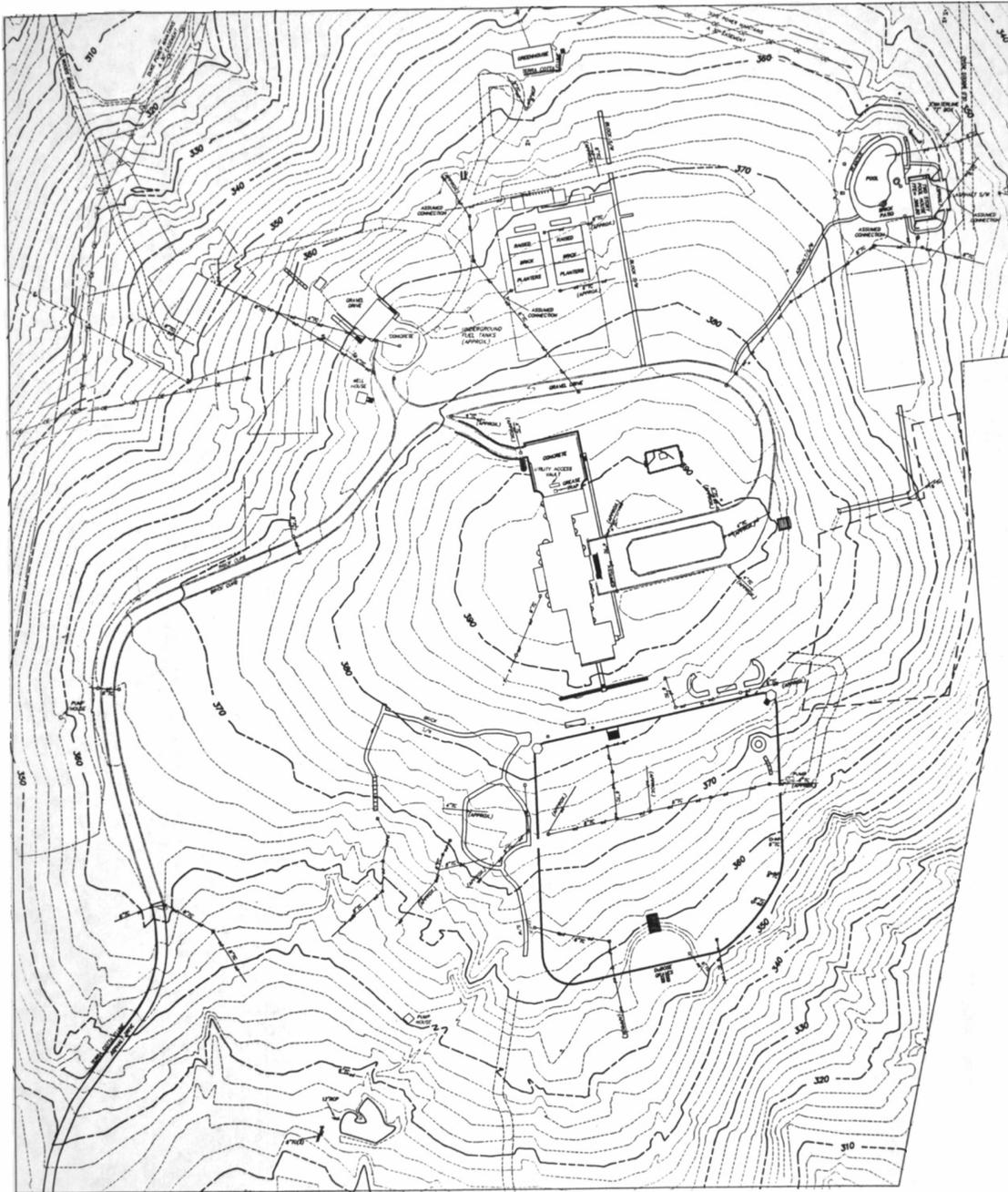


Figure 1. Meadowmont property (adapted from boundary/topographic survey map, Univeristy of North Carolina, Chapel Hill).

his son, William. Although William probably continued to farm like his father, he was involved in a number of commercial ventures in Chapel Hill, and may not have spent much of his adult life on the plantation. William died in 1857 and divided his land among his five children. William and his wife Gaskey are the only Barbee family members documented to be buried in the cemetery. Approximately 20 other family members were interred there as well, probably including Christopher and his wife (Daniel 1996).

One of William's daughters, Margaret (Barbee) Hargrave, acquired the mountain tract after her father's death. She then willed it to her son, Robert W. Hargrave. He is the last Barbee descendent to own the Meadowmont tract and sold it in 1873. Subsequently, the parcel went through several transactions and was acquired by DuBose from a real estate company in 1931 (Daniel 1996).

FIELD METHODS

As proposed in our initial report, three areas within the proposed construction zones were selected for subsurface testing (Daniel 1996). These locations included two areas on the lawn just east of the manor house near the stone foundation and one area just north of the existing turn-around drive (Figures 2-5). Shovel testing was done in each of these areas at circa 30 ft intervals along a grid aligned a few degrees west of magnetic north. Placement of the grid was facilitated by a compass and survey tape.

Each shovel test was approximately 1 ft in diameter and excavated to subsoil. Excavation was done by hand and all soil sifted through one-half inch wire mesh. Artifacts recovered from each shovel test were bagged and labeled according to provenience (Appendix 1).

Soil profiles were fairly consistent across the three areas. Excavations revealed artifacts present in a single soil zone, a dark brown loam, overlying an orange clay subsoil. The zone of dark brown loam was present just under the grass lawn to .1 - .3 ft below surface and often included roots and small rocks.

ARTIFACTS

Virtually all of the recovered artifacts were from the historic period occupation of the site. They were sorted into functional groups adapted from South's (1977:92-102) artifact classification format including: (1) Kitchen Artifact Group, (2) Architectural Artifact Group, (3) Activities Group, (4) Furniture and Furnishings Group, and (5) Faunal Remains. Isolated examples of some prehistoric artifacts were also uncovered. The historic period artifacts are described first, followed by the prehistoric artifacts.



Figure 2. Area 1 looking northwest.



Figure 3. Area 2 looking west.



Figure 4. Area 3 looking north.



Figure 5. Area 3 looking southeast.

Kitchen Artifact Group

The Kitchen Artifact Group represents those artifact classes related to subsistence activities including food preparation, consumption, and storage. Two artifact classes dominated the assemblage: ceramics and glass.

Two basic ceramic wares were identified in the assemblage: earthenware and stoneware. Earthenwares include whitewares exhibiting a permeable body (i.e., sherd edge sticks to the tongue) with irregular broken edges (Pittman 1983:22; Worthy 1982). Stonewares in the assemblage include earthtone-bodied sherds that are dense, granular, and very thick in cross-section.

Whiteware. Whitewares are the predominant pottery type in the assemblage (n=15). In cross-section, this white glazed pottery exhibits a distinct boundary between the body and glaze. Most specimens also display a tendency to craze (i.e., the glaze tends to break into a network of fine cracks). Functionally, these artifacts appear to be either plates or cups. White wares post date 1820.

Stoneware. Two earthtone-bodied types of stoneware were identified in the assemblage. The first is a salt-glazed variety (n=2). They are both body sherds. One is dark brown in color and the other is light brown. The second variety of stoneware is a single bristol-glazed, albany slip body sherd. Functionally, these types would represent storage crocks. Moreover, the salt-glazed crocks probably were manufactured locally (i.e., in the Piedmont) during the mid to late nineteenth century (Patricia Samford, personal communication 1996).

Pearlware. Three small sherds were tentatively identified as pearlwares. Although difficult to distinguish from whiteware, this type is characterized by the faint appearance of a bluish tinted glaze. Moreover, the glaze tended to spall and craze. These sherds were probably from plates and are the earliest historic wares recovered in the assemblage (circa 1780-1830) (South 1977:12).

Container glass. A total of 11 glass fragments are present in the assemblage. These artifacts were sorted by color. They include opaque white glass (n=5), clear colorless glass (n=4), green glass (n=1), and purple glass (n=1). Several functional categories appear to be present within this group. The opaque white glass specimens all came from one shovel test and represent a canning jar lid. The clear colorless artifacts probably represent medicine or panel bottles. A soda bottle (?) neck is likely represented by the single green glass artifact. Finally, a portion of a kerosene lamp base is represented by the single piece of purple pressed glass. As a group, the glass artifacts would date from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century.

Architectural Artifact Group

This group includes items associated with the architecture of any structure. It is the second most abundant functional group in the assemblage (n=30). Artifacts classified in this group include brick, nails, window glass, and metal hardware items.

Brick. A total of 14 brick specimens are present in the assemblage. While one specimen is clearly a modern red brick, the vast majority are small eroded fragments that are light orange to brown in color. Two larger specimens, however, were recovered from Area 1. They are similar in color to the small fragments, rather lightweight, and exhibit voids on their interior. As such, the majority of these bricks may be associated with the foundation remains.

Nails. Eight nails were recovered during the project. Both machine cut (n=5) and wire nails (3) are present in this group. Cut nails were produced beginning about 1790, while wire nails appeared around 1850 (Noel-Hume 1982:252-254).

Window glass. Three small fragments of window glass are present in the assemblage.

Metal hardware. Metal hardware items include two possible iron hinge fragments and one other unidentified curved, tabular-shaped piece of hardware.

Activities Artifact Group

The Activities group comprise a number of artifact types that represent a wide range of cultural behaviors. Only a few items of this group are present in the assemblage. They include small lead sheet fragments (n=2), wire fragments (barbed wire?) (n=4), and a very small thin piece of unidentified metal.

Furniture and Furnishing Artifact Group

This group includes furniture parts or hardware, and home furnishings. A single artifact type—a piece of mirror glass—was identified in this group.

Faunal Remains

The probable food remains—a possible pig's tooth—of a single animal was recovered during the fieldwork.

Prehistoric Artifacts

Two stone thinning flakes representing the by products of tool or core reduction were also recovered in the shovel tests. They are not particularly diagnostic of any prehistoric time period and thus could represent the prehistoric presence of Native Americans on the hilltop any time during the last 12,000 years.

RESULTS

As outlined in our previous report, three areas within the proposed construction zones were chosen for subsurface testing. They are located in the northeast section of the tract encompassing sections of the lawn east and north of the manor house. Each area has been landscaped and contains sparsely occurring trees. The results of testing each areas is discussed below.

Area 1. Area 1 covers approximately 10,800 sq ft and is located just east of the manor house. This area also contains the stone foundation. A total of 21 shovel tests were excavated within the area surrounding the foundation (Figure 6). A total of 55 artifacts were recovered from 15 of those shovel tests. Although sample size is small the assemblage is dominated by artifacts from the Kitchen (47.3%) and Architecture (41.8%) groups. Minor frequencies of the Activities (7.3%) and Furniture and Furnishings (1.8%) groups and Faunal remains (1.8%) constitute the rest of the assemblage (Appendix 1).

Area 2. Area 2 covers approximately 5400 sq ft and is located south of Area 1 and south of the gravel drive (Figure 6). Thirteen shovel tests were dug in Area 2, six of which produced cultural remains. Only 12 artifacts—including pottery, brick, nails, and wire—were recovered from these units. Of interest, however, is the presence of a single pearlware sherd that hints at a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century presence on the site. A single prehistoric flake was also recovered from this area.

Area 3. Area 3 covers approximately 16,200 sq ft and was located north of Area 1 on the north side of the gravel drive (Figure 7). Twenty-nine shovel tests were dug in Area 3, only four of which produced cultural material. These four pits were concentrated in the southeast portion of the area. While it was originally planned to dig approximately twice the number of shovel tests, testing was terminated when it became apparent that few positive tests existed beyond the southern edge of the area. As with Area 2, the artifact count from this area was very low (n=5). Likewise, Area 3 also produced minor evidence of a late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century presence in the form of two pearlware sherds. Finally, slight evidence of some prehistoric activity is indicated in the area by the recovery of a single prehistoric stone flake.

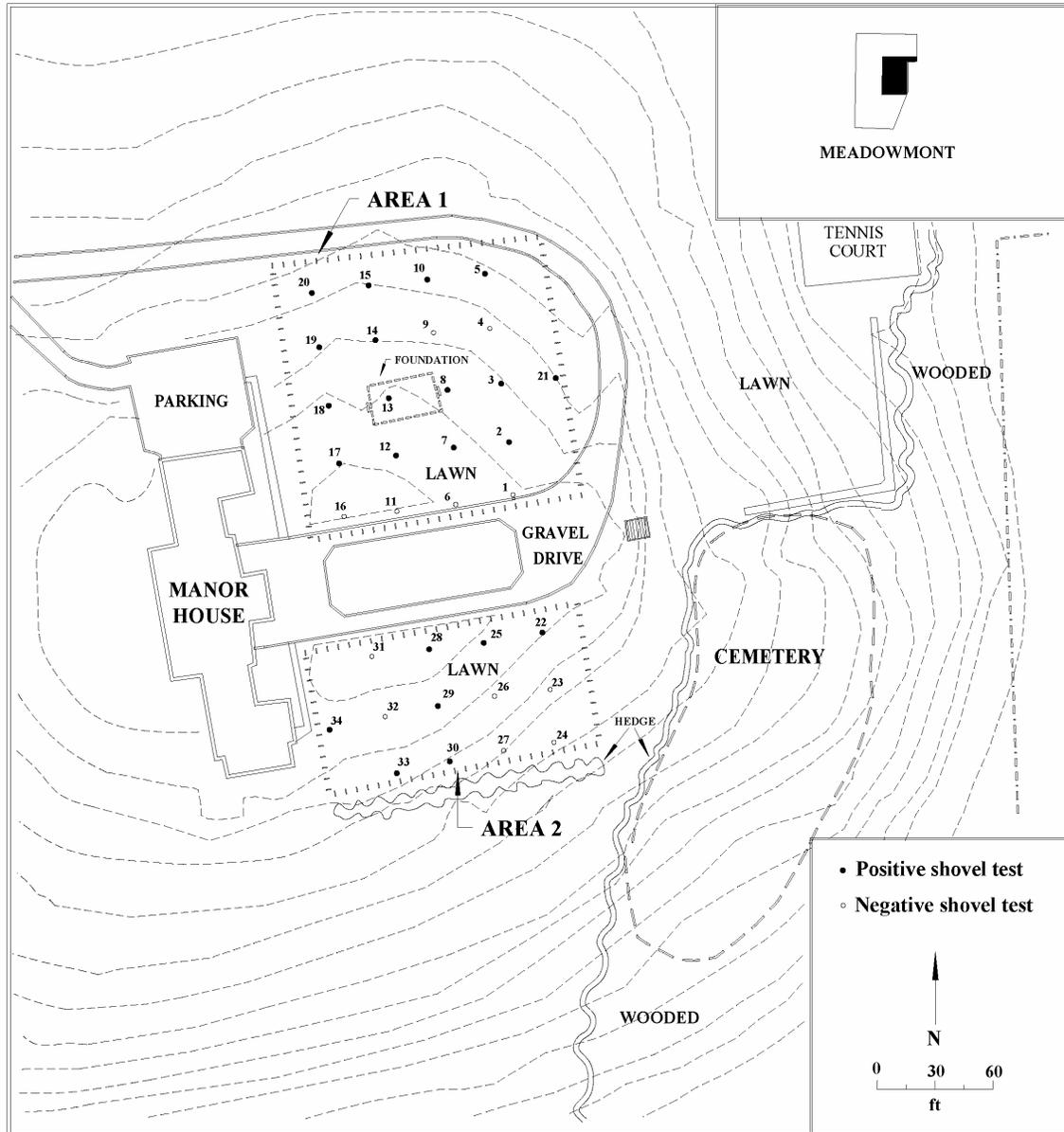


Figure 6. Shovel test locations in Areas 1 and 2 (adapted from boundary/topographic map, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.)

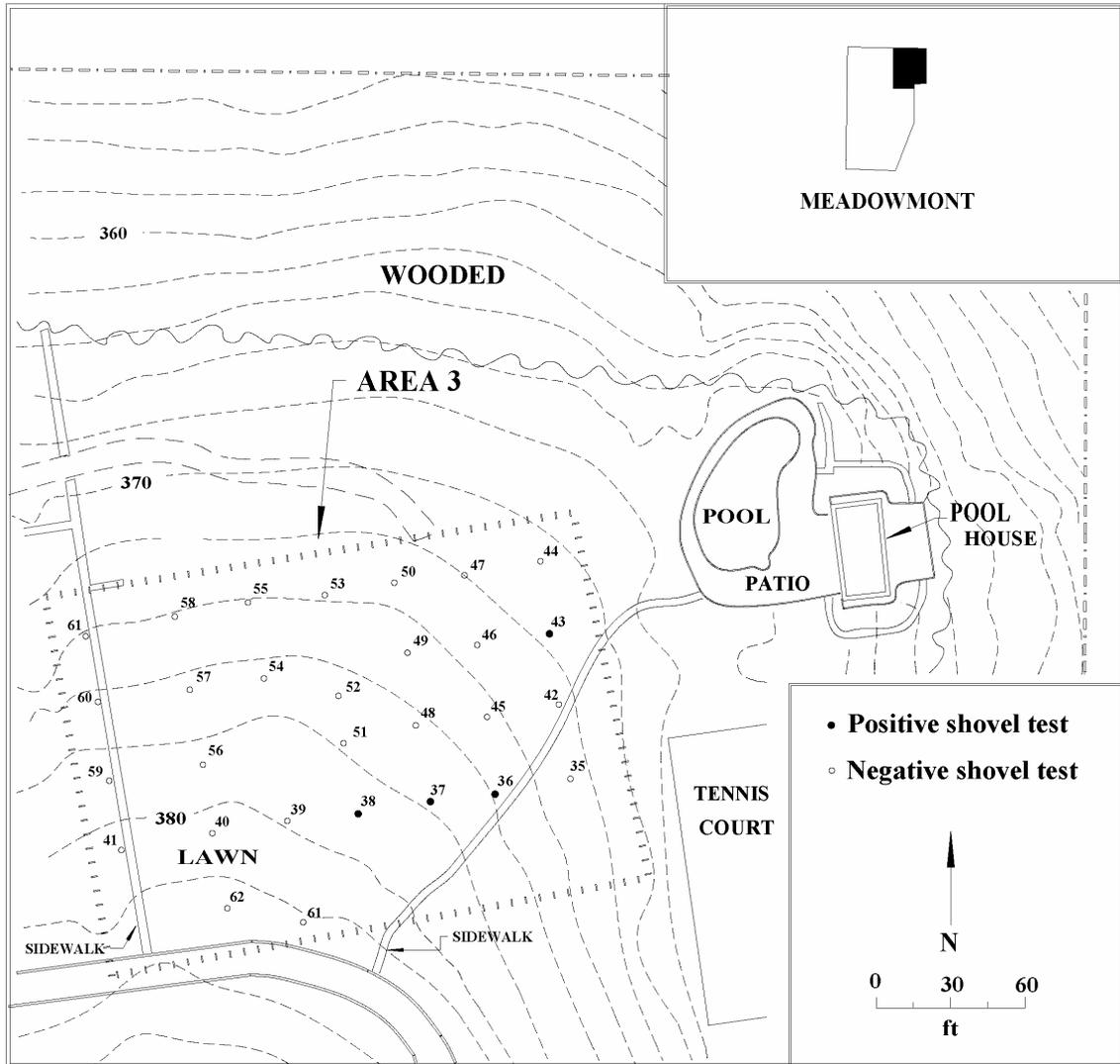


Figure 7. Shovel test locations in Area 3 (adapted from boundary/topographic map, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These data provide some preliminary evidence concerning the function and age of the structural remains in Area 1. Given the relatively large size of the foundations (37 x 13 ft) and the two chimney footings, we originally identified the structure as house (Daniel 1996). The recovery of high frequencies of artifacts from Area 1 associated with the Kitchen Group suggests that the interpretation of a residence or kitchen still seems warranted.

The exact age of the structure, however, is somewhat more difficult to answer. Based upon documentary research, we originally suggested that the house was built by Christopher Barbee as part of the plantation he established on the hilltop some time during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. While some pearlware sherds were recovered during our work that are consistent with the date of such an occupation, they were not recovered in the immediate vicinity of the foundation. Rather, they were discovered in Areas 2 and 3, south and north of the structural remains. Furthermore, the ceramics that were associated with the foundation were all produced some time after 1820 which would imply a nineteenth century date for the structure—a date too late to represent the home built by Christopher.

If the structure was constructed after Christopher's death, it begs the question of who built the structure. Christopher's son William comes to mind, but documentary accounts do not indicate this possibility as very likely. As noted in our previous report, William sold all the house and farm furnishings in 1834 shortly after his father's death (Daniel 1996). This occurrence combined with the fact that William had a house in downtown Chapel Hill plus a plantation on Morgan Creek suggests that he would have little need to build another home on his father's plantation.

In this case, the structure would have to have been built by a later owner of the property. If true, there is no documentary evidence of whom that might be. Although the property went through several hands after Christopher's death—including some Barbee descendants—there is no known record of anyone actually living on the property between the time Christopher died and DuBose purchased the tract (Daniel 1996).

On the other hand, the archaeological data do not necessarily belie an eighteenth century construction date. Given the limited nature of the testing, additional excavation in Area 1 could yield late eighteenth century artifacts. And, since Christopher died in 1832, the whiteware sherds recovered from Area 1 could reflect a very early nineteenth century occupation associated with the last decade or so of Christopher's life. The presence of eighteenth century sherds in Areas 2 and 3, then, would have involved activities elsewhere on the plantation, perhaps associated with other outbuildings.

In sum, the material remains recovered from testing Area 1 indicate that the structure was probably a residence. The exact date of its construction is uncertain but it was occupied during some portion of the nineteenth century. Documentary accounts and archaeological evidence tentatively identify the foundation as the former location of

Christopher Barbee's home; more extensive excavations would be necessary to confirm this identification. But, since the proposed construction plans for this area indicates only minor ground disturbance in the form of driveway expansion and sidewalk construction, no further archaeological work is recommended at this time. We also recommend, however, that an archaeologist be allowed to monitor any ground disturbing activities in this area should any subsurface features or other significant archaeological remains be encountered during the construction. Furthermore, as noted in our previous report we recommend that the stone foundation be preserved.

Areas 2 and 3, on the other hand, yielded less extensive historic remains than Area 1. Nevertheless, a few sherds were recovered from both areas that would date to Christopher Barbee's occupation of the hilltop. A few nineteenth century artifacts were also recovered from Areas 2 and 3. As is the case from Area 1, it is uncertain if these later historic materials were associated with the Barbee plantation. Nevertheless, if these remains were associated with any Barbee plantation structure little architectural remains of these buildings probably would exist, given the shallow nature of the deposits and the extensive landscaping. In any case, it does not appear that the proposed construction in Area 2 will adversely impact any significant archaeological remains. No further archaeological work is recommended for that area.

Area 3 yielded the least extensive distribution of material remains. What remains were recovered, however, are interesting because they were concentrated in three adjacent shovel tests in the southeast corner of the area and included eighteenth century sherds. Given the shallow nature of the deposits, the extensive landscaping, and low frequency of historic remains no further archaeological work is recommended in the area. Nonetheless, it is recommended that an archaeologist be allowed to monitor ground disturbing activities in the southeast corner of the area for the presence of subsurface features or other significant archaeological remains.

Finally, with respect to the scant prehistoric remains recovered during the testing, the site has minimal research potential and no further investigation is recommended for the prehistoric component.

Appendix 1. Artifact counts by Area.

Area:		
Shovel Test	Artifact Type	Count
Area 1:		
1	-	-
2	wire nail	1
	wire frags.	2
	whiteware	2
	brick	1
3	cut nail	1
	metal hinge?	1
	brick	1
4	-	-
5	whiteware	2
	brick	1
6	-	-
7	metal hinge?	1
8	whiteware	3
	salt-glazed stoneware	1
	brick	1
9	-	-
10	window glass	1
	green glass	1
	mirror glass	1
11	-	-
12	brick	1
13	window glass	1
	lead	1
	brick	1
14	whiteware	1
	brick	2
15	window glass	1
	salt-glazed stoneware	1
	bristol-glazed stoneware	1
	brick	1
16	-	-
17	clear glass	1
	whiteware	1
	unid. metal hardware	1
18	cut nail	1
	clear glass	2
	pig's tooth (?)	1
	brick	1
19	clear glass	1
	purple glass	1
20	whiteware	2
	opaque white glass	5

Appendix 1. Artifact counts by Area (continued).

Area:	Shovel Test	Artifact Type	Count
Area 1:			
	21	cut nail	1
		lead	1
		whiteware	1
		brick	3
Area 2:			
	22	wire	2
		unid. metal	1
	23	-	-
	24	-	-
	25	stone flake	1
	26	-	-
	27	-	-
	28	whiteware	1
	29	cut nail	1
		wire nails	3
	30	whiteware	1
		brick	1
	31	-	-
	32	-	-
	33	wire nail	1
	34	pearlware	1
	35	-	-
Area 3:			
	36	whiteware	1
	37	pearlware	2
	38	cut nail	1
	39	-	-
	40	-	-
	41	-	-
	42	-	-
	43	flake	1
	44	-	-
	45	-	-
	46	-	-
	47	-	-
	48	-	-
	49	-	-
	50	-	-
	51	-	-
	52	-	-
	53	-	-
	54	-	-
	55	-	-
	56	-	-

Appendix 1. Artifact counts by Area (continued).

Area:			
Shovel Test	Artifact Type		Count
57	-		-
58	-		-
59	-		-
60	-		-
61	-		-
62	-		-

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