

TRANSITIONS IN SLAVERY IN THE VIRGINIA PIEDMONT

July 30, 2011 Barbara Heath Archaeological Prospection, Day of Archaeology 2011, Education, Excavation, Post Medieval, Survey Bedford County, Ethics, French's Tavern, Geography of the United States, historical archaeology, Indian Camp, Lori Lee, National Endowment for the Humanities, North Hill, plantation, Poplar Forest, Powhatan, Powhatan County, Slavery, Southern United States, States of the United States, Tennessee, United States, University of Tennessee, Virginia



Excavations a Wingos

Six graduate, one undergraduate, and two recent graduates in Anthropology from the University of Tennessee are working, with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to study transitions in slavery in the Virginia Piedmont during the 18th century. We're comparing three sites, all associated with members of a single enslaved community that were relocated from the eastern to western piedmont in the 1770s. The North Hill site at Poplar Forest in Bedford County, Virginia, was excavated in the 1990s, and the collection is being compared to artifacts from two sites currently under investigation: Wingos, also a quarter farm at Poplar Forest, and Indian Camp plantation in Powhatan County, about 85 miles to the east. Enslaved members of the community lived there from the 1730s-1770s before being moved west.

One part of our team came close to wrapping up work at Wingo's quarter today. In 2009, we found two subfloor pits associated with one of the houses at the quarter; this summer we've been looking for additional

structures and sumping the yard, seeking evidence of how enslaved residents shaped the spaces surrounding their houses. Today started with backfilling and a run to the local farm supply store to buy straw. We backfilled completed units and planted grass seed on them, and finished troweling, photographing and mapping what were supposed to be our last two units. At about mid-day, as the temperatures soared to nearly 100° F, we discovered a large feature running into the south wall of one of the last units. We spent the remainder of the afternoon opening a new unit in an attempt to expose its

edges. We'll have to return Monday to continue working to define it. Luckily, we have the resources to extend our excavations for a few more days.



We are creating a video for the project which will be hosted, once it has been edited, by both the UTK website and by our [project website](#). I ended the day interviewing Lori Lee at Poplar Forest for the video, asking her to discuss the artifacts recovered from the previous North Hill excavations.

The second group of team members spent the day at Indian Camp. Originally 1200 acres, the property has since

been subdivided. We've excavated hundreds of shovel test pits over the past four weeks looking for quartering sites, and are concentrating now on an area east of historic French's Tavern. On Wednesday we found the corner of a feature under about 1 ft. of plowed soil. The plow zone contains a variety of architectural and domestic artifacts, including some which date to the second and third quarters of the 18th century, so this area looks promising. We'll continue to expose and map the feature and look for additional features in this area, as well as continue testing elsewhere on the property. Work will continue here until August 5.

This project incorporates research, instruction in the field and later, on campus in the lab, public outreach, and is built on partnerships between members of the UTK community, private and corporate landowners, and state and federal government agencies.