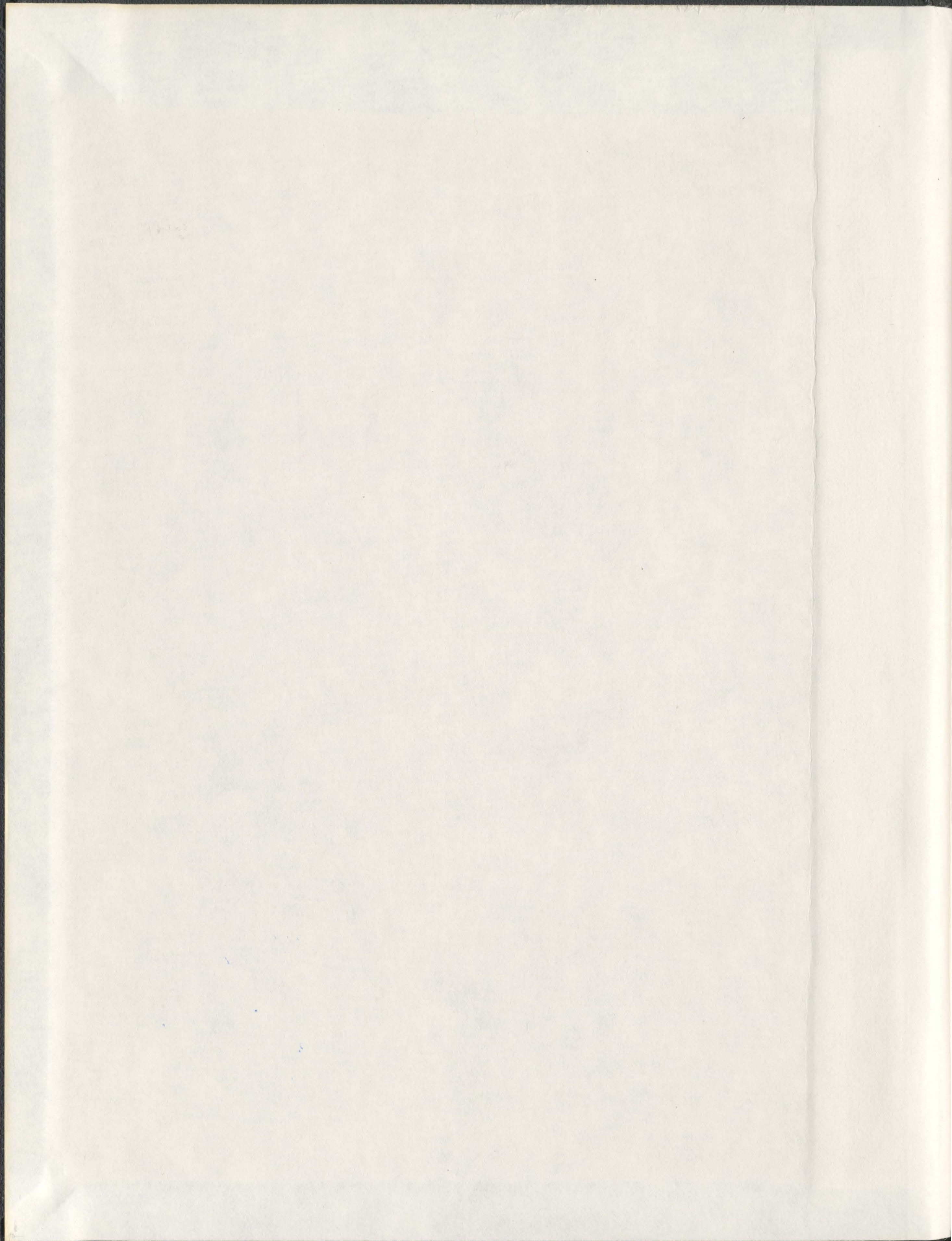


SANKOFA / RETURN AND GET IT:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF BLACK  
LOYALIST IDENTITY AND CULTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA

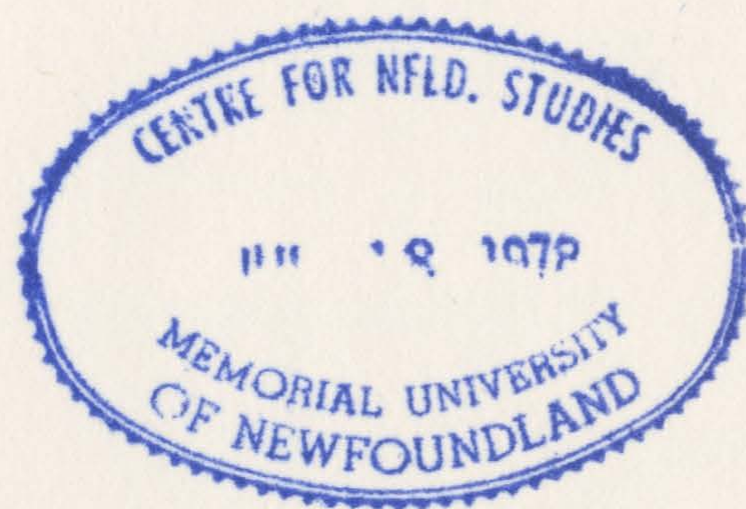
HEATHER A. MacLEOD-LESLIE







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**SANKOFA / Return and Get It:**  
**An Archaeological Exploration of Black Loyalist Identity and Culture**  
**in Nova Scotia**

**By Heather A. MacLeod-Leslie**

A thesis submitted  
to the School of Graduate Studies  
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Sankofa is an (African) Adinkra symbol of the Akan ancestors which means “return and get it”. The concept is recognition of the past; that “a future cannot be built without recognizing those who have made the past possible” (Orofi-Ansa 2004)



## **Abstract**

Scholarly archaeological research into the African diaspora in Atlantic Canada is quite limited to date. The discourse in history has been more regularly attended here but, given the sociopolitical challenges that members of the African diaspora faced, archaeology is a vital and perhaps more democratic source of information to understand this heritage and its importance to modern Atlantic Canadians. This thesis represents an effort to begin to fill this need.

Localized cultural variation is a factor for which scholars must allow, however the discourse on African diaspora archaeology has demonstrated that some common, Africentric cultural phenomena link populations across the wide geography of the colonial African diaspora through both their African cultural heritage and experiences as members of this diaspora. This thesis, using a specific focus on Black Loyalists and their descendents in Nova Scotia, contends that early black settlers in Atlantic Canada embodied varying degrees and facets of West African cultural traditions. These have contributed to modern black culture and ethnocultural identity in Atlantic Canada and must be seen in both their contemporary and historic contexts as African diasporic in nature.

This research uses several approaches to understand the emic perspective of African Nova Scotian identity and local cultural heritage. These include a comparative study of consumption behavior through an analysis of ceramic decorative colours and motifs, an attempt to comprehend cultural landscapes at regional, community and



household levels and a consideration of ethnocultural identity through materially expressed Africentric spirituality and folk traditions. Further, this thesis demonstrates that, since the material traces of such Africentric practices and perspectives lack any substantial documentary record to assist in their comprehension, the adoption of an Africentric perspective to archaeological field methodology and interpretation is necessary for both detecting the evidence and understanding it.

Data from several Black Loyalist communities were analyzed to address the varied objectives including Delap's Cove (Annapolis Co.), Rear Monastery (Antigonish & Guysborough Cos.), Birchtown (Shelburne Co.) and a white Irish community, Coote Cove (Halifax Regional Municipality). Data from previous research was used from the latter two communities, whereas the author collected data specifically for this research from the two former communities.



## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to dedicate this research and dissertation to the many Black Loyalist descendents and African Nova Scotian individuals to whom I am so indebted for their kindness, openness and support. This heritage is so very important, and while it can be a source of a great deal of pride in one's black ancestors, it can also stir up painful memories for some. I hope this work has offered more opportunities for the former. The Black Loyalist Heritage Society and the Black Cultural Centre have both been tremendous touchstones for these precious relationships with community members. Repeatedly, people opened their doors, their hearts and their minds to me, offering their thoughts, ideas, knowledge and support. In particular, I would like to dedicate this work to the memory of Richard Gallion, past president of the Black Loyalist Heritage Society. Richard always treated me with kindness, respect and warmth, never failing to ask how my mother was doing. He is missed by many. Also, I wish to dedicate this work to Elizabeth and Everett Cromwell, founding members of the Black Loyalist Heritage Society and, indeed, its strong and steady heart. I have had the good fortune to receive wisdom, guidance, hospitality and kindness from these amazing people; to learn from Elizabeth's great example of strength, integrity and perseverance and the honour of speaking with and listening to Everett share his knowledge, perspectives and wisdom. As a veteran, his stories of life in the military and as a man of great patience and integrity have been a gift of understanding for which I can never offer enough gratitude. They are this archaeologist's treasure. To these three special people and the many others whose



work and passion have and continue to forge great change bigger than they can even imagine, bigger than any of us, I wish to say thank you.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Sankofa; return and get it. That is what archaeologists do – return to the sites of past lives lived and get the pieces, and the stories, left behind. For black people in the Americas, those stories are inimitable records of their ancestors' perspectives on life then as they experienced it. Although mediated by modern, frequently non-black, archaeologists, the pieces are material facts left directly by those ancestors themselves. We return to get their stories yet unheard.

Black people in the Americas are not descended from slaves; they are descended from Africans who were enslaved. Those enslaved people came from and created dynamic and rich cultures steeped in heritage and tradition; they were not peoples without history, roots and culture. Slavery was an episode in their cultural history, a significant episode which transformed traditions that were blended into new and different cultures whose roots extended deep into those rich African cultures.

Many home-based private and semi-private practices, and the artefacts they produce, are cultural. Often, they are what we do and make that *feels* right, subconsciously. Some practices are handed down, in part, because of a family's ethnicity



and provenance and the culture that developed as a result. In this thesis, using a specific focus on Black Loyalists and their descendents in Nova Scotia, I contend that these early black settlers in Atlantic Canada embodied varying degrees and facets of West African cultural traditions which have contributed to modern black culture and ethnocultural identity in Atlantic Canada. Also, through the experiences of slavery and political tumult in a racist Atlantic World society, among the most archaeologically-enduring aspects of African-derived cultural identity would have been those that were practiced in private and semi-private contexts or in the construction of space and the creation of place. As such, they are most likely to have left material traces in the archaeological resources, often having been physically embedded and so less likely to have been disturbed or, as is frequently the case with spatial organization, were hidden in plain sight as a sometimes less contested form of cultural expression. Finally, I demonstrate that, since the material traces of such practices lack any substantial documentary record to assist in their comparative analysis, the adoption of an Africentric perspective to archaeological field methodology and interpretive approach is necessary for both detecting the evidence and understanding it.

### The Black Loyalists

In 1783, after the close of the American Revolution, Loyalists were evacuated, the majority embarking from New York City, and redistributed throughout the British Empire. More than 30 000 of them came to Nova Scotia. The Loyalists included free white British subjects, free black British subjects and blacks, now labelled as servants but defacto enslaved, travelling with free British subjects. The Black Loyalists were those



people of African descent who allied themselves with the British cause in the American Revolution for a variety of reasons. Among those reasons were the perception that such alliance meant supporting the abolition of slavery, the promise of land, provisions and freedom under the Dunmore and Philipsburg Proclamations within the British Empire and, for some perhaps, an allegiance to the British Crown. The first two reasons, however, are cited as primarily responsible for the majority of Black Loyalists' support of the Loyalist cause (Cahill 1999; Walker 1999). The two proclamations extended to black people within the rebels' society, including those enslaved by the rebels, an invitation to fight for the Loyalist cause in exchange for their freedom. Lord Dunmore, then Governor of Virginia, issued his proclamation in 1775 calling upon, "...every person capable of bearing arms to resort to his Majesty's standard [and declared] all indentured servants, negroes, or others (appertaining to Rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear arms..." (Dunmore 1775). Similarly, in 1779 Sir Henry Clinton, British Commander in Chief, issued the Philipsburg Proclamation that proffered, "to every negro who shall desert the Rebel Standard, full security to follow within these Lines, any Occupation which he shall think proper" (Clinton 1779). Interestingly, though not surprisingly, the same offers of freedom were not made to the enslaved or indentured servants held by the Loyalists.

The massive black immigration to Nova Scotia constituted by the landing of the Black Loyalists had direct and immediate impact on a number of historically significant phenomena namely, the development of the Underground Railroad, the foundation of relations between racialized populations in Canada, and to some extent, a reflexive relationship with the place of Atlantic Canada in the Atlantic World. For the first time,



en masse, blacks and whites were required to live, side by side as legally equal and free British subjects. This unprecedented circumstance in the third quarter of the eighteenth century followed the most rigorous period of expansion of the English trade in African people in the history of the transatlantic slave trade (Eltis 2001:22; Thornton 1998:304). The ramifications of the Black Loyalists' situation were extensive, profound and transatlantic. Paul Hair recognized the significance of their history when he wrote, "Students of the development of African nationalism might care to take a longer look at the Nova Scotians, and the Freetown community they moulded" (1963).<sup>1</sup>

The Black Loyalists' presence in Canada represents a major sociocultural shift in the Americas. Black Loyalists pioneered both natural and social frontiers. Their presence, status and struggles here pointed the way for many blacks, still enslaved in the United States and Caribbean, to Canada, where a person of colour and African descent could live freely and legally equally with their fellow British subjects. Black Loyalists established the northern destination for the underground railroad. Because of Black Loyalists, whites were forced to face the racism that underlay many of their social operational principles in colonial society. However, despite being legal equals, Black Loyalists did not enjoy true social equality on these shores.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1792, led by John Clarkson of the Sierra Leone Company, more than 1100 Black Loyalists, dissatisfied with the treatment they'd received in Loyalist Nova Scotia, sailed to Sierra Leone and successfully settled Freetown. Today, they and their descendents are still known in this African country by their heritage as "Nova Scotians".



### Ethnocultural Identity in This Study

Throughout this document, the definition of ethnocultural identity is used as given below and as defined in the discussion of race, ethnicity and ethnocultural identity. The definition of ethnocultural identity as used here derives from an examination of the discourse on identity and African diaspora with a particular focus on sources from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and archaeology (Orser 2001). Ethnocultural identity is often expressed in private and semi-private fora, perhaps subconsciously or inadvertently, and it is this culture that one's family transmits and that is passed on to the next generation. Ethnocultural identity is that facet of cultural identity which is less staged and not masked for any political agenda or social gain, it is simply who one is that derives from one's cultural history, which includes their ethnicity (Franklin 2001:89). If an individual has an ethnic affiliation, this can result in a direct impact on both the motives and methods of cultural retention and/or adaptation of cultural practices derived from one's cultural history, hence the expression of an *ethnocultural* identity, as opposed to a cultural identity. Ethnocultural identity is meant to recognize the impact of ethnicity on one's cultural identity and the expression of it in private or semi-private fora. Cultural retention and adaptation can be purposeful acts of ethnocultural identity construction or can be priority acts of the same, required or preferred within the cultural principles of that particular cultural heritage. For example, parents and family members will frequently teach children about their roots; setup house in a way that is proper or appropriate; make an old remedy, or enact protective mechanisms at one's disposal to care for family and community. It is this level of cultural identity, of rapport with people of the past, which



this research investigates through the archaeological resources left by African diasporic Nova Scotian pioneers<sup>2</sup>.

### Why Archaeology Is Important

In an effort to understand the internalized sense of culture borne by Nova Scotia's Black Loyalist settlers and their descendents, this thesis turns to the archaeological record, often touted as the most democratic record we have of the past. Male, female, rich, poor, juvenile or senile, literate or not, all human beings are capable of leaving an archaeological record of their lives. Because the archaeological record is often happenstance, one without plan or agenda, it can grant us a glimpse into the subconscious, cultural behaviours so ingrained that the agents themselves might not have been aware of the cultural influence or definition of what they did or how they did it (Giddens 1984: p. xx). For individuals who are marginalized by broader society and less well documented historically, the archaeological record is often the only record we have to investigate their lives. When this fact is compounded by the privacy of the domestic sphere, archaeology emerges as the most scientifically objective avenue of inquiry as well as that most informative of undocumented, daily, and in some cases clandestine, practices. So, while Hair's 1963 challenge was taken up by historians, archaeologists whose discipline offers perhaps a wider horizon across which to view black pasts have,

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<sup>2</sup> "African diaspora" and "diaspora" are used interchangeably to refer to the forced distribution of African peoples and the distribution of their descendents outside of Africa due to the transatlantic slave trade. "Diasporic" is derived from this definition.



sadly, only begun their work in Nova Scotia (Cottreau-Robins 2002; MacLeod-Leslie 2001, 2010; Niven 1994, 2000; Powell and Niven 2000).

Modern people are reconnecting with their roots, without the presence or level of racism that previous generations had to endure. Some modern African diasporic cultural expression in Nova Scotia may be reclamation of past or popularized cultural behaviours. That said, modern African Nova Scotian culture also derives, in part, from earlier incarnations which, even after generations of enslavement, abuse and oppression, were both African and Nova Scotian. Evidence of cultural transformations derived from African cultures has been identified throughout the diaspora, and much of that archaeologically (Brown 2001; Davidson 2004; DiZerega Wall 2000; Fennell 2007a, 2007b; Ferguson 1992; Herskovits 1941; Leone and Fry 1999; Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1999; Singleton 1985, 1999; Walsh 2001; Wheaton et al. 1993; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999; Young 1995, 1996).

Early discourse began with Melville Herskovits in the first half of the twentieth century looking for what he termed “Africanisms”, which were representations of African cultural practices simply transplanted throughout the diaspora (1945). More than half a century later, discussion has now turned into a search for African-descended cultural practices – sometimes also referred to as Africanisms. This recent distinction of the cultural origin of practices as descended practices recognizes that adaptation and evolution of cultural practices happened. African peoples and their descendents engaged in new social and natural environments and made choices about how to exist in such



circumstances. The recent modern view, from the late twentieth century, also better recognizes the agency of African diasporic peoples in devising their own ways and making their own choices about what beliefs and practices were suited to them and their social groupings and how changes might have been culturally accommodated.

Expression of the Africaness or Africentricity of culture in the face of racism and oppression has often been archaeologically distinguished as private and, regularly, the less inhibited homesphere of African diasporic lives. Bourdieu would have termed these contexts *habitus*: inside and outside the home structures and within the black communities in which people lived and conducted the quotidian activities and routines of their lives (Bourdieu 1972, 1984). Anthony Giddens' concept of a *routinized* level of activity characterizes much life carried out in these fora, namely, that behavior which most honestly demonstrates one's core sense of cultural identity. This personal and, in some ways subconscious, sense of identity is expressed through the regular activities reproduced with the greatest frequency (1984: p.xxiii, 60). This research attempts to see into the private, domestic cultural sphere of those overlooked in a documentary record largely authored by others, purporting to tell the tale of collective heritage, though selectively reporting the incidents and individuals of the past. Such voyeurism is necessary to estimate the importance of African-derived culture in the genesis of African Nova Scotian traditions.



### Culture, Colour and Local History

A marked difference exists between black culture in Canada's central region and Atlantic Canada. This is due in part to the volume of blacks immigrating to these regions and their varying attractions to travelers on the Underground Railroad, but also to the geopolitical characters of each of these regions; central Canada as the geopolitical seat of a nascent nation and Atlantic Canada as an important node, close to Britain, in the Atlantic World. While significant black populations have and do exist in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, the majority of archaeological and historical information used in this research derives from Nova Scotia as it offers the most abundant historical and archaeological records. Black populations in Newfoundland and Labrador are negligible, however as disparate instances of historic black presence are identified, a new understanding may develop there. In the meantime, however, the focus of this research will be Nova Scotia with the intention that, as part of a geographically and culturally distinct region of Canada, certain generalities about African diaspora here will be transferable to the other Atlantic Canadian provinces.

The popular notion of cultural heritage of Nova Scotians does not usually consider Africans (their descendents, values, traditions and cultural elements) to be part of the cultural mosaic. Yet, they have indeed contributed to the culture of this place, where the tourism market rests heavily on heritage assets and cultural tourism. Unfortunately, while influencing the province's broader sociopolitical condition, much early African diasporic cultural expression in the past was limited to the more private domestic spaces of its bearers. Harvey Amani Whitfield's recent work, *Blacks on the*



*Border*, demonstrates the development of a distinct, public and collective identity in Nova Scotia's black population that is rooted in ethnicity (2006). However, this public identity was built on the social foundations laid by Black Loyalists and did not truly take hold until the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. Before then, it was alright to be black in Nova Scotia, but being African was another story. Such dismissal of cultural history was characteristic of Herskovits' definition of the myth of blacks' past.

This highlights an issue with which some scholars of the African diaspora may struggle and to which consideration must be given. The labels "black" and "white", as applied to human beings, are laden with historical baggage (Clarke 2002:16; Madden 2009:9; Paynter 2001:141). For some people identified as white, there may be a sense of historical shame rooted in the race-based transatlantic slave trade and white supremacist behaviours. To have been white, indeed to be white, echoes with an easier social lot or privilege. To have been black was, and to some extent still is, to struggle with what Herskovits articulated as the tenets of the "myth of the negro past" (1941). Even the use of the word negro or its derogatory slang, nigger, demonstrates the significance accorded the use of such labels in the power structures shaped by the co-presence of people labeled with these words and those not labeled with them, most often the latter being labeled white.

Since the civil rights era of the twentieth century, the term 'black' has taken on a subtext, as expounded upon in movements like Black Power and resistance songs such as James Brown's, "Say It Loud, I'm Black And I'm Proud". The term 'white' can never



emulate this power because it does not have an association with overcoming adversity and has not been socially sanctioned as a term of pride and resistance to that adversity, as has the term black.

In the examples above, note the lack of capital letters. As white people stumble over what labels to use to refer to non-white peoples (black, coloured, negro, aboriginal, First Nation, Indian) in a generation of political correctness and historical reckoning, many African descendents in North America, in particular, use black as a self referent with pride. Some have suggested that the term be capitalized like terms such as, Dutch, Scottish, Asian and African. To do this, however, would require considering capitalizing the term white, which because of the negative connotations and legacies noted above, could have a counter effect to the capitalization of black (Madden 2009:11).

Additionally, to continue applying the term African as a prefix to residential geography, such as African American, the definition of African diasporic cultures as something unique and separate from African cultures may be done a disservice. On the one hand, the signifier African is regularly used to pay homage to heritage and is used as a source of pride. Likewise, the use of black as a signifier, particularly since the civil rights era, is a source of pride and has both cultural and phenotypic implications through recognition of skin colour. In the end, no answer is offered here as this is an archaeological dissertation and the struggle with this issue shall continue. Throughout this thesis, though, the term black shall be used as will African, though with a certain reticence as a choice has been made not to capitalize the former. For the purposes of this



document, though black may later require a capital “B” and white may need to maintain a lowercase “w”, both shall remain lowercase unless being used to refer to a historically identifiable subgroup of individuals recognized elsewhere, such as Black Loyalists. When dealing with issues of cultural heritage, I shall endeavour to employ the term African (such as African diasporic) indicating something culturally between Africa and British North America, whereas with issues regarding either individual human beings, social dynamics (generally) or communities of Nova Scotia, I shall more regularly use the term black. The term white shall be used broadly to indicate those of European descent.

It is also necessary to clearly distinguish use of the term ethnocultural identity, with which this thesis is directly concerned, from ethnicity and race, with which it is not directly concerned. The definitions below are those used in this dissertation. A great deal of current archaeological research and theory treats ethnicity and, often through archaeologies of the African diaspora, frequently connects it with the concept of race (Epperson 1990, 1996, 1999a, 1999b; Franklin and Fesler 1999; McGuire and Paynter 1991; Orser 1998, 2001).

#### Race, Ethnicity and Ethnocultural Identity

Race is a socially defined concept grounded in ideas about biology. It is not, as was once thought, a biological fact (Lewontin 2004). This is not to deny that biology plays a role in defining one’s phenotypic visage or body appearance; however, the application of the concept of race to social identity is different than the genetic basis of one’s biological ancestry and its derivation from specific geographic locales over



millennia. It is simplistic to draw direct links between biological composition and social agents' participation in human culture. Lewontin suggests that human genetic variation is a consequence of activities in human history (migration, piracy, slave-taking, rape and mating) and that visible features typically linked with race were likely those linked to ideas about beauty and power (2004). Beauty and power are sociocultural factors that enmesh biological components of mating. Wordsmithing and sociopolitical awareness have influenced use of the term race as applied to individuals whose social identities have relationships with African heritage through development of classifications within African Diasporic populations related to phenotypic heritage (i.e., mullato, quadroon, negro, black). This wordsmithing was also used to justify othering by attempting to highlight difference as opposed to common human heritage and to reinforce the asymmetry in social power structures that brought masses of black and white people together.

To deny or reject the interaction of the biological with the social aspects of racially defined identities can be viewed as social constructionism (Machery and Faucher 2005). However, there is no biological support for the nature of the sociohistorical usage of the term race as it has been applied to people who have visible links with African cultural heritage (Drake 1987, 1990). "DNA studies do not indicate that separate classifiable subspecies (races) exist within modern humans" (USDOE 2007).

For the purposes of this thesis, a racial identity is one that is frequently linked to visible characteristics such as skin colour, hair texture and style, and morphological qualities, particularly when defined by individuals or groups who are not the individual or



group to whom the racialized identity is ascribed (Orser 2001:5). Ethnicity frequently encompasses the same defining characteristics but includes a further association with cultural heritage (Fesler and Franklin 1999:2). Both of these are grounded in etic (or others') perceptions. Unlike race or ethnicity, ethnocultural identity, as I use it here, refers to the emic perception and/or practice of one's culture and/or culturally grounded group membership as defined by agents themselves, either consciously or subconsciously. Whether or not one is aware of one's ethnocultural identity is not essential and this explains why ethnoculturally derived practice can be associated with routinized behaviours that are frequently engaged in without conscious purpose. That said, ethnicity cannot be removed from the understanding of one's ethnocultural identity (nor can the socially-constructed notion of race, for that matter). All three are intertwined because individuals' identities, particularly as related to skin colour and cultural heritage, are enmeshed. Where I have primarily attempted to make a distinction between these related facets of identity is in the forum of expression which can influence the method and degree of ethnic expression, but as a facet of one's culture – which can sometimes happen subconsciously. This context-dependent understanding of ethnic and cultural expression highlights why Brodtkin's concept of ethnoracial identity is incongruous with the (emic) approach taken here, as her concept, though self-assigned, derives its framework from an etically devised structure (Brodtkin 1998:3; Wilkie 2001:108).

#### Rooting the Research in Nova Scotia

Communities founded by Black Loyalists were specifically chosen for investigation in this research since these individuals were the pioneers of freedom for



African diasporic peoples in Canada. The road north to freedom and liberty, the Underground Railroad, was shaped by the Philipsburg and Dunmore Proclamations at the beginning of the American War for Independence. In these, legal freedom and land were offered, within the British Empire, to black people who would support the Loyalist cause<sup>3</sup>. Those who responded to these clauses of the proclamations became the Black Loyalists. Of course, the British Empire contracted after the American Revolution and the northern British territory, what would become Canada, was the destination for the majority of those African diasporic peoples (numbering well over 3000) who had responded to the proclamations (Force 1837-53; Walker 1992; Carleton 1783). In addition to these free British subjects, an untold number of black servants accompanied their white Loyalist masters to Nova Scotia (which then included modern day New Brunswick) and Ontario. However, Nova Scotia was, by far, recipient of the largest number of Loyalists of all cultural backgrounds. Of note, there appears to have been a shift in semantics that occurred as the Loyalists moved north. The term servant was used to refer to black people held in bondage who, in the American south, would likely have been referred to as slaves. This obfuscation of the condition of black people in Atlantic

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<sup>3</sup> Lord Dunmore's Proclamation (1775) stated, "...And I do hereby further declare all indentured Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His MAJESTY'S Troops as soon as may be..." (in Force 1837-53). The later Philipsburg Proclamation (1779) additionally offered land and provisions to such "negroes" (Carleton Papers, 1779 doc. 2094, Clinton 30 June 1779 as cited in Walker 1992:1, 2).



Canada has only served to perpetuate ambiguity regarding the history of slavery in this region.

Here, for the first time in history, whites and blacks faced the realities of living as free British subjects, en masse, side by side. Sociopolitical tensions were palpable in the post-war economy of the losing side. The tensions and new social climate challenged cultural definitions and expressions within this northern slave society. Because of this, household and community contexts are best suited to illuminate the black settlers' perspectives. Their struggles, compromises and triumphs laid the social and cultural foundations of society upon which further infusions of African diasporic people settled; the Maroons arriving in 1796, Refugees of the War of 1812 a decade and a half later, travelers on the Underground Railroad and immigrants from the Caribbean in the later years of the nineteenth century. The Black Loyalists pioneered the African Nova Scotian culture that exists today.

#### Survival and Change of African Diasporic Cultures

Elements of African cultures transformed and survived throughout the diaspora despite slavery. In fact, the surreptitious transmission of certain African practices was often necessary, if fortuitous, in race-based slave societies. Additionally, cultural mechanisms of change responded to local availability. Historical archaeologies in many of these places have established, using material evidence, the commitment of African diasporic peoples to practice and transmit African culture in these environments; to remain African (Ascher and Faribanks 1971; Davidson 2004; Deetz 1996; DiZerega-Wall



2000; Fairbanks 1974; Fennell 2007b, 2007c; Ferguson 1992; Franklin 1997, 2001; Leone and Fry 1999; McKee 1998; McCarthy 1998; Orser 2001, 1998 1994; Otto 1984; Samford 1999; Singleton 1985, 1995, 1999; Vlach 1991; Young 1995, 1996, 2004). These works have fostered a new discourse, not in the coping that African diasporic peoples managed in the face of powerlessness but, rather, in the shaping and moulding of new, adaptive cultures through decisions and values expressed by active cultural agents in a myriad of circumstances. This dissertation is part of the new discourse. Those people created the Black Atlantic World and here they created Black Atlantic Canada (Gilroy 2002; Matory 2005; Ogundiran and Falola 2007).

#### Communities in this Study

Material culture from three Black Loyalist communities is considered in this research, each representing a different set of circumstances in Nova Scotia. Originally a fourth community was to be included (Brindleytown, Digby County) but a brief reconnaissance survey failed to yield surface indications of features to be tested and so was excluded from this study.<sup>4</sup> Subsurface testing will likely be more successful in identifying archaeological remains of Brindleytown, the second largest official settlement of Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century. The Black Loyalist

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<sup>4</sup> One exception was a (likely twentieth century) shell midden. The shell midden was only 10-15 cm deep, though perhaps 10m lengthwise along the shore and near a boat launch which was considered evidence of modern activity.



communities which were included in this study are Delap's Cove (Annapolis County), Rear Monastery (Antigonish County), and Birchtown (Shelburne County) (Figure 1)<sup>5</sup>.

Delap's Cove was an unofficial settlement of Black Loyalists and their descendents, meaning that its origin is poorly documented. It likely began as a squatter community of landless Black Loyalists, blacks fleeing slavery and others who sought to change their property-holding situations. While no clear indications of survival of transformed African cultural elements of practice or taste were noted in the artefacts collected here, the spatial patterning evident in the intertwined cultural and natural landscapes is quite telling. Prior to the survey done to facilitate this study, no historical archaeological research had been done in this area. The pattern of site locations yielded some interesting observations which will be discussed later in relation to spatial organization.

The second community included in this research was Rear Monastery (Figure 2). Only Stephen Powell's broad survey, spanning an area across Antigonish and Guysborough Counties (which included Rear Monastery), preceded my 2004 survey and subsequent 2005 excavations as specific archaeological investigation of black presence in this area (Powell and Niven 2000). My survey built upon Powell's work, barely tapping

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<sup>5</sup> There are two Birchtowns: one in Shelburne County, the other in Guysborough County. Unless indicated otherwise, from this point forward a reference to Birchtown is to that in Shelburne County.



the vast archaeological record that no doubt exists here for the settlement of this area by Black Loyalists. Their occupancy of this land spread from the time of their landing at Guysborough, then to Birchtown, Guysborough County and, finally, to the Tracadie area on the Northumberland Strait. Inland from Tracadie, the lands of Rear Monastery were included in a 1787 grant of 3000 acres to Thomas Brownspriggs and 74 other heads of Black Loyalist households (Figure 2). An official Black Loyalist settlement, it gave the black settlers legal title to the land in this rural area. Guysborough and Antigonish were the closest towns, the better part of a day's travel away by eighteenth-century modes of travel.

The final Black Loyalist community included in this research is Birchtown, Shelburne County. Birchtown was the largest official settlement of free blacks and the largest Black Loyalist community in eighteenth-century Nova Scotia, with roughly 1500 settlers (Walker 1992:22). Neighbouring Shelburne was, briefly in 1784, among the largest cities in North America. As such, the social climate shared between these black and white sister communities, less than five miles apart, was unique, dynamic and expressive. Birchtown would have been a hotbed for African diasporic cultural survival and transformation, with so many people and such visible politics within the community, as well as between it and Shelburne.

No additional survey or excavation was carried out in Birchtown for the purpose of this thesis but, it is the most archaeologically researched African diasporic community in Atlantic Canada. Material from excavations at eight different sites meant that the



Birchtown collection was significant for the comparative exercise carried out to assess the potential for a Black Loyalist ceramic consumption pattern that expressed West African-derived aesthetic taste. The inter-black community study was balanced with a further comparison with material from a white Irish settlement in Nova Scotia, Coote Cove, roughly contemporary with the early Black Loyalist communities. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Irish settlers in Nova Scotia occupied a socioeconomic stratum akin to that occupied by African diasporic people. The purpose of including their material in this study was to eliminate the potential to see as an ethnoculturally-derived pattern of consumerism one that, in fact, might have derived from socioeconomic circumstance. Coote Cove is located just outside of Halifax, at the northern end of Nova Scotia's South Shore.

### Framing the Research

The individual research questions evolved and expanded as the program was carried out, but each entailed a search for African-descended or influenced practices in historical African Nova Scotian contexts. Through my time working with and for the Black Loyalist Heritage Society, I had the honour of hearing descendents, particularly those who appear visibly black, discuss their concerns about recognition of their heritage, that they were descended from African people and that their culture in Atlantic Canada is unique and rooted in Africentric traditions. I had the privilege of listening to open and, often, painful conversations about suffering racism and the need to operate with caution in public places, even in the twenty-first century. As a white archaeologist, it was a gift to understand through these conversational experiences of my own that, even in modern



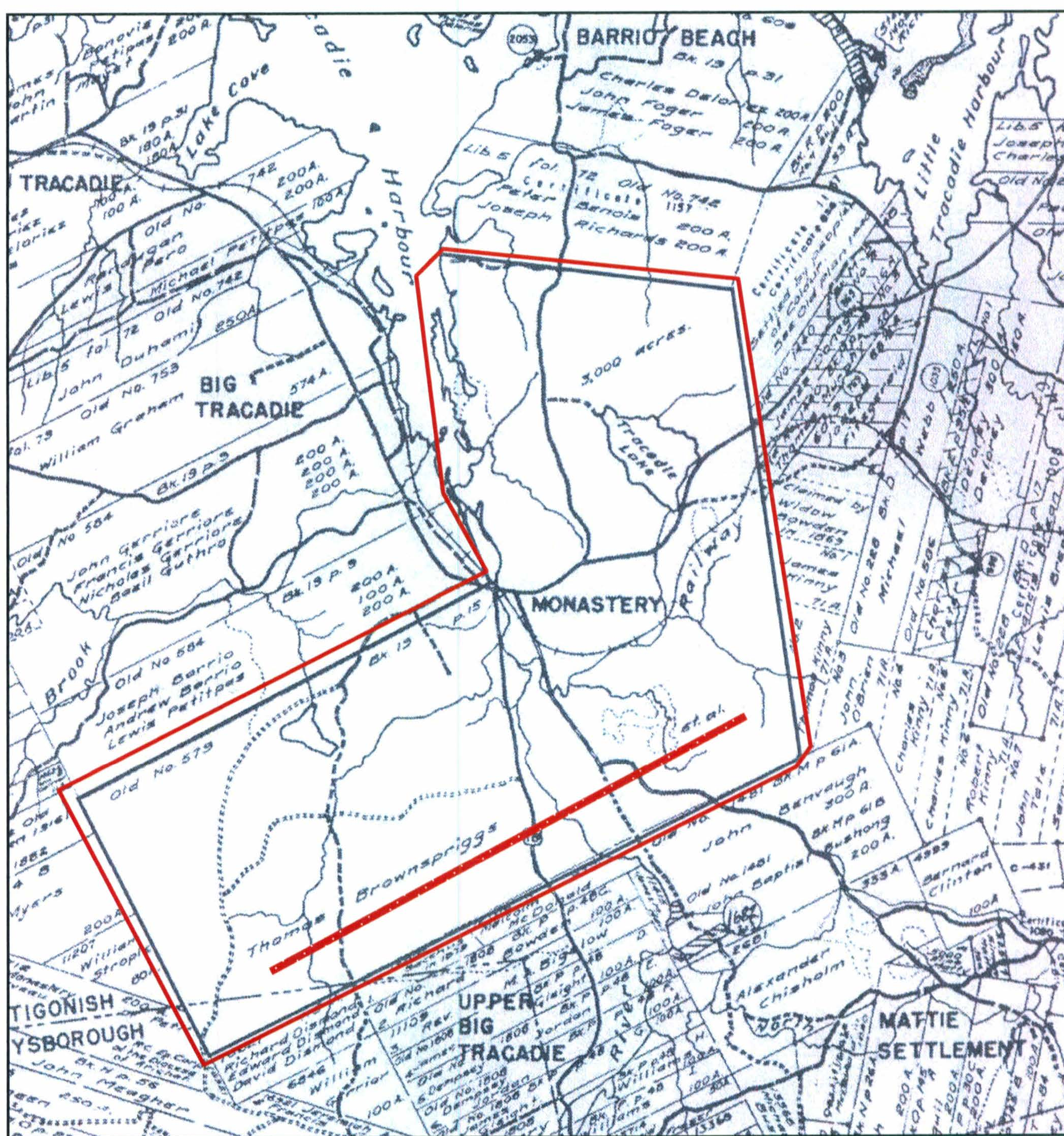
contexts, there is a difference in how people express their cultural heritage and ethnicity in private and in public; imagine how much more so this might have been in earlier times. The research questions, then, have been developed based on what modern African Nova Scotian community members expressed as questions and interests about their own ancestors, as well as a desire for tangible proof of what they had been told about their own ethnic heritage as they were growing up. When I considered the community-based interests in conjunction with archaeological research already well-developed elsewhere in the African diaspora, specific tests were defined that would relate to academically structured methods and attainable answers.

The original program of research included a question of whether aesthetic tastes which influenced consumer choices of ceramics might reflect culturally defined preferences for decorative colour palettes that bore an affinity with those of West African textiles. This was Wilkie and Farnsworth's conclusion from their work in the Bahamas (1999:307-310). Also from the original program, consideration was given to community spatial organization with the hope that community dynamics created and faced by blacks in Nova Scotia would be better understood. Finally, this research explored the possibility that traditional West African derived magico-religious behaviours were practiced in African Nova Scotian contexts. This was done by testing contexts, where discernible, that have, on other African diasporic sites, yielded materials associated with such practices, such as northeast corners, door sills and hearths (Brown 2001; Davidson 2004;









**Figure 2.** Crown Land Index Sheet #104. Rear Monastery is in the vicinity of the red underlined annotation identifying “Thomas Brownspriggs”. (NSDNR) Crown Land Information Management Centre, Crown Land Index Sheet No.104.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/land/indexmaps/104.pdf>



DiZerega Wall 2000, Edwards 1998; Leone and Fry 1999, Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1996, Sauer 1998, Thompson 1998; Young 1996). I was fortunate enough to find both a hearth and a building footing that may, in fact, be the location of a front door sill, in the course of testing the northeast corners of two different domestic cellar features, one in Delap's Cove, the other in Rear Monastery. Northeastern corners of structures were tested using cellar depressions as a central reference point. Given the difficulty in discerning magico-religious behaviours, one of the most important tools used for this aspect of the research was the adoption of an Africentric interpretive perspective. Because consideration of magico-religious behaviours through material culture requires one to investigate the meanings of things to individuals, this effort has been one of the most rewarding, if most challenging, of this project.

Patterns in ceramic consumption practices and spatial organization behaviours can offer glimpses of longterm processes such as the development of taste and the creation of spatial structures that reflect ingrained principles of (ethno)cultural identity – what *feels* right spatially and what *looks* right aesthetically (Bourdieu 1984; LeFebvre 1991; Rapoport 1969, 1980; Giddens 1984; Miller 1998; Leone and Fry 1998; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999). Conversely, demonstrations of power may use certain practices because of their known origin, such as the modern donning of African clothes by African diasporic peoples throughout the world as a cultural reclamation. Objects matter when it comes to expression of ideas, values, and identity. What we choose to create our material world, our consumerism, indicates what we are attracted to for function as well as fashion (Bourdieu 1984; Miller 1998; Spencer-Wood 1987). In an effort to distill broad African



Nova Scotian cultural trends that might link these people with the larger diaspora, I selected comparative samples from different communities across the province. Drawing such a wide regional sample allowed local variation and characteristics to be managed and discouraged conclusions about African Nova Scotians' cultural heritage based on data from a single community.

One of the greatest contributions of this work is the invitation it extends to other archaeologists in Atlantic Canada to detect and understand black presence in the archaeological record. This invitation is rooted in archaeological evidence from Nova Scotia and the material foundation on which arguments may be made for or against the Africentricity of local cultural traditions. This research demonstrates the potential richness of the resources, if only one remains open to new frameworks of understanding. By using an Africentric interpretive perspective for African diasporic sites and training our brains to see the indications of ethnoculturally black or African diasporic presence in the records of the past, historical archaeology will speak volumes about the development of Black Atlantic Canada and its place in the Black Atlantic World (Gilroy 2002; Matony 2005; Ogundiran and Falola 2007).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Training our brains" means, simply, to educate oneself about the possibilities.

Academic archaeologists maintain scientific objectivity and a critical analytic approach to avoid the pitfalls of conveniently interpreting evidence according to preconceived notions only. Patterns in material culture across the diaspora argue for a "trained" interpretation. Also, however, there is academic value in theoretically-grounded interpretive exercise.



## **Chapter 2 – Historical Backdrop**

### Understanding the Historical Context

Developing background histories for African diasporic communities presents a unique and exciting challenge. Documentary records regarding blacks are often created from white perspectives and, therefore, are usually unable to illuminate the daily lives of black people. This is one reason why historical archaeology has become such an important tool for creating understanding of African diasporic pasts: it is the most abundant first-person account of everyone's past in that it is a record created by the historical agents themselves. Over the last decade or more, historical archaeological discourse from the United States has been almost dominated by the archaeology of the African diaspora (Little 2007:107). As well, issues of identity broached in archaeology, generally, have emerged to become timely scholarship for some of the challenges and questions that are critical to archaeologies of the African diaspora. Archaeology offers under-utilized possibilities to explore identity formation and development (Franklin and Fessler 1999; Leone et al. 2005: 575).

Historical archaeology is the epitome of interdisciplinary study; a social science with a hard science alter ego. Interpretations of its unique constellation of data require competency in history, biology, ecology, geography, psychology, sociology and all of the



subdisciplines of anthropology. However, to keep manageable the task of building a backdrop against which to view the data, this literature review was developed within limits restricting it to works of secondary history on the transatlantic slave trade, the American Revolution, Black Loyalists and Atlantic Canadian African diasporic settlement (Donovan 1994, 1996, 2004, 2007; Fergusson 1971; Grant 2002; MacKinnon 1986; MacLeod-Leslie 2001; Madden 2009; Schama 2005; Spray 1977; Thornton 1998; Walker 1992, 2006; Winks 1971). Archaeologically pertinent information regarding the influence of slavery on ethnocultural identity formation and practice was augmented with reference to collections of black folklore which had relevance to African diasporic cultures in northeastern North America (Fauset 1931; Hurston 1935, 1938; Leone and Fry 1999; Levine 1977; Piersen 1988; Puckett 1926). The primary historical documents used were those related to the two communities on which archaeological fieldwork and analysis were performed, Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery. Archaeological publications on material expressions of African diasporic ethnocultural identity and that of direct relevance to Black Atlantic Canadian archaeology were selected from the sea of scholarly literature (Cottreau-Robbins 2002; DiZerega-Wall 2000; Leone 2005; Leone and Fry 1999; MacLeod-Leslie 2001; Mathias and Jerkic 1995; Niven 1994, 2000; Niven and Davis 1999; Powell and Niven 2000). This was done primarily based on geography and history. Priority was given to recent archaeological research in the eastern United States (north and south) which recognized the potential for African- derived meanings of material culture through their research designs (i.e., testing contexts regularly identified with such artefacts on other sites or adopting Africentric interpretive approaches to



collection analysis). Such research from the north was examined because of the similarity in social structure and natural environment that this context shared with Atlantic Canada. Sources from southeastern United States contexts were included for two reasons: African diasporic archaeological research there is more mature and many Black Loyalists and other African diasporic peoples came to live in Atlantic Canada after leaving these areas. Finally, archaeological research wherein people or material related to the African diaspora were noted, were included because of their location within the region of interest.

Databases have become an oft-used tool for management and integration of the mass of data and data sources used by historical archaeologists. One such tool is the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (1999).<sup>7</sup> Its application will be discussed shortly, but I mention it here to underscore this standard for data management and querying that inspired my own use of geographic information system software (GIS) in this research project.

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<sup>7</sup> The *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* was built from records of 27, 233 slave ship voyages, though it does not account for all voyages wherein human beings of African descent were transported as cargo. It was compiled at the W.E.B. DuBois Institute at Harvard University and has inspired countless studies. Its categorized information includes 226 fields such as places of purchase, port of disembarkation, sex, age categories, mortality rates and individual ship specifications.



Finally, archaeology, as a whole, is a changing discipline. Theoretically-grounded archaeological research projects account for the smaller portion of archaeological practice, while the lion's share is drawn from the abundance of cultural resource management (CRM) archaeology, particularly contract archaeology, in response to development pressure. The impact of this phenomenon on African diasporic archaeology is significant. There had been little archaeology of the African diaspora carried out over the course of the history of the discipline. Since the level of detail historically recorded about places associated with the African diaspora was unbalanced compared with that of white landuse, African diasporic sites are more frequently encountered by development unexpectedly. Remains of African diasporic landscapes are unlikely to be indicated on white-authored maps. Seemingly vacant spaces slated for development, as with the African Burial Ground, can be those areas that constituted a place in an African diasporic landscape. In the midst of development, this type of archaeological potential is very poorly understood until earth is broken (Blakey 1996, 1997; LaRoche and Blakey 1996; Perry 1996, 1997).

The African Burial Ground, in lower Manhattan, has become the archetype for African diasporic archaeological research in the Americas. The reconfiguration of its research design and the change in its intellectual leadership to Howard University, a traditionally black institution, resulted from pressure imposed by the African American community. This reflects a recent ethical development in much North American archaeological research as a discipline which now regularly operates in partnership



and/or consultation with communities, particularly if they are affiliated with historically disempowered cultural groups.

African American protests have highlighted the need for greater care and consideration of African pasts in the New World. While academic researchers have developed deeper awareness of the importance of African diasporic pasts since the Civil Rights era, developers and consultants now face greater scrutiny in how they treat the archaeological record. Finally, due in large part to the publicity of the African Burial Ground, African diasporic peoples in North America have come to realize the importance of the archaeological record to understanding their own pasts and the lives of their ancestors. The African Burial Ground project created awareness within the general public of a need to become stewards of their own cultural heritage.

Often times, intensive, theoretically-grounded research of the archaeological materials collected from African diasporic sites under contract CRM projects is a second wave of analysis that follows the preliminary reporting for regulatory bodies. As such, the theoretical perspectives of the initial work are limited in that they do not often have the opportunity to influence field collection methodology. However, despite this fact, the gray literature produced in CRM archaeological work constitutes a necessary source for any African diaspora archaeological literature survey (Davis Archaeological Consultants Limited 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Niven 1994).



The African Nova Scotians and their related sites under consideration here are situated in the wider geographic and temporal context of the Atlantic World, the African slave trade and diaspora and the development of the British Empire in the Americas. Therefore, the background study begins with a brief consideration of the transatlantic slave trade and its attendant relationships with slavery and cultural transformation. It then presents material from the historical archaeological discourse on African diaspora in the northeast and then focuses in on the background specific to Atlantic Canada's place in the African diaspora and the communities investigated specifically for this project.

#### The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Atlantic World

The Atlantic World is constituted by the ocean and its terrestrial fringe which links it to human groups engaged in the activities played out across this forum. While today the ocean is often viewed as a mass of space which divides people, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was a complex of trade routes, transportation corridors, and a workplace. For peoples living along the coast, the Atlantic Ocean was an integral part of their world. Its currents influenced cultural contacts, developed and carried economic structures and managed the flow of traffic around this world (Armitage and Braddick 2002; Cottreau-Robbins 2006; MacLeod-Leslie 2003; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Thornton 1998). Its creatures, such as cod and whales, nurtured capitalist structures and fueled the development of a whole new human understanding of the world, the way it operates and their role in it. The Atlantic Ocean was a place, not an absence of such.



Many different societies and cultures populated the southeastern border of the Atlantic World along the western shores of Africa. Broadly speaking, Mande, Wolof, Fula (or Harpulaar), Mel, Akan, Igbo, Ibo, Fon, Yoruba, Aja, Edo, and Bantu peoples, including Kimbundu and Kikongo peoples, inhabited the many coastal communities of West Africa and West Central Africa with whom later Europeans established trading relationships<sup>8</sup>. These peoples made up larger cultural groupings such as BaKongo and Yoruba, each of which included multiple ethnonyms. Enslaved human beings were among the goods traded and transported to various European colonies and societies throughout the Atlantic World. Slavery was well established in Africa when Europeans came to the shores of Africa to seek out its riches; however, it differed in many respects from the type of enslavement that supported the historical development of the western hemisphere (Thornton 1998:74). The primary difference between European enslavement of black Africans and that of enslavement within Africa was that African slavery was not racialized, but based on social organization and/or cultural membership. African slave holding was more phenotypically monochromatic in its pre-colonial period than the Eurocolonial Atlantic World; black people held other black people in bondage, en masse. African individuals traded to Europeans by other African individuals were often suffering the results of cultural politics, warfare and power struggles; they were political obstacles gotten rid of as much as they were used as wealth generating resources. Therefore, skin colour was not the social indicator that it became in Eurocolonial societies. Further, the nature of land ownership in Africa was corporate, not private. So, while this meant that

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<sup>8</sup> These designations are based on linguistic groups as defined by Thornton (1998:187).



in both contexts, enslaved people were a method of displaying wealth and social status, in the Eurocolonial Atlantic World, enslaved people were secondary to landed capital. In the Eurocolonial world they were, perhaps, more greatly distanced from the human qualities of wealth display. As such, they were dehumanized to the point of object resource wherein their care and presentation was secondary to the care and presentation of landed resources because of their causal relationship with the wealth displayed in the lands and their products (Thornton 1998:75). Ultimately, it was this difference in attitude that led to the decline of slavery with the advent of the Industrial Revolution (Williams 1987).

Skin colour seemed not to have an impact on the African vein of slavery under the rule of Islam, a part of African societies for hundreds of years prior to development of the Atlantic slave trade. Rather, there is suggestion that conversion to Islam influenced the conditions of the enslaved (not unlike conversion to Christianity). So, while black African leaders held slaves, religion and heritable caste was of greater import than skin colour or physical characteristics to the condition of enslavement. Further to the argument that slavery in Africa was not racialized is the development of a feudal-like system wherein enslaved people in Africa were often organized into villages settled for economic purposes (Curtin 1975:59-91; Thornton 1998:90). These villages often paid tribute to those who required their settlement. Such settlement patterning accorded enslaved people acknowledged their freedom to establish social hierarchy within these communities, unsupervised by the dominant class; the cultural dynamics of this would



have been akin to those at work in maroon communities<sup>9</sup>. In fact, residents of these communities were able to increase their socioeconomic status and gather wealth. The operation of these communities also enabled the enslaved community to practice and redevelop aspects of their culture, including religion, as they saw fit.

Like North, Central and South American slavery, slave status in Africa was heritable. Enslavement in Africa could be either commercial or domestic and physical circumstances could be violent and devastating. Some have suggested that the nature of enslavement in Africa was gentler than that in the Americas, but, certainly the impact of it on the social demography of Africa was in stark contrast to Eurocolonial slavery, since in the former situation, Africans stayed in Africa (Thornton 1998:74; Austen 1995, 2001; Eltis 2001; Inikori 1992; Lovejoy 1982, 1989; Walsh 2001).

John Thornton reset the tone for understanding the role of African peoples in the development and course of the triangle trade, in particular its layer of economic activity we know as the transatlantic slave trade, with the first edition of his work, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (1992). Earlier interpretations portrayed European traders as economic, social, intellectual and spiritual saviours and

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<sup>9</sup> When referring to people of African descent outside of Africa, this term indicates a person or their descendent who ran away from slavery and settled in an independent black community. Such communities were prominent in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Americas.



commanders in the relationship with the grateful and diminutive Africans who flocked to the shorelines to greet and trade with these men. Thornton recast these roles, based on a more critically exhaustive examination of the evidence to show how Africans defined and influenced the course of trade, the goods and humans released into the system and how the slave trade became a socioeconomic mechanism to effect African political wills (1998:44). He shows how the demography of the enslaved population of the transatlantic trade contained a greater percentage of peoples from the interior of West Africa (such as Mali) than previously thought, and how individuals from coastal communities were most likely to have entered the system as human cargo as a result of political conflict within and between African societies (1998:106). Like Curtin (1975) before him, Thornton presents evidence for the interpretation of the transatlantic slave trade as a diversion of the trans-Saharan trade, built by Africans, Arabs and the coming of Islam, to a new trading destination. The culpability for variation in the conditions of the endpoint rests with the European colonists and their capitalist colonial descendents.

Thornton's study has ramifications for the study of African diasporic archaeological sites in the Americas because his work increases understanding of African social dynamics and cultural demography, and therefore the original cultural heritage, of those who contributed to African diasporic cultural dispersal and development. Recent scholarship in African diaspora archaeology has built on Thornton's work and approach, applying this method directly to archaeological interpretation and synthesis (Ogundiran and Falola 2007). By understanding where enslaved Africans came from geographically and culturally, we can better investigate individual cultures through ethnography, history



and archaeology. Specifically, with a greater awareness of the practices and worldviews of African groups who most heavily influenced the African components of African diasporic ethnogenesis, archaeologists' ability to distinguish the likelihood that certain traditions manifested in material culture are of African extraction, or not, consequently increases (Walsh 2001:143). Thornton's work is not, however, grounded in archaeological research but rather in history and, therefore, is unable to offer some of the specific types of knowledge historical archaeologists require of West African cultures. This highlights the important resource that Ogundiran and Falola's (2007) volume provides researchers in conjunction with Thornton's work. Historians' growing recognition of the critical analysis required in the study of historical documents as the record of the Eurocolonial economic cultural agents has translated into a more recent anthropological treatment of their data. Therefore, Thornton's work is, quite significantly, more directly applicable to historical archaeological research than many earlier histories of West Africa in the age of colonialism and the Atlantic World.

For centuries, scholars and activists have contested the volume of individuals transported from Africa and delivered into slavery throughout the Atlantic World (MacLeod-Leslie 2003). Travellers' journals and abolitionist literature offer numbers that underscore the devastation which the transatlantic slave trade imposed on human morality as well as the subjected African nations (Benezet 1771; Falconbridge 1788; Fuller 1789; Snelgrave 1734; Edwards 1801). However, research has demonstrated that accounting for the numbers of African people forced to migrate via the transatlantic slave trade was oft influenced by social and political agendas (MacLeod-Leslie 2003). Now, at



the beginning of the twenty-first century, we have an increasingly detailed view of how the transatlantic slave trade functioned, thanks to the works of many who have considered cultures, economy, technology and the vast numbers of people in this forced migration of monumental proportions (Bailyn 2001; Behrendt 1993, 2001; Curtin 1969; Eltis 2001; Eltis and Engerman 1992; Eltis and Richardson 1997; Klein et al. 2001; Nwokeji 2001; Thornton 1998).

African people were dehumanized and commoditized as they were thrust into the slave trade. They entered through a variety of often violent paths: perhaps as prisoners of war or social powerlessness or the inheritance of slave status in African society. Whatever circumstances led to their enslavement, African peoples were purchased at the edge of Africa by maritime Eurocolonial traders and sailed across the ocean to places and circumstances foreign to them and over which they had no socially or politically sanctioned control. The physical leg of this voyage was known as the middle passage, because it served as the intermediate spatial link between the points of export and import of goods out of and into the European base across the triangle trade.

The triangle trade was so known because of the three rough points of commerce that defined the transmission of people, goods, ideas and wealth around the Atlantic World. From western Europe, ships brought trade goods to the shores of Africa. The top of the triangle begins in the north, and its first edge traces a line southward to the western shores of Africa. Here, at the second point, the goods were traded for local resources; gold, ivory, enslaved Africans. The middle passage was the second edge of the triangle



and it was along this that the irrecoverable horrors of the transatlantic version of enslavement were first realized by millions of Africans as they sailed toward a land completely unknown to them. Many died of disease, abuse and shock along this route; though many were also thrown into the ocean to drown, or jumped to their own deaths. The third point, at the end of the second edge, was the New World. Many ports received the human cargoes in South America, the Caribbean, and all up along the coast of North America, from Florida to Newfoundland, though the majority of enslaved Africans were delivered to ports south of the Chesapeake. The final edge of the triangle linked the New World ports with the Old World recipients of the goods produced by the enslaved. Materials from Africa, such as gold and ivory and even enslaved Africans, made it back to Europe, but the most abundant imports came from the Americas: rum, sugar, cotton, and other agricultural crops grown and harvested by enslaved human hands. Psychologically, the middle passage served as a threshold across which African people passed. This single, devastating experience undoubtedly affected their attitudes toward daily habits and practices in the new lands, as would the new ecology that awaited them and their new social and economic roles.

Archaeologists studying the African diaspora have, in the last decade and a half, realized that the discipline lacked an emic and intimate understanding of West African historical cultures, their development and impacts of the transatlantic slave trade. There was, in effect, no archaeological perspective on West Africa's colonial and proto-colonial period. Historians' command of the past has been derived largely from white Eurocolonially authored works. As historical archaeology is just half a century old, there



remained many gaps to be filled in the data assemblage and West Africa constituted a major one. Despite its recognition, the gap has been difficult to bridge given the political climate of the region. Combined with Thornton's work, the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (1999) offers archaeologists a glimpse into the specific cultures from Africa that contributed to local cultural adaptations to specific locations throughout the diaspora. However, the work to be done in Africa has only just begun (Bailyn 2001: 246, 259).

In the last decade, archaeologists have begun to address the need for more transatlantic consideration of the African diaspora and its material remains (Franklin and McKee 2004; Ogundiran and Falola 2007). As the archaeology of slavery began to reveal patterns wherein explanations defied Eurocolonial interpretive frameworks, Africanist archaeologists encouraged their colleagues researching the diaspora to better understand the many African cultures from which the diaspora had stemmed (DeCorse 1999; Posnansky 1984, 1999). Likewise, diaspora archaeologists encouraged a reflexive discourse in recognition of the agency of Africans, their descendents and the many roles they played in the transatlantic slave trade, as well as the dynamism of African and African diasporic cultures (Singleton 2001). The seminal works now available will foster more critical transatlantic analysis over this next decade and the understanding of the complexities of the Black Atlantic World will begin to generate the volume of discourse that the White Eurocolonial Atlantic World has achieved.



## Slavery

The experience of enslavement was once thought to have stripped any sense of African cultural identity from those transported across the Atlantic Ocean into the slave societies of the Americas. It was thought that those born into slavery in the western hemisphere simply became Eurocolonial cultural agents, though simply of a darker complexion than the hegemonic colonists. Modern study of the African diasporic past has moved well beyond this thought, beginning with Herskovits, and later demonstrating the agency of African diasporic peoples and the transmission of African cultural ideas and their incorporation into new, diasporic traditions (Fennell 2007a, 2007b, Fitts 1996; Franklin; Herskovits 1941; Leone and Fry 1999; MacLeod-Leslie 2007; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Piersen 1988; Walsh 2001; Whitfield 2006). In effect, the diaspora became a new place, tied not to a single geographic country, but to a cohesive landscape of politics, worldviews, experiences, economies and natural resources. This place can be conceptualized as floating across the spaces of other political geographies but woven together by the commonality of African cultural heritage and change created by becoming *black*. In Africa, where darker skin pigmentation is a more abundant phenotype, people were not *black*, they were, quite simply, people<sup>10</sup>. It was not until

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<sup>10</sup> Certainly, cultural and linguistic differences could compound the processes of othering and dehumanizing, but Europeans regularly encountered different languages and cultures nearer home without enslaving their agents. However, servitude in Europe was not entrenched in institutionalized slavery as indeed it was in Africa. This factor, then, may have contributed to Europeans' fast embrace of enslaving non-Europeans.



there was a basis for dialectic en masse, outside of this norm, that these people became black – and, generically, African.

Once enslaved, African people were subjected to various types of treatment. Most slaveowners treated enslaved people as less than human, often accounting for them along with livestock and possessions. In many cases, though not all, enslaved people were abused physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually. But, regardless of the individual circumstances of enslaved people, all were in some form of socioeconomic powerlessness.

Powerlessness can breed resistance and, for enslaved people of African descent, their enslavement was reinforced by their racialization. Resistance was, in some ways, prescribed by the Eurocolonial cultures. In other ways, we are coming to recognize that practices previously viewed as resistance were, indeed, active agency; an action rather than a reaction (Matory 2005). We are only now beginning to understand how acts of resistance or perhaps agency, were defined by African-derived ideas and traditions. Slave revolts aboard slaveships and on plantations, resulting in bloodshed and warfare, may be viewed as examples of the former. Perhaps the two most famous examples of these, wherein the enslaved were victorious, were the *Amistad* and the revolution in Haiti. Smaller acts of resistance were commonplace in slave societies. For instance, enslaved people used illness to take much needed rest from the physically punishing regime of slavery or at holiday times. Delle notes that the population of the hospital in Radnor, Jamaica swelled with enslaved people the week prior to Christmas (1998:165). Slave



songs and quilts are some of the most well-known forms of non-violent resistance. These acted as navigational tools for those seeking escape from enslavement, but, because the slaveowners were unaware that they were encoded, these forms could remain in plain view (and hearing) of the hegemonic population without true knowledge of their meanings (Fry 2002; Ruppel et al. 2003; Tobin and Dobard 1999). Other forms of resistance were related to spirituality and conjuring. Often, these were hidden from view in private, spiritually meaningful contexts such as thresholds, chimneys, pathways and northeastern corners (Edwards 1998; Fennell 2007b, 2007c; Ferguson 1992; Jones 1998; Leone and Fry 1999; Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1999; Sauer 1998). The nature of these tended to be African-derived and their account and interpretation is best illuminated through historical archaeology (Fennell 2007b, 2007c; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Walsh 2001). An important point that remains under-considered in the West is the degree to which the Muslim faith influenced West African belief systems from which many of the enslaved were taken. Until such understanding is further developed by scholars studying religion and history, it remains part of the nebulous West African belief systems to which many historical archaeologists have deferred for interpretation.

Enslaved people used magico-religious traditions to both protect themselves from the slaveowners, and to exact revenge upon them through the use of conjuring, charms and invocations (Jones 1998; Leone and Fry 1999). A growing body of discourse is exploring this recently discovered aspect of African diasporic cultures. Historical archaeology has been a leading discipline in this work. This is because the quantification of apparent anomalies in the material culture record has been a catalyst for the efforts to



answer questions about what these anomalous objects mean. There, they are no longer anomalies, but patterns in material culture that are spread across the diaspora (Fennell 2009; Leone et al. 2005; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Walsh 2001).

Known variously as “spirit bundles”, “minkisi” (“nkisi” is the singular form), or “caches”, these purposefully chosen and placed items represent African diasporic behaviours which are descended from African cultural traditions (Fennell 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Leone and Fry 1999; Leone 2005; Young 1996; Ferguson 1992; Samford 1999; Sauer 1998). The usual items and materials included in minkisi are discussed in Chapter 8. They cannot be seen as simple transportations from African mother cultures or “Africanisms” because to view them as such would deny the agency and experiences of those throughout the diaspora (Herskovits 1945; Walsh 2001). Their placement, or the action of placing them, was likely impacted by the surveillance and restriction imposed upon the enslaved. The act of choosing an African-descended tradition (or some transformation of an Africentric cultural idea) demonstrates, simultaneously, a will to resist the circumstances of occupation within a racialized slave society, if not the condition of enslavement itself, as well as a resistance to the complete dissipation of African cultural heritage.

Other African-descended traditions are now widely known throughout the diaspora, including foodways, ceramic technology, music and rhythms, language, architecture, medicine, child birthing, agriculture and settlement patterning (Leone et al. 2005). The most important message these traditions send, beyond the transmission of



distinct ethnocultural identities, is that African diasporic peoples were aware of their African cultural heritage and traditions. Such knowledge informed the cultures which developed throughout the diaspora, including those not limited to black membership.

While many people transported into the slave trade had been taken from Africa, a significant portion of the enslaved black population was born into slavery in the Eurocolonial world, either as the first generation of non-African born diasporic people (creoles) or as subsequent generations born of African diasporic peoples (i.e., African Americans). It might be suggested that this would have increased the dilution of African-descended tradition and decreased the likelihood of its transmission. However, in the face of racialized slavery and oppression, particularly in the south, the opportunity to safeguard and pass on a sense of ethnocultural identity that reminded people of their group membership outside of slavery and slave society may have constituted a priority. This might have been effected in the privacy of the enslaved peoples' homes.

In northern slave societies, the privacy or escape from constant surveillance necessary for most ethnocultural transmissions was not as easily found as in southern slave quarters, for most were housed in their owners' homes. Fitts takes issue with Piersen's claim that this living arrangement gave birth to a gentler enslaved experience and a more paternal relationship between enslaved and slaveowner characteristic of the northern experience of slavery (Fitts 1996; Piersen 1988:146). He suggests that such was not the case and that resistance and power struggles were common in northern slave societies (1996:54).



If northern slave society was truly gentler and less oppressive, those enslaved in the north might have embraced Eurocolonial culture more readily and not maintained Africentric practices similar to those enslaved in the south. Scholars working in the south recognize that some of the motivation for adapting Africentric practices under bondage constituted resistance against (often harsh) Eurocolonial practices of enslavement there. In South America, the suggestion has been that, rather than resistance, these acts constituted active agency; an intention motivated by internal stimuli primarily, rather than a simple reaction to an external condition where the condition is the stimulus for action (Ogundiran and Falola 2007). The evidence of similar degrees and methods of resistance (or agency) in both the north and south, and the attendant African diasporic cultural development, suggests two things. The first is that enslaved people in both regions shared a similar attitude to Eurocolonial slave society and the lot imposed on them in it – thus, the resistance behaviours. The second is that the similarity of cultural practices maintained indicates the importance of these specific practices to African-descended peoples and a crucial cultural link that connects African diasporic peoples to a mutual cultural foundation or worldview. Indeed, the suggestion by Piersen (1988) that northern slave society was gentler and more paternalistic seems rooted more in his attitude toward the activities of the enslaved (domestic versus agricultural) than an acknowledgment of the attitudes of the enslaved toward their own enslavement. In fact, there may be room here for a critique rooted in feminist theory about ideas regarding work and leisure.



While I agree that Piersen's claim may be a bit rose coloured, I have used Piersen's work differently. William Piersen's *Black Yankees* (1988) offers a folklorist's approach to African diaspora history useful for historical archaeological research (Leone and Fry 1999). He teases out the details that historical archaeologists require of such forms of evidence to assist in the interpretation of the material culture record. For instance, Piersen presents a variety of folk traditions that were distinctly black, including medicine, games, celebrations and consumer choices (74-86, 96-113 and 117-128). His argument on these points stimulates an understanding of both the uniqueness of these cultural elements to the black populations in the north and the heritage of these alternative traditions (to the local white, Euro-Christian norm) as African-descended.

Fennell has promoted the use of "ethnogenesis" and "ethnogenic bricolage" as opposed to terms such as "cultural retention" or "Africanism" (2000, 2007a, 2007b). The former denote the distance between African and African diasporic cultures and, consequently, acknowledge the effects of cultural contacts between African and African-descended peoples and Eurocolonial and Native American cultures in the creation of African diasporic cultures. His preferred terms also connote the culturally generative influence that individual and colonial experiences would undoubtedly have had on the resultant cultural behaviours and, indeed, weave together resistance and active agency.

Because a large number of the Black Loyalists came from the southern states, the rules of cultural transmission and ethnogenesis from there would apply to many of their population. There is no doubt that the type of enslavement most generally suffered by



African diasporic peoples in the American South and Caribbean was harsh; the environment was difficult and fostered specific types of commercial activities which proved punishing for the enslaved. The conditions of slavery there are popularly understood. In part, the reasons for this derive from their portrayal (albeit sensationalized in some respects) in film and fictional literature. But academic discourse, particularly that within archaeology, has illuminated the facts of the past in ways historical documents have not. Many Black Loyalist settlers had come from southern and Caribbean locales, although, there were Black Loyalists who derived from the northern states as well. The sociopolitical climate with which the Black Loyalists were greeted in Nova Scotia would have begun much like that of New England's version of slave society, but the presence of the Loyalists, particularly the Black Loyalists, would have immediate and dramatic impact (NSARM 2006). Interactions between blacks and whites in Nova Scotia, indeed throughout Canada's Atlantic Region, would have been predicated on a northern slave society model similar to that of the northern United States. However, work on slave society in Atlantic Canada is only beginning. Historians have made the most progress to date, but archaeology has begun to make strides in this direction as well (Cahill 1994; Cottreau-Robins in prep; Donovan 2007; Grant 1990; Niven 1997; Pachai 1987, 2007; Riddell 1920; Walker 1973; 1992; Whitehead 2000; Whitfield 2006, 2007).

First Nations' people of the Americas were enslaved alongside blacks, though the experiences that each of these broad ethnological groupings would have had must have been quite different. Blacks had to deal with the horrors of the middle passage and the perception that black people were a resource to be mined out of Africa for the



development of the colonies – a perception which underlay the economic machine of the transatlantic slave trade. First Nations peoples had to deal with the perception of them as a people to be conquered, an obstacle to colonization and the expansion of European powers and as lesser people whose society was to be improved upon. While members of each group were dehumanized, exploited, oppressed and abused, their perspectives on the circumstances and ramifications of enslavement and the institution of slavery would have been distinctly different.

The similarity of social locations of black and First Nation peoples was a significant ethnogenic factor throughout African diasporic cultures. Beyond the conditions imposed upon them and the legacy of prejudice and oppression for their modern descendents, this relationship and its many incarnations across the western hemisphere have resulted in a whole segment of people whose heritage is both African and Native American (Katz 1997; Madden 2009). Phenotypic visage combined with other heritage indicators such as surnames and residence patterns, regularly disclose this shared heritage. The degree to which this heritage is understood varies by region as the politics of aboriginal rights and title pose significant implications for issues of citizenship and beneficiaries (Madden 2009). For the purposes of this study the significance is in its potential ethnogenic implications, however there remain significant intersections of cultural landscapes and political geographies to be investigated in future research programs.



### Archaeology of the African Diaspora

Much archaeology of the African diaspora has been conducted on sites in the American South and the Caribbean and, most recently, in the northeastern United States (Agorsah 1994, 2007; Armstrong 1985; Battle-Baptiste 2007; Beaudry and Berkland 2007; Brown 1994; Chan 2007; Delle 1998; Ferguson 1978, 1991, 1992; Franklin 1997; Handler and Lange 1978; Hauser 2007; Leone and Fry 1999, Leone 2005; Levine 1977; McKee 1995; Mrozowski 2003; Orser 1998; Samford 1996; Singleton 1985, 1995, 1999, 2001; Toner 2003; Upton 1988; Weik 1997, 2007; Wheaton et al. 1983; Wilkie 2000; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999; Young 1995). The majority of the early diaspora work can be called plantation archaeology or the archaeology of slavery, as most of it has focussed on sites where people were enslaved and, most frequently, enslaved to support agricultural production.

The archaeology of slavery yields a great deal of information about the differences between blacks' and whites' material circumstances, the structures and anti-structures of colonial society and African-descended traditions. Recently, however, African diaspora archaeology has expanded its horizons to include communities of free blacks and important places within the African diasporic landscape (Deetz 1996; Fennell 2007c; Niven 1994, 2000; MacLeod-Leslie 2001, 2010). The search for African-descended traditions is waning in the United States, due in part to the accepted notion that they existed there and that interpretations of black sites need to be informed by Africentric perspectives. In response to this early volume of investigation, research has advanced to more theoretically sophisticated questions of identity formation, gender,



consumerism, landscape and intersectionality (Agbe-Davis 2007; Leone et al. 2005).

Such is not the case in Atlantic Canada; our southern colleagues are more advanced in their understanding of the African American past. Atlantic Canadian archaeology must take the work from the United States and Caribbean as a basis for comparison, to help develop an understanding of its nature and variation here. Quite simply, the archaeological record of the African diaspora in Atlantic Canada is comparatively untapped and, if the advances to the south are any indication, there is much to learn. And, while some could argue that the work to the south is enough for Atlantic Canada to understand its African diasporic past, such a view would deny the regional identity that characterizes Atlantic Canada as a distinct location in the Atlantic World, even in comparison with nearby New England. Whitfield's work testifies to the importance of this latter point (2006:6). Atlantic Canada occupies a unique position in the landscapes of the Atlantic World, the African diaspora, the Black Atlantic World, Canada, and northeastern North America. This unique position has fostered a unique cultural incarnation and is deserving of its own investigation and explanation based on its own evidence. Specifically, while the African diaspora of Atlantic Canada is strongly related to larger patterns, local identity is unique and black Atlantic Canadians deserve to know their past and integrate it with their sense of identity as much as any other cultural or ethnic segment of this region's population.

From African diaspora archaeology to date, we know that certain objects in certain locations in past landscapes bespeak African diasporic cultural behaviours (Fennell 2007c; Gundaker 1998; Leone et al. 2005). Particular items appear again and



again that would, without Africentric interpretation, be discounted as garbage or detritus: crystals, blue beads, pierced coins, out-of-place marine shells, pipes, spoons with “X”s on them and/or handles cut off of them, copper alloy objects, bones, cutlery, white saucers (complete and incomplete), nails and iron (Brown 1994; DiZerega-Wall 2000; Fennell 2000, 2007b, 2007c; Ferguson 1992; Franklin 2006 pers. comm.; Funari 2007; Jones 1998; LaRoche 1994; Leone 2005; Leone and Fry 1999; Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1999; Sauer 1998; Young 1996). That discourse has also taught us that some African diasporic peoples consumed goods differently than white Eurocolonial peoples, for example buying tinned, controlled food as opposed to locally derived foods whose quantities and qualities could be tampered with (Mullins 1999, 1999b, 1999c). In the Bahamas, it has been suggested that enslaved blacks selected ceramics whose decorative colours reflected palettes similar to those seen in African textiles, a major commodity for West Africans in displays of wealth and fashion (Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999).

In addition to objects, an African cultural past and the experiences of slavery, oppression and a culture of fear have informed architectural traditions and settlement patterns (Cottreau-Robins 2002; MacLeod-Leslie 2001, 2007; Vlach 1977; Orser and Nekola 1985). For some, settlement patterns were selected which supported community structure similar to that of West African cultures. In other African diasporic settlements, patterning reflects the impact of slavery in the need for and development of privacy, either from other households or, more often, from non-black communities (Delle 1998, 2007; Dème and Guèye 2007; MacLeod-Leslie 2001, 2007; Orser and Nekola 1985; Saunders 2009; Usman 2007).



African diasporic systems reflect religious traditions and belief systems of African cultures. Gospel music is undeniably unique and African-descended, in its tone, message, rhythm and performance. Vodun, Voodoo and Hoodoo are systems of belief, folklore, healing, and sociopolitical action widely recognized and established in the Americas and firmly grounded in African practices. The experience of slavery and the presence of African born peoples, living both enslaved and free, amplified the potential for African-derived spirituality to endure and metamorphose throughout the diaspora. In 2008, I carried out archaeological excavations in the midst of what I have hypothesized are African-derived ancestral commemoration architectural features in Birchtown, Nova Scotia. In this dissertation I demonstrate that settlement patterning and folk practices in African Nova Scotian communities bespeak blackness and African-derived culture as fundamental to African diasporic ethnogenesis in Atlantic Canada.

Slavery was horrible. It was responsible for the deaths, disenfranchisement and demoralization of millions of African people and their descendents. It tore children from parents, ripped asunder families and communities and drained the will to live from emotionally-destroyed men, women and children. Those that survived withstood the denial of freedom and human decency. Among the many survivors, those that successfully fought this “peculiar institution”, stand the Black Loyalists who came to



settle in Nova Scotia, where slavery had been in full swing for a hundred years or more in both English and French societies.<sup>11</sup>

### Black Atlantic Canada

Black history in Nova Scotia extends back, roughly, as far as that of whites' settlement history. The first historical record of a person of African descent here is of Mathieu Da Coste, the language interpreter for Samuel de Champlain and his entourage at Port Royal in 1605 (Historica Dominion Institute 2009; Whitfield 2006:11)<sup>12</sup>. De Coste's language and communications skills with native peoples in the Americas were well developed at that time and may have come from some earlier experiences, perhaps on North American shores or through culture contacts on other shores. He may have commanded an intermediate language, perhaps pidgin Basque, which First Nations' people understood (Historica Dominion Institute; Johnston 2001; Madden 2009; Whitfield 2006:11). It is equally conceivable that Da Coste overwintered with Mi'kmaq

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<sup>11</sup> The phrase "peculiar institution" came into common usage in the early nineteenth century as abolitionists used it frequently to distinguish it as something typically American (Stampp 1956).

<sup>12</sup> While the seasonal fishery and other natural resources explorations and harvests brought European peoples to North America's shores for at least hundreds of years prior to this time, the focus here is on the period of settlement history from which modern Atlantic Canadian culture most often traces its recent colonial roots.



to develop the necessary communication skills. Indeed, there were likely African participants in the seasonal fishery as seafaring brought Europeans and Africans together for centuries before Champlain's time throughout which the seasonal fishery touched North American shores. Africans, then, may have been among the nameless masses of fisherfolk who visited the northeast prior to the historically documented Da Coste. If this is so, then a black presence in Nova Scotia may extend even further back than 1605. A year after the first record of Da Coste, there is another record of the death of a black person who died of scurvy circa 1606-07 (Brunet 1677; Walker 1992; Whitfield 2006:12). In any event, the documentary record alone proves that black history in Nova Scotia is at least four hundred years long.

While Da Coste was a free man, the enslavement of African peoples by those of European extraction has a history just as old. Early records from the English colony at Jamestown, Virginia show enslaved Africans arrived there as early as 1619 (Preservation Virginia 2011; Whitefield 2006:10). Likewise, the French and Spanish trade in enslaved Africans was funneling black people into their New World colonies at this time. Although the nature of enslavement practices there were often more domestic and industrial than agricultural, New England was engaged in slavery as early as the neighbouring colonies to the south. Additionally, free African diasporic people lived and influenced cultural historical developments here in the northeast.

On the island of Newfoundland, black presence is, so far, indicated through archival documents. Slave societies clearly existed in the early settlements on



Newfoundland. A seventeenth-century letter to Charles II from Thomas Oxford of St. John's records a "Negro Servant" among his property (Oxford 1679; Temple 1999:77). In Plaisance, the fortified French stronghold on the Avalon Peninsula in the late seventeenth century, a merchant's ledger records the sale of cotton to two local planters "pour sa negresse" (Brunet 1677)<sup>13</sup>. The time was 1677, nearer the beginning of French occupation of this settlement (1662) than its end, in 1713. Further research may reveal a notable black presence in Newfoundland as these disparate references converge into a nascent narrative. McGhee's recognition of links between the African diaspora and maritime archaeology through whaling, fisheries and other commercial seafaring activity can be extended to Atlantic Canada (Bolster 1997; McGhee 2007). Given the role of the fishery, the sea and Atlantic World commerce in Newfoundland's history it is likely that black presence in Newfoundland's history is more extensive than we currently understand (Pope 2004).

As the French left Plaisance to establish Louisbourg on Ile Royale (Cape Breton) following the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), the governor of the colony, Pasteur de Costebelle, brought with him his recently purchased enslaved 16 year-old African boy, Georges (Donovan 2004). A century later, likely during a fishing expedition in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, the body of a man of African descent was interred on the shore at L'Anse au

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<sup>13</sup> Thanks to my doctoral student colleague, Amanda Crompton who, perhaps as a result of our collegiality, made note of these women as she sifted through the mass of archival documentation for her own dissertation.



Loup, Labrador wearing typical English garb for the time, bearing the initials “WH” (Mathias and Jerkic 1995).

Costebelle characterizes the trend for Ile Royale’s French residents. As historian Ken Donovan’s work shows, slaveholding of African people was prevalent in French Louisbourg between 1713 and 1758 (1995, 2004, 2007). At least 232 of Ile Royale’s black population of 266 lived in Louisbourg, most of them domestic labourers. Undoubtedly, the eighteenth century witnessed additional slaveholding among the English speaking population of Nova Scotia, as this was the strongest period of the English trade in enslaved Africans (Eltis 2001; Eltis et al. 1999; MacLeod-Leslie 2003). Donovan continues to track slaveholding in Cape Breton to 1810, by which time records of enslaved blacks had expanded to 413 people, though certainly more could have gone unrecorded (2004:38, 2007).

Nova Scotia was engaged as a slave society in the Atlantic World. The earliest presence of white settlers here seems to have been accompanied by blacks. Over the succeeding centuries, the Maritime region continued to develop with black people racialized and, often, subjugated. Analysis of the documentary record of the late seventeenth century, in terms of black presence, lags behind that of eighteenth century documentation. Further, archaeologists have only recently begun to consider blacks as detectable in the archaeological record of multi-ethnic sites and their limited work has not included sites in Canada’s Atlantic Region from the 1600s. Historical research has shown, however, that African diasporic peoples, both enslaved and free, were among



those who built Halifax which was established in 1749. Citadel Hill, the most prominent terrestrial landscape feature of the city, was the worksite for many of Halifax's early black settlers (Grant 2002:36). Slave auctions were held on the early town's waterfront by Joshua Mauger, who advertised in the same newspapers where runaway slave ads indicate enslaved peoples' resistance to the imposition of the condition of enslavement (Donovan 1995; Grant 1990, 2002; NSM 2001; Rommel-Ruiz 2008; Walker 1992; Whitehead 2003, 2006 pers. comm.; Whitfield 2006:17). Following the Acadian Deportation, when English settlement was encouraged across the Nova Scotian landscape by settling New England planters on the former Acadian farmsteads, blacks enslaved by those planters further expanded the slave society in Atlantic Canada (Cahill 2001; Rommel-Ruiz 2008; Whitfield 2006). The New England planters engaged in agriculture on the fertile lands of Nova Scotia's rolling plains, not-so-rocky shores, and reclaimed saltmarshes with the aid of their enslaved blacks, though not on the scale of the agricultural plantation slavery of the American southeast. This influx of Africans to Nova Scotia was followed by, perhaps, one event that must stand among the most influential events in the history of the African diaspora in North America and the Black Atlantic – the landing of the loyalists and their servants in Nova Scotia. Of greatest concern to this study are the more than 10 percent of them, numbering over 3000, who were of African descent (the Black Loyalists). The implications of this demography were presented in chapter one, but to reiterate, the movement of these people at this period in time to this part of the world caused a ripple effect that touched the economies, cultures, political regimes and social functioning of the Atlantic World.



A curious transition seems to have taken place as loyalists migrated from the United States to Canada and other British territories and it is reflected in the wording of Carleton's *Book of Negroes*. Individuals of African descent who would, no doubt, have been previously cited as slaves now seem to have become servants. There does not appear to have been any actual or distinctive change in their condition under the new terminology. Indeed, a free person who, due to poverty, chose to indent themselves to a master seems to have remained an indentured servant, leaving a status gap between them and the other servants, so labeled. What the terminological shift reflects is the ideological impact in the British Atlantic World of the promises made to the Black Loyalists during the Revolutionary War and the distinct character that began to emerge in the eighteenth century of the Atlantic Canadian region.

#### Carleton's *Book Of Negroes*

Following the American Revolution, Americans sought to reclaim or be compensated for property they had lost to the Loyalist forces, including the enslaved people of whom they claimed ownership. This had a direct impact on the Black Loyalists as many of them had fled slavery to join the British. Sir Guy Carleton, who was in charge of evacuating the Loyalists from New York, agreed to the return of formerly enslaved individuals who had joined the British after 30 November 1782 (Walker 1992:10). However, for those Black Loyalists who had been enslaved immediately prior to their joining the British, and who did so prior to 30 November 1782, compensation was to be paid. Such transactions required an inventory of the Black Loyalists. On



Carleton's orders, a listing known as the *Book of Negroes* (BON) was produced. Entries included a variety of uniquely identifying information and typically read much like this example: "Nero Denton, 40, stout fellow, (Cornet Gray, B. Legion). Formerly the property of William Denton of Goshen; left him in 1776. GMC." (Carleton 1783:Book 2). Other entries included race (i.e., black, mulatto, quadroon), infirmities (i.e., blindness), physical features such as visible ritual scarification, or a subjective assessment of the person (e.g., "worn out"). Entries also included the name of the ship, her captain, the date of the record and the port for which they were bound. It is unclear why a destination was a necessary part of the record, but it may have been due to the standard practices of the time in maritime commerce. In all, more than 3000 Black Loyalists were recorded in the 3 volumes of this document. Only three copies of this document exist; one in the Public Records Office, Kew, one in the United States and one in Canada, at Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management. In the end, compensation was never paid to the Americans for their lost property, but the demand culminated in a monumentally important historical document.

This document is an unparalleled one for Atlantic Canada's black history, and perhaps throughout the whole of the African diaspora. Rarely is a high level of detail



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Says gave her full before she died 11  
years ago -  
Sister Charles Elliott of - do who  
died about 1772 years ago  
Property of Edw Wright, purchased from  
Jas Stokes of New York,  
Formerly Slave to Mrs Woodhouse Princess  
and Virginia left Virg<sup>a</sup> 6 years past  
by Proclamation<sup>m</sup>  
Served with Capt Powell in Town Virg<sup>a</sup>  
left him 6 years past no Slave -  
Formerly Serv<sup>t</sup> to Geo Philips Middletown  
Connecticut left him 6 years past by  
Proclam<sup>n</sup>

Misses Names	Where	Round - Negroes Names -	Age
and their	Port Roseway -	Rachel	28
Commander -	"	David	8
Ship Monaga	"	Polly Pompey -	9
Rev <sup>d</sup> Wilson -	"	Minus -	19
"			
Ship Providence	Port Roseway -	Nero Mc Culloch -	22
John Richell -	"	Polly Shrewsbury -	20
		Son <sup>n</sup> Bloy -	40
	"	Wig <sup>n</sup> Richardson -	38
	"	Call <sup>n</sup> Do -	9
		Jam <sup>s</sup> Ramsey -	20
		Hannah Hazard	36
		Ben Hazard.	11
		David Jant	40
		Caro Ramsey	45
		Chim Godfrey -	35
		Nelly Ramsey -	15

**Figure 3.** A page from Carleton's *Book of Negroes*. Carleton 1783. (NSARM, RG1 vol. 423, *Book of Negroes*).



available about the lives of black individuals in any historical document. Treated as subhuman, diasporic peoples were stripped of family histories through the break up of family units, taking parents from children and husbands from wives and selling them to buyers regardless of geography. This has made genealogical research impossible for many.

The *Book of Negroes* gives Black Loyalist descendents a next step by directing their searches, not just to ports of departure, but to the locations of their ancestors' former enslavement and enslavers. Coupled with the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, it is conceivable that a lucky few might trace their family histories to an African port or culture. The majority of Atlantic World Black Loyalist descendents, however, are likely to use the *Book of Negroes* to find historical, social and cultural connections with African American and African Canadian communities. It is a crucial part of that network and essential for understanding it<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> In 2007, Lawrence Hill published *The Book of Negroes* (released as *Someone Knows My Name* in the United States). It is a work of historical fiction that takes, as its central character a woman, Aminata Diallo, who at one point in her life's journey works for the British as a scribe recording the people in Carleton's *Book of Negroes*, including herself. Aminata had been born in Africa and had learned to read there and then again, in another language, after her enslavement in the southern United States. Hill's work portrays what could have been one of the thousands of amazing life stories of the African diasporic people who lived at that time and were recorded in the historical document. Weaving the



Clearly, Canada's Atlantic Region was a hive of activity within the African diaspora. Understanding of it though, has only recently expanded. Much of this, to date, has come from historical documentation. It is now the opportunity of historical archaeology to develop the nascent understanding and detect African diasporic people throughout the region. The pieces of African Atlantic Canadian heritage must be collated and seen as fertile ground for African cultural substance in Atlantic Canada. African diasporic lives, realities and perspectives on Atlantic Canada's history are most accessible, as a historically less documented people, through archaeology. Blacks came to this region from all over the Atlantic World and created a unique African diasporic cultural position. The challenge now is to uncover that layer of the region's history that is Black Atlantic Canada and weave it into its rightful place in the fabric of the Atlantic World's African diaspora.

#### Delap's Cove

To understand the lives of Africans and African Americans as they became Nova Scotians, we must weave together strands from diverse, but fragmentary, sources.

Reconstructing the history of Delap's Cove from the available historical documentation presents a number of challenges, and underlines the need for integrating archaeological

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tale of this woman's life allowed him to take his readers into the heart and soul of a woman who had witnessed the greatest horrors of this life, murder, violence, enslavement, rape, death and abduction of her children, as well as its greatest joy, as a midwife, in the miracle of a child's birth.



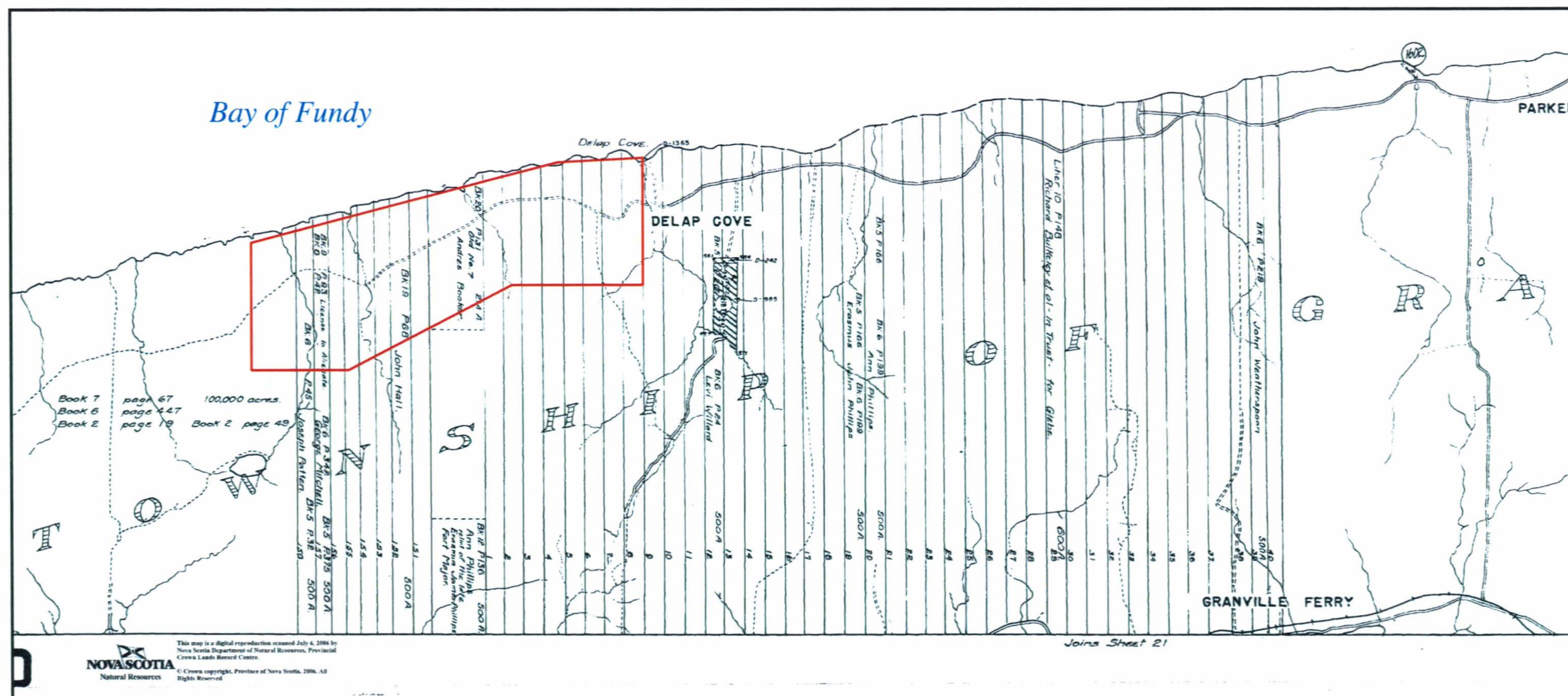
research into the story of African Nova Scotians. The community of Delap's Cove exists on the northwestern slope of the North Mountain, facing the Bay of Fundy. Its natural landscape falls within the Basalt Ridge subunit of the Fundy Coast Region, as defined by Davis and Browne (1996). It is tied to the toponymic landscape by a small cove whose namesake was a white land grantee, in the Annapolis Valley, whose grant extended from the valley floor, up over the North Mountain, to the Fundy shore.

The physiographic feature of the North Mountain appears to have acted as a divide between two social worlds. Within the valley, southeast of the base of the mountain, was a fertile, agricultural, slave-owning world. The longstanding settlement of Annapolis Royal, swelled by planters in the 1760s and by loyalists in the 1780s, grew over the previous landscapes of Acadian agriculture and the fortified posts of Fort Anne and Port Royal – the beginning of permanent, yearround European occupation of Mi'kma'ki<sup>15</sup>. This lush, bountiful, fertile landscape, steeped in thousands of years of peoples' history and struggle, offered eighteenth and nineteenth century settlers one of the easiest Nova Scotia existences of the time. Between the agricultural and domestic contexts it was also one of the most significant slave-owning areas of the province, with Annapolis Royal forming its urban centre.

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<sup>15</sup> Mi'kma'ki is the Mi'kmaw name for the land now partially known to most as Nova Scotia. The rest of Mi'kma'ki covers Prince Edward Island and parts of New Brunswick, the Gaspé and Newfoundland.

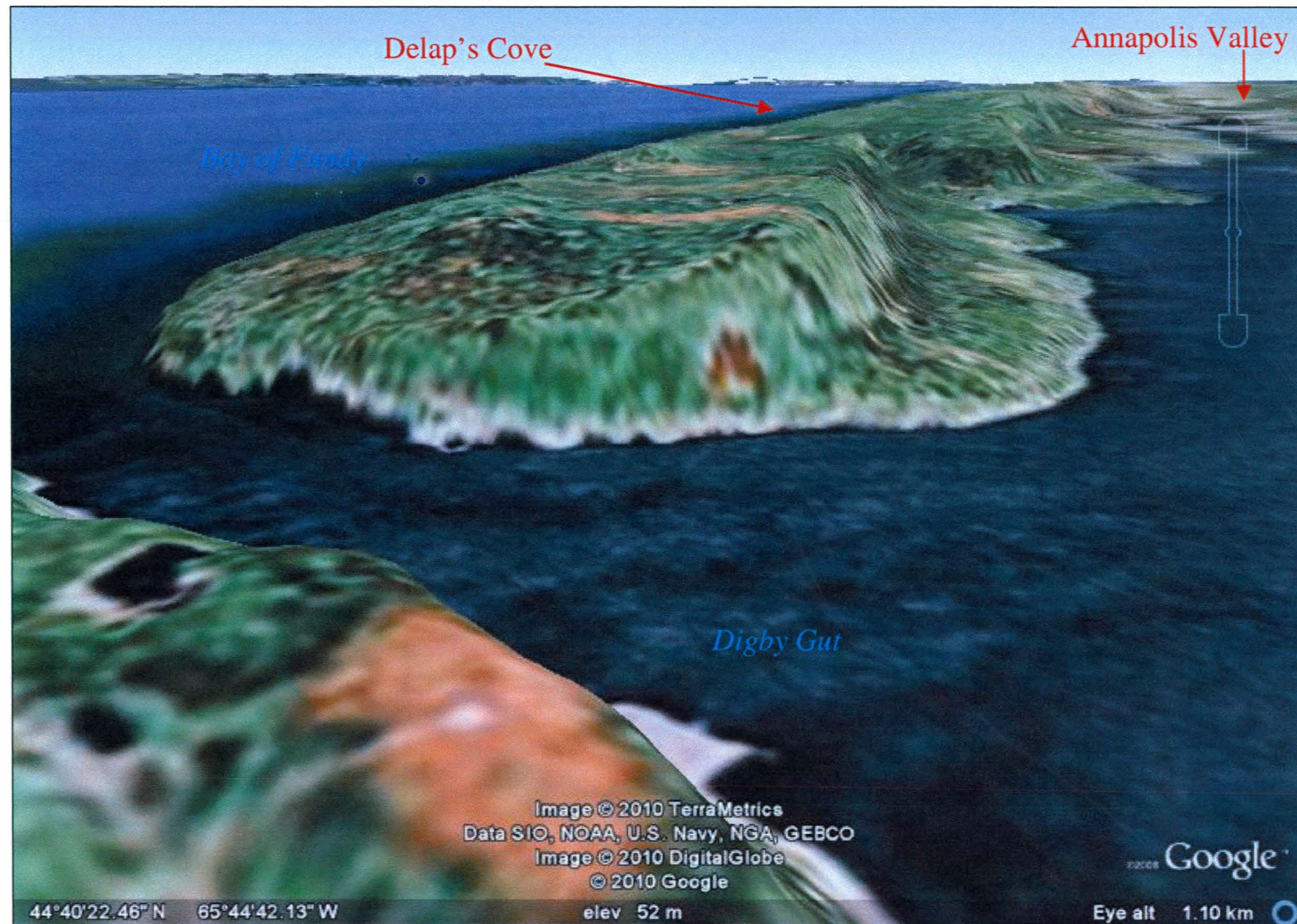




**Figure 4.** Subset of crown land grant map sheet #20, covering area of black Delap's Cove (roughly outlined in red). Although the Annapolis Valley portion is not shown, the edge of grants extend to the valley floor. A Delap Cove [sic] label appears at the outflow of the ravine that separates black Delap's Cove (to the west) from white Delap's Cove. Note the change in the road symbol west of the ravine. Nova Scotia Crown Land Information Management Centre, Crown Land Index Sheet No.20.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/land/indexmaps/020.pdf> Accessed: June 4 2010.





**Figure 5.** Looking northeast, 3-Dimensional rendering of the topographic character of the North Mountain showing the ridge that separates Delap's Cove from the Annapolis Valley. Image courtesy of DigitalGlobe, 2010 and Google, 2010.



Over the mountain, to the Bay of Fundy, however, the land was untamed, a frontier for industrious pioneers and a life more private and independent (if not as hospitable as the valley floor). Soils were thinner and significantly less fertile by comparison with the neighbouring valley. Today, as one travels down the Fundy Shore, something changes when you come to Delap's Cove. Settlement on this side of the mountain appears to stop as the paved road, until then paralleling the shore, turns 90° and heads straight for the Bay. However, visible to the more careful motorist, a dirt road branches off the apex of the turn, appearing to immediately drop you and your vehicle into a gully. This is the ravine which, described by modern local (white) fishermen, divided "white" Delap's Cove from "black" Delap's Cove. At one time, it is said, a hanging bridge spanned this divide but today the road down into and up out of the ravine is the one option. An abandoned road that ran between black Delap's Cove, across the mountain top to the Delap's Cove Road, and the Annapolis Valley suggests that the ravine acted as a divide, otherwise one might expect residents of black Delap's Cove to travel across the hanging bridge to the Delap's Cove Road and then to the Valley.

Most of the residents in the area engaged in fishing or farming or made their living as labourers. This is supported by the oral evidence collected from black residents of the modern neighbouring communities in the Annapolis Valley who have suggested that many of the female black residents of Delap's Cove travelled over the mountain to work as domestics (Lawrence 2004 pers. comm.; Marsman 2004 pers. comm.).



General histories of the area place the settlement of Delap's Cove around 1811: however, roads began to be built as early as 1799 (Calnek 1897:215; Lawrence 2004 pers. comm.; NSARM n.d.; Brown 1922:43). Others purport that by 1811, money was granted settlers there under the Appropriation Act, implying that the settlers were already there (Calnek 1897). Blacks were applying for licences of occupation in the vicinity of Delap's Cove, west of the ravine, where improvements by them had already been made (Curry 2005 pers. comm.; States 2008 pers. comm.). This suggests the growth of a squatter community which in later, perhaps safer, times sought to own the land on which they had built their homes and lives.

A work of fiction written by Raymond Parker, who grew up in nearby Parker's Cove, tells the story of a young black couple brought to Nova Scotia and sold into slavery in the fertile Annapolis Valley (1987). The couple seek freedom and a life of self determination; they steal away to a place where they can live free amongst their own. This Maroon community is not given a name by Parker. It could easily have been the story of two black Delap's Cove residents and, perhaps, was, if Parker drew from stories heard as a child.

A maroon community refers to any community of African diasporic peoples who fled slavery and formed a separate, self-determining community, usually as squatters. A wave of black migration into and out of Nova Scotia between 1796 and 1800 is known as the Jamaican Maroons, but these were a specific group of individuals who were exiled from Jamaica and sent to Nova Scotia. Some four years later, the Jamaican Maroons





**Figure 6.** Remnant of a wharf visible in the bank on the black side of Delap's Cove. The black side is significantly steeper than the white side of the cove, so black fishermen would lower fish buckets down to the boats from a stage built higher up the slope to process fish in a shack atop the ravine wall. Photo H. MacLeod-Leslie, 2004.



moved on to Sierra Leone, in the wake of the Black Loyalists who had gone there in 1791. There is controversy over whether or not all of the Jamaican Maroons went to Sierra Leone. Some may have been left behind in Nova Scotia through their own choice or by force (Grant 2002).

The early nineteenth century censuses refer to this area as “Granville and the Black Population”. The reason for separating the African diasporic peoples in this area from non-blacks in the title is unclear, but it was likely due to a general standard employed at the time. A couple of Delap’s Cove residents are recorded as English and Scottish, but given that blacks often sought to “pass” for white, one cannot conclude they were white or biracial households, although that is the pervading assumption. The black population appears to have been sizeable, according to nineteenth-century census data, and spread from Delap’s Cove to Clements and from Wilmot to Digby, covering Annapolis Royal as well (Nova Scotia Commissioner of Public Records 1838). The community was referred to by several different names throughout the nineteenth century including Delap’s Cove, Granville, Granville Mountain, Lower Granville and Broad Cove. This increases the challenge of weaving together the community history of black Delap’s Cove. Members of the black community in nearby Annapolis Royal have also suggested that a strong relationship existed between black Delap’s Cove and Thorne’s Cove (Lawrence 2004 pers. comm.). This is supported by the presence of a road connecting the two. In 1854, Reverend Richard Preston founded the African United Baptist Association in a meeting “on Granville Mountain” (Black Business Initiative 2009:9).



Ambrose F. Church's map (1876) of the area (Figure 7) details the residents of the community with the locations of their homesteads and the surnames of the heads of households (or a label for structures constituting community infrastructure, such as school or church)<sup>16</sup>. Church's map shows sparse settlement. While this could have been the case, the settlement may have been a bit larger than this suggests as there was a sizeable population there in the early twentieth century, on the order of 125 individuals, and a school was established in black Delap's Cove in the first decade of the twentieth century (Cromwell 2004 pers. comm.; Marsman 2004 pers. comm.). It is known that Church's maps suffer inaccuracies and omissions due, in some cases, to residents not paying to have their names recorded on the maps (Fergusson 1970). This may be the case in Delap's Cove where residents either might not have been able to afford to pay or did not want the locations of their homes recorded for security purposes.

Beginning on the black side of the ravine, the surnames present on this map appear to belong almost exclusively to members of the local black community. Pomp

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<sup>16</sup> A. F. Church was commissioned to draw maps of each community in Nova Scotia, beginning in 1861. Not all of the maps reflect land use from that year, as data collection took place over nearly two decades before the series was completed. Difficulties with Church's maps have been identified by some including omissions of households, mislocations of homestead centres and numbers of buildings as well as the misspelling of names endemic to colonial recordkeeping.



was most certainly a black surname, as was Skanks, Esser and Brothers. Ample genealogical information supports the association of the residents of this area with black families, though some have suggested that there were a limited number of residents who were not black, such as the Morton family and the Hamilton families. Perhaps these families were biracial, or light skinned or white. However, if they were the latter, the social circumstances of black Delap's Cove would raise the question of why white people were living in what appears to have been protective isolation dominated by black people. Additionally, the surname Francis appears on Church's map of black Delap's Cove, a surname traditionally associated with Mi'kmaq families in the area. Further consideration of the links between black and Mi'kmaq will be taken up in the background history of Rear Monastery.

An interesting folklore has grown up in the local area regarding the surname Pomp. As a name associated with African diasporic people, this surname appears to have evolved from the name Pompey or Pompeii, often given by white slaveowners to enslaved black people. This was part of a common practice of naming enslaved people for classical or royal figures, and included names such as Caesar and Prince.

Local black residents have recalled that the surname of Pomp was shed and a new surname, Stevenson, was adopted (Stevenson 2004 pers. comm.). One black resident remembers the label "pomp" being used as a behavioural deterrent for childhood misbehaviour; "Don't be acting the pomp" (Marsman 2004 pers. comm.). I was told that black Elders were ashamed of slavery and the role that they or their ancestors had played





**Figure 7.** Area of A. F. Church's (1876) map covering black Delap's Cove. (Church 1876).



in the institution and that this was responsible for little talk of the past to children and, because of its association, the abandonment of the surname Pomp. This sense of shame may be responsible for the “collective amnesia” noted by Robertson or, in the case of my own quest, such amnesia may be a way to avoid discussing internal community information with an outsider (Robertson 2000).

The name that appears to signify the westerly extent of black Delap’s Cove on Church’s map is “C. Pomp”. Perhaps this is the farm of Charles Pomp, and this may explain why the adjacent watercourse is known as “Charlie’s Brook”. Two other brooks run through the area of black Delap’s Cove: Sloan’s Brook, on which a saw mill was located (Figure 7) and Bohaker Brook, where a stunning waterfall cascades toward the Bay of Fundy (Figure 8). Given the relationship between Africentric magico-religious traditions and water, this waterfall deserves future archaeological investigation.

The road that travels through black Delap’s Cove from the ravine has been upgraded since the municipality put the *Delap’s Cove Trail System* in over the ghost landscape of the past community. Many of the trails follow abandoned roads and paths, no doubt created by the original community. A parking lot and outhouses are situated at the end of this upgrade, just on the other side of the only remaining resident’s home. Interpretive panels along the trail mention the black community once settled here, noting that old foundations from these settlers’ homes can be seen along some of the trails.





**Figure 8.** Waterfall at Bohaker Brook, a unique resource available to settlers at black Delap's Cove. Photo. H. MacLeod-Leslie, 2004.



No archaeological impact assessment was performed in the planning and creation of the municipality's trail system, and so the 2004 survey and subsequent year's excavation represent the first archaeological study of this community's archaeological resources. The sole remaining resident of black Delap's Cove, a man now in his fifties, lives a bachelor's life in the home left to him by his mother a few years ago, after she passed away in her nineties. He recalls the few families that lived here in the third quarter of the twentieth century and relates their migration to urban centres in the province and the United States. He also remembers being sent to collect wood from abandoned homes for use in maintenance and for firewood (Marsman 2005 pers. comm.).

A final telling detail from this legatee is the story of his grandfather (or perhaps his great grandfather), who "escaped from the West Indies and came to Delap's Cove". The scant documentary, as well as the oral, evidence suggest that Delap's Cove likely began as a community of squatters or licensed occupants on the socioeconomic margin of the Annapolis Valley. Local lore recalls American draft dodgers of the mid-twentieth century taking refuge in the seclusion of black Delap's Cove, by this time largely depopulated.

Black Delap's Cove seems to have continued on in this squatters' landscape role even today, as forest products companies and American landowners have moved, almost secretly, onto the edge of what some Atlantic Canadians would consider an Atlantic Eden. Black Delap's Cove is protected and just out of sight of the warm and fertile Annapolis Valley. It is just beyond the fray of local (largely white) fishing folk. It





**Figure 9.** Interpretive signage along the *Delap's Cove Trail System* encourages hikers to take time to view the remnants of the black community that thrived here in the 1800s.

Photo: H. MacLeod-Leslie.



overlooks the highest tides in the world, the Bay of Fundy, where even the whales come to play, protected from the rigours of their Atlantic World.

### Rear Monastery

The community of Rear Monastery is part of a wider cluster of close-knit Black Loyalist descendent communities in both Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. Beginning at Sunnyville on the edge of Guysborough, they string up Highway 16 past Birchtown, Lincolnville, Upper Big Tracadie and into Rear Monastery. A former Black Loyalist community along the eastern shore at Port Hinchbrook, now related to Redhead, was settled after a destructive gale hit Mount Misery across the harbour in 1817. Isaac Webb, a founder of the Redhead community, had come to Mount Misery “with his master”. An archaeological feature identified at Mount Misery may be the remains of “the master’s” home (Davis 2004b). In the later 1990s, Alonzo Reddick, of Lincolnville, instigated an archaeological salvage excavation to remove the remains of historic Redhead residents interred at the Webb family cemetery because the graves were eroding from the side of a precipice exposed to the destructive waves and winds from the Atlantic Ocean (Niven et al. 2001). The extent of the loss of human remains prior to this project is unknown. The excavated remains were reinterred at a nearby cemetery, further inland, following a limited analysis of them. Redhead, as it has come to be known, is surrounded by much controversy as the offshore energy industry plans to build up their infrastructure to export liquid natural gas, plans which involve impacting the original site of the Webb family cemetery. Protest from neighbouring African Nova Scotian





**Figure 10.** Looking north, toward Rear Monastery, from atop Boylston (Guysborough County) along the course of Highway 16, along which Black Loyalist settlement was distributed. Milford Haven River is at centre. Photo: H. MacLeod-Leslie.



communities, particularly those along Highway 16, cite the precipice, from which the graves were re-excavated, as a sacred landscape whether the human remains are interred there or not. That the political will to fight the proposed development has been rooted in those communities along Highway 16 bespeaks a strong historic connection between these settlements, regardless of politically defined boundaries in place in both modern and historic times. Contract archaeological investigation has continued in the area of Redhead in advance of development of the landfall infrastructure of the offshore gas industry.

After their nascent community at Port Mouton (Shelburne County) was razed by fire, Loyalist settlers (black and white) were re-landed at Guysborough (Guysborough County). Here, the business of settlement carried on as at other Loyalist settlements, with whites accorded land grants quickly and the establishment of a town proceeding apace (Walker 1992). Meanwhile, Black Loyalists began settling across the harbour at Birchtown (Guysborough County), though many continued to wait for the allotments they had been promised for their service to the crown. Among them was Thomas Brownspriggs who, after waiting more than four years, successfully petitioned for land, with 74 other heads of Black Loyalist households (Walker 1992:27 and 28). They were granted 3000 acres abutting Tracadie Harbour under what became known as the Thomas Brownspriggs grant (1787) (Figure 2).

Although a formally allotted area of Black Loyalist settlement, there were no subdivisions of the land grant to prescribe where these families would settle within this



area. Therefore, the pattern of their settlement would have been vernacular. Settlement choices were also, undoubtedly, influenced by the natural landscapes of the area.

Historical documentation of land transactions in the area is sparse, owing, in part, to the lack of formal subdivision in the Brownspriggs grant and the practices associated with the transfer of lands to descendents and other members of the black community there, making deed traces particularly challenging. Additionally, in 1799, 2720 of the original 3000 acres of the Brownspriggs grant were re-granted to Acadians, though Black Loyalists remained in the area. Walker tells us that the Black Loyalists settled at Tracadie did not constitute a notable portion of the emigrants to Sierra Leone in 1791, so we may assume, without evidence otherwise, that the recent settlers on the Brownspriggs grant were engaged in the activities of setting up their new homes (1992:122).

Early in the nineteenth century, Father Vincent de Paul Merle, a Trappist monk, arrived in the area to establish a monastery. He says this of his dealings with the Black Loyalists of the Tracadie area:

Besides being heretics they are rascals, given to all kinds of vice.

I have often visited them, and upon every occasion that offered, tried to instruct them in spite of the danger that I ran of being ill-treated and perhaps killed by them, for there are some among them who are bad at heart and capable of evil deeds. I had some experience of this when I lived near them (Merle 1824).



Father de Paul Merle was purchasing lands in the area by 1819 for the establishment of the monastery. He notes "twenty or thirty-six families of negroes" in the Tracadie area, which does suggest some depopulation of the area since the beginning of the Brownspriggs grant to roughly double that many heads of household three and a half decades earlier. Fr. De Paul Merle discusses hiring local blacks to assist him with the labour of building the monastery and in establishing a school for the black children of the community. In addition to the economic arrangements between the Trappists and the Black Loyalists, there were religious relationships as well. Fr. de Paul Merle's memoir provides an account of the rejection of his ministering to one Black Loyalist settler by the man's brethren.

Recently one of these negroes, remarkable among the others for his age and his pretended learning, fell ill. I went to see him thinking that my visit would not displease him. There were a number of blacks round his bed, who were singing hymns and praying. They offered me a chair. I seated myself near the sick man and commenced to speak to him of death, of judgment and of the true faith, of the only true religion in which we can save ourselves. Finally I said to him that he would be damned if he died in his false belief. At these words the other negroes turned on me with fury; by their animated features, by their eyes flashing with anger, and by their horrible cries, I knew that I was not safe with them, and that I could do no good there, so I left the



house. They followed me, crying out against the priests. A young ecclesiastic who accompanied me was very frightened, and I myself expected to be assaulted by them. There was one in particular more enraged than the others, and who screamed most loudly. He said that if a hundred or a thousand priests should speak to him of religion he would not believe one of them. I returned there some days afterwards with another priest who was conversant with English (for the sick man could not speak French). After some hours conversation with the missionary, the sick man asked him if he would come to him again when he sent for him. Soon after this I left the country, but I have reason to think that he sent for me. I do not know what is the result for his soul, whether he is converted or whether he remains in error, for the above incident occurred just before my return to France (Merle 1824).

The presence of the monastery clearly affected the black population, though whether it caused the shift of the Black Loyalist settlers away from Tracadie Harbour is doubtful. If a sizeable portion of the Brownspriggs grant was re-granted to Acadians, it may be that not all of the original grantees chose to remain for a long period of time. Rural depopulation and the consequent growth of urban populations were common and accelerating phenomena. In the event that there were fewer Black Loyalist settlers in the area, it is not inconceivable that the centre of their settlement shifted toward the other black settlements which follow the course of Highway 16, toward Guysborough. Surely



the positive social networks that linked these communities were stronger than those they may have shared with neighbouring white communities, be they English, French or Acadian.

There is evidence to suggest that the links between the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq communities were strong. A Mi'kmaq reserve, referred to by modern black residents of Monastery as "Cobequid", existed near the area of Rear Monastery. Even today, local black residents remember the strong ties between the two communities, citing the network of roads and paths that have since been masked by forest and activity related to its harvest<sup>17</sup>. One resident reported that the children all used to play together and that there were strong bonds between the adults. In Conway (Digby County), one African Nova Scotian man spoke of the common genetic heritage of African Nova Scotians and Mi'kmaq, as evidenced by the regular phenotypic expression of "black" traits in many Mi'kmaq and vice versa, including the gentleman himself, who possessed both strongly. As I trekked from house to house, in community after community, seeking landowner permission to access private lands during the first phase of the fieldwork, I

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<sup>17</sup> While I did not formally interview local residents for oral history, in the course of asking landowners' permissions to access their properties for field survey I was afforded many invitations to discuss my research and black histories in Nova Scotia. Mention of the social links between "Cobequid" and the blacks in the Tracadie/Rear Monastery area were frequently made in the course of these discussions in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties.



was often greeted by people I was told were black, who I would have identified on any city street as First Nation. This was particularly true in the area around Tracadie and Rear Monastery, and, in fact, the year before enrolling in my doctoral program I met a prominent Mi'kmaw man whose phenotype appeared more African diasporic than First Nations. It may have been the residents of the so-called "Cobequid Reserve" who supplied local merchants near Tracadie with aboriginal goods, such as moccasins and what was called "Indian" meal, for sale to local residents, including the Black Loyalists.

A merchant's ledger, known as the Symonds Ledger, records purchases of goods and credit arrangements between, first, Nathaniel Symonds (in Antigonish) and later, his son, Joseph (in Linwood – near Monastery) and residents of the local area (1815-1860s) (Nathaniel Symonds). Many of the customers' names include Black Loyalists known to live in the Tracadie area: Sam Fee, Thomas Gero, Simon Dismal, Moses Reddick, Elijah Ash, Simon Bowden, Elisha Devou. This ledger suggests that Black Loyalists were buying food (potatoes, meal, oats, fish, sheep, beef, barley), clothing and supplies to make them (old coat, shoes, moccasins, broad cloth, wool, sole leather, indigo, buttons, vest pattern, sheepskin), building and farming supplies (shingles, hemlock boards, 2 pound nails, scythe, seed, 3 panes window glass) some household items (ironstone, "earthenware for wife") and the occasional luxury or therapeutic item (tobacco, wine, rum, "one little book", bottle of medicine, camphor, 1 bible). The ledger also records work performed by many of these residents (Jo Elms, Simon Dismal, Christopher Reddick, Thomas Gero), work that was sometimes paid out to them in cash and at other

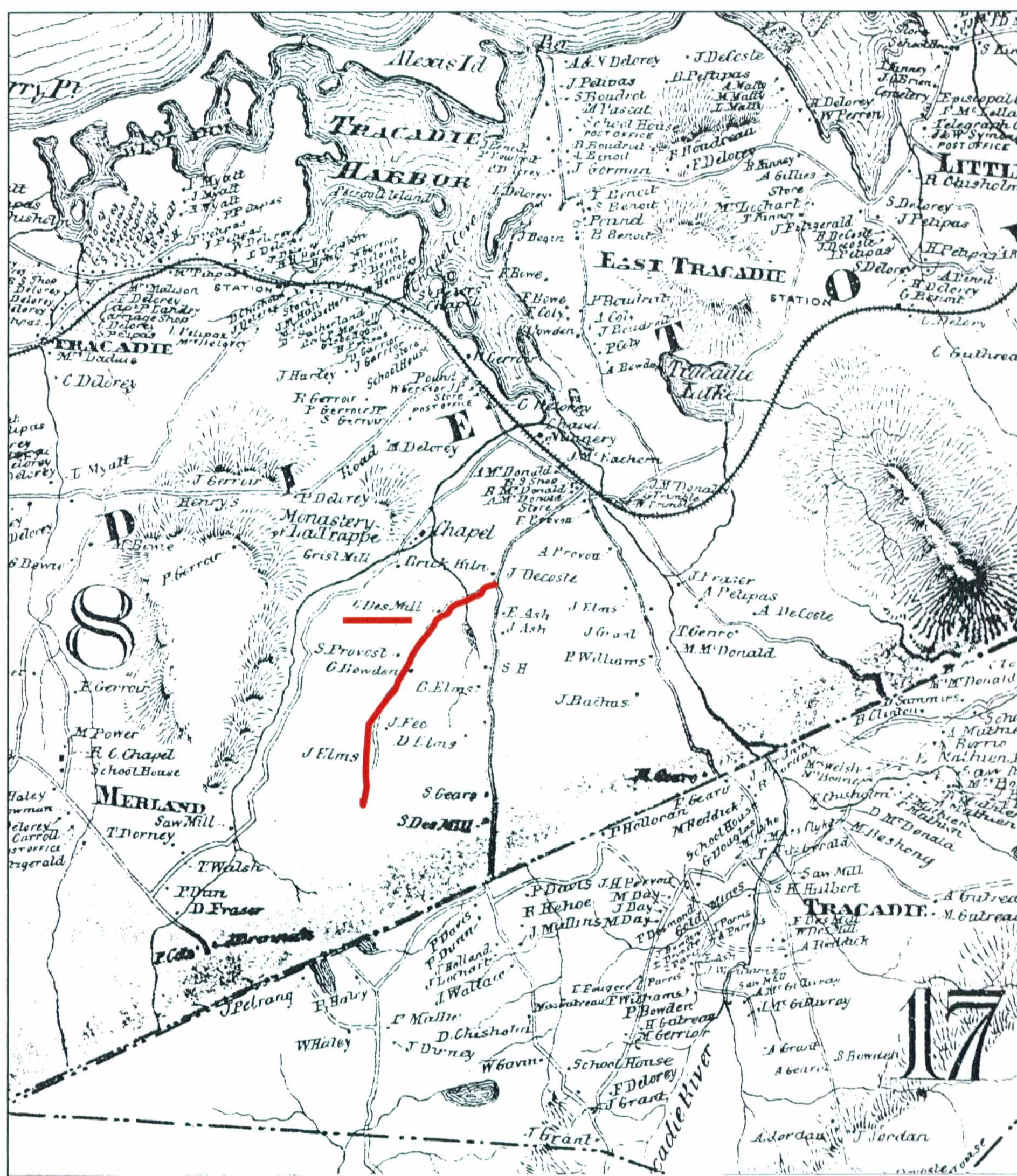


times in goods. Ethnohistorian Ruth Whitehead has obtained a copy of this ledger and has indicated her intention to transcribe and publish its contents (Whitehead, pers. comm. 2006).

To date, the archaeological evidence of early settlement here is sparse, but a constellation of fifteen historic archaeological sites begins our understanding of the local settlement pattern (MacLeod-Leslie 2005; Powell and Niven 2000; 46). Of these fifteen sites, however, only one appears to date to the early nineteenth century and, so, the earliest sites may be undiscovered thanks to subsequent disturbance, incorporation into current features or the limited nature of survey of the local area. Also, because of the regrant of a significant portion of the Brownspriggs allotment, late eighteenth and early nineteenth century sites along East Tracadie Harbour may belong to Acadian settlers.

Ambrose F. Church's map (1878) shows residents south of Tracadie Harbour with Black Loyalist surnames, such as Bowden, Elms and Ash. One of the surnames in the midst of those we know, thanks to the *Book of Negroes* (BON) and local residents, to be a likely Black Loyalist surname is "DesMill". This is quite probably an alternative spelling of the Black Loyalist surname "Dismal", which appears in the BON, since another DesMill occurs just south of the "C. DesMill" noted above. The second DesMill is located in the historically continuous black community of Lincolnville, alongside other Black Loyalist surnames, such as Desmond (perhaps descended from Dismal?) and Reddick. Multiple and alternative spellings of names occurs regularly throughout the Church series of maps and causes some difficulty relating references to individuals





**Figure 11.** Section of A.F. Church's map of Antigonish County (1879) over Rear Monastery study area. Note the road highlighted with red as the abandoned road along which the three sites identified during the 2004 survey were located. BjCj-29, partially excavated in 2005, appears to be located in the same area as *C. DesMill* (underlined in red) (Church 1879).



between historical documents (Fergusson 1970). The C. DesMill on the below map occurs in the vicinity of the site partially excavated for this program of research. The dot on the map for C. DesMill is on the opposite side of the road from BjCj-29, but locational generalization is also a frequent issue with Church's maps (Fergusson 1970). As I will discuss the fieldwork in a separate section, suffice it to say here that a thorough survey of the opposite side of the abandoned road from BjCj-29 yielded no indication of further historical archaeological sites.

Beyond the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the history of this area slips into the shadow that covers so many rural communities as residents settled into a rhythm of living and leaving for urban opportunities. The site excavated for this research dates to this period, roughly the second half of the nineteenth century and into the first quarter of the twentieth. It illuminates not just a shadowed period of this rural community's past, but the longterm cultural processes that helped seed and nurture this African diasporic community which, even today, exhibits so many of the cultural characteristics of its forebears.

#### Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery in African Nova Scotia

Each of the two sites selected for further excavation and study under this program of research offers a unique scenario in the comparative scheme. On the one hand, Delap's Cove offers a less documented settlement of people whose use of landscape and natural resources makes a statement about relationships between communities within the area. The notable topography and physiography was critical to creating the privacy and



independence that characterized this community. Consequently, it also offers the opportunity to explore an Africentric perspective on the development of the lower Annapolis Valley region to balance the hitherto Eurocentric understanding of its cultural landscape.

Rear Monastery, meanwhile, provides a rural, and, in some ways, Eurocentrically-impacted landscape in the Brownspriggs Grant. Its area was defined by colonial surveyors; the space and community suffered repeated spatial marginalization and mobility as black settlers were pushed from Guysborough to here and later, from Tracadie Harbour through re-granting of some of the Brownspriggs land to Acadians in the 1790s. Its natural physiographic setting made it a more accessible place to visit and detect in passing than Delap's Cove. Its socio-spatial relationship to neighbouring non-black communities, located in the midst of thoroughfares between Guysborough, Antigonish and Mainland Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, placed it in the wider Eurocentric cultural landscape. It was also, however, an African diasporic enclave.

The specific margins of the Brownspriggs Grant had to be redrawn because of the settlement choices made by Black Loyalists in the early days of its settlement. There were sufficient numbers of African diasporic settlers to create a wide and distinct black community, where today's Lincolnville Church still stands as testament to the ethnocultural definition of this community. The excavated site has offered an unexpected and unique opportunity through its artefacts and their contexts to study Africentric



traditions, spirituality and the cultural development of Africans into African Nova Scotians.



## Chapter 3 – Theoretical Approach

### Archaeology and Historically Less Visible People

Archaeology is the most democratic record that we have of the past, since to leave a record one need not be of a particular gender, age, culture or level of literacy (Deagan 1991:110; Little 2007:20; Wilkie 2009:336). For the most part, archaeological resources are created without a conscious sociopolitical agenda and are testament to the politics and processes at work in the past in ways that no consciously written historical document can ever be. Archaeological resources are critical for understanding undocumented pasts because they bear greater potential for completeness *despite* political agendas. Taphonomy, sampling strategy and the individual archaeologist and their theoretical approach to interpreting the meaning of what has been found are among the primary biases present in archaeological data. Since archaeological remains of past life are so all-encompassing of daily life, archaeology presents a unique and important opportunity as a window on the everyday, common details of life and culture which are intrinsically linked to the larger themes running throughout human history. These details can, and often do, evade conscious contemplation of motivations by agents. One of archaeology's chief responsibilities is to illuminate the realities of past lives that have escaped, or been



under-represented in, historical recording which then casts greater light across a more complete picture of the past (Deetz 1996:138; Kelly 1998; Little 2007:21).

### Cultural Process

In the quest to understand the past and its development into the present, we seek to understand longterm cultural processes at a variety of scales of analysis, encompassing multiple periods, cultures and subcultures. Braudel (1949) recognized the importance of this approach when he proposed understanding the past as a complex of cultural processes and actions operating, concurrently, at multiple paces of development. Continuity of African cultural elements and structures throughout African diasporic cultures is an example of a long term process (a *longue durée*) of adaptation and ethnogenesis. This can be balanced, in African diasporic lives, against the *longue durée* of the various European Nations' slave trades, the *moyen durée* of lifespans and the *événements* of life experiences of the enslaved people and their roles in the *longue durée* process of developing African diasporic cultures. In order to examine the processes of cultural transformation from Africa to African diaspora, and the many important steps in between, one must consider the ethnocultural identities of cultural agents.

### Contexts in Culture

The context within which ethnocultural identities can be most openly expressed is that least impacted directly by sociopolitical agendas or influence by racialized notions of personhood. This context is found in the *habitus*, Bourdieu's system of durable, transposable dispositions (1984:72). The *habitus* is both structured by and expressed via



material culture. It is in homes and daily lives that the subconsciously maintained and adapted elements of one's culture, derived from heritage and cultural experience, are transmitted by kin and community to future generations. That these are subconsciously propagated by cultural agents is part of the conceptual strength of habitus. "The habitus is the source of these series of moves [or ingrained cultural practices] which are objectively organized as strategies *without being the product of a genuine strategic intention...*" (emphasis mine) (Bourdieu 1984:73). Bourdieu goes on to suggest that we cannot see these actions or reactions as merely mechanistic or unconsciously carried out as the only possible strategy, because to do so would deny the impact, even the primacy, of agency in practice. Indeed, ethnic identity, affective in more public fora than ethnocultural identity as used here, would witness a more conscious and strategic selection of action to practice. Nevertheless, the notion of habitus does elucidate the role of practice in the transmission, and historical continuity, of culture; as Bourdieu puts it, "...the habitus, [is] history turned into nature..." (Bourdieu 1984:79).

Miller proposes that the domain or context of material culture (including the context created *by* material culture) must inform the understanding of its meaning (1998:5). In this way, archaeological artefacts both define the context which must be interpreted and bespeak crucial linkages between the material form of the object and the cultural meaning of that material form. This has profound ramifications for African diasporic archaeologies, since to focus on the material culture is to open a vast communication with the past, unavailable through most historical documentation or mediated texts. The *meaning* of material culture is the greatest resource available and



encodes reasons often not consciously articulated by historical agents. As well, since African diasporic peoples frequently used material culture not of their own making, understanding its appropriation within African diasporic systems of meaning and value becomes both necessary and problematic because its meaning often differs from that which it bore for its original manufacturers.

Vlach explores many of the facets of this relationship of manufacture and meaning, in his book, *By The Work Of Their Hands: Studies in Afro-American Folklife* (1991). He acknowledges the impacts on black material culture that the complexity of African diasporic cultural history necessarily produces. Also, he identifies material culture as the primary record of African diasporic perspective (1991: xvii). Vlach presents many instances of black manufacture as well, demonstrating that unique African diasporic methods of, and motivations to, manufacture both existed and maintained roots in African cultural traditions. In the final section of his book he focuses on architecture and landscape, again demonstrating the significance of those intangible components of material culture: space and place. These bear great potential for researchers to explore broad stroke cultural concepts that frame African diasporic life in ways inextricably linked to African structuring principles, namely those that constitute context.

#### Identity and Contexts of its Negotiation

The construction of identity is a dynamic process that is subject to pressures and stimuli within the daily existences of human beings. The many facets of identity (parent,



child, lover, worker, neighbour, outsider, black, white) provide points of entry into the social landscapes of the past.

The social sciences' discourse on identity gathered momentum in the early 1980s, in step with the rise of postmodernism, and in archaeology, post-processualism. By the mid 1990s it had spread along lines of gender, sexuality, nationality, race and ethnicity (Rouse 1995; White and Beaudry 2009:210). While race and ethnicity are related to the current exploration, as briefly outlined in the introduction, I am most explicitly concerned with the ethnocultural facet of identity, which I distinguish from racial and ethnic facets based primarily on the context of most easily detectable expression. This would be the primary difference between racial and ethnic identity facets because of the presence or absence of "others". Racial and ethnic facets of one's identity are intrinsically linked to a public forum or context for conceptualization (and, therefore, the ingredients for othering), while the latter is the expression of cultural identity, influenced by the socially-constructed idea of race, and therefore, ethnicity, in private spheres, either within a home or home community (*habitus*) characterized by a collective identity (in this case African diasporic) (Gordon and Anderson 1999: 284; Jones 1999:224). Even then, however, ethnocultural identity is more likely to be expressed in subconscious fashion than an ethnic or racialized facet of identity, within a home or family where racialized political agendas and relationships of sociopolitical power exert less influence upon quotidian practice and underlying cultural grammar happen with less conscious consideration.



The concept of an African diaspora is intrinsically linked to notions of history, culture and racialization, and therefore, identity (Epperson 1990, 1994, 1996, 1999a, 1999b; Franklin and Fesler 1999; Franklin 2001:89; Gordon and Anderson 1999:284; Jones 1997; Leone et al. 2005). Primary amongst the factors defining African diasporic identity, however, has been race, which is a social construct based on the idea of visible “blackness” and not on a biological reality of separable subspecies (Orser 2001:7; Paynter 2001:135). As mentioned earlier, being black developed with the expansion of Eurocolonialism and the establishment of the transatlantic slave trade (Drake 1987, 1990). Racialization required, at a minimum, a dichotomy between white and black. The foundation of racialization used whiteness as the baseline against which all “non-whiteness” was compared (Paynter 2001:135; Frankenberg 1995)<sup>18</sup>. This required othering: an us-them mentality which was necessarily a publicly-negotiated process and created a racialized identity that was proscribed, rather than (at least initially) self-ascribed (Paynter 2001:133).

Ethnicity or ethnic identity, again, is a facet of identity that, because of its connection with a collective and identification by others as a member of such, is publicly

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<sup>18</sup> There might be some potential to trace this back to the relationship of interaction whereby whites were in a foreign land encountering blacks where most things were foreign, different and unfamiliar to the whites. For blacks, being in home environments where new stimuli were easiest to adapt to and accommodate, whites became just one more new thing.



negotiated (Greene 1996:12; Jones 1997:64; Walsh 2001:143). However, the roots of ethnic identity reach into the private, personhood level of identity construction, as Rouse tells us, because of "...inextricable ties between the ways in which people are constituted as collective subjects and the processes through which they are prompted to construe themselves as distinct individuals" (1995:356). In this way, ethnic identity construction can be conceived as growing from the daily practices of individuals at a subconscious level of routinized behaviour throughout a collective with shared experiences (and also within a habitus), including cultural heritage and racialized public identities. To begin to understand the ways in which African Nova Scotian culture has grown as a culturally distinct segment of Nova Scotian society and determine whether some of its distinctive qualities derive from African cultural origins, one must explore identity that was not required to be consciously mediated. Ethnocultural identity is understood here to be that facet of one's identity, derived from individual cultural heritage, expressed through daily practices, including the influence of race and ethnicity, and so ingrained in one's actions and worldview that it simply becomes the way to do things, when one is not overwhelmed with the sociopolitical ramifications of one's own actions or being surveilled. It is because the behaviours that constitute this facet of identity have the greatest likelihood for long distance transport through extenuating circumstances due to their ideological value that they are, indeed, a most likely point to begin such an investigation.



The ethnocultural facet of one's identity, as defined here, can be considered at two primary levels of expression. The first level is the individual's subconsciously practiced identity that derives from their enculturation, often in the private spheres of life in routinized behaviours most regularly linked to the mundane, daily activities of the lives of individuals. Giddens suggests that this is the forum within which routinized behaviours are formulated from social (and therefore cultural) structures at a subconscious level (1984: xxiii; 1986:282). An example of this is the construction of a space that feels right. The second level is the consciously practiced expression of social group affiliation as a form of cultural identity, often constructed in (protected) public or semi-public spheres, acknowledging and embracing otherness, but not as a requirement of this level of expression. One does this as a member of a collective and, frequently, within a community, though most often at the level of household. Outside the household or home community, such behaviour would constitute expression of an ethnic identity and, instead of simply acknowledging cultural identity, would promote otherness or, as a more positive aspect, distinctiveness. An example of this second level of expression would be selection of display items for one's home that constitute ethnocultural emblems, for instance, a portrait of a black Jesus, clothes or colour palettes that suggest an item's origin as African or a folk practice. African diasporic yard displays would also be included here (Thompson 1998; Edwards 1998; Gundaker and McWillie 2005).

There has been much consideration of the idea of ethnicity in archaeological discourse; how an ethnic group is defined, the social dimensions of ethnicity and the links between race, ethnicity and culture (Franklin and Fesler 1999; Jones 1997; Orser 2001).



For the purposes of this dissertation, there is a critical distinction made between ethnic identity and an ethnocultural identity facets – though the two are interdependent. Ethnicity (or an ethnic identity) focuses on categorizing of groups and their memberships and, despite subjectivist versus objectivist approaches, this is the bottom line. Without others, there is just culture and heritage – not necessarily ethnicity. Ethnocultural identity, as used here, focuses on that basic quality setting humans apart from other animals: culture and the quality of culture that is human behaviour in its most basic form - people in action, being people. However, there can be no denying that since the transatlantic slave trade, ethnicity influences culture, particularly black culture. Somewhere between ethnicity and culture is a zone that defies boundaries of distinction specifically, that encompasses a very personal sense of who one is (culturally) and wants to be (ethnically). In the end, I suggest that a continuum between ethnicity and culture be drawn with ethnocultural identity somewhere in between, in that interstitial place between being humans (with culture as a defining element of our existence) and being a social agent.

### *Ethnogenesis*

Fennell proposes that rather than linear evolution from African to “creolized” cultures, African diasporic cultures must be seen as the ethnogenic offspring of cultural bricolage (2007a; 2007b). Mintz and Price (1976) made a similar suggestion but, with access to greater archaeological evidence, Fennell has extended the discussion into the realm of cosmology and ideology. The substance of ethnogenesis resulted from the inundation of cultural senses in the historically unprecedented environment of



colonialism, global reorganization and intensified human settlement. So, while African diasporic archaeological cultures are expected to contain cultural elements derived from African cultures, they may also contain European, colonial and First Nations elements as well. This bricolage does not negate the role of African cultures in the ethnogenesis of African diasporic cultures because of the interdependence of ethnocultural identity with other facets of identity, expressed in public fora. Likewise, full explanation of African diasporic cultural traditions must also give consideration to the other feeder cultures that may have influenced a particular variant of African diasporic ethnogenesis.

Earlier I mentioned the large and expanding discourse on the shared heritage of African diasporic and First Nation populations. Indeed, there is a segment of the world's population whose heritage would identify them as "Black Indians" (Katz 1997; MacLeod-Leslie 2007b; Madden 2009; Saunt 2005). The discourse on this topic, as with that on African diasporic archaeology and history, is greater elsewhere, though the phenomenon has local relevance and application in Atlantic Canada, despite its neglect. Again, a significant part of the reason for the neglect is a resistance to inquiry, largely on behalf of First Nations, because of the political ramifications that such acknowledgement has for beneficiaries of Aboriginal rights and title and treaty rights. But for present purposes, I shall focus on the impact this cultural dynamism would have had on African diasporic ethnogenesis.

Interaction was taking place between blacks and Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia early in the colonial history of the province (Merle 1824; Marrant 1790). In the period of Black



Loyalist arrival and settlement, the locations Black Loyalists settled were near to, but not immediately adjacent to, white settlements. This would have meant African diasporic people were closer to Mi'kmaw communities and hunting and gathering territories. Later, Mi'kmaw communities or reserves and black communities were found adjacent to one another in the political and physical landscapes. Many family lineages intertwine the two cultural groups. In Rear Monastery, Black Loyalists settled close to Mi'kmaq living near and on the Afton Reserve or Paqtnkek area and throughout the Tracadie and Guysborough regions. In living memory, Black and Mi'kmaw families interacted in the Rear Monastery areas as children played together and family lines blended through marriage and offspring, evident in surnames and phenotypic expressions in the area. This interaction has not only a biological legacy, but a cultural one. African Nova Scotian individuals often cited to me their own Mi'kmaw and other First Nations' heritage along with specific traditions and knowledge deriving from that heritage (Informant 1 2004 pers. comm.; Cromwell 2007 pers. comm.; Gallion 2007 pers. comm.). Specifically, medicine, landscape and spirituality were topics people remembered being taught by Mi'kmaq to African Nova Scotian ancestors.

### *Ideology/Cosmology*

Through the co-location and cultural interaction of black and Mi'kmaw communities, ideas conveyed about traditional local resources would have offered black settlers resources they needed. The nature of traditional Mi'kmaw spirituality, heavily linked with the natural world and ancestors, would have echoed many values and perceptions that formed parts of African cultures. The similarity of African and First



Nations' cosmology may have provided a furtive basis for ethnogenesis, particularly among African diasporic people. First Nations people shared locally relevant knowledge, while African diasporic people learned and adapted familiar types of knowledge that assisted them in coping with the new (non-African) environments in which they lived. Therefore, much of the ethnogenic bricolage of African diasporic cultures derived from First Nations may relate to naturally occurring resources and the landscape, though the understanding of these may be grounded in a blending of African and Mi'kmaw cosmology.

Fennell suggests that it was not the public (or "emblematic") forms of African-derived belief systems that endured across the diaspora, but the "private and covert [or "instrumental"] forms of ritual" (2007b:130, 2007c:200). This means that, particularly for the oppressed, the most likely cultural elements to endure and be transmitted (either purposefully or subconsciously) were those practiced in the privacy of homes and in the course of everyday domestic life where the most uncontested form of identity could prevail. In the case of African diasporic peoples, this meant covert home traditions such as private BaKongo rituals and unconsidered details of (routinized) daily life (Fennell 2007b:131 and 166).

#### *Impacts of Differing Contexts of Negotiating Identity*

Taken along with the notion of ethnogenic bricolage, the above suggests that public facets of identity might display more non-Africentric characteristics when Africentric identity would yield vulnerability. If this is, indeed, the case then it may



account for the perception among non-African diasporic members of a local population that black people are not cultural agents of any Africentrically inclined cultural practices. Further, this perception may account, in part, for the myth outlined by Herskovits and the time lag since his work in recognizing African-descended cultural elements. For African diasporic people, this type of climate in public fora of identity negotiation may have influenced, and, actually, supported the claimed cultural or collective amnesia with respect to slavery and black heritage.

#### Consumption and Cultural Transformations

When individuals are oppressed, they are socially and historically marginalized. While creating an undesirable situation in many respects, this circumstance can spark resistance which illuminates how motives of oppressed agents are influenced by the relationship between them and their oppressor(s) (Delle 1998; Fairbanks 1984; Fitts 1996; Kelso 1984). Additionally, resistance to oppression, in some cases as a reaction to fear, will elicit responses that demonstrate or activate participation in behaviours which help to define the groups to which the resisters belong.

Wilkie and Farnsworth's study in African Bahamian archaeology used Bourdieu's and Giddens' concepts of habitus and structuration, respectively, to demonstrate that African diasporic peoples' consumption choices were informed, at least in part, by their African heritage (1999:304). Their research is situated in post-Revolutionary contexts of enslaved Black Loyalists and so, although most of Nova Scotia's Black Loyalists were not enslaved, they may have had many experiences and attitudes in common with the



Bahamians, owing to the war, their living likewise in a racialized society and as part of an African diaspora. In the Bahamian study, taste and style were considered through analysis of design motifs, decorative techniques and colour palettes of ceramic assemblages. Those from the enslaved Black Loyalists' quarters suggest an African-inspired aesthetic as the tastes and choices appear to be quite different from those reflected in the planter's assemblage. It seems that the planters' ceramics reflected a preference for shell-edged wares and transfer printed wares and for the colour blue in their decorations. Among the African diasporic assemblages, brown appears to have been the most popular colour, with annular and mocha decorative techniques preferred as well as the fluidity of hand painted motifs (considered non-formal at this time in a Eurocentric aesthetic) (Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999:312)<sup>19</sup>. The colour palette and decorative tastes of African diasporic peoples are interpreted as reflecting value systems by which African crafts and products, such as textiles and wood carvings, were judged (Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999:309). The planter's aesthetic tastes perceived through the ceramic assemblage, reflected European values.

Additional study of African diasporic consumption practices has strengthened the notion that these consumers chose products differently and for reasons also associated

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<sup>19</sup> Wilkie and Farnsworth suggest that other colours that appear to have been preferred by African Diasporic people include red, green, pink and earth-tones (1999:313). Red is an important colour in African-derived rituals such as those practiced in Hoodoo, noted in many archaeological contexts (Sauer 1998).



with the more public facets of their identities. Mullins has demonstrated that African American consumption was a “complex negotiative process” and draws upon W.E.B. DuBois’ concept of “double consciousness” heavily and masterfully (DuBois 1903; Mullins 1999). Apparent preferences for brand name canned goods likely resulted not from a desire to mimic the consumption practices of upper socioeconomic echelons, but rather from racist surveillance practices in stores and the potential for racist notions to impact quantity, quality and price of locally produced and distributed goods (Mullins 1999: 172, 174, 177). Regarding the consumption of glass and ceramic objects, Mullins suggests that the normally semi-public display value of these goods was not affected so much by any “compulsion to reproduce the material trappings of dining etiquette....[but] subtly aspired to a consumer ideal” (Mullins 1999: 182). In short, the wealth display value of such items lay in the practice of consumption, rather than in the consumption of a specific good. This contradicts, somewhat, the propositions made by Wilkie and Farnsworth, but, perhaps, this is due to differences in geography (Mullins’ data are from Annapolis, Maryland), legal status (Mullins’ sites were those inhabited by free African Americans) and time (Mullins’ assemblages dated from 1850 into the twentieth century) (Mullins 1999: 173). Wilkie and Farnsworth approach consumption largely on the basis of ethnicity, while Mullins’ treatment of consumption places public and semi-public African diasporic personae in a broader context of nineteenth-century American society. In this way, Mullins may give too little attention to the impact of ethnoculture on consumption practices. Conversely, Wilkie and Farnsworth’s focus on Africentricity may have led to too small a scope of analysis and explanation. One might consider this



latter possibility an argument against Africentric analysis. However, if a balance and measure against such a potential misapplication of interpretive approach is implemented within a research design, then the problem might be minimized or eliminated from the interpretation at the analysis stage. In the current research for this dissertation I have attempted to implement just such a balance and measure mechanism by including data from a white, Irish site from a contemporary period. This effectively alters the ethnocultural element of the (white Irish) dataset as a non-African diasporic one, whilst maintaining a comparable socioeconomic position of the comparative population.

#### African Diaspora

*African diaspora* is an important concept for the present archaeological study, because it has direct bearing on the validity of the notion of incorporation of African-derived cultural elements into African diasporic cultural development. It recognizes that black people distributed outside of Africa through the mechanism of the transatlantic slave trade were not just black colonial people, but Africans and African descendents who were not living in Africa. As well, identification with the African diaspora, though not labelled as such by historical agents, generated two significant outcomes. On the one hand, membership in the African diaspora influenced relationships of black or African people with socioeconomically powerful individuals who often discouraged attempts to maintain or adapt African cultural practices or outwardly express an identity whose roots preceded the condition of enslavement. This opposition to Africentricity stemmed from both hegemonic opposition to non-Christian beliefs, and the bid to quell development of, or strengthening of, collective empowerment of black and African peoples (which could



have fed into forceful resistance or rebellion). On the other hand, membership within the African diaspora generated support for resistance efforts which, although impeded in public fora, may have stiffened members' resolves to maintain a distinct cultural identity, especially at home. Such resolve was often profoundly influenced by the facets of black identity expressed in public fora and the cultural roots of the ability to claim that distinction as being of African descent. Wilkie and Farnsworth suggest that, owing to diversity of cultural experiences and the variety of African heritage of individuals forced into New World groups based on race, some of the attendant tension could be relieved "...through acknowledgement of commonalities... [such as] similarities in some of the aesthetic traditions of the region [of West Africa], including decorative motifs, color palettes, and vessel shapes" (1999:315). Fennell's framework of core "emblematic" and "instrumental" symbols and the fora of their expression, public and private respectively, would necessarily be directly affected by these two factors of the existence of such a concept as African diaspora and the weaving together of a collective based on this shared cultural heritage.

The wave of migration that brought the Black Loyalist settlers to Atlantic Canada was a critical event in African Nova Scotian cultural development, indeed in African Canadian cultural development, particularly in the transformation of public social fora and the redefinition of collective identity. This, in turn, impacted African diasporic peoples' sense of place in this region's physical, social and cognitive landscapes. The presence of Black Loyalists in Atlantic Canada, and the magnitude of their settlement, generated conditions previously unknown either in this region or elsewhere in the



diaspora, despite black presence in this region for more than a century and a half prior to the Black Loyalists' arrival.

I propose that the Black Loyalists' presence impacted the development of African diasporic identity in this region, particularly in the stiffening of resolve to be culturally distinct, even if expressed only at home. Because the character of public fora changed with the legally free status of the Black Loyalists and because their numbers demanded social reconfiguration in the colonial society of the region, the Black Loyalists of Atlantic Canada may have used this unique opportunity to reclaim traditions long discouraged in previous settings: being black and being African took on new meanings in the local social consciousness. Being black and being African no longer meant one was likely enslaved for there were at least as many, if not more, free African diasporic people in Nova Scotia than there were enslaved. African-derived traditions were likely expressed, though, in the home, since public fora were still constrained by the entrenchment of racialized social structures and practices. In Loyalist-era Atlantic Canada, it was okay to be black, but being African (culturally) seems to still have been discouraged (Pope 1886).

While archaeologists working in other parts of the African diaspora are abandoning the search for "ethnic markers either linked to Africa or associated with African Americans" such a quest has not yet been attempted in Atlantic Canada (Leone et al. 2005: 582; Singleton 1995; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999). Part of the reason that archaeologists in other parts of the diaspora can move on to other problems is because they have established that material manifestations of African-derived cultural elements



are present in their local archaeological records. That is, the African diasporic sites they study have yielded material evidence of cultural practices that are either African or are related to African cultures (Fennell 2010a). They have based these conclusions on the fact that either the material substance or the context of material culture is the same as, or very similar to, African cultures from which African people were taken for trade in the transatlantic slave trade. The archaeologists have proven the presence of distinct cultural practices which, although in transformed and adaptive forms, derive from African cultural practices. They have achieved this through quantified pattern analysis of material culture (DiZerega-Wall 2000; Fennell 2007b; Ferguson 1992; Ruppel et al. 2003; Orser 1994; Thompson 1983, 1998; Walsh 2001; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999; Young 1996). This remains a step to be taken in Atlantic Canada, in part because it will help archaeologists understand the juxtaposition of Atlantic Canada's African diasporic character in relation to other locales. Further, the presence of such African diasporic cultural elements cannot be assumed in the Atlantic Canadian environs. They must be investigated independently, drawing on the work elsewhere in the diaspora to act as an interpretive guidebook. Because archaeology of the African diaspora in Atlantic Canada is at least two steps behind its correlates elsewhere, the potential to (incorrectly) promote a static view of African diasporic Atlantic Canadian culture can be avoided (Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999:283). The first step, however, is to establish that the African diaspora in Atlantic Canada maintained an Africentrism in its identity. Since the most productive contexts in which to identify such a character, or lack thereof, are private and semi-private, archaeology emerges as the most promising discipline for this exploration.



### Spatial Creation and Landscape Use

How a group of people distribute themselves across a natural landscape, employ it in the physical organization of social space, and accord it meaning, is a wholly cultural act. Place and space are two different things; space is the available, measurable entity to which humans may assign meaning, place is the assignation of meaning to space; the understanding of the configuration and significance of space (Battle-Baptiste 2007; LeFebvre 1997:170; Merrifield 1993; Soja 1996:56). In the creation of a community, the definition, organization and constellation of places, particularly boundaries, are fora for sociopolitical negotiation and expression and become microlandscapes: the connectivity, contiguity and overlapping of places.

Orser (1996), like many others, proposes that landscapes are dual in character: natural (uncontrolled by humans) and cultural (defined by human social behaviours). Orser's work is evocative and he clearly shares many of the ideas and assumptions upon which the present work is founded. Orser understands spatiality as, "the conscious creation of space" (Orser 1996:136). However, Orser fails to articulate the mechanism by which the natural and cultural characters of landscapes become integrated as a whole. To return to Bourdieu, the spatial dimension of habitus, as "nature turned into history", is landscape, which, as Schama says, "...is the work of the mind....built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock" (Schama 1995:7).



The idea of an experienced spatiality, of cognized landscapes and the attachment of meaning to places (and mutability of those attachments or understandings) is a well established discourse (Buggey 2000; Hall 1966; Hodder 1987; Lefebvre 1997; Schama 1995; Soja 1996; Tilley 1994; Whitridge 2004). I would add the works of van Gennep and Turner to this list because of their development and use of the concept of liminality and the defacto creation of a trialectic of conceptualization as well as liminality's clear relationship to spatiality in its application as a threshold between spaces of being (van Gennep 1909, Turner 1969). Lefebvre, Soja and Whitridge, among those leading modern discourse in spatial theory, define spatiality as a trialectic formed of physical, social and other, or lived, dimensions; Lefebvre calls this last mental space; for Whitridge, this is the *imaginary* or nexus of the intersection of the objective and cultural; Soja calls this *thirdspace* (Lefebvre 1997:61; Soja 1996:56; Whitridge 2004:214). As a mental process, the lived dimension of space is both consciously and subconsciously created, particularly as routine is applied (Bourdieu 1984:468; Hall 1966). A cultural landscape, or a system of places and the proxemically meaningful spaces in between (where liminality is experienced), is the product of the process of cognized and lived space. Both the cognition of places that necessarily must occur prior to the production of space and place and the understanding of the *meaning* of their production and organization constitute the cognitive dimension of place. Turner and Hall understood the cognition of boundaries as does Soja, a recognition which necessarily requires a trialectical nature of spatialism. The Haida poem, *Raven Travelling*, illustrates this interdependence of cognition and actualization in a material existence, as well as the place of boundary



(threshold/liminality), “He pushed his mind through and pulled his body after” (Kane 1994:68).

A cognitive landscape, or alternatively, the cognitive mechanism by which social and physical spaces are linked (thirdspace or lived space), bespeaks both conscious and subconscious cultural practices about what is right or comfortable. The development of places is fraught with political agendas and expressions and, indeed, where African diasporic individuals exerted choice in spatial creation there is much to read on both inter- and intra- community levels of organization (Hayden 1995; Saunders 1997). One process of spatial organization that concerns the present study is the use of natural landscape features in the creation of social places and boundaries between them. Where members of the African diaspora maintained and reified a strong sense of community, the influence of extra-community pressures is visible in the juxtaposition of racialized communities to one another and the use of natural landscape features to serve as sociocultural landscape infrastructure (boundaries).

A second process of spatial organization that yields insight into the ethnoculture of African diasporic peoples is the creation, dressing and comprehension of domestic and yard space. At this scale, spatial practice encompasses both conscious and subconscious routines that serve to both demonstrate and reinforce ethnocultural identity. Certainly, the art and architecture of yards have proven bountiful in African-derived tradition and ideology (Gundaker 1998; Gundaker and McWillie 2005; Jones 1998; Szwed 1998;



Thompson 1998). Hidden in plain view, yard shows have been proven powerful displays of African spirituality and meaning that are and were frequently undetected by non-African passers-by (Edwards 1998). Rather than yards full of junk and disorganized plantings, African diasporic yard shows of hub caps, tires, bottle trees, plants, objects tied to trees, mirrors, disused ceramics and so on are protective traditions that bear great spiritual significance. Archaeologists have shown that contexts in homespheres, even in biracial, enslaved circumstances, were imbued with African-derived meanings as a layer on top of (or beneath, whatever one's perspective might be) the functionally inclined, Eurocentric meaning of, say, a room's corner, doorway, cellar or a hearth (Leone and Fry 1999; Ruppel, et al. 2003; Thompson 1998). Spatially designed context and cardinal orientation of items of material culture, particularly in conjunction with a cross, circle or combination of the two, and the material items themselves, served as powerful spiritual beacons, barriers and conduits in an African-descended cosmological landscape. Now that archaeologists and other academic researchers have grown aware of the non-Eurocentric reading of these meanings, their noted examples in both the archaeological materials and in modern African diasporic communities have grown too numerous to enumerate here (Tobin and Dobard 1999; Leone et al. 2005; Fennell 2010). It is almost as though archaeologists of the African diaspora have learned a new language with which to interpret the cultural materials. The message is, however, that African diasporic landscapes, places and items have often been misread in the absence of an Africentric perspective on their meanings.



### Africentricity

In the 1970s, Dr. Molefi Kete Asante articulated ideas of Africentricity<sup>20</sup>, similar to notions culminating in the minds of many post-Civil Rights era thinkers. The principles of Africentrism, according to Asante, affirm:

...the central role of the African subject within the context of African history, thereby removing Europe from the center of the African reality. In this way, Afrocentricity becomes a revolutionary idea because it studies ideas, concepts, events, personalities, and political and economic processes from a standpoint of black people as subjects and not as objects, basing all knowledge on the authentic interrogation of *location* (Asante 2005).

Asante is not suggesting the removal of Europe (or European criteria) from consideration, merely its relocation away from the centre. This seems a reasonable proposition, particularly given the influence of racialized identities on everyday practices and the potential for those public experiences to impact mindsets in private. It is the Africentric nature of experience that permeates African diasporic individuals' formulation of identity and, at least initially, most colonial and post-colonial social circumstances. Fennell's proposition that African diasporic culture be considered as the

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<sup>20</sup> I use "Africentric" throughout this document while Asante's work uses "Afrocentric". As the concept is still evolving in its usage, I have chosen the former since this spelling has been used by the local Atlantic Canadian black population in a variety of fora.



product of ethnogenic bricolage also maintains European and First Nations' cultural principles within the scope of the interpretive framework. An Africentric interpretive perspective, thereby, can accommodate recognition of the validity of Fennell's proposition, but also ensures that African cultural principles form the core of the interpretive framework.

### Africentric Interpretive Perspective

The standards by which we have measured things are frequently derived from what is considered the norm for white, males (often) of European extraction. This is the foundation of eurocentrism and the connotations of this type of thinking lead us to believe that anything else is deviant or abnormal, not the way it is supposed to be, a mutation, different. Early science, and most significantly anthropology, established this pale baseline that has only begun to be redressed in recent years. This thinking can also account for the importance of such theoretical approaches as feminist studies in archaeology and other academic disciplines.

Add to eurocentrism and a pale baseline the indubitable impact of colonialism and mass enslavement of African people and their descendents, and the visual comparison of skin colour available to all, regardless of the observer's age, gender, education, or culture. Add, once again, the historical oppression of people whose skin was not white in Western colonial societies in general and we are faced with the reality that non-white anything (skin, food, culture) was somehow, perhaps subconsciously now, considered in Western cultures to be less.



Today's discipline of archaeology is perhaps better equipped than some sciences to challenge these assumptions. Archaeologists can examine the body of data derived from African diasporic archaeological sites as a complete entity in and of itself whose norm simply has yet to be understood: not as a variation from white culture, but as a whole and complete organism. One may still, however, compare white and black archaeological data to measure variability between the two, but an understanding of how an African diasporic site might be characterized need not rely on this method solely. Distilling variability does not lead directly to commitment of a pale baseline. Rather, the implementation of African cultural historical knowledge ensures that the norm against which African diasporic materials are measured is rooted in African and African diasporic cultural communities. It has been this type of interpretive strategy that has led, in other African diasporic archaeologies, to the identification of material manifestations of African-derived belief systems, folk behaviours and creations of place (DiZerega-Wall 2000; Franklin 2001; Galke 2000; Jones 1998; Kelso 1986; Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1999; Walsh 2001; Wheaton et al. 1993; Young 1996).

#### Nova Scotian Africentric Perspective

In all African diasporic cultures we must expect a transformed, evolved character of African cultural elements. As Fennell has suggested, African diasporic cultures incorporate elements of other cultures engaged in the colonial experience, including those from European and Aboriginal contexts as well as those of African origin (2007b). African-descended peoples throughout the diaspora brought with them African mother



cultures, filtered through agents and kin relationships, and varied experiences in oppressive and racist circumstances and plentifully diverse natural environments. Nova Scotia was, again, a unique place with its unique blend of nature and politics and its distinct Atlantic World economic niche. It must not be expected that a homogenous African diasporic culture existed, but that the commonality of African mother cultures, shared political, social and racist experiences and sense of *black* community would, similarly, yield and interest in maintenance of Africentric cultural traditions throughout the diaspora. This is to say that African Nova Scotians have been and are both African and Nova Scotian, thus generating an Africentric culture – born locally.

All cultures change, and those developed throughout the African diaspora are no exception. It has been proven that African cultures came to the New World with those forced to emigrate. Under conditions of enslavement, those cultures changed. But resistance was a reality and it took, among others, the forms of maintained African cultural traditions and the development of new, Africentric traditions that made sense in these new physical, social and cultural landscapes. The recorded instances of these are many (Fry 2002; Piersen 1988; Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Rael 2002; Vlach 1977, 1991). It is therefore incumbent upon archaeologists studying the African diaspora to give consideration to the cultural meanings of the archaeological resources they examine that derive from Africentric cultures. This has not hitherto been practiced throughout Atlantic Canada, yet it is the goal of this thesis to promote adoption of an Africentric interpretive perspective on archaeological sites created and used by African diasporic peoples in Atlantic Canada.



To adopt an Africentric perspective is to commit to an interpretation of data, in this case archaeological, in accordance with values, meanings and explanations that might be traced back to historical African and African diasporic cultures or experiential catalysts borne by members of African diasporic cultures. An Africentric perspective should be employed in the interpretation of data collected from sites created by those of African descent where there is no documentation to indicate non-Africentric significance. This differs from the Eurocentric perspective that had, for some time, been the default perspective used for the interpretation of African diasporic archaeological data, particularly in contexts outside of agricultural plantations where individuals of African descent were enslaved.

Use of an Africentric perspective is not meant to suggest a view of diasporic cultures as static transplants of African cultures or even of individual traditions. In the beginning, when archaeologists and anthropologists began considering the African heritage of black descendents of those who had been dispersed throughout the world via the transatlantic slave trade, the term "africanism" was coined (Herskovits 1941). While this was a crucial step in weeding out residual colonialist attitudes from scientific interpretation and understanding, it faltered and fell into a rut, seeking out African culture in places other than Africa. Leone and Fry credit John Vlach with pointing out the required correction of perspective, "...Africa in America was not only Africa surviving but Africa coalescing into African America" (Leone and Fry 1999:3). Such an interpretive perspective is still being implemented in practice to account for the many and



varied experiences of African-descended peoples outside of Africa. One must consider diverse cultural backgrounds, varied natural and socioeconomic environments and the agency that each person deployed in the course of his/her own life. There are accounts of African people and their descendents employing traditional African healing methods, spirituality, foodways, language and spatial behaviours, and they are sufficiently common to suggest cultural continuity beyond African shores (Fennell 2000, 2007b, 2007c; Ferguson 1992; Franklin 2000; Gundaker 1998; Leone and Fry 1999; Leone et al. 2005; Singleton 1999). However, the cultures that grew across the diaspora were dynamic, adapting and adopting new elements from varied sources to create African diasporic cultures with roots in Africa, the Americas and Europe.

With few exceptions, those of African descent throughout the diaspora used material culture not of their own manufacture. Ferguson (1992) and Vlach (1991) have noted the most significant exceptions. In the manufacture of colonoware, enslaved people of African extraction employed traditions learned within African cultures on their continent of cultural origin to create these utilitarian coarse earthenwares in New World colonial contexts (Ferguson 1992). There is also strong evidence for the incorporation of First Nations' potting traditions in the creation of these wares, but their relationship with enslaved African people and their descendents is undeniable. In addition to colonoware, archaeologists have identified clay pipes manufactured in New World contexts in accordance with African stylistic traditions (Emerson 1988).



Primarily, however, these same African people appropriated the European colonial objects available to them, at least in the beginning, and frequently accorded them Africentric meanings (Brown 1994; Fennell 2000; Ferguson 1992; Franklin 2004; Leone and Fry 1999; Samford 1999; Sauer 1998; Thompson 1998; Wilkie 1997; Young 1996). In the research and analysis for this dissertation, the meanings accorded objects in their African Nova Scotian context must be given precedence in the interpretation of the archaeological material, rather than the meaning accorded them at the time of manufacture. Indeed, this is a critical distinction to be made if the interpretive approach adopted is to actually move toward an Africentric one.

Not until encountering Brown and Cooper's (1990) work had I considered the ramifications of cataloguing the artefacts interpreted as having symbolic or Africentric meaning under categories such as kitchen or pharmaceutical. Indeed, to catalogue the objects found in the symbolically significant contexts of African diasporic sites as lithics (in the case of crystals) or clothing/personal (in the case of blue beads) would be to embed in the curation system a Eurocentric interpretation of their meaning and to prioritize the manufacturer's intended use rather than the final consumer's (actual) use of the object. This is problematic and contradictory to the goal of an Africentric interpretation in this work, by which I hope to encourage archaeologists to consider the meanings of things as the historical agents had done. In the cataloguing system used by the provincial regulator of archaeology in Nova Scotia, categories are set digitally within the software and reflect only broad categories of usage (e.g., architectural) that are derived from the intentions of manufacture rather than modification. This leaves an



archaeologist only the tools of the “other activities”, “personal” or miscellaneous” categories, augmented with a notes section, to denote the interpreted meaning of the object. Indeed, this may, on some levels, be adequate but becomes problematic with a lack of interpretation of material culture, such as often happens in consulting archaeology. It is likely moreso a problem with certain items, such as nails, which may have been used by African diasporic peoples as items of conjure, especially if recovered from certain contexts. In the end, the interpretive perspective of the archaeologist is key, but the point is that there is an ethnocentrism inherent in the curation system that likely goes uncritically considered as it is viewed as a scientific tool, missing the vulnerability of it as a tool of *western* science. This is likely the case with many jurisdictional regulators across North America, and elsewhere.

To summarize, this thesis approaches the archaeological material from the theoretical perspective that the distinctiveness of African Nova Scotian culture, and its attendant ethnocultural identity facet implications, tie into a broader context of African diasporic cultures. Among the threads which weave these cultures together is the commonality of African cultural heritage. This cultural heritage is visible in the practices carried out in the private spheres of African diasporic lives where sociopolitical agendas and the imposition of race did not take precedence as causal factors in cultural practices, though certainly continued to have influence, such as the expression of taste, spirituality, folk medicine and the construction of space and place in African diasporic cultural landscapes. The evidence of these practices can be found in the archaeological record.



## **Chapter 4 – Methodology**

### Objectives and Logic

This research investigates African diasporic identity in Atlantic Canada through analysis of the construction and use of space and the consumption, use and appropriation of material culture from African Nova Scotian archaeological sites. By looking at materials and spatial data from several different communities, I hoped to gain insight into what binds African Nova Scotians together as a cultural group and gain an understanding of the degree to which the sense of identity of past African Nova Scotians might have been linked with their African pasts. I have used archaeological techniques to recover material culture data for analysis of consumption behaviours and particularistic analysis of appropriations of European and colonial material culture for Africentric folk traditions. I have also used archaeological techniques to explore specific contexts that other archaeologists studying the African diaspora have linked with African-descended magico-religious systems and cosmology. Using GIS to manage community and region



level spatial data, I have conducted analyses of the black cultural landscapes of Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery.<sup>21</sup>

The focus of this research is on Nova Scotian Black Loyalist communities and sites created by their descendents. The Black Loyalists were early settlers and the most voluminous wave of African diasporic migration to Atlantic Canada. Their social, cultural and historical circumstances here were likely to a) have fostered maintenance of African cultural elements that survived and transformed through the experience of slavery and slave societies and b) formed a broad and significant basis for the development of African Nova Scotian culture. Each of the communities selected contributed a different perspective on African Nova Scotians' experiences. Delap's Cove was an unofficial settlement, created according to vernacular structures, by (likely) squatters. Some of its settlers may have been seeking refuge from slaveowners who sought to recapture them. Black Loyalists who settled with Thomas Brownspriggs at Tracadie (Rear Monastery) enjoyed an officially sanctioned existence in an area that, even today, remains populated by farms and small homesteads.

Ceramics from Birchtown were used as comparative material. Birchtown was the largest settlement of Black Loyalists in the post-Revolutionary British Empire. As well, its proximity to Shelburne made it rather more urban, by eighteenth century standards,

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<sup>21</sup> See MacLeod-Leslie (2001) for a spatial analysis of Black Loyalist settlement at Birchtown, Shelburne County.



than any of the other communities considered here. The ceramic assemblages available from Birchtown provided an opportunity to consider socioeconomic differentiation within the black community.

Finally, a brief comparison of the ceramics from African diasporic communities included in this study was made with ceramics recovered from the Irish community at Coote Cove (1794-1945) on the outskirts of Halifax (Wright 1999). The Irish, subjects of discrimination in colonial Nova Scotia, experienced socioeconomic hardship similar to that faced by African Nova Scotians. Coote Cove's community character and spatial relationship with other communities most closely approximates that of Birchtown as a commuter community, or suburb, to a large, mostly white urban community.

### Prior Research

I previously discussed how new African diasporic archaeology is in Atlantic Canada. Prior to the current research in Nova Scotia, this subfield was limited to six seasons of work between 1992 and 2007 at Birchtown (Shelburne County), a small project on the later Seaview African United Baptist Church in Africville (Halifax Regional Municipality), a four week survey of Black Loyalist sites between Tracadie (Antigonish County) and Birchtown (Guysborough County) and a salvage Black Loyalist cemetery removal and reburial from Redhead, along Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore near Goldboro (Guysborough County) (Niven 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2002; Niven and Davis 1995; Powell and Niven 2000). Two graduate level theses have focused on Black



Loyalist material culture, based on archaeological excavations that had been completed by the other archaeologists (Cottreau-Robbins 2002; MacLeod-Leslie 2001). A small survey for graves of enslaved blacks was conducted in 2006 on a New England planter plantation in Yarmouth County in the interstitial period between the fieldwork for the present dissertation and its drafting in response to a plea from concerned community members (MacLeod-Leslie 2008). That survey augmented an earlier survey of the plantation to inventory features across it (Niven 1997). The 2006 survey identified a stone-lined cellar feature in the centre of a modern commercial blueberry field that may relate to the early plantation. One other doctoral thesis, an interdisciplinary study, is in progress which focuses on slavery in Nova Scotia in the Loyalist era (1783-1810) (Cottreau-Robbins in prep.). The fieldwork for that dissertation took place during the drafting process for the present work.

The work at Birchtown, Shelburne County, the largest Black Loyalist settlement in Nova Scotia, has been the most extensive and in depth of any of the projects in a single community. Excavations have uncovered evidence of the temporary, semi-subterranean shelters that some of the Black Loyalist settlers occupied while building homes or awaiting landgrants (Figure 12). The home of the official head of the community, Colonel Stephen Blucke, (located across from the Old Black Burying Ground on the shores of Birchtown Bay) was partially excavated. One of the enigmatic rock mounds in one of the two groups of them was dismantled after the complexes of mounds were mapped extensively. Subsurface testing of several cellar features has taken place on at





**Figure 12.** Reconstruction of a Black Loyalist pithouse dwelling based on excavations at AkDi-12, in Birchtown. The entryway is the hole visible in the lower image, which would have been covered by a hatchdoor hinged at the top. Photos courtesy of Laird Niven.



least 3 of the more than 20 historical archaeological sites identified there since 1993.

And finally, I carried out a small research project, as an undergraduate field school, to explore the spaces between the enigmatic rock mounds, bounded by the southernmost mound complex (AkDi-31) (MacLeod-Leslie 2010).

### Background Research – Process and Sources

The background study began prior to the fieldwork and continued after the excavations of 2005 were complete. My research included primary and secondary documentation. Since African diasporic peoples seldom left primary textual documents about themselves, much of the primary documentation related to land settlement: maps, road petitions and deeds. Church records of births, marriages and deaths were also consulted, but were often inconsistent. Census data, particularly for earlier years, is fraught with geographic and identity problems, including the racism then rampant within governmental systems. Often, a general area of black settlement was referred to, and mapped in lesser detail and with less attention to detail than would have been the case for an area settled by whites. Secondary histories were more abundant, though often generalized with regard to the types of information with which this project was concerned. Local histories of black communities are being generated, but I found that much of the information was merely restated from the scant primary documentary record or the larger secondary histories, such as Walker's *The Black Loyalists* (1992) or Pachai's *Blacks* (1987). Some of the most interesting and personally rewarding opportunities came in the conversations with local informants, black and white alike. These individuals provided information to assist the surveys in all three of the areas surveyed in



2004 (Brindleytown, Delap's Cove and the Tracadie area) and asked questions that helped inform me of the potential interest and value of the research results to the general public. Their insights into local dynamics were of a sort not usually accessible through documents, which also improved my appreciation for the human qualities of the research data with which I was working.

One fortuitous find was the collection of folklore published by the American Folklore Society in 1931. This record of attitudes and vernacular perspectives toward everyday life and folk beliefs is a rare and important source of direct evidence from African Nova Scotians. The opening of the book demonstrates a problem which continued until the late twentieth century with understanding black presence and heritage in Canada, and especially in Atlantic Canada, which has resulted in a lack of volume and diversity in black history sources for this region:

The majority of the following stories from Nova Scotia were told by Negroes. This may seem strange, since most of us are accustomed to think that Negroes are not to be met in large numbers after one goes north of Boston. It is a fact, however, that, groups of Negroes live in various parts of the Dominion of Canada, especially in the eastern section. There is a large colony in Montreal. As one travels through the province of Nova Scotia, the frequency with which one encounters the



Negro is not unlike similar experiences in states like New Jersey and Pennsylvania (Fauset 1931:vii).

Clearly, there was still blatant othering taking place in the perception of the African Nova Scotians whom the folklorist encountered. This undoubtedly had ramifications for the types of knowledge the informants felt they could share with the interviewer. However, Fauset does provide a local source of information somewhat comparable to the slaves' narratives (and folklore contained within them) used by the folklorist Fry in her collaboration with Leone to more accurately and Africentrically interpret African diasporic archaeological resources (Leone and Fry 1999; 2001). There are some fundamental differences between the Nova Scotian folklore and that used by Leone and Fry, owing to the varied social circumstances of the informants: the nature of Nova Scotia's racism is very different than that experienced by African diasporic peoples in the southern United States.

Archival records held by Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM), in Halifax, constituted the first source of primary documentation explored. Here I used the finding aid *Ethnic Groups: Blacks* collated by archives staff as a starting point. The Ambrose F. Church maps were a particularly fruitful source of primary documentation. Compiled in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, they show locations of homes, names of residents and the names and locations of infrastructure such as churches, schools, and stores. While known to have some errors in point placement



and spelling, these maps proved to coincide with periods of occupation at both of the sites tested under this program of research (Fergusson 1970).

Additional documents were consulted at the Antigonish Heritage Museum, primarily a transcription of memoirs of the founder of the Trappist Monastery at Tracadie, Father Vincent de Paul Merle. Given the close spatial relationship of the land purchased for the monastery and the homes of many Black Loyalists on the Brownspriggs grant (the monastery lands being at and within the northwestern edge of the grant) as well as his work to establish a school for black children, Father Merle's memoirs contain a number of relevant comments on his interaction with local black residents. In Annapolis Royal, the archival holdings of the O'Dell House Museum contain a valuable resource for researching African Nova Scotian heritage in the area created by a local historian. *The Blue Binder* is a compilation of documents and transcribed references relevant to the local environs of Annapolis Royal and the southern portions of the Annapolis Valley (Lawrence, n.d.).

Deed records were consulted at offices across Nova Scotia, at Lawrencetown (Annapolis County), Antigonish and Halifax. Given the apparent issue of squatting in Delap's Cove, the group grant to Thomas Brownspriggs and 73 other heads of households, and informal nature of land transmission to kin and fellow community members, deed tracing was challenging. I would often encounter, in conversation with elderly local residents, a comment along the lines of, "Well, it was always just black people who lived back (or "up" or "in") there, no white people". While this, in



conjunction with the difficulty in deed tracing, does not offer the comfortable confidence of a signature on a dotted line, it does add to the evidence for black settlement of an area, if not a specific site. This replicates the pattern when dealing with African diasporic archaeology elsewhere in the Americas – traditionally oral cultures that were socially and historically marginalized and poorly documented. It also highlights the importance of an archaeological method for learning about African diasporic cultural members and the stories of their lives. For example, in considering the two sites excavated for this program of research, I am very confident in the identification of BjCj-29 as the home of “C DesMill”, as noted on Church’s map. I am equally confident that this was a Black Loyalist descendant’s household and that their surname was either Dismal (as is found in the BON and at adjacent Lincolnville on Church’s Map) or a variation of it. The Delap’s Cove site, BeDj-16, is somewhat harder to identify as Church’s map shows only nine households in black Delap’s Cove and we know there to have been more than a hundred people living in the area (Public Records Committee 1881).

Overall, the documentary record of these black communities, Delap’s Cove and Rear Monastery, is rather sparse with respect to the types of details archaeologists typically seek for other sites. A lack of detailed land transactions does not allow a solid chronology of land ownership of specific sites, thanks to group grant and squatting. Architectural histories for individual homes are completely absent, as the black residents of these communities were commoners. Such histories did not exist for the more socially prominent memorialists and Black Loyalist Christian leaders: Boston King of Birchtown,



David George of Shelburne and the itinerant minister, John Marrant, who served other black, as well as Mi'kmaw and white, communities (George 1793; King 1798; Marrant 1790; Whitehead 2003). This makes the folklore data, local informant information and a comparative approach even more important to the research.

### Fieldwork and the Research Agenda

The present research sought to expand the understanding of Black Loyalists' and African Nova Scotians' pasts by incorporating data from additional communities, building on previous work and investigating new, theoretically grounded research questions using an Africentric interpretive perspective. Most of the nascent understanding of African Nova Scotians' past gained archaeologically had come from Birchtown and the need to broaden the basis of understanding of pan-Nova Scotian and local experiences, as well as to use a consistent academic approach, was apparent. The fieldwork conducted specifically for this program of research over the 2004 and 2005 field seasons yielded both spatial and artefact data used to investigate the research questions.

The survey at Delap's Cove identified archaeological sites in a previously uninvestigated African Nova Scotian community. The survey at Rear Monastery further explored the area around Tracadie, where Powell had begun the difficult task of building up that area's record of African Nova Scotian archaeology only six years prior. The author's survey added three new sites to the sixteen identified by Powell (Powell and



Niven 2000:46)<sup>22</sup>. Ten new sites were identified at Delap's Cove, nine of which appeared to be associated with domestic occupation (Figure 31). The tenth site was likely the schoolhouse of the late nineteenth – early twentieth century, as the very large building footing (about 12 x 6m) was located atop "Schoolhouse Hill" (C. Marsman 2004 pers. comm.).

### Fieldwork Strategies

#### *Surveys*

The field survey strategy relied on historical sources and local informants to help define areas of investigation and survey transects. Transects were defined to visit areas of features identified on historic maps, such as roads and homesteads, clearings and anomalies identified on modern and historic aerial imagery, and locations indicated by local informants. Surface reconnaissance survey was the primary method employed as the historic features were anticipated to be visually detectable without subsurface testing. The feature types targeted were relatively recent, archaeologically speaking, in undeveloped rural areas and generally of household type, such as cellar depressions, which were adequately identified through such low impact methods. It was the lack of detection through surface reconnaissance techniques that eliminated Brindley Town (Digby County) from this research project. However, as this area exists in a more urbanized environment that has been subjected to much development, subsurface testing

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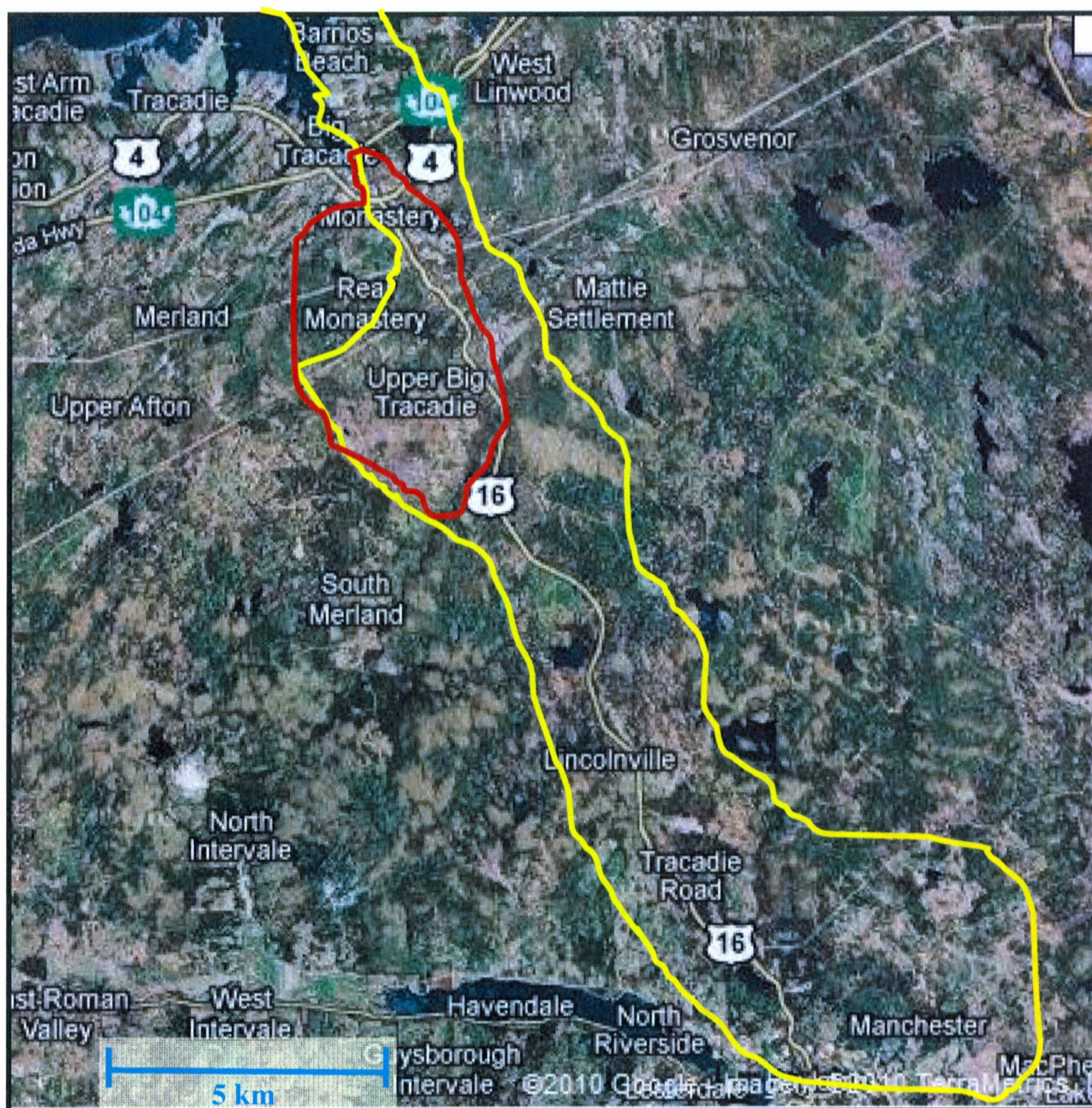
<sup>22</sup> Only three of the sites recorded by Powell are in the Rear Monastery area, proper.



may reveal pockets of existing archaeological resources pertaining to the original Black Loyalist settlement. The area of Brindley Town (modern Conway) that appeared to have the highest potential for survival of archaeological resources was not accessible due to a lack of landowner permission to enter upon the lands. A sheet scatter shell midden that appeared to be in modern usage at a small boat slip was located on the water's edge of a Robinson Weir Road property and may indicate an area used historically by Black Loyalists. Some of their descendents have managed to maintain residences along this road, though white settlement and development have encroached onto the edge of this small lobe of land. Scheduling did not allow for extensive shovel testing of the area but surface reconnaissance and a minor hand trowel test indicated the midden to be approximately 20m x 5m and approximately 25-30 cm deep.

As features were encountered, the immediately surrounding vicinities were visually surveyed (usually on the order of 50 – 100m radius from the feature and in the directions of streams, brooks and roads) to identify related features that might constitute other activity areas belonging to the site. Each site was photographed with a digital camera, field notes recorded and evident features were measured and sketched. A GPS point was taken to represent each site location and the digital data downloaded into the GIS database in shapefile (ArcGIS) format. This site location data provided the information used to investigate cultural landscapes and at the regional level of spatial analysis.





**Figure 13.** Areas of Black Loyalist settlement along Highway 16 through Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. Powell's approximate 1999 study area outlined in yellow (continues to extend northward). MacLeod-Leslie's 2004 survey study area outlined in red. The site excavated in 2005 falls in the area not covered by Powell's survey. Image courtesy Google Imagery and TerraMetrics, 2010.





**Figure 14.** General outline of 2004 survey study area at black Delap's Cove. Image courtesy Google Imagery and TerraMetrics 2010.



At only three sites was shovel testing undertaken: two in Delap's Cove and one in Rear Monastery. Two of the sites shovel tested were chosen for excavation in 2005, BeDj-16 in Delap's Cove and BjCj-29 in Rear Monastery. In Delap's Cove, five small shovel tests were also dug at a building footing (DC1) located at the beginning of the modern Delap's Cove Wilderness Trail. These tests yielded machine cut and wire nails and flat glass. Based on these tests and the seemingly insubstantial building feature compared with the other tested site at Delap's Cove (BeDj-16), it seemed unlikely that the building footing (DC1) would be as productive for the defined research agenda as BeDj-16. At this latter site, where the 2005 field school was held (BeDj-16), artefacts collected from four shovel tests dug to the rear of the house cellar indicated a domestic occupation from the second quarter to the end of the nineteenth century. Shovel test locations were mapped manually on individual site maps, for those tested, using a compass and hand tape.

In retrospect, given the outstanding question of the ethnicity of the possible residents of the BeDj-16 site in Delap's Cove, which will be discussed shortly, the Pomp Site (BeDk-2) may provide a good source of data for future expansion of archaeological research in the vein of the current project. The results of the 2004 survey of all three communities (Brindley Town, Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery) were summarized in a report filed with the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MacLeod-Leslie 2005).



### *Excavations*

Two excavation projects were carried out in 2005, one in Delap's Cove (at BeDj-16), the other in Rear Monastery (at BjCj-29). This work generated new artefact and spatial data to compare with the material from Birchtown and Coote Cove and spatial data for analysis at the household level. Excavation strategies were inspired by Africentrically informed archaeological projects that have discerned specific locations in houses and yards to have been symbolically meaningful contexts for African diasporic peoples (Brown 1994; Di-Zerega-Wall 2000; Edwards 1998; Franklin 2004; Jones 1998; Kelso 1986; Leone and Fry 1999; Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1999; Sauer 1998; Wilkie 1997; Young 1996). Therefore, excavations were focused on apparent household sites, with excavation units placed over northeastern quadrants of cellar depression features, in yard areas and, toward the rear of structures in the hopes of identifying backdoor thresholds. All excavation was carried out with hand trowels. Through these excavations, artefact data were collected and particular attention was paid to the contexts of recovery (i.e., thresholds, northeastern corners, private/semi-private spaces versus public spaces, and stratigraphic expressions of site formation (construction, occupation, abandonment, etc.)).

None of the matrix was screened. In retrospect, we probably should have done so however, the excavation methods and pace of work under the research projects was moderate. While some small items may have remained undetected, our methods and pace did yield several small items, including annealed silver sewing needles (complete



and fragmented) and minute calcined bone fragments. Following the fieldwork, the recovered artefacts were cleaned and catalogued and then examined in the laboratory for decorative colours and possible modifications. Artefact data were analyzed using an Africentric interpretive perspective as outlined earlier (DiZerega-Wall 2000; Edwards 1998; Ferguson 1992; Gundaker 1998; Jones 1998; Leone and Fry 1999; Orser 1994; Ruppel et al 2003; Samford 1999; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999; Young 1996). Site maps were largely created using a compass and measuring tape and recorded on drafting vellum. Stratigraphic profiles were similarly recorded using standard methods and drafting vellum. These maps were scanned to create digital versions.

The work at the Delap's Cove site was carried out as an archaeological field school through Saint Mary's University. Excavations took place on two features at this site which have been identified as a house (FND 9A in preliminary analyses) and outbuilding, likely a barn (FND 9B). The house dimensions appear to have been roughly 6m x 6m, though the cellar depression that falls in the centre of the area measured 2.5m x 3m. The barn, again, was located by its large central cellar depression. Barns with subsurface cellars are not uncommon (Sanford et al. 1995:9). In over 20 years of field experience in Nova Scotia, I have encountered barns with subsurface cellars frequently. The significantly smaller quantity of artefacts from FND#2 collected via 20m<sup>2</sup> worth of excavation units, as compared with FND #1, tested with 22m<sup>2</sup>, in conjunction with my experiences has led me to identify FND #2 as a barn. Further, no chimney collapse was evident at FND#2, as at FND#1. A nineteenth century publication, *The New England*





**Figure 15.** Saint Mary's University field school students (2005) clear the litter layer from Test Pit 1, situated over the eastern portion of the house cellar feature at BeDj-16 in Delap's Cove. The western edge of the excavation unit (left) is visible immediately behind the crouching student excavating from within the cellar depression. The eastern edge of the unit begins near the tripod visible in the background.



*Farmer*, has some interesting information on how to use barn cellars, particularly in the winter (Brown 1856:83).

At Rear Monastery, excavation took place with a smaller crew, comprised of myself, one assistant and occasional help from four volunteers: two from the local community, the assistant from the 2004 survey and the author's husband. The excavation units were placed on a domestic feature and in its yard. A significant effort was expended mapping the substantial rock wall and rock pile features at this site that appeared to define the property immediately surrounding the house feature.

Three weeks of excavation took place at each of Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery. Laboratory processing took place at the author's home and in the archaeological laboratory at Saint Mary's University between June 2006 and May 2007. GIS data manipulation was carried out using ArcGIS on both university computers at Saint Mary's University and a personal laptop.

As part of the theoretically grounded methodology, the northeastern corners of cellar depressions were systematically tested on all features at both sites; that is, on both the house and barn cellar features at Delap's Cove (4m x 5m and 3 x 3m, respectively) and the house cellar at Rear Monastery (2m x 2.5m). Mark Leone and others working on African diasporic sites acknowledge the great archaeological potential of northeastern corners of rooms, structures and sites as symbolically charged contexts because of the significance of cardinal axes in various African belief systems and the private magico-



religious practices conducted in these contexts (Brown 1994; Fennell 2000, 2007c; Leone et al. 1999; 2001). The explanation for the significance of this cardinal orientation and relationship with architectural features is provided by Thompson (1998) and Fennell (2007b, 2007c). Since the research question regarding consumption practices did not specify a necessary context for sample extraction, the method of placing excavation units on northeastern corners was seen as an opportunity to gain the necessary sample and explore these potentially Africentrically significant contexts simultaneously. However, excavation was not limited to northeastern corners of cellar features. Additional units were placed variously along westerly and southerly edges of such features, and two more units were placed in yard spaces. In Rear Monastery, a unit was placed behind the house (on the southern face) (1m x 3m) and on the edge of a small midden east of the house (1m x 1m). In Delap's Cove a unit was placed to the west of the house (1m x 2m), another to the south of (or behind) the barn/outbuilding (1m x 2m) and the last over the barn/outbuilding's southwestern corner (3m x 3m).

### *Mapping*

Spatial data were managed in a geographic information system (GIS). Site locations were recorded during the 2004 survey with a handheld GPS. The coordinates were manually entered into a table and converted into digital point features in a georeferenced layer within the GIS. These data were overlaid onto modern digital basedata layers, showing roads, shorelines, hydrology, areas of cleared vegetation and elevation.





**Figure 16.** Cellar feature at BjCj-29 in Rear Monastery, looking southwest. The excavation unit, Test Pit 2 (in the foreground), is situated over the northeastern corner of the house feature. This unit began as a 2m x 3m unit, however the westernmost 50cm of the unit (along the unit's western edge) was left unexcavated following the removal of the leaf litter and acquisition of this image. The reason for contracting the unit's excavated dimensions were a) to move the western edge of the unit closer to the visible center of the cellar depression and, b) to ensure the unit could be completed with the time and personnel available.



A compass and measuring tape were used to generate the site map for the Rear Monastery excavation units in 2005. In Delap's Cove, a total station and differential GPS were used to produce the majority of the final basemap for the 2005 field project. The digital mapping methods were augmented for the purpose of students' instruction, by mapping some of the chimney collapse feature in Test Pit 1 with a theodolite and stadia rod. These coordinates were plotted on drafting velum which was scanned and georeferenced as a digital image into the GIS. The outlines of the image-based feature from the scanned map were then digitally traced, thus integrating the hand drawn features with the total station vector based data<sup>23</sup>.

#### Interpretative Strategies

It is to be expected that the varied backgrounds of the Black Loyalists had all contributed to the development of the sense of ethnic or ethnocultural identity borne by

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<sup>23</sup> Very broadly, digital geospatial features are represented in either raster-based structures (as rows and columns of pixels) or vector-based structures (as points, lines and polygons). Scanning generates raster data and vectorization of these can be conducted manually (like tracing with a computer's pointer) or automatically (through a raster to vector conversion algorithm). The latter can result in a certain amount of distortion of form, making the former method more desirable when a smaller number of features need be converted. However, the latter can result in positional inaccuracies which may or may not be within an acceptable margin of error (e.g., centimetres across an archaeological site may be acceptable where they may not be in the engineering of a bridge).



these Atlantic Canadian settlers and their descendents into the more private spheres of their lives. Among the factors to be considered were the varied African cultural backgrounds, experiences of enslavement, creolization and generational factors, Eurocolonial culture in the Americas, Loyalist military experience and post Revolutionary Nova Scotian society. As the goals of this research were to explore identity at both community and agent levels of analysis, each avenue of inquiry has proven variably suited to one or the other of these scales of examination. For example, cultural landscapes provided insight into the African diasporic identities of communities while the examination of magico-religious folk traditions proved fruitful in the consideration of an agent-level sense of ethnicity or ethnocultural identity. The comparative analysis of taste as exhibited in the consumption of ceramics offered an opportunity to explore trends in individual choices linked to broad societal dynamics, such as variable economic and political echelons, as well as cultural identity. Analytic criteria for each of the two main classes of data, artefacts and spatial relationships, were drawn from a variety of sources. The interpretation of data according to the criteria was carried out using an Africentric approach.

The primary focus of the artefact interpretation was to determine if any patterns or characteristics appeared that were identified in other African diasporic archaeological assemblages (either in ceramic consumption or object appropriation behaviours). In artefact analysis, my main foci were decorative colours and motifs (on ceramics), contexts of recovery, and any modification or grouping of artefacts (for instance, as subassemblages in specific contexts) that suggested meanings similar to other African



diasporic archaeological data. The latter foci of investigation (contexts of recovery, subassemblages and some types of modification), which are also spatial in nature, could, if identified in Atlantic Canada's archaeological contexts, indicate a possible nkisi, such as those found at the Charles Carroll House, the Fanthorp Inn site and many different agricultural plantations (eg. Locust Grove, Levi Jordan, Rich Neck) (Brown 1994; Franklin 2004; Leone and Fry 1999; Sauer 1998; Young 1995).

The spatial data analyses carried out in this research included two broad categories: 1) intrasite contexts at the household scale, generally, and at the scale of the single domestic structure and 2) macrolandscapes, through broad analysis of cultural and natural landscape features' intersections. The examination of artefacts' contexts of recovery and any potential subassemblages are examples of the first category of spatial analysis, while cultural landscape is an example of the second.

### *Cultural Landscapes and Spatial Analysis*

The settlement patterns of black Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery (including the latter's relationship with black settlement along highway 16) were explored as landscape expressions of people's historical experiences in cultural heritage, transformation of culture and socio-spatial fragmentation. The macrospatiality of black Delap's Cove presented an opportunity to consider the shape of that community in conjunction with that of the natural landscape. It also offered a chance to explore the regional configuration of communities (with respect to one another) and how this form of archaeological data can be used to examine social phenomena, such as racial tension and



relationships of power. For black Delap's Cove, this scale of analysis used considerations of core-periphery relationships, as governed by economic and sociocultural phenomena, in addition to cultural heritage, social blackness and physiography. At Rear Monastery, this scale of analysis again considered core-periphery relationships as well as the variation from black Delap's Cove in its establishment (Rear Monastery was a legally and socially sanctioned black community) and the implications and results of these factors for the shape of the community and its juxtaposition with features of the natural and social landscapes.

Spatial data at the community level were gathered by recording site locations as a point feature (admittedly, an abstraction of a site's location) with a GPS and plotting them on digital base physiographic data. Field surveys conducted in 2004 yielded three new sites at Rear Monastery and ten new sites at Delap's Cove (Figure 31 and Figure 34). When displayed as a layer in conjunction with base physiographic data (such as contours, hydrology and roads), insights regarding spatial distribution of the sites were recorded. Contextualization of the individual site locations within the broad areal physiographic data fostered comprehension of the sites as part of a larger entity. Patterning in site distribution across the landscape was investigated at both the individual site level (relative to other sites belonging to that community) and at the cultural landscape level (relative to physiographic features, other communities and connective infrastructure). No statistical calculations of clustering were carried out. Rather, oral evidence for isolated or identifiable areas of community and visual distribution of mapped cultural and natural



data were used to explore community boundaries and connectivity. Fieldwork over the course of two years in both communities provided chances to experience the landscape and its boundaries (slope, aspect, water features, etc.) in real life, rather than relying solely on representative maps.

At the site or household level, spatial analysis used divisions of private, semi-private, semi-public and public space to contextualize artefacts. As both of the sites excavated for this research project included house features near roadways, divisions of front and backyards were possible, as were the definition of property boundaries through extant or vestigial rock wall features. The proximity of both houses to the roadways meant that visibility was clear, which also contributed to the definition of privacy or lack thereof, a significant factor in how human beings live in a space and define places (Wilson 1988: 57-58).

Spatial contexts of artefacts at the household level were considered in conjunction with places that have been identified in other African diasporic sites to have had Africentric significance for folk traditions. For example, a piece of twisted iron was found in association with a piece of broken white ceramic saucer behind a cornerstone on the northeastern corner of the porch structure. Without an Africentric approach to definition of place, this would likely have been identified as garbage or a lost item. However, given the context of its recovery, it has a potential alternative explanation under an Africentric understanding of the significance of that space as a place where charms may be embedded to conjure and perform protective or healing magic (Leone and



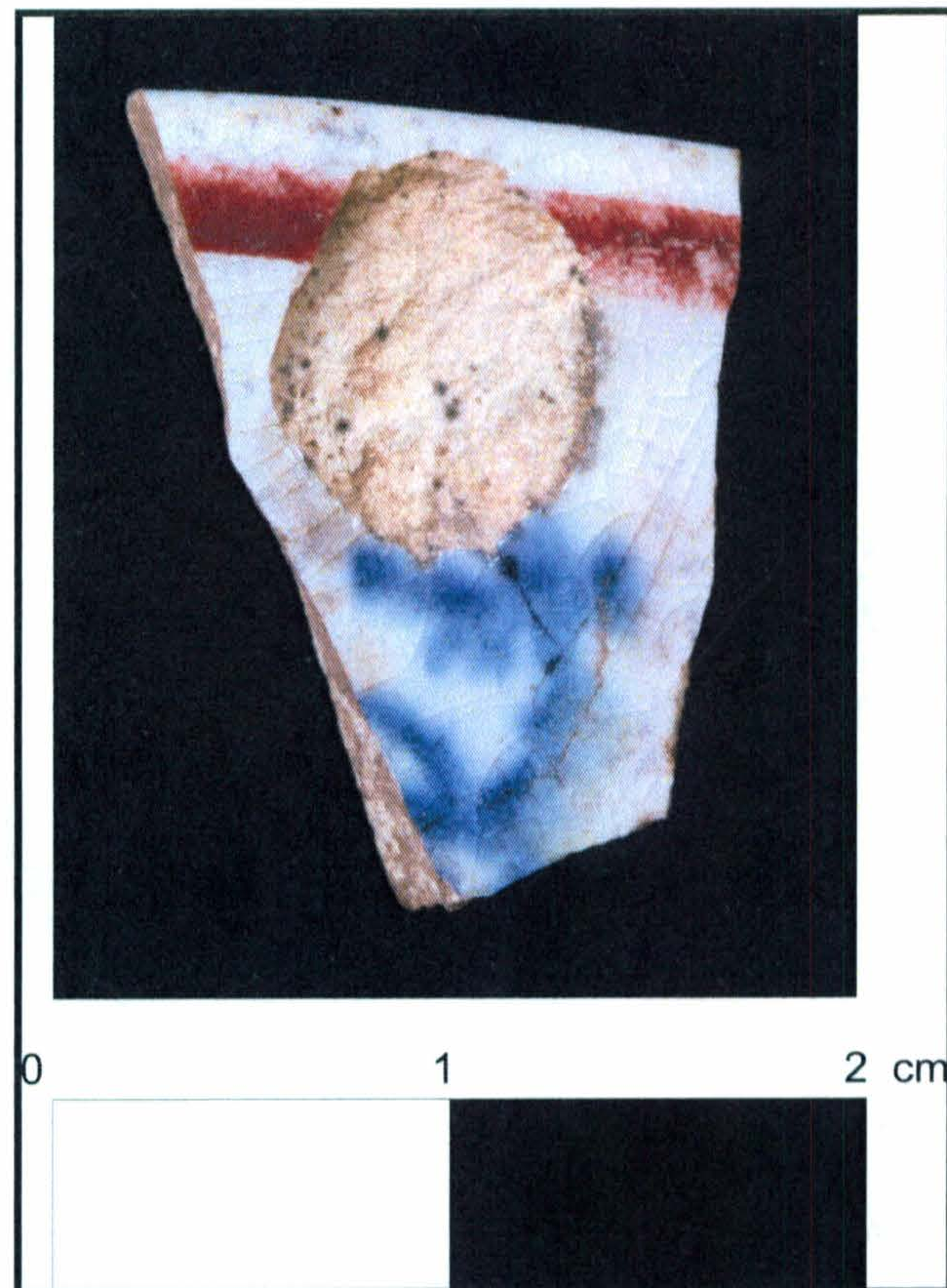
Fry 1999:377; Fennell 2007c:218, 220-223). In this way, the analysis of specific objects in specific contexts draws on both spatial and artefact analyses.

Using an Africentric interpretive approach meant, also, that spatial contextualization of artefacts or subassemblages needed to be considered in their relationship with the cardinal directions as well as their positions relative to cultural features and public or private places. Fennell (2007c) and Brown (1994) have given detailed explanations of the significance of the cardinal directions in some African belief systems that were contributors to the ethnogenesis of African diasporic forms of culture and magico-religious folk traditions. The specifics of these will be discussed with the material from the Nova Scotian sites.

### *Consumption and Taste*

Artefact data provided opportunities to examine ceramic assemblages for their decorative colours and motifs and to use these to explore consumer tastes in Black Loyalist communities and the expression of ethnocultural identity through material culture. Wilkie and Farnsworth's work in the Bahamas concludes that, in some African diasporic communities, ceramic consumption choices reflect tastes for colour palettes that resemble those of West African textiles (1999:309). Their research suggested the criteria used in this examination. The records of observations were managed in a Microsoft Excel worksheet. Each ceramic sherd was visually inspected and the decorative colour(s) was noted for the vessel to which that sherd corresponded. A frequency analysis of the colours on the ceramic objects was calculated as a percentage of objects that exhibited





**Figure 17.** Ceramic consumption: sherd recovered from BjCj-29, Rear Monastery. This sherd would result in two colour entries (red and blue) and two motif entries (annular and sponge).



that colour. A simple presence/absence determination of a colour was used to calculate these frequencies as per Wilkie and Farnsworth's methodology, without regard for the hierarchical visual prominence of a colour or its areal coverage over the object.

Additional notes were kept in a "Comments" field in the Excel worksheet table. Regarding motifs/decorative techniques, the data were tabulated (as with the colours, motif/technique presence or absence per vessel) for each site individually and then combined for regional totals. Each of these methods reflect those used by Wilkie and Farnsworth to explore consumption patterns and whether there might be a cultural historical identity reflected in these patterns that would allow distinction between African and African-descended consumers from Western European and Western European descended consumers. Their research assumed their ability to distinguish what ceramic objects might have been acquired by enslaved black consumers from those provided to them by slaveholders (1999: 298, 303, 307). As the black residents of Delap's Cove, Rear Monastery and Birchtown were all free British subjects (as were the white residents of Coote Cove) or, in some cases perhaps, fugitives from enslavement, this research assumed all consumers had full control over their consumption choices limited only by their economic circumstances and, perhaps, potentially racist retail experiences (Mullins 1999:174, 176).

### *Magico-Religious Folk Traditions*

In addition to the spatial analysis of certain objects and contexts in relation to other objects and features and to cardinal directions, the objects themselves are able to



indicate culturally distinct and significant practices. Further, purposeful deposition in such a landscape would require cognition of that landscape and the places within it. The places within such a landscape that were explored in this research project would have been suited to a type of magico-religious practice that Chris Fennell calls private and covert instrumental core symbol expression (2007c:200). The symbol and the act of its expression indicate an identity construction practice that bespeaks both the cultural heritage of an individual actor and, when consciously undertaken, an active voice in the individual's sense of identity. When unconsciously undertaken, it represents an ingrained element of one's enculturated identity that bespeaks incidental and authentic cultural connectivity (Giddens 1984:xx).

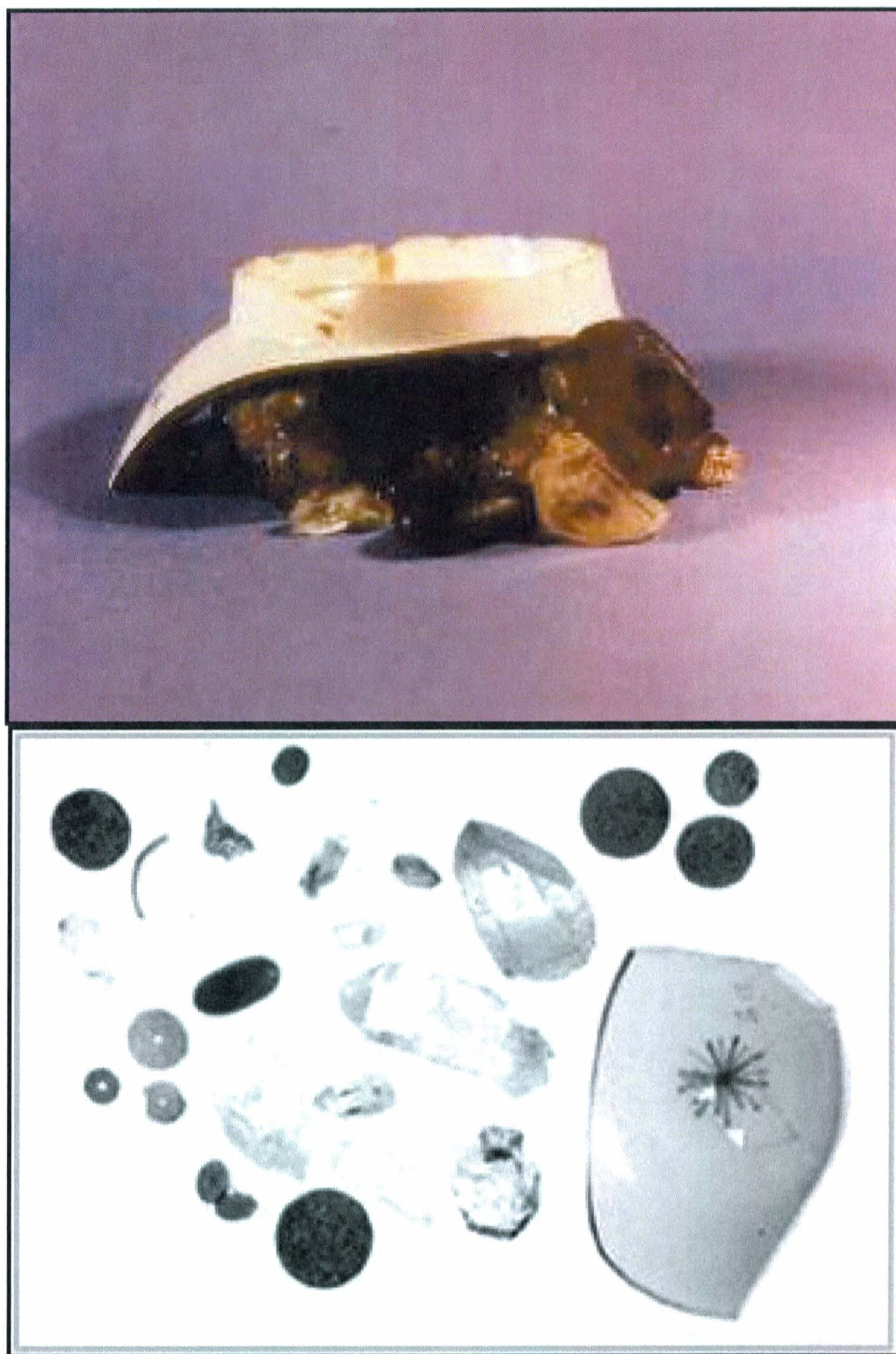
The household, as a category of space, defines a level of personal privacy that includes both areas in a house structure and outdoor areas around the property. In yard areas, which are intrinsically more public, such Africentric symbolic expressions have been called yard shows (Thompson 1998:44). Artefacts and their juxtapositions within an Africentric magico-religious landscape, such as those identified at other African diasporic sites, were considered in the identification of subassemblages, purposefully deposited artefacts and modified objects, all of which would indicate appropriation of manufactured objects. The contexts to which Africentric interpretive consideration was given in the field included northeastern corners, hearths, thresholds/approaches and yards (Fennell 2007c:199; Leone and Fry 1999:377; Thompson 1998). Additionally, the stratigraphic layers from which objects were recovered and the activity each layer represented (i.e., construction, occupation, destruction, post-abandonment accumulation)





**Figure 18.** Artefacts from Locust Grove plantation, interpreted as having Africentric magico-religious meaning. Note the object forms, the materials, their modifications (notching and incising) and their originally manufactured qualities (pierced coins, faceting to refract light, circularity). Photo courtesy of Dr. Amy Young.





**Figure 19.** An nkisi, as excavated (top) and disassembled to examine contents (bottom) recovered from the Charles Carroll House, Annapolis Maryland. Photos courtesy of Dr. Mark Leone.



were also noted. This was done to identify any temporal relationships that might indicate contemporaneity of practices or isolated instances of artefact deposition. Protective magic and spiritual practices are frequently linked with the period of a home's construction (Jones 1998:106). Archaeologists working on African American sites have discovered evidence indicating these behaviours throughout the Eastern United States that suggest ritual practice based on a combination of object forms/materials and specific contexts (Brown 1994; DiZerega-Wall 2000; Fennell 2007a, 2007c; Ferguson 1992; Franklin 1997, 2004; Leone and Fry 1999; Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1999; Sauer 1998; Young 1995, 1996).

African diasporic object modification included notching of circular objects to define quarter sections, engraving with cruciform or star/asterisk motifs, truncated utensil handles/tangs and piercing of coins and bones (Figures 17 and 18) (Fennell 2007c:199; Ferguson 1992:119; Franklin 2001, 2004). Detection of object modification was carried out through close visual inspection of all recovered artefacts. In the case of a pierced bone, expertise in faunal analysis was sought to determine if the hole was naturally worn, as at a site of weak bone, or perhaps chewed by a rodent, or culturally created using a drill or puncture tool.



## **Chapter 5 – Archaeological Summary of Sites Tested**

### The Nature of the Sites and Features

The objectives of the 2004 surveys were to identify sites in historic Black Loyalist communities, select candidate sites for excavation and create mapped data for landscape analysis. The 2005 excavation objectives were to collect artefact samples to examine ceramic tastes and to investigate specific contexts (northeastern corners and yard areas) on Black Loyalist or African diasporic archaeological sites in Atlantic Canada. Both sites on which excavation was undertaken for this research project in 2005 were domestic rural sites. Both exhibited cellar depression features that were near dirt roadways. In Delap's Cove, the road was used as a logging road and was in very poor repair, though ditch maintenance threatens potential archaeological resources related to the house feature located less than 10 metres to its south. In Rear Monastery the road is essentially abandoned, though occasionally used for recreational access to a forest constituted by a mature hardwood canopy and no understory. No threats are readily apparent at the latter site. The site at Rear Monastery (BjCj-29) appears to have been occupied during roughly the same period as the Delap's Cove site (BeDj-16).



### BjCj-29 - Rear Monastery

At Rear Monastery, five 50 x 50cm shovel tests were dug during the 2004 survey on a baseline established south of the cellar depression and projecting on a southerly course, to test for backyard sheet scatter (the road being located along the northern side of the feature and wrapping around to its west). There was a mild depression immediately west of the most southerly extent of this 5m baseline, so a 1m x 1m expansion of the southernmost shovel test unit was excavated in the hopes of identifying a larger midden. The unit yielded only further sheet scatter.

In all of these tests, sterile soil was reached within 25 to 35cm of the surface, with an uncomplicated stratigraphic sequence above. This suggested a single occupation/use of the site. The artefacts indicated a domestic occupation extending from the second quarter of the nineteenth century into the early years of the twentieth.

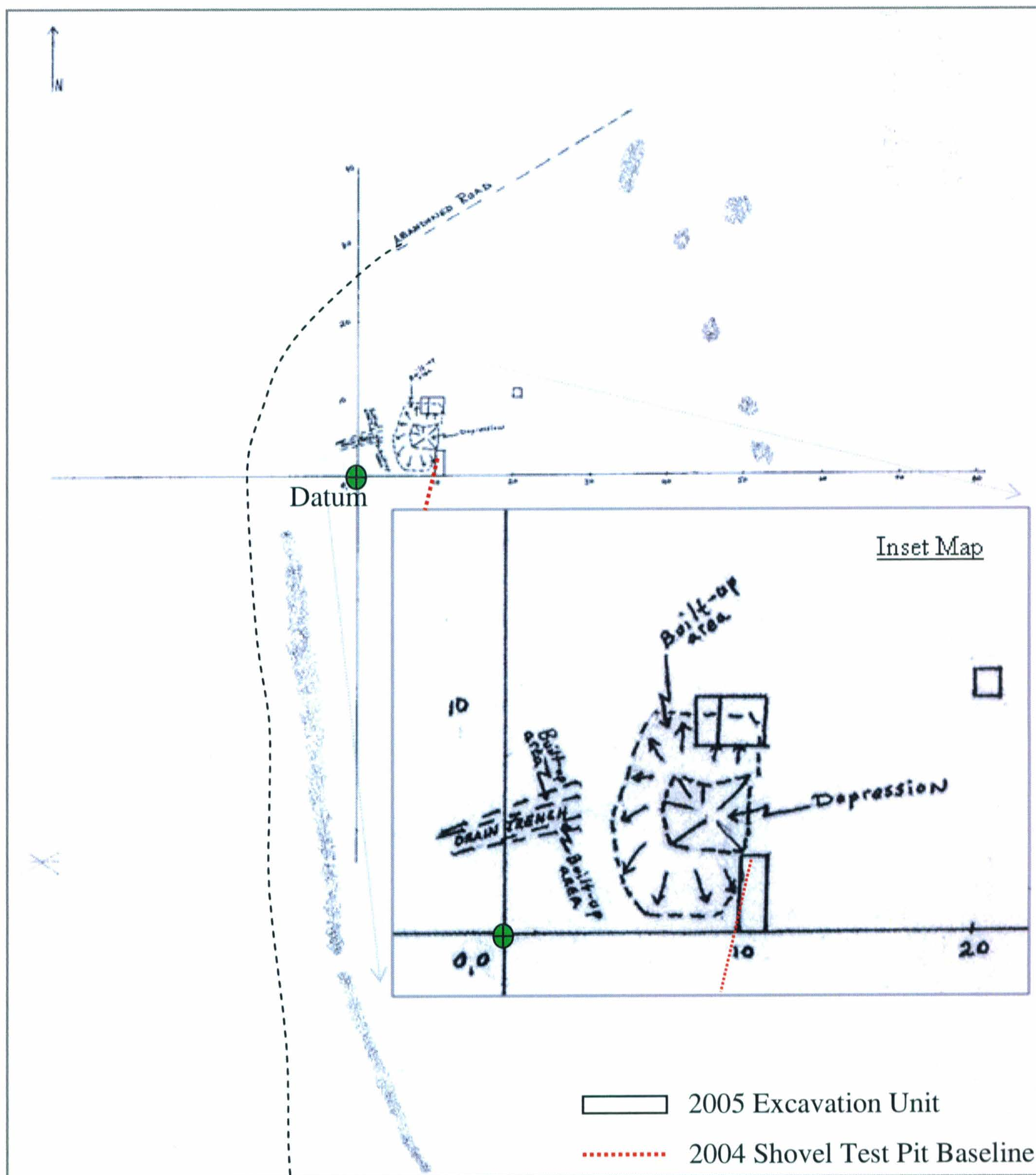
A domestic cellar feature with a drainage trench to its west, yard perimeter walls, several rock piles and a small yard midden have been identified and recorded at BjCj-29. Three units were excavated at this site in 2005: two on the house and one in the yard. Test Pit 1 extended southerly from the southeast (rear) corner of the cellar feature and corresponded roughly with the area of the previous year's shovel tests, which had yielded significant quantities of artefacts. Test Pit 2, measuring 2m x 2.5m, covered the northeastern corner of the house feature and Test Pit 3 overlaid a southern portion of the midden.





**Figure 20.** Looking west, cellar depression at Rear Monastery (BjCj-29). Edge of depression outlined in red, edge (roughly) of redeposited soil outlined in yellow.





**Figure 21.** At Rear Monastery, BjCj-29 features as understood at the close of the 2005 field season.



Test Pit 2 spanned a mounded earth area (redeposited from the cellar excavation) along the northern edge suggestive of a porch, and yielded information about a front entryway threshold as well. Test Pit 3, situated on the edge of the midden, was used to test the nature of the feature as it was not readily apparent if it was a midden, a privy or a feature of another nature. The logic was that if the feature proved to be either a midden or privy, the cultural deposit could be quite rich and, as there was only a single day, the last day of the field project in fact, to finish the unit, its intention was merely to identify the feature rather than fully explore or remove its cultural contents. As it turned out to be a shallow midden, choosing to place a small excavation unit over the edge and keeping the dimensions to a minimum proved to be prudent, as well as productive of data for analysis (Figure 36). Ceramic artefacts were produced by all 3 test pits, though those from the midden produced some of the more substantially sized pieces, suggesting an undisturbed primary midden deposit.

At Rear Monastery, the quantity of material collected from Test Pit 3 in a single day dwarfed that collected from the other two over the course of three weeks. However, Test Pits 1 and 2 provided the richest sources of material culture and contextual data used in the Africentric, magico-religious folk tradition analysis. In total, 488 artefacts were collected from Rear Monastery, including brick, flat and bottle glass, ceramic, nails, iron objects and faunal remains. Nearly half of the assemblage constituted the ceramic sample (242 artefacts), about 30% was glass (151 artefacts - primarily container glass), and approximately 20% was metallic (98 artefacts - which includes nails). Unlike the field school carried out in Delap's Cove, the Rear Monastery excavations were carried out by





**Figure 22.** BjCj-29 (Rear Monastery), looking south-southwest; 2004 shovel test baseline (left), and 2005 excavation unit (Test Pit 1) (right).





**Figure 23.** Looking southwest. Test Pit 2, located over the northeastern corner of the mounded area at the front of the house and a limited portion of the cellar depression. This unit was originally placed as a 3m x 2m unit, however, the westernmost 50cm was left unexcavated in the interests of time and lessening impact of the excavation on the site.



the author and an assistant with a total of four volunteers from the public for two days (two people each day). Excavations revealed uncomplicated stratigraphy across the areas tested with a single construction, occupation, and abandonment sequence (Figure 43 and Table 3).

#### BeDj-16 – Delap's Cove

The Delap's Cove site (BeDj-16) is also domestic and marked by the presence of a house and an outbuilding (likely a barn) situated between the house and a small, perhaps intermittent, stream to the east. The house feature exhibits a cellar depression and a chimney collapse that had at least one exterior face. The barn is marked by a large depression. Two test pits were placed at the house and three at the barn; only Test Pit 1, situated over the eastern half of the cellar depression and chimney collapse of the house feature, yielded significant quantities of analytical information. Based on the artefact data collected from the site, it appears to have been in use from the mid-nineteenth century and into the early years of the twentieth century and, as such, was likely the home of a Black Loyalist descendant as opposed to a Black Loyalist settler.

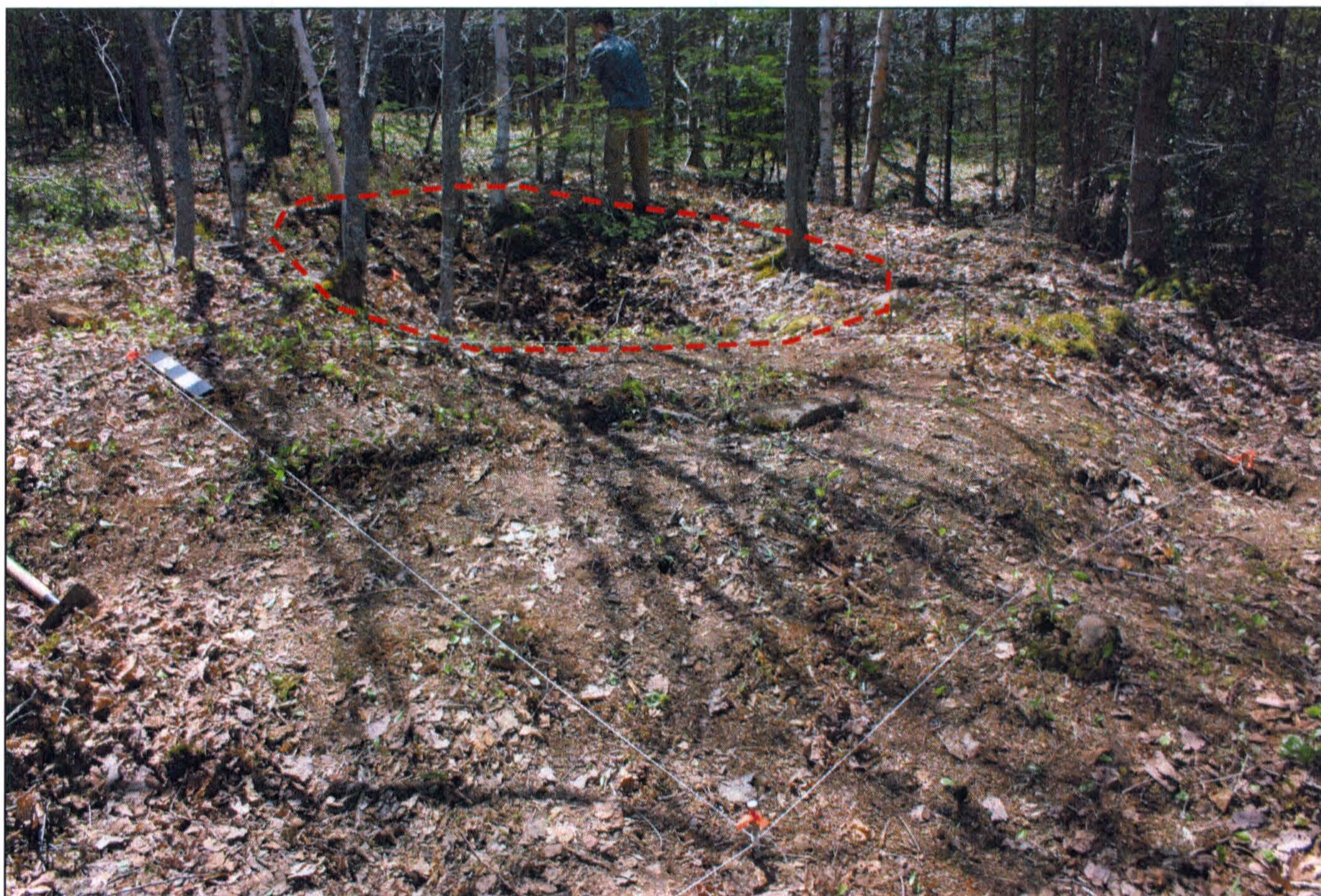
The 4m x 5m excavation unit (Test Pit 1) situated over the eastern half of the house feature at Delap's Cove included a chimney collapse, under which a brick lined hearth was discovered in situ. The hearth feature was bisected to allow recording of its full profile, since progress was slow within the context of an undergraduate field school. The additional 1m x 2m unit (Test Pit 2) placed on the western edge of the house feature





**Figure 24.** Looking west-northwest. Domestic cellar depression at black Delap's Cove (BeDj-16). Depression outlined in red, chimney collapse/hearth feature located at yellow arrow. Logging road visible in background.





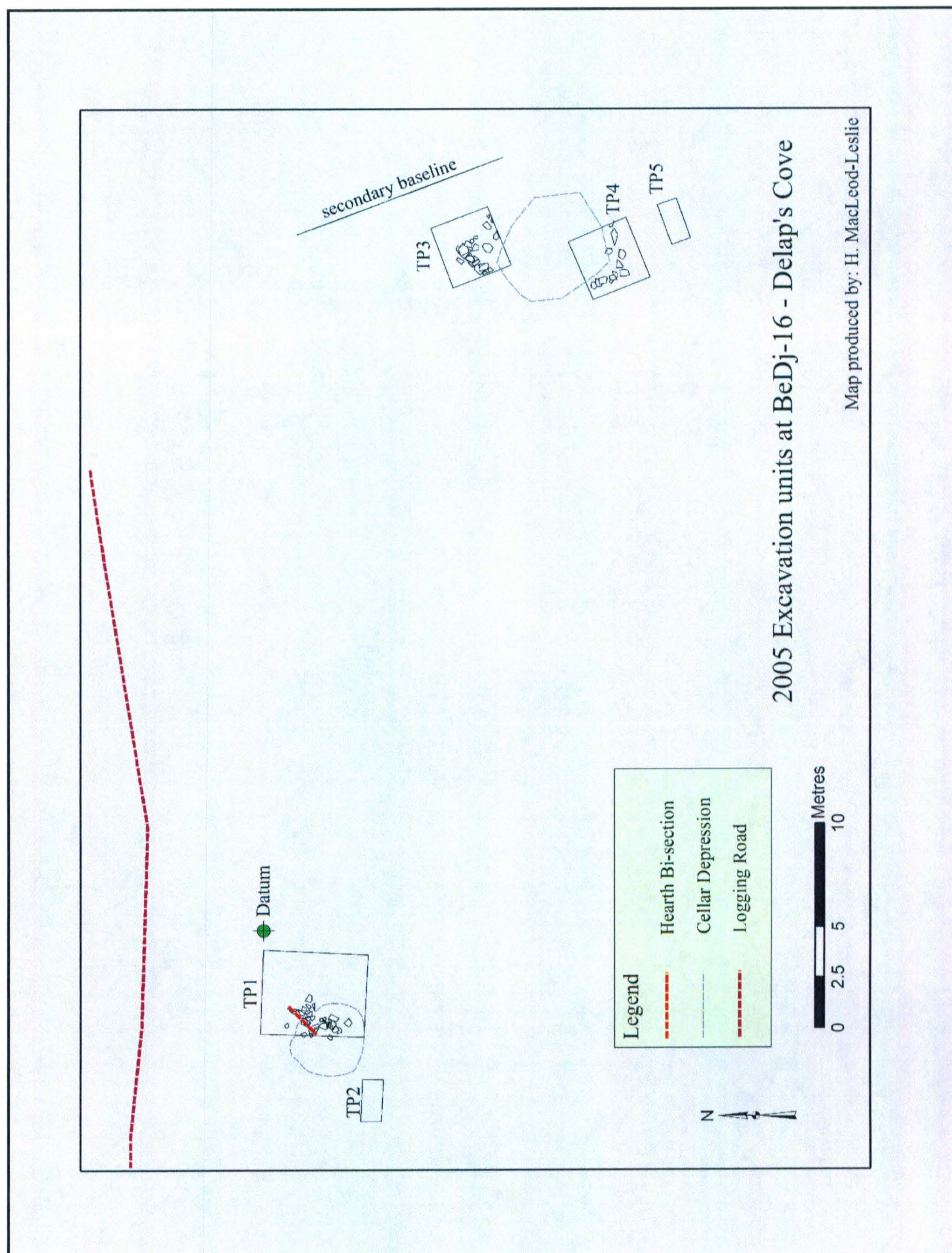
**Figure 25.** Looking southwest, outbuilding cellar depression at BeDj-16 – Delap’s Cove.  
Depression outlined in red.



was used to better understand an earthen mound/platform near the southwestern corner. At the outbuilding/barn, the two 3m x 3m units (Test Pits 3 and 4) were placed on diametrically opposing corners, northeast and southwest, and a 1m x 2m unit (Test Pit 5) was placed south of the outbuilding at what appeared to be the rear of the structure. Test Pits 3 and 4 were intended to: a) test the northeastern corner of the structure, b) balance the bias of digging northeastern corners and, c) collect artefact data for analysis. Test Pit 5 was intended to explore the exterior area around this second structure in a potentially more private area of the yard, as well as gather artefact data for analysis. The majority of ceramics was collected from Test Pit 1.

At Delap's Cove, Test Pit 1 also yielded the greatest amount of information about the house feature and overall artefact composition of the site. Beneath the chimney collapse in the northeastern corner of the excavation unit, a brick-lined hearth was exposed and bisected. Atop the brick lining lay a concentration of burned items, including a significant amount of fragmented, burned bone and copper alloy fittings from a shoe. The fireplace appears to have been constructed of fieldstone, with a flue of the same material beneath it, perhaps for air circulation and support. A small length of the eastern wall of the chimney remained *in situ*. Its construction suggested that this eastern section may have been an interior wall, unlike the northern face of the chimney which appears to have been on the exterior. Confirmation, however, requires further investigation. The southeastern portion of the unit yielded an assemblage of small





**Figure 26.** Site map of 2005 Delap's Cove excavation units. Note TPs1 and 2 are situated over the house feature, while TPs 3,4 and 5 are situated over the outbuilding (likely barn).





**Figure 27.** Hearth feature at Delap's Cove site (BeDj-16). Standing at north, looking down. Interior of the cellar feature is above the picture.





**Figure 28.** Top: looking northeast, the trench located within Test Pit 1 was used to bisect the hearth feature to record its profile. The southeastern half of the hearth, left unexcavated in this image, remains unexcavated. Bottom: looking southeast, profile of bisected feature. Note brick concentration indicating interior functioning hearth (home interior located to the right).



fragmentary artefacts that may suggest a yard scatter, but this would imply that the eastern face of the chimney was, in fact, an exterior face.

The cellar depression at BeDj-16 appears to have been lined with fieldstone, like that used in the chimney construction. The exact dimensions of the cellar were not ascertained, as only the eastern portion was excavated. The test unit was unfinished due to limited field time and the focus of efforts upon the hearth feature. Excavations revealed uncomplicated stratigraphy and a single construction, occupation and abandonment sequence. Artefacts collected included ceramics, flat and bottle glass, iron (particularly architectural materials such as nails) significant quantities of fragmentary calcined faunal remains from the hearth feature, straight pins or needles, a bone knife handle and fragments of an iron cauldron. In total, 807 artefacts were collected from BeDj-16 (40% faunal remains – 291 artefacts, 11% brick (88 artefacts), 24% metallic (194 artefacts - primarily nails), 9% glass (71 artefacts - primarily flat glass) and 9% ceramic (73 artefacts). The remaining 7% includes pipe stems, pins, floral samples and other miscellany.

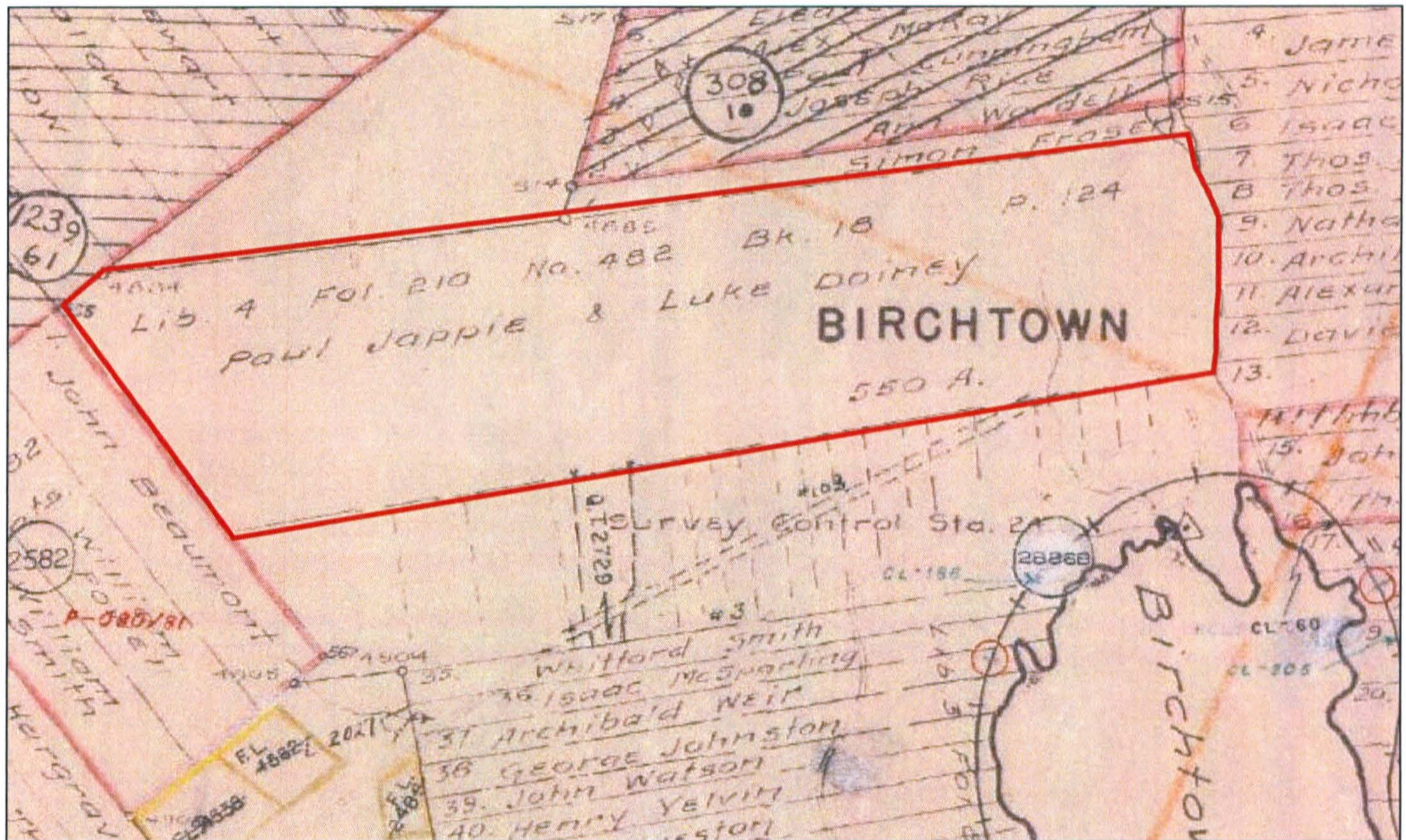


## **Chapter 6 – Cultural Landscapes and Spatial Analysis**

### African Diasporic Cultural Landscapes

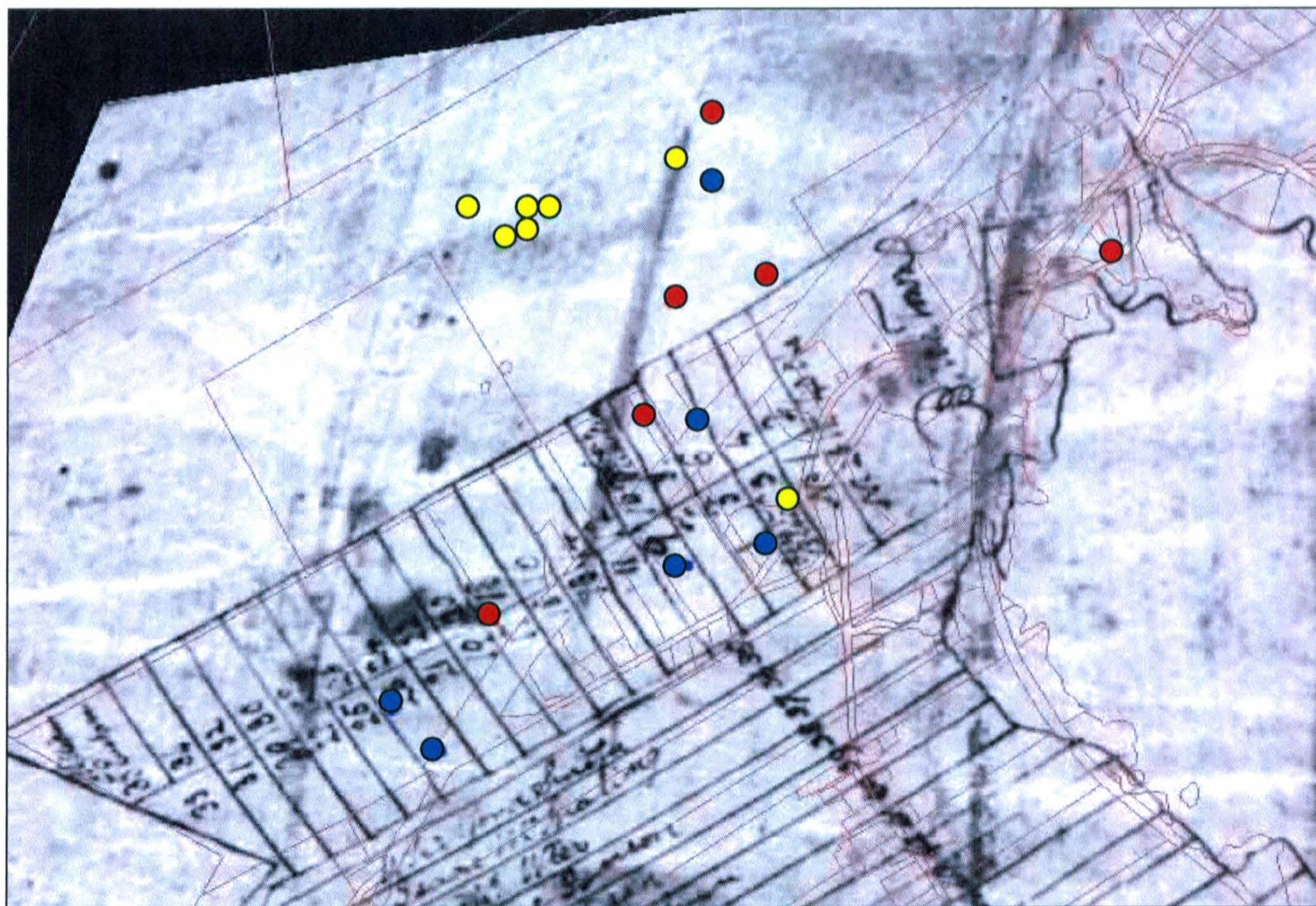
In the Americas, the lexicon of cultural landscape discourse has been heavily impacted by cultural resource management priorities. The majority of cultural landscape classification is easily applicable to either designed landscapes, such as Monticello in Virginia, or First Nations' landscapes, accommodating particularly well the religious elements of their cultural landscapes. However, it can be difficult to situate within that discourse a shorter term, sometimes purely or largely archaeological landscape as something other than a site. For African diasporic landscapes, this is in part because of the publicly acknowledged emotional quality tied to racism that helped shape the meaning of the African diasporic sense of place. It is also influenced by the rapid changes that have taken place in coping with racism in a much changed technological and economic society over the past several centuries. And, only more recently, have the shortcomings of African diasporic landscape discourse been redressed by progress beyond sites of enslavement (Brown 2010; Deetz 1996; Fennell 2010b; Funari 1999; MacLeod-Leslie 2001).





**Figure 29.** Subsection from Crown Land Grant Map, Sheet No. 18 – over Birchtown, Shelburne County. The “Jappie lot” (so referred to by local Black Loyalist descendents) is outlined in red. The small 10-acre lots immediately below it (without names in them) were the mere 36 lots surveyed out for the more than 1500 Black Loyalist settlers at Birchtown. Since there were not enough lots to accommodate all of the Black Loyalist settlers, many squatted on the lot granted to Paul Jappie and Luke Doiney because those men were absentee grantees. The Black Loyalists’ settlement pattern within the Jappie lot was largely unfettered by colonial structural principles and, so, the pattern of homes and trails reflects the African diasporic choices of the settlers on the platform of the natural landscape at Birchtown.





**Figure 30.** Archaeological sites recorded at Birchtown overlaid on the georeferenced Goulden Map. Note the different pattern of distribution between those located on the surveyed Birchtown town lots and the cluster of sites above on the “Jappie lot”. Red dots indicate sites related to early Black Loyalist settlement, blue to nineteenth century settlement and yellow of indeterminate age due to yet insufficient research on the site. Red lines indicate modern boundaries of forest edges and property boundaries. Vector line data courtesy of Service Nova Scotia, Geomatics Centre.



As a resource to be managed, cultural landscapes associated with African diasporic communities such as black Delap's Cove or the squatters' settlement at Birchtown on the Jappie Lot (Figure 28), reflect vernacular patterns. These are derived from other places, such as colonial places of enslavement and refuge from it, and Africa, superimposed onto a new local, natural tableau. Though often treated as historic sites when political boundaries are applicable, such as cadastral units, such designation does not adequately recognize the longterm cultural significance of a place, but more a moment in time.

Alternatively, African diasporic landscapes might be seen as evolved (*relict*, in the case of archaeological) landscapes with associative significance, albeit with a more abbreviated nascence than is usually considered for such landscapes (Mitchell and Bugey 2000:37-38; UNESCO 2008). Indeed, it can be difficult to reconcile the softer outer boundaries of natural features with their position in a historically managed context. I suggest that this problem is also part of what challenges some First Nations' claims processes when attempting to reconcile, to the satisfaction of arbiters, the implied continuous use and occupancy over thousands of years associated with the notion of traditional uses and a couple of centuries of centralization.

Chan suggests the term "inadvertent landscape" is applicable to the black experience of landscape, whether that be designed, natural or consequential (2007:252). This terminology is usefully applied to the material culture deposits associated with spatialized behaviour, but it lacks flexibility in its full application to cognition of cultural



meanings applied to natural landscape features. "Inadvertent landscape" is most useful when taken as an experience of a landscape, but is unsuccessful in encapsulating the idea of an African diasporic community's cultural landscape, particularly a community of free people, because it prioritizes the explanation of the landscape according to a non-African diasporic ideology first and then the African diasporic one secondarily. This can also imply a lack of African diasporic agency and practice in the definition of the landscape. While this would be the case with a natural tableau that simply is, in that instance there is no sociopolitically prescribed motive for its shape. This would contrast with the tableau of a designed or built landscape defined with architectural features and purposeful manipulation of visibility, landforms or vegetation for reasons of social power, or a historically evolved one (Delle 1998, 2007; King 1997; Wilson 1988). The critical element that Chan's term has difficulty accounting for is a more flexible degree of African diasporic agency in defining the cultural landscape in which the sense of place is cognized by the African diasporic experience; in short, inadvertent landscape is a racialized term most useful in multicultural contexts, but not at the level of a free, black community. At places like black Delap's Cove, the 70-plus Black Loyalist households settled within the Brownspriggs grant at Tracadie and Rear Monastery, or the squatters settled on the Jappie lot at Birchtown, African diasporic ideas of spatial structuring and *use of natural landscape features* in that spatial structuring were able to predominate on a broad, community-wide scale. Indeed, the places that constituted these communities and neighbourhoods seem to best represent African diasporic imaginaries – something much less accessible in African Diasporic landscapes woven into other community types and,



further, perhaps even done a disservice by an interpretive approach rooted in the idea of inadvertent landscapes (Whitridge 2004:216).

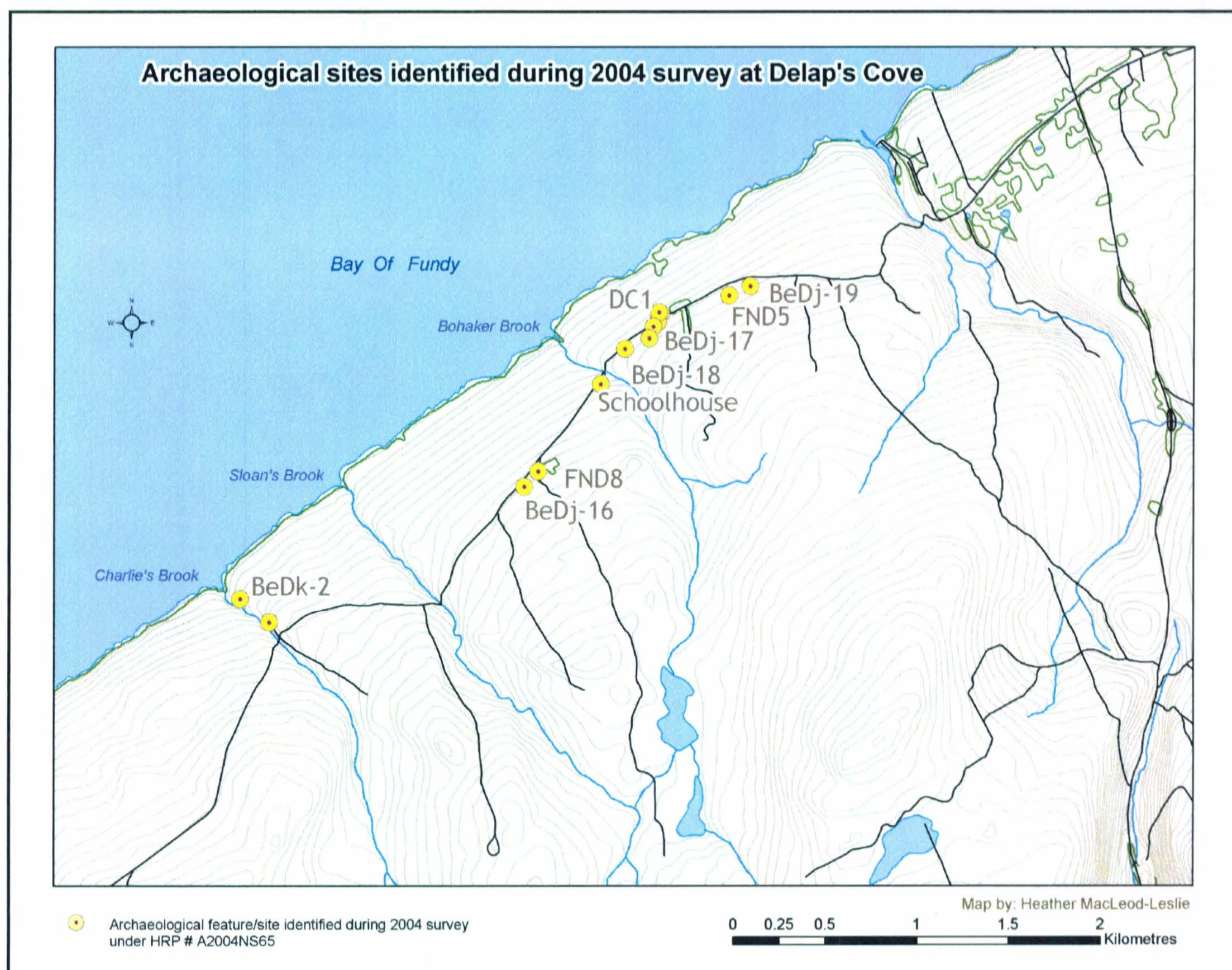
### Cultural Landscape at Delap's Cove

Site distribution at Delap's Cove exhibits several notable features when considered in conjunction with the natural landscape. This is part of what elucidates the African diasporic cultural landscape. A further piece of the puzzle emerges by adopting an Africentric approach to interpreting these conjunctions. First, I will present the site distribution pattern and then discuss the potential Africentric cultural relationship with the landscape features.

Each site located and mapped in the course of fieldwork for this research is represented either by a drylaid stone cellar or a stone footing feature. All of the rocks appear to be local and, in some instances, are dressed. The cellar features range in depth from approximately 1 to 2m. The dirt road through black Delap's Cove, along which most of the sites are located, is regularly bordered by low, dry stone walls, marking the front edges of former homesteads.

The majority of sites identified in the course of the fieldwork for this research are located closer to the road than the shoreline. There may be additional, yet undetected sites further toward the mountain ridge, but the area between the road and shore, from DC1 to BeDj-16, was surveyed as was the area between Sloan's Brook and Charlie's Brook. It is expected that sites exist near the mouth of Delap's Cove, on the edge of the





**Figure 31.** Site distribution across black Delap's Cove, according to 2004 survey.





**Figure 32.** An example of the low dry stone walls that border homesteads along the main road through black Delap's Cove.



ravine to where black fishermen were said to have hauled their catches for processing, but there is an absence of sites southwest of this area along and near the shore. This suggests, then, that the sites identified in the research constitute a useful representative sample of site locations.

Based on the sites identified, there appears to be a preference for locating homes away from the shoreline which, in this area, does not appear to have changed significantly in the last 150 years. The shore is generally either high or scoured bedrock with few good landing spaces interspersed; most of the shore may have been considered inconvenient and inaccessible.

It is unclear whether the road that links the homes of black Delap's Cove was created as a result of the presence of these homes or began as a previously existing path. If the latter, then it would make sense to locate one's home near to an existing land-based transportation corridor. Indeed, if it was in existence when African diasporic individuals came to settle here, it would likely have been a pathway, perhaps established by Mi'kmaq through whom the knowledge of the path would have been transmitted to black settlers. The common heritage of African diasporic and Mi'kmaq populations, though poorly understood, appears extensive and significant at Delap's Cove, at least in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (V. Giles 2011 pers. comm.).

If, however, the former is the case, that the road development succeeded the settlement, then the site selection for homes suggests a desire to be distant from the shore,



unlike the rest of (white) Delap's Cove, and further northeast along the Fundy shore. It also would indicate that the homes are clustered in a linear way, roughly parallel between the shore and the mountain's ridge. If residents of black Delap's Cove sought to settle their homes further from the shore, one must ask, "Why?"

It may have been that the early settlers of black Delap's Cove, like their African diasporic brethren in Shelburne and Birchtown, feared (re)capture by seafarers who would sell them into slavery elsewhere. This was not an unfounded concern, as it had, indeed, happened in many places, including Shelburne Harbour in the early years of its settlement by the Loyalists (King 1798; Rommel-Ruiz 2008:2-5; Whitehead and Robertson 2003). Waterways were the superhighways of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The desire to remain outside the purview of the hegemonic, white Eurocolonial society continued throughout the nineteenth century in Nova Scotia, eventually leading to the development of "African" Christian churches and racially defined organizations (Whitfield 2006: 93, 99).

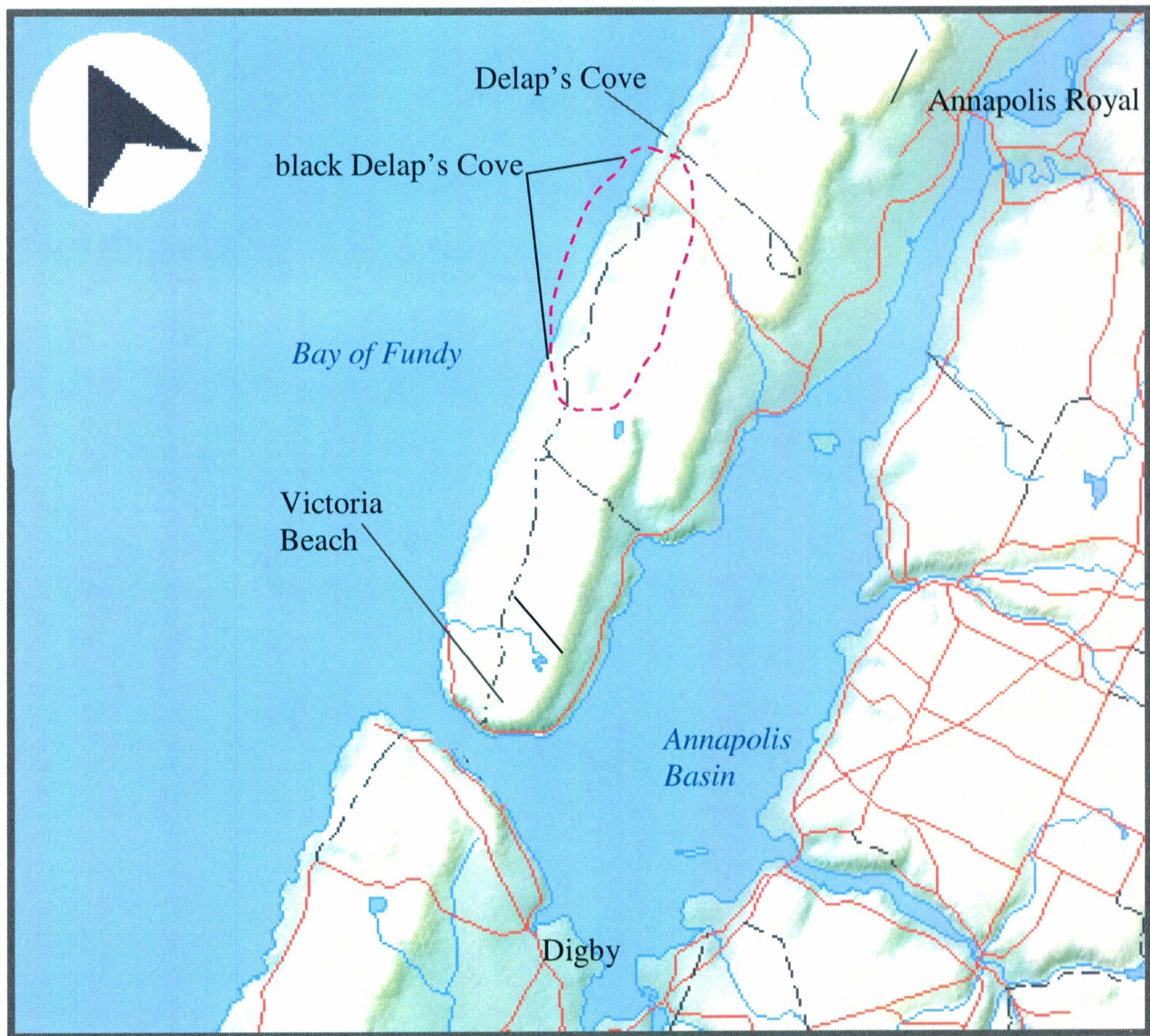
The answer to the question of why settlement occurred distant from the shore may be related to the nature of the shoreline edge of black Delap's Cove and the type of threshold that the shoreline represents. If the settlement away from the shore represents a choice based on fear of (re)capture into slavery, then the rough, largely unlandable shoreline (except for small craft such as canoes or dories) was an asset that would have provided a sense of privacy and protection for the community. This shoreline threshold would have been a liminal zone whereby community members would have cognitively



transitioned from a protected interior to an unprotected exterior. Detection by outsiders aboard ships could have jeopardized others in the community as well as the individual who passed through the liminal zone. This interpretation would garner further support if the road that connects the homesteads developed as a result of the presence of the homesteads, thereby focusing the establishment of the community's shape on a desire to be away from the shore and largely invisible to waterborne passers-by.

A steep ravine marks the beginning of the modern road into black Delap's Cove from the white settlement at the cove itself. The background history section of this study notes that a hanging bridge is said to have once spanned this formidable landscape feature into the twentieth century. To walk into and up out of the ravine would have been an arduous task requiring one's hands to be free for balance. This would mean that transported items, children, tools and even livestock were not easily moved across this feature without a bridge. It is unclear when the reported bridge was constructed and its existence remains unconfirmed. This ravine, therefore, likely proved a prohibitive feature prior to construction of the reported hanging bridge, discouraging spatial interaction between early residents of black Delap's Cove and white Delap's Cove. The black fishermen who fished from Delap's Cove drew baskets of fish up to the stage atop the southwestern ravine wall from their boats moored below in the cove (Informant 3 2004 pers. comm.). However, while the black and white fishermen would clearly have been aware of each others' presence under such circumstances, and undoubtedly interacted while navigating into and out of the cove, their settlement infrastructure was





**Figure 33.** Map of Annapolis Basin and region, 1:200 000. Courtesy of Natural Resources Canada, 2008



separate and there was little reason for them to interact commercially or socially. Indeed, the ravine feature would have discouraged close contact between the two halves of the Delap's Cove community except for the contact between fisherfolk at work. Without a hanging bridge, the ravine caused the two halves to be rather separate communities, but at least defined a threshold which afforded residents of black Delap's Cove a measure of privacy from outsiders.

It is unclear when the residents of black Delap's Cove built their fishing stage and dock; this remains a question for future, perhaps archaeological, investigation. It also raises the question of whether the opportunity to fish out of Delap's Cove was part of the initial reason for black settlement at Delap's Cove or a later development in the community's structure. What is clear is that fishing from the western (black) side of the cove would have been much more difficult than fishing from the eastern (white) side and it reflects a zone where black priority or choice likely did not predominate. This resulted from one of a number of possibilities. Perhaps the black settlers arrived to the cove later or opted to remain hidden in the forests and uplands of their community, away from the fishery at the cove. This problem requires further investigation.

A derelict road leads from the eastern end of the black Delap's Cove settlement, from approximately .5 - .75km west of the ravine toward the crest of the North Mountain, intersecting the Delap's Cove road. It would have been a primary route used to travel down into the Valley, toward Annapolis Royal from black Delap's Cove. This served to keep black Delap's Cove and white Delap's Cove isolated from one another in casual



daily movements away from the communities and near the more cosmopolitan Valley and its hub at Annapolis Royal.

The road over the mountain also meant that black Delap's Cove's socio-spatial connection with the Annapolis Valley was mediated by the formidable crest of the mountain, as was white Delap's Cove. However, a distinction can be made in the relationships that white and black Delap's Cove would have had with settlement in the Valley because of the presence of formally developed roadways to each settlement. The road to white Delap's Cove resulted from a petition and was an arterial route between the Valley and the Fundy shore. The roadway branching off of it, to black Delap's Cove, was a small, vernacular cart road now overgrown. Since this road branches off of the main Delap's Cove road, it appears to have been established after the road leading to the white community. This indicates either a later development of the black community or a desire to maintain secrecy of access to the community by not establishing clear roads or paths. Thus, a clearer path may have been established later, once the community members felt safer being acknowledged by outsiders.

Like the ravine, the mountain ridge would have functioned not only as a physical and visual barrier, but as a social boundary as well, and moreso for black Delap's Cove than for white Delap's Cove because of the inaccessibility by road. The location of black Delap's Cove is not a convenient one. This may explain why significant development of these backlands of the early landgrants, which straddled the mountain from the valley floor, were not generally developed by the grantees. The mountain ridge obscures this



area from easy detection from the Annapolis Valley. Indeed, without an obvious road, and as it lays protected in the forested backslope of the mountain, black Delap's Cove would have been effectively invisible. This is reminiscent of the poorly accessible landscapes sought out as fugitive or maroon settlement locations in the slave societies to the south, such as those in the Great Dismal Swamp in northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia, the mountain settlement of the Jamaican Maroons, and Palmares, Brazil where a significant network of maroon settlements was established in the inhospitable mountains of the interior (Cowan 1998; Lockley 2007; Smulewicz-Zucker 2009). Like black Delap's Cove, many maroon settlements were also close enough to white communities to maintain access for residents of the former to resources available in the latter (Cowan 1998:196). In fact, residents of maroon communities so situated came to Canada, thereby bringing this pattern of spatial cognition with them (Redpath 1859:291, 292).

To the west-southwest of black Delap's Cove, beyond BeDk-2, the Bay of Fundy side of the North Mountain has been, and remains, unpopulated. There is no indication that this area was, historically, home to any colonial or historic settlers. Today, it is forested and has a few hunting camps along the woods road and a great deal of commercial and private logging activity. For all intents and purposes, it was a natural buffer zone between the edge of black Delap's Cove and the mouth of the Annapolis Basin at Victoria Beach, a busy seaward thoroughfare from Digby and Annapolis Royal.



Settlement away from shore was not likely a choice made due to fear, but the inaccessible shore may have proved to be an advantageous boundary for a vulnerable population. If there had been a great deal of abject fear, there could not have been common workspace at the cove. The positioning of the black population behind the ravine and along the inaccessible Fundy shore was more likely the result of the lack of first choice options available to blacks in Nova Scotia at that time. No doubt, if unpopulated, a better cove and more accessible shoreline would have been chosen as long as their socially and visually protective characters were equal. However, inadvertently, the detractive landscape elements (according to Eurocentric notions of landscape) also constituted assets in the community's landscape definition. As with maroon communities established in swamps, the location of Delap's Cove across the ravine and along a less accessible shoreline was not optimal, but if it was the best or only option available, then it was wisest to use the detractive features as assets. The communities' touch point at the cove meant that the short side of black Delap's Cove was visible, leaving the majority of the black community unknown to outsiders unless they entered it.

The most telling natural feature of the cultural landscape of black Delap's Cove is the mountain crest. The spatial relationship of it with the community of black Delap's Cove ensured invisibility from the settlements within the Valley. Annapolis Royal and the surrounding settlements were heavily impacted by colonial regulation in everyday life. Unless someone was intending to go to black Delap's Cove or simply happened upon the community without prior knowledge of its existence, there was little likelihood of outsiders visiting or passing through it. The mountain crest was, perhaps, the most



critical natural spatial element in the definition of this cultural landscape, much like the community in author Raymond Parker's, *Beyond the Dark Horizon*. Interestingly, Mr. Parker hails from Parker's Cove, just three coves north of Delap's Cove

Other black communities in the Annapolis Valley in the vicinity of Annapolis Royal and nearby Digby offered cohesive, recognized and accessible black communities on the fertile sediments of the valley floor: Lequille, Inglewood, Jordantown and Acaciaville, for example. Many Black Loyalists and later freed people who had been enslaved in Nova Scotia and elsewhere did settle in these communities and in more heterogenous communities, such as the larger towns. If African diasporic people were able to settle in places closer to socioeconomic infrastructure, such as stores or places of employment, why would anyone chose to live in inaccessible, rugged, end of the road black Delap's Cove?

Distantly surrounded by settlement, black Delap's Cove was successfully insulated from outsider scrutiny and incursive thoroughfare. It was buffered to its northeast and south by formidable landscape features and its to west by an unpopulated expanse. Settlement back from the water (where nighttime house lights would not likely be visible to passing traffic), may have afforded a sense of privacy from traffic to or from St. John and other neighbouring ports. Black Delap's Cove represents an ideal location for African diasporic people in the age of slavery and later, largely unfettered, racial oppression. Black Loyalists and other African diasporic settlers in Nova Scotia constituted a unique cultural group here seeking physical and intellectual privacy and



freedom from the imposition of others' wills. While they certainly kept company with other socioeconomically oppressed and marginalized groups, such as Irish or Acadian people, their visage put them in a nearly unparalleled circumstance. Only the Mi'kmaq would have known a comparable level of treatment to that suffered by blacks, and they were forced to live on reservations. It is, therefore, not surprising that African Nova Scotian people and communities have so much in common with Mi'kmaq people and communities, in historical experience, modern challenges and genealogy, not to mention postal address. Perhaps the Mi'kmaq drew the area of black Delap's Cove to the attention of African diasporic people who, by interest or need, sought a private, out of the way spot to settle. Certainly, some of the later Delap's Cove history and genealogy suggests that the relationship between African diasporic and Mi'kmaq people was close (Giles 2011 pers. comm.; Madden 2009).

Regardless of how African diasporic people came to know of or choose to live in black Delap's Cove, it was their choice to settle there. This is important, not only because of the demonstration of agency, but also because of the cultural history of the African diasporic settlers (Lefebvre 1997:46). Violence was an enormous part of everyday life and family history for every African diasporic individual in the Americas. Whether they themselves had been captured into slavery, were born into it, or were born free but lived in a slave society, violence toward them affected their lives every day. The opportunity to live in a segregated community without, or with a lesser, daily threat of racially motivated violence demonstrates the symbolic violent geography that surrounded the segregated community (Byrd 1929; Cowan 1998:201; Weems n.d.). The choice to



live in a hinterland, indeed the identification of a hinterland, invisible or less visible from surrounding communities, exemplifies that symbolic violent geography (Braxton 1998:178; Orser 2006:29, 30). However, from an emic perspective, black Delap's Cove, like the Great Dismal Swamp, was a protected private place wherein the landscape offered a sense of freedom absent elsewhere, as well as opportunities to more safely enter the outsiders' landscapes when necessary via protected, semi-private, non-Eurocolonial routes of transportation.

Black Delap's Cove likely emerged from a squatter community, since licences of occupation and deeds were sought by black residents for lands that seemed to have already been improved by them. This resulted in a largely vernacular settlement pattern; its spatial arrangement of houses and homesteads is one of African diasporic choice. As a protected landscape, it was a perfect destination for people escaping racism and, perhaps, slavery. We know that further along the North Mountain, African diasporic people initiated many land transactions throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> The best place to hide from slave catchers or racial violence would have been a black community and fleeing to African Nova Scotian communities was not uncommon (C. Marsman 2005 pers. comm.; D. States 2008 pers. comm.; Walker 1992:49). Black Delap's Cove offers both positive and negative messages simultaneously about Nova Scotia's African

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<sup>24</sup> D. Lawrence's *Blue Binder* (n.d.) at the O'Dell House Museum in Annapolis Royal includes a section "Deeds Involving Blacks" that covers much of the area around Annapolis Royal.



diasporic past. On the one hand, this black enclave shows the will of its residents to eke out lives from the land and sea, to build homes and a cohesive community despite the pressures of the economically dominant, white society occupying much of the surrounding landscapes. Correspondingly, their settlement here reflects ugliness in Nova Scotia's past, as blacks waited longer for poorer land grants or licences of occupation and were inclined to leave the racist systems of life and law in broader Nova Scotian society to take their chances in the colonial hinterland.

The site excavated in black Delap's Cove, BeDj-16, may have been home to A. Morton (or Morten), whom the 1881 census of Broad Cove suggests was "English" (as opposed to African), as was his wife, Miria (entry 191). In 1881 they were 77 and 70 years old respectively. All of their neighbours were noted as "African", including Joseph Sims, though his wife was noted as "English". It is possible that the Mortons were white, but it is equally possible, in the racist climate of rural nineteenth-century Nova Scotia, that these people were a biracial couple or light complected people who sought to pass as white, as many aspects of life would have been made easier by doing so. The 1901 census for Annapolis County notes John Peters (record 79) as black and African, his son Freeman as black and African, but John's wife, Mathilda (presumably Freeman's mother) as black and French. Similarly, their granddaughter, Eva May, is noted as black and English, but their grandson is noted as black and African. The point is that the mixed genetic lineages of many people, which included African, European and First Nations parentage, resulted in a variety of phenotypic expressions. These could vary greatly even within a single family. How individuals were recorded in censuses during times of



rampant and socially condoned racism might not accurately reflect their genetic heritage or sense of ethnocultural identity as much as it would reflect an exterior judgement of one's social membership. There might be good reasons for not wanting to be identified as African (or Mi'kmaw) if one did not have to be.

If the Mortons were, in fact, white, the question remains as to why these elderly people were living in an isolated landscape, away from the nearby conveniences of Annapolis Royal and the Valley, in a black community. Many "African" households are enumerated in the 1881 census in the area of the Mortens, such as Francises, and Scanks', but there is only a single instance of each of these latter surnames recorded on the Ambrose Church map (1876). More than one household for each is recorded in the census data and they were most definitely homes of African diasporic people. Because of the inconsistencies between the historical documents, a variety of scenarios become possible which serve to hamper confident identification of archaeological sites with individual residents. Rather, one is left to decipher the community as a whole from its constituent parts. While it is not certain that BeDj-16 was the Mortons' home given the social and cultural landscapes at black Delap's Cove and the surrounding communities, I believe the Mortons to have had familial ties with the black Delap's Cove community regardless of which cellar feature identified in the 2004 survey might be what is left of their home. The people whose home was at BeDj-16 lived in black Delap's Cove, and their community membership, sense of cultural identity and sense of place would have been that of residents of black Delap's Cove.



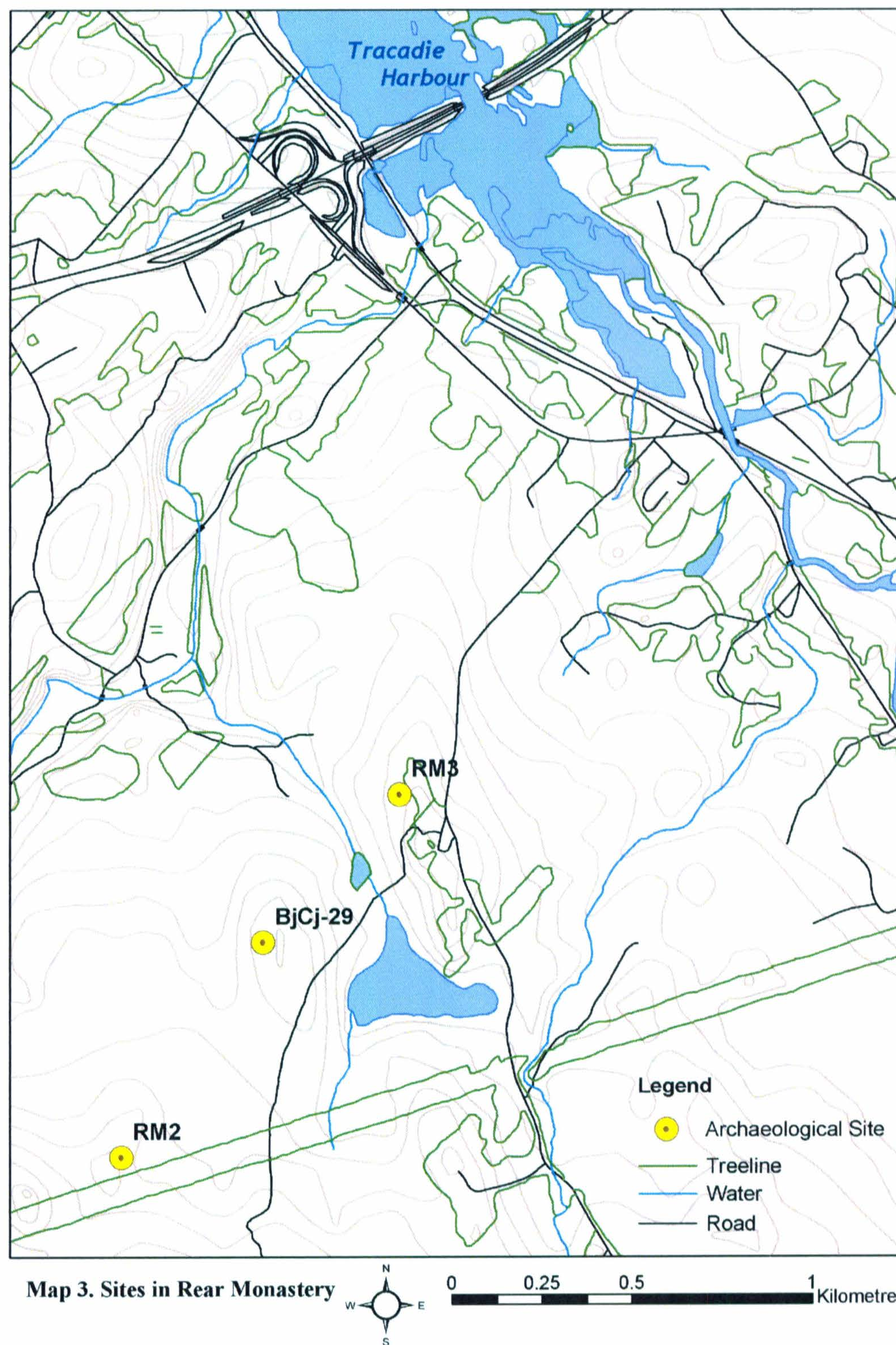
The lessons that black Delap's Cove's cultural landscape offers future researchers are many. It suggests one ought to look to the historical edges of intensively settled areas to find past black communities. Also, the use of natural landscape features in the cultural landscape is evident as they have not only impacted the settlement pattern here, but have been incorporated into it as a series of boundaries that define the place. These boundaries are not politically determined or recorded, but, rather, are cognized thresholds in the cultural landscapes of black Delap's Cove and its neighbouring communities, defining and supporting the sense of place or imaginary (Henderson 1998:114; Whitridge 204:214, 24). Finally, the settlement of black Delap's Cove shows the will of African Nova Scotian settlers to establish themselves, despite the lack of support from government infrastructure. Black Delap's Cove was a place that epitomized African diasporic determination and resistance to racism and slavery through its landscape.

#### Cultural Landscape at Rear Monastery

The primary spatial analysis conducted at Rear Monastery was at the household level and therefore differed in scale from that facilitated by the Delap's Cove data. However, consideration of the site distribution patterning at regional and community scales for Rear Monastery did highlight two fundamental realities faced by African Nova Scotian communities in the past, the consequences of which continue to pose challenges for modern communities. The first, is that when official African diasporic communities were originally settled near desirable socioeconomic resources, such as harbours and urban centres, they were pushed back away from these assets over time, through the



Archaeological Sites identified during 2004 survey at Rear Monastery



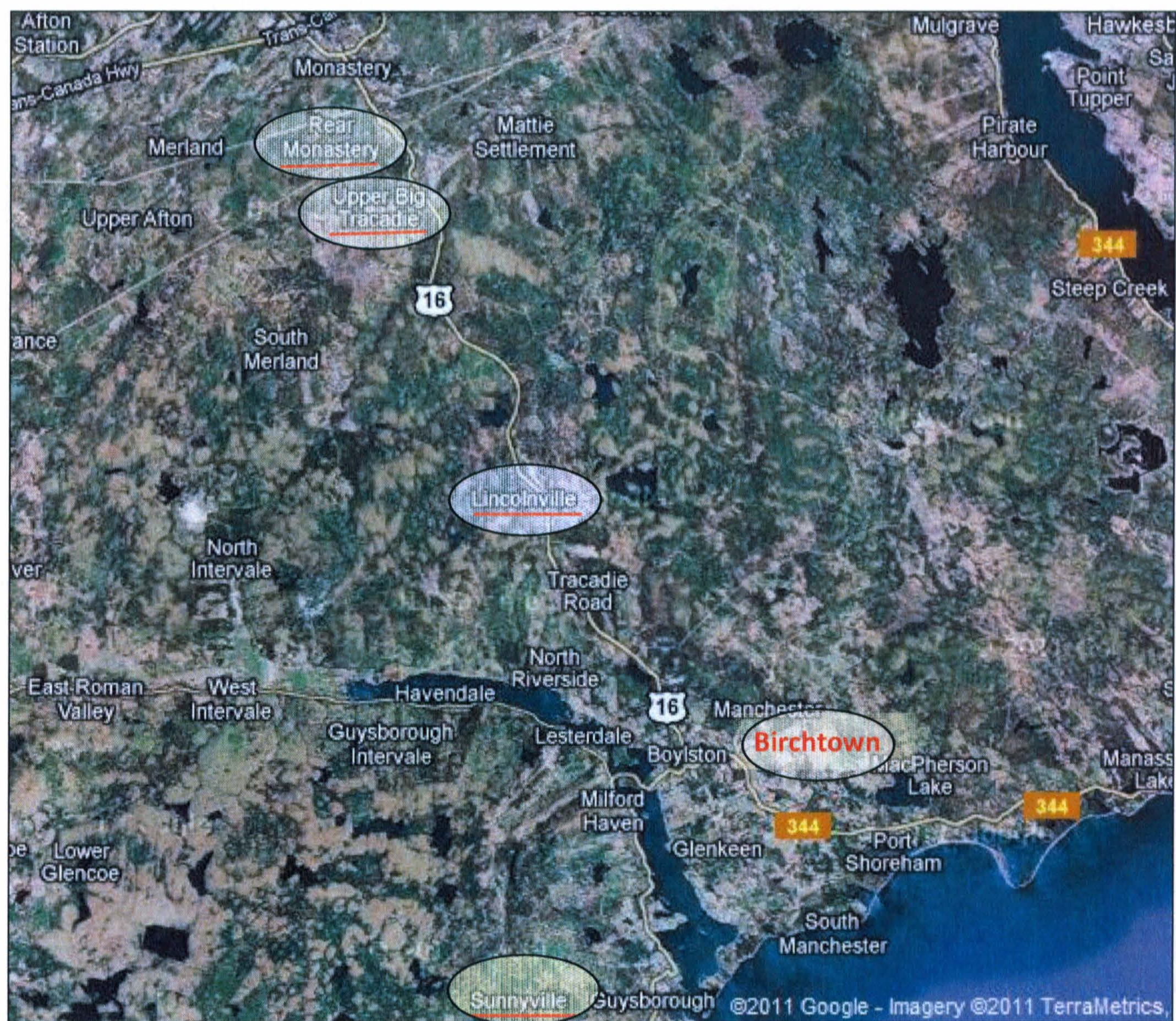
**Figure 34.** Distribution of sites identified at Rear Monastery during 2004 survey. Blue lines in Tracadie Harbour represent low tide line.



manipulation of land transactions (Walker 1992: 23-28; Whitfield 2006:53,54). Crumley and Marquardt discuss this phenomenon in terms of key (and therefore, contested) resources that create structural tensions and eventual resolutions (Crumley and Marquardt 1990). In Nova Scotia, the resolutions regularly resulted in black dislocation and local migration due to the socioeconomic powerlessness, generally, of African diasporic communities. This was especially true in the post-Revolutionary world of slavery and heightened contest for land in the British Empire, thus continuing the motion that characterizes African diasporic cultural histories (New York Public Library n.d.). At Brindley Town (now Conway), the Black Loyalist settlers were ultimately shifted back from the water and proximity to Digby, most ending up at Jordantown, Acaciaville and Marshalltown. At Rear Monastery, the lion's share of the L-shaped Brownsprigg's grant was re-granted to Acadian settlers (Figure 2 and Figure 10) (Walker 1992:28). The primary area occupied by Acadians focused on Tracadie Harbour and the rich and fertile lands of the saltmarsh and estuary. While the Black Loyalist settlers chose to establish their homes closer to kin at the end of a linear arrangement of neighbouring black communities, no doubt access to the harbour, the aquatic resources and the rich estuary were valuable assets felt lost by them to the (white) Acadian settlers.

The second reality faced by African Nova Scotian communities of the past, is that, as racism continued to impact daily life and land transactions, many African diasporic communities contracted toward a centre (albeit one that may have had to shift inland). Contraction was caused, largely, by the depopulation that plagued most of Nova Scotia's rural communities in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.





**Figure 35.** The continuum of Black Loyalist settlement and that of their descendents along Highway 16. Communities/areas of significance noted with red highlights.



Contractive movement was further fostered by the pressures of racism from outside of the black communities, thus requiring geographic solidarity for both defensive and offensive sociopolitical positioning. For the black community of Rear Monastery, which is connected with Upper Big Tracadie, Lincolnville, Birchtown (Guysborough County) and Sunnyville, an inland centre existed along the continuum between the more waterside settlements on Tracadie Harbour and Guysborough Harbour/Milford Haven River, today connected by Highway 16. With historical understanding of that spatial continuum, one can see that the centre toward which settlement contracted in the Rear Monastery area was Lincolnville, today a strong black community and home to a prominent black church (Tracadie United Baptist Church). While this resulted in movement away from the water, perhaps that move was perceived by the Black Loyalists and their descendents as less catastrophic than we might see it in strict economic terms. It seems to have been a geographically expressive reinforcement of the cultural enclave of an African Nova Scotian community. Ultimately, though, for many African Nova Scotians the promise of land for farming and the freedom to enjoy it securely was not realized, since systematized racism and a culture of fear continued to impact blacks in the northern "Promised Land" (Pachai 1987:15, 2007; Walker 1992:87; Whitfield 2006:20, 118).

One of the primary differences between black Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery is that Rear Monastery was an officially granted and sanctioned area of Black Loyalist settlement, whereas black Delap's Cove was settled through a non-orchestrated effort and, indeed, perhaps even surreptitiously. Thus, the need for settlement to evade



detection did not exist at Rear Monastery and so landscape features were not used in the same way. The most revealing aspect of Rear Monastery's settlement pattern that elucidates the Black Loyalist's cultural landscape or imaginary there was the clustering of their settlement. The idea that this group of Black Loyalist settlers shared a strong sense of community is supported by the allocation of the 3000 acres of the Brownspriggs' grant to 74 heads of households collectively. This is reminiscent of the allotment of lands through the reservation system of land allocation to Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. In each case, the internal division and use of the land is left to be determined by those who live on it. So, while Rear Monastery differs from black Delap's Cove in that the former was an officially recognized and delineated community and the latter not, they are similar in that both exhibit spatial patterning at the internal scale of the community that was defined by the African diasporic residents themselves. At black Delap's Cove, the definition of boundaries at the outside edges of the community as protective buffers appears to have been a primary organizing factor. At Rear Monastery, there appears to have been a lack of such concern. Further, there seems to have been a trust in the protection of ownership and community priority to the space granted, because of the landgrant document and the formal, public and legal recognition that such a document was to have accorded the community through the system of colonial lands administration. This fostered a level of comfort to settle as community members chose, without a need to respond to outside pressures in the configuration of built or cognized community elements.

A comparison of the Thomas Brownspriggs' grant location (1787) with black settlement as noted in the later Ambrose Church map (1878) demonstrates, specifically,



the clustering of households that Black Loyalists seem to have implemented as their settlement pattern within the 3000 acres originally granted them (Figure 2 and Figure 10). Indeed, the area of BjCj-29 is at the heart of this clustered settlement within that original grant. While later Acadian settlement along the eastern shore of Tracadie Harbour may have encroached somewhat on the edge of the Brownspriggs' grant, a significant portion of the upper arm of the grant appears to have been unpopulated in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The presence of an extensive network of small roads and cart paths in the area of BjCj-29, as well as the density of homesteads mapped by Church in that area, indicate both a greater level of effort expended in settlement of the lower (clustered settlement) area of the grant and the long term of established settlement in that area. Because it is the portion of the grant that is closest to the linear array of black settlement along Highway 16, it suggests that the original pattern of settlement in the area, reflected in Church's map, was focused toward Lincolnville and the sense of community shared through black communities along that axis rather than the potential economic asset constituted by the harbour. At this scale, the habitus of the communities bespeaks the blending of both the cultural heritage of the African diasporic residents and the ethnogenic activity that establishing themselves as individuals, households and communities fostered in this segment of British North American settlers in this region (Bourdieu 1977:72-73; Wilkie 2000:239).

The scale of this sense of geographic community identity and imaginary differs between Rear Monastery and black Delap's Cove, the former including many areas of settlement and the latter, seemingly, a single area. This difference in scale of spatial



expression, however, may be partly explained by the lack of official sanctioning at black Delap's Cove and therefore a greater need to remain outside the view of mainstream Nova Scotian society and the attendant requirement of settling in more out of the way places. Conversely, the Highway 16 continuum of black settlement borders a main terrestrial thoroughfare between the towns of Guysborough and Antigonish.

It is also important to note, though, that while the communities along the Highway 16 continuum are spread out linearly, the communities themselves form clusters around smaller loci, such as that in the Rear Monastery area around the BjCj-29 site area. The Ambrose Church map shows an extensive network of transportation and communication channels between the many black households of Rear Monastery. At the scale of this community, and in consideration of the connection between communities along the Highway 16 continuum, the more corporate spirit of community and cultural solidarity of black communities are expressed in the organization of the spaces and sense of place. Indeed African diaspora communities, whose cultural heritage reaches back into West Africa's many communities, generally exhibit this as a spatial quality that differs from the military grid layout of Eurocolonial settlement (Brown and Cooper 1990; Brown 1994; Deetz 1996:204; Delle 1998; Hodder 1987; MacLeod-Leslie 2001; Orser and Nekola 1985). At both a community and regional level, Rear Monastery exhibits an Africentric cultural landscape.

The settlement pattern thus far identified in the archaeological record at black Delap's Cove appears more linear than clustered. It will take additional research of the



area between the identified sites along the logging road and the crest of the North Mountain to determine if there is clustering of settlement sites in that community. If so, this does not negate the characterization of the cultural landscape there as a defensive one that uses natural landscape features to form boundaries between the inside and outside of the community, or public versus private space, on a regional scale. The crest of the mountain is a formidable enough feature that settlement closer to it, as long as detection of the settlement from the valley floor is not likely, is possible while maintaining the necessary landscape qualities of a defensible maroon-like community. The primary organizing principle for spatial organization at Delap's Cove, then, seems to have been the need to protect the community residents' freedom to be a community.

At Rear Monastery, the clustering represents a spatial expression of a greater freedom and perhaps confidence in the ability to "be black" and therefore, to "be of African descent" than those in unsanctioned community might experience within itself in Nova Scotia. However, this sense of freedom was not likely the case, at least at first, in more public fora. Within the community of Rear Monastery, the corporate spirit is reflected many times: in the group grant, in the clustered settlement and the contraction toward a centre of black communities in the broader landscape. Indeed these characteristics were apparent in the data used in Deetz's seminal analysis at Parting Ways, wherein this grandfather of historical archaeology noted that the nuances in spatial configurations are important in African diasporic analyses and that misinterpretation of them is both easy and blatantly wrong (1996:206, 210).



### Spatial Analysis of Yards and Homesteads

At Rear Monastery, the focus of spatial analysis was at the household level and encompassed both the domestic structure and yard space surrounding the house. At this scale, the contexts of individual objects were considered from an Africentric perspective. Discussion of individual artefacts will be presented in Chapter 8. The focus of spatial analysis at this juncture is on features and the definition of spatial units across the homestead and at the scale of the yard. At black Delap's Cove, the most informative spatial analysis is at the scale of community landscape and regional context, therefore the discussion of the yard and homestead at BeDj-16 will be comparatively brief.

*In Keep Your Head to the Sky: Interpreting African American Home Ground*, several of the contributing authors discuss the importance of yard shows and yard space in African diasporic cultures (Braxton 1998:177; Edwards 1998:246; Gundaker 1998:7-8; Thompson 1998:45). They suggest that many yards appearing disorganized or littered with "trash" were misread by the observers. In fact, the organization present is Africentric and the selection and placement of specific items, materials, forms, vegetation and their orientation is heavily imbued with African-descended cosmological symbolism. In the current research, these spaces and artefacts were critically recognized as potential foci for the intentions of those who created or used them.

At both BeDj-16 in black Delap's Cove and BjCj-29 at Rear Monastery, the sites were located adjacent roadways and a measure of border delineation through dry laid



stone or stone piling created property boundary walls along at least a portion of the roadway. The stone feature was much greater at Rear Monastery than at black Delap's Cove, but both expressed a desire to reify the boundary between the semi-privacy of a homestead and the public/semi-public of a roadway in the community (Figure 20 and Figure 30). This liminal zone, then, was both cognized and reified.

### Delap's Cove

There appears to be little usable space between the house feature and the road at the black Delap's Cove site. Given the presence of a substantial outbuilding southeast of the house, likely a barn, it may have been that the yard focus was to the east of the house (beside it) and away from the road. A small, perhaps intermittent, stream running through the eastern yard, perhaps at its border, would have allowed access to water without having to venture outside the semi-privacy of the yard. No other features were evident between the house cellar and the barn cellar southeast of the house, though forest between the two was mature and open with little to no understory. Conversely, forest cover south of the house proved an impediment to getting a clear sense of archaeological potential in any open backyardscape. Limited survey was carried out here, but it seems that the greater area of use as a yard was likely the space between the house and barn. In sum, there was little spatial detail to consider relative to the yard of the tested homestead at BeDj-16 in black Delap's Cove and the data for spatial analysis of the household feature was likewise limited.



No obvious doorway was evident along the side of the house feature that faced the road. In fact, it seems the most likely area where a doorway might have existed, based on surface character and exposed archaeological features, was along the south side of the cellar feature where substantial redeposited sediment was excavated. This area was investigated to determine the nature of the deposit and whether there was either structural or magico-religious data present. Neither were identified and it was interpreted to be merely redeposited soil from the original cellar hole excavation that had been flattened for some unknown purpose. Had it served as a step outside a doorway, we would have expected to see either some stonework to decrease the dirt tracked in through the doorway or a central depression where most foot traffic would have been concentrated. Nothing of the sort was identified. The most curious spatial characteristic of the house structure was the placement of the hearth and chimney at the northeastern corner, whereas one might expect to find them at the northwest (and often coldest) corner of the house. The significance of this, if there is any beyond whimsy, is unknown.

#### Rear Monastery

The yardspace at BjCj-29 in Rear Monastery offered more data for examination. Beginning off the northwest corner of the house feature, a substantial rock wall ran along the edge of the property at the road for 80m or more. This allowed definition of a zone of semi-public/semi-private yardspace, as at the Delap's Cove site. At black Delap's Cove, the wall was less developed and appears to have been limited to the road frontage. At the Rear Monastery site, the road frontage around the property was longer and met along two sides (north and west) of the property. Rock boundaries have been identified as



important features in Africentrically interpreted yards (Thompson 1998). Interestingly, the rock wall did not exist at the front edge of the property but began at the northwest corner and stretched along the western edge and across the back (south) where there was no road frontage evident. It may be that the edge of the road along the front of the property and the front of the house's porch defined the front yard and, as a yard associated with a home within a black community, was able to be simply recognized by outsiders (with respect to the home's residents) travelling along the road. Other mechanisms for definition and protection of the front yard space and the unwallled eastern yard may have existed and these will be discussed in Chapter 8.

The area south of the house (to its rear) would have been significantly less visible to passers-by due to distance, topography and the obstacle of the wall. The sheet scatter of refuse identified behind the house in the 2004 shovel testing and further explored in the 2005 excavation appears to represent the casual discard of garbage in the privacy of the backyard. This contrasts with a number of elements present at the front of the house and in the eastern yard. A suspected midden was located to the east of the house at BjCj-29, some 10 m beyond the eastern side of the cellar feature, and was partially excavated in 2005. It presented itself as a feature approximately 1 m in diameter characterized as a cluster of loose rocks. This feature, only identified late in the 2005 project, was full of substantial pieces of refuse, and even whole bottles. The choice to place potentially more visible garbage in the public/semi-public/semi-private space where no rock wall defined the inside and outside of the yard seems to make a significant statement. There are three



characteristics of this feature that echo those of other African diasporic sites (Thompson 1998:45; Edwards 1998:247). First, that such a feature might make a front yard appear to the non-African diasporic observer unconventional and “trashy” would be significant in this rubric. Second, the midden feature may have served as a stockpile of resources for a yard show or magico-religious tool. Third, the large artefacts appear to have been buried beneath an overlying layer of rocks that were covered only with a thin layer of moss, leaf litter and developing humus. The so-called midden does not appear to be one of the very purposefully designed and artistic expressions that are evident in many true African American yard shows, but rather it may reflect the seeds of an Africentric yard aesthetic that, if misread, appears to be merely trash as opposed to resources located in an appropriate spot near their eventual use. In such an interpretation, then, it would be inappropriate to continue to refer to the feature as a midden, so it will be referred to as a yard feature containing concentrated material items.

Discussion of the content of the yard feature will be presented in Chapter 8, along with discussion of other mechanisms of definition and protection present at the front of the house and yard space, since that discussion pertains to specific artefacts and their contextualized interpretations.





**Figure 36.** The yard feature at BjCj-29 in Rear Monastery, from beginning to end of test excavation. Both top and bottom left frames, looking north, bottom right frame 4, looking west. Note: excavation of feature not completed due to time constraints. Photo: H.

MacLeod-Leslie



The final spatial feature of the yardspace at BjCj-29 is a series of rock piles that occur at the eastern edge of the house yard along a roughly parallel trajectory with a small cart path just outside the yard area. It is interesting to note that while they do not form a wall, their form and arrangement discourage direct access, especially by cart, from the road. These features were mapped but not invasively investigated. Therefore, with only the spatial data of how they appear to fit into the landscape of the yard, there is insufficient data to determine if these, too, were stockpiles in preparation for building a wall, discard piles of rocks from the yard or constructed features. At this point one can merely say that their location bespeaks a border of the yard, but the way in which that spatial definition was made by the home's residents is a question that requires further investigation. There may have been some difference required in marking an eastern border if the Bakongo cosmogram or other similar West African cosmology influenced the ethnocultural identity of the home's residents. This possibility, and the potential Africentric significance of the rock pile features, will need to be considered in the interpretation of them when they are further investigated. However, their presence does allow a distinction between inside and outside the yard to be made. Standing on the site, with the knowledge of these perimeter markers, one can experience the sense of bounded and protected space that these create; I felt as though I were on the inside of this homestead.

The rock piles at Rear Monastery are conspicuous but seem to differ in both structure and function from rock piles (or mounds) identified and mapped at the historical



edges of the Nova Scotian Black Loyalist town of Birchtown. The Birchtown mounds appear to have significance and purpose well beyond clearance activity based on the uniformity and formality of their construction technique as well as the spatial and landscape similarities between the two complexes. Nevertheless, their explanation has, thus far, evaded researchers. The author has a hypothesis that these mounds may derive from West African spiritual beliefs and represent ancestral shrines or commemorative mounds to loved ones who, for whatever reason, did not make the journey to Birchtown from the colonies to the south. This hypothesis was the subject of field investigations by the author in 2008 which yielded inconclusive evidence.<sup>25</sup> In the context of the current program of research, it is sufficient to note that the rock piles at BjCj-29, while linearly arranged along the eastern edge of the yard, appear to have a different significance and are constructed differently than the mounds in Birchtown. Whether their purpose extends beyond simple clearance and into yard show is unclear, though one African Nova Scotian volunteer excavator at Rear Monastery noted that many of the old peoples' houses (in black neighbourhoods) had rock piles behind them which were used in garbage disposal routines (Informant 2, 2005 pers. comm.).

### Africentric Geography

At a regional scale, an Africentric spatial pattern is detectable in the corporate spirit between black communities and, for maroon-like communities, in their relationship

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<sup>25</sup> Results documented in a permit report (heritage research permit # A2008NS61) filed with the Heritage Division, Province of Nova Scotia.



with the natural landscape. For officially sanctioned black communities, the cultural landscape is less concerned with natural landscape features and more definable by socio-spatial factors and economic landscape features such as relationships with other black communities and locations of key resources. For unofficial or unsanctioned communities, natural landscape features were more critical in the definition of community boundaries, the juxtaposition of black and white communities and the expression of non-whiteness. There was a need to discourage external notice for reasons of safety and so using natural features to become either invisible or inaccessible was important. In trying to evade detection, more energy could be expended on not expressing presence than in expressing African-descended presence. Indeed, the expression of difference in the public and inter-ethnically visible spheres of a hegemonic landscape and the evasion of detection are mutually exclusive.

The use of natural features in cultural landscape definition demonstrates agency in the creation of public and semi-public space at the regional scale for maroon-like communities. Black Delap's Cove's cultural landscape fits very well with other researchers' criteria for maroon or maroon-like settlement locations (La Rosa Corzo 2003:225; Norton and Espenshade 2007: 5-7; Price 1996:5-6). Since this development of habitus is repeated in other African diasporic cultural landscapes, in particular when considering maroon-like communities, it implies a longterm cultural tradition. This is likely also rooted, in part, in the implications of the system of enslavement wherein people seeking refuge need to evade detection. Use of this spatial organizing principle, however, may bespeak an Africentric ethnocultural identity. If black Delap's Cove



indeed grew from early fugitives from enslavement, proof of this as a more Africentric principle of spatial construction might be found in the settlement on the Jappie Lot at Birchtown. Here, at least 43 Black Loyalists who had in fact, been born in Africa, settled. Living at Birchtown placed them on the upper edge of the transatlantic triangle, the second vector after the transatlantic voyage from Africa. Part of the motivations which impacted their settlement patterns may have demonstrated their choice to settle back from from the watery edge of the Atlantic World, Birchtown Bay and the colonial interlocutor, Colonel Stephen Blucke. The African-born settlers on the Jappie lot may have been using the upland topography and forest to assist in this removal from the edge of that international marine stage, while their footpaths and trails linked the homes in this cluster on the uplands in such a way as to discourage easy incursion by those closer to the waters of the bay (MacLeod-Leslie 2001).

The clustered settlement pattern evident at Rear Monastery and on the Jappie Lot in Birchtown, in echoing a corporate community spirit, appears to be a reflection of an Africentric community identity (which would also suggest that the residents bore a greater inclination to an Africentric ethnocultural identity). Societies in West Africa, too, settled in clusters due to kinship relationships and internal sociopolitical structures (Usman 2007:152).

One of the implications of the circumstance of sanctioned or recognized black community settlement versus unsanctioned black settlement in Nova Scotia that is suggested in the current research was the expression of Africentric ethnocultural identity



in the semi-public / semi-private space of the yard. While yard shows have not been conclusively identified in the Nova Scotian research, there is an absence of such in the most likely yard space at the investigated site in black Delap's Cove. At Rear Monastery however, it appears that the definition and use of such space contains features that are evident at other African diasporic sites and have been related to African-descended practices and imaginaries.



## **Chapter 7 – Consumption Behaviour, Taste and Identity**

### Exploring Taste and Consumption in African Nova Scotia

The current research explores whether decorative colour choice in past African diasporic communities in Nova Scotia, as displayed on ceramic tablewares, exhibits tastes for palettes similar to those seen in West African textiles and other art forms, as was suggested by Wilkie and Farnsworth's research at Clifton Plantation, Bahamas (1999). Additionally, motif preference is examined to explore whether these choices reflect a West African aesthetic, again suggested by Wilkie and Farnsworth in their Bahamian study (1999:309). From the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries, ceramic tablewares provided opportunities for households to express style and participate in consumerism and fashion. Consumption choices made within this class of material culture would have been affected by enculturation as much as by broader social trends, particularly for a group of people defined, in part, by their ethnocultural heritage identification (Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999:312). Robert Farris Thompson's work offers some of the best discussions of the presence of African aesthetics in African diasporic cultures (1983).



## The Data

Data from four regions are analyzed: Delap's Cove, Rear Monastery, Birchtown and a white comparative site, Coote Cove. The Delap's Cove data are drawn from the 2004 shovel testing of BeDj-16 and the 2005 excavations at this same site. The Rear Monastery data are based on artefacts collected by the author at BjCj-29 over the 2004 and 2005 field seasons and sites in the immediate vicinity (East Tracadie, Upper Big Tracadie, Lincolnville and Rear Monastery) tested by Powell in 1998 (seven sites in total). The immediate vicinity at Rear Monastery was defined by the area covered, roughly, by the Brownspriggs land grant. This analysis, therefore, does not include the sites identified during Powell's survey that were located further along Highway 16. The Birchtown (Shelburne County) data are tabulated using the five site assemblages collected by Laird Niven. The five Birchtown assemblages are further subdivided for analysis, analyzing the data from AkDi-23, the Stephen Blucke site, as an assemblage on its own and treating the other four assemblages as a single sample of Birchtown material. The Blucke site was expected to differ significantly from other Black Loyalist sites, because of the relative affluence and political power that Colonel Stephen Blucke and his family enjoyed, in comparison to their fellow Black Loyalists. We know that Blucke was viewed by many Black Loyalists as a community outsider, though he was left in command of it by the colonial government (Cahill 1991).

If one considers the artifacts from AkDi-23 as a whole, they stand in stark contrast to other eighteenth-century sites studied at Birchtown. For the



most part, testing and excavation on these sites has shown that the material culture is very limited and mostly undiagnostic. This appears to be a reflection of the low economic status of the average citizen of Birchtown. The 13,000 artifacts from AkDi-23 stand out because of their quantity but also because of the very good quality of the ceramics and clothing artifacts (Niven 2000:36).

One reason for including AkDi-23's artefacts in the current study is to explore whether the socioeconomic differences between the Blukes and their fellow Black Loyalists might have affected their taste in decorative colours and motifs. If not, then perhaps ethnocultural heritage weighed more heavily in aesthetic decision-making than socioeconomic status within early Nova Scotian society.

The Coote Cove data include only that collected by Niven, as the data from a subsequent excavation there had not yet been submitted to the Nova Scotia Museum when the collections examination for this research was being carried out. As noted previously, Coote Cove was the site of an Irish settlement roughly contemporaneous with the Black Loyalist immigration and subsequent African diasporic migrations to Nova Scotia in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In those years of Nova Scotia's history, Catholics (including the Irish settlers at Coote Cove) were subjected to oppressive discrimination and occupied a socioeconomic stratum akin to that occupied by African diasporic peoples.



The most abundant sample in this study comes from the single site of the family known to have been the most affluent (AkDi-23, the Blucke site). The minimum vessel count (89) reflects a stark contrast in the wealth of households when compared to the sample for Rear Monastery (73) that combines assemblages from 7 separate household sites. The sample for Delap's Cove (10) is also representative of a single household site like AkDi-23, but its size imposes analytic limitations that the abundant sample from the Blucke site does not.

Wilkie and Farnsworth concluded that affluent white planters in the Bahamas preferred shell-edged and annular ceramics decorated in blue (50% – 60%), orange (40%) and brown (20% - 45%), with blue always being the most popular choice and brown the second or third most popular choice, while the enslaved African diasporic people preferred annular and mocha decorations in brown (33% - 100%), green (18.5 – 80%) and blue (25% - 62.5%), where brown is always the most popular choice and blue the thirdmost (1999:307, 308). They also hypothesized that since both shell-edged and annular decorated wares fell within the same price category, the differential selection between the two cultural groups was based on distinct aesthetic tastes.

#### Aesthetic Tastes in African Nova Scotia

##### *Ceramic Colour Selection*

At Rear Monastery, the overall colour palette of the enslaved Black Loyalists in the Bahamian study is represented, but the proportion of vessels displaying blue is greatest (21 of 73 or 29% of the assemblage), with brown the second most common



colour (16 of 73 or 21%) and green the third (14 of 73 or 19%) (Table 1). Pink appears also to have been a significant decorative colour choice (12 of 73 or 16%), with only two fewer occurrences than green. The fifth to tenth ranked colours' representation drops significantly to occurrences between 5 and 1 vessel(s) suggesting that these colours (white, black, cream, purple, orange and yellow, in that order) were the consequence of a vessel being chosen for another reason, such as, function, or coincidence with another colour of greater importance.

The Blucke household in Birchtown appears to have consumed goods similarly to Black Loyalists in Rear Monastery. Stephen Blucke (Bahamian by birth) was considerably more affluent than his fellow Black Loyalists. Unlike the enslaved Bahamian Black Loyalists, Blucke's well-appointed household shows a clear preference for blue decorated wares, followed by brown and green. In the three most prominent colour choices, Blucke's household shares the same palette as the enslaved Black Loyalists in the Bahamas, however the relationship of blue to brown, as at Rear Monastery, more closely reflects the tastes of the Bahamian planters, with blue artefacts totalling 51 of 89 vessels (or 56% of the assemblage) and brown 20 vessels (or 22%) in the Blucke household. Green is present on only 12 vessels (13%) in the Blucke assemblage. The fourth and fifth ranked colour choices (cream and yellow respectively) only differ from the occurrence of green by one or two. The subsequent spread in occurrences (ranked sixth to eighth) was more gradual than that in the Rear Monastery data, with orange occurring on 8 vessels (9%), black occurring on 5 (5%) and red on 4 (3%). The ninth, tenth and eleventh ranked colours (pink, purple and white) were



**Table 1.** Incidence of Decorative Colour and Motif Choices per Community/Sample

Region of Settlement	MVC*	No. of Vessels Exhibiting Colour		Frequency	No. of vessels exhibiting Motif		Frequency
Rear Monastery	73	Blue	21	29%	Floral / organic	14	19%
		Brown	16	21%	Annular	8	11%
		Green	14	19%	Sponged	5	6%
		Pink	12	16%	Banded	4	5%
		White	5	6%	Shell-Edged	3	4%
		Black	5	6%	Wavy lines	3	4%
		Cream	2	3%	Geometric	2	3%
		Purple	1	1%	Lines	2	3%
		Orange	1	1%	Cut sponge-		
		Yellow	1	1%	stamped /star	1	1%
**AkDi-23 (Blucke household)	89				Mocha/organic	1	1%
		Blue	51	56%	Annular	16	15%
		Brown	20	22%	Geometric	10	11%
		Green	12	13%	Floral/organic	20	22%
		Cream	11	12%	Basket	1	1%
		Yellow	10	11%	Shell-Edged	14	12%
		Orange	8	9%	Sponged	1	1%
		Black	5	5%	Banded	8	9%
		Red	4	3%	Clouded	1	1%
		Pink	1	1%	Lines	5	5%
		Purple	1	1%	Wavy lines	1	1%
		White	1	1%	Dotted	6	6%
					Stars	2	2%
					Central Medallion	2	2%



Region of Settlement	MVC*	No. of Vessels Exhibiting Colour		Frequency	No. of vessels exhibiting Motif		Frequency
Birchtown	33	Brown	7	21%	Circles	3	3%
					Annular	5	15%
					Floral/organic	3	10%
					Shell-Edged	1	3%
					Geometric	1	3%
					Sponged	1	3%
					Dotted	1	3%
					Central Medallion	1	3%
black Delap's Cove	10	Blue	3	30%	Annular	3	30%
		Pink	3	30%	Floral/organic	2	20%
		Brown	3	30%	Shell-Edged	1	10%
		Green	1	10%	Mocha/organic	1	10%
		White	1	10%	Geometric	1	10%
		Black	1	10%			
Coote Cove	14	Pink	4	28%	Sponged	2	14%
		Brown	4	28%	Floral/organic	2	14%
		Blue	3	21%	Banded	1	7%
		Black	3	21%	Geometric	1	7%
		Orange	2	14%	Shell-Edged	1	7%
		Yellow	2	14%			
		Green	1	7%			
		Beige	1	7%			
		White	1	7%			



\*MVC stands for minimum vessel count.

\*\* AkDi-23, believed to be the home of Stephen Blucke. This site has been removed from the Birchtown sample and treated separately.

represented only by single occurrences. So, while the palette of most predominant colours in the Blucke and Rear Monastery ceramics appears culturally aligned, generally, with Africentric aesthetics as framed by Wilkie and Farnsworth, the balance of it, with blue as the most predominant colour choice, suggests that the dynamics of consumption for the Blucke household and for those at Rear Monastery were somehow different than for their fellow Black Loyalists in post-Revolutionary Bahamas. Further, the sheer volume of blue-decorated vessels in the Blucke household (56%) is nearly double (in terms of percentage) the presence of blue in Rear Monastery's Black Loyalist households (29%). This suggests that, while there may have been different consumption practices between the common Black Loyalist residents of Birchtown and Rear Monastery, socioeconomic differences impacted consumption behaviours as well. While orange was of negligible presence in the Rear Monastery sample (1 vessel or 3%) and absent in black Delap's Cove and the commoners' households of Birchtown, the Blucke household, like the Bahamian planters, consumed more vessels with orange decoration (9% for Blucke and up to 40% of 16 vessels for the Bahamian planters).

The other households sampled in Birchtown exhibit a closer correspondence with the aesthetic colour choices of the enslaved Black Loyalists in the Bahamas. The three most popular colour choices in Birchtown were brown (on 7 vessels or 21% of the



assemblage), green (4 vessels or 12%) and blue (4 vessels or 12%). The Birchtown sample size on which this was based (33 MVC), especially considering the number of households represented (6), shows a vast economic distance between these households compared with the Blucke household (89 MVC).

Earlier I noted that racism in Nova Scotia resulted in racial violence as early as 1784, despite the legal circumstances of freedom and equality accorded the majority of Black Loyalists after the American Revolution. This resulted in pressures in public fora, including those where commercial consumption was practiced. For most residents of Birchtown (save for the Blucke household), the racial tension was prohibitive for these African Diaporic consumers whose consumption took place largely in the white Loyalist town of Shelburne. In the sister communities of Birchtown and Shelburne, most Black Loyalists lived in a racialized society not unlike the enslaved Bahamian Black Loyalists.

In Birchtown, brown decoration was a more prevalent aesthetic choice, as it was for their (enslaved) Bahamian brethren. At Rear Monastery, where the Loyalist population was in general smaller and the settlement more rural, the differences between consumers may have been drawn along simpler lines of black and white as opposed to cultural lines of Eurocolonial and African diasporic. As a different experience in their consumerism, the focus on phenotype (black versus white) as opposed to socioeconomic stratum (enslaved versus slaveholders) appears to have impacted aesthetic choice, where Rear Monastery's Black Loyalist consumers chose more blue than brown ceramic decoration. This may also have been the Blucke's experience, given their closer



relationship with the Eurocolonial government and, thus, white Loyalist society in Shelburne – quite urban by eighteenth-century standards. The Blucke's may have been seen simply as black (by white merchants and fellow shoppers) rather than as relatives of the enslaved. Whether the Bluckes sought to participate in Eurocolonial consumption in a role other than that defined by their skin colour is unclear in this analysis. However, this seems to be a possibility given the overwhelming presence of blue in their assemblage, since this is a difference demonstrated in comparison with the volume of consumption and with the balance of aesthetic choices evident in the other Black Loyalist assemblages in that locale. Alternatively, it may simply be a function of the ability to consume more and the availability of goods for consumption.

The socioeconomic differences between the Bluckes and their fellow Birchtowners resulted in a difference in the way decorated ceramics were consumed. Whether this was purely economic or resulted from differences in the sense of ethnocultural identity requires further comparison with the other datasets in this study. Comparison with the data from Rear Monastery is somewhat inconclusive on this point as the balance in colour selection reflects that of the Bluckes, although the difference in sample size (and therefore household wealth) suggests that those in Rear Monastery had more in common, socioeconomically, with common Birchtowners. So, were the residents of Rear Monastery simply selecting from what was available or were they practicing consumption as consumers who were different than the common African diasporic residents of Birchtown?



The black Delap's Cove data offer yet another profile of Nova Scotia's African diasporic consumers. While the sample represents a single household and is of limited size (10 MVC), it is the same in its four most popular colours as Rear Monastery and Birchtown, though in a different balance, where at black Delap's Cove the assemblage's colours are ranked blue (3 vessels or 30%), pink (3 or 30%), brown (3 or 30%) – a tie for first choice - and green (1 vessel or 10%). Were the sample larger, the present balance might be amplified or it might be slightly different, but the important point is that, in considering the four most popular colours as opposed to three, the palette is the same between these three African diasporic settlements in Nova Scotia (Birchtown, Rear Monastery and black Delap's Cove). Further, the presence of pink in the Blucke household is substantially different than at these three communities (1 vessel or 1%).

Pink is an interesting colour in the Nova Scotian data and, while it is not highlighted as analytically significant in Wilkie and Farnsworth's study, its occurrence in Nova Scotia's palettes suggests consideration of it in this analysis is relevant. Pink is the fourth most frequently occurring decorative colour in the Rear Monastery and Birchtown data; at Rear Monastery 12 vessels (16% of the sample) exhibit this colour while at Birchtown 3 vessels (10% of the sample) exhibit it. These datasets both represent multiple households. However, I suggested above that there were differences in consumption patterns at these two communities because of the local social climates in which consumption took place: rural versus urban, racialized dichotomizing (at Rear Monastery) as opposed to racialized socioeconomic differentiation (in a slaveholding society in Shelburne County). While this might be the case and have had implications for



the practice of consumption in public fora, there appears to be a linkage between the two communities in consumption choices. When the data from Birchtown, Rear Monastery and black Delap's Cove are considered together and the colour choices are extended to include the top four, there appears to be an ethnocultural pattern evident that consequently supports Cahill's suggestion that Stephen Blucke was not wholly a part of the Black Loyalist community (Cahill:1991).

An explanation based on ethnoculturally-linked aesthetic choice fails, however, when the Coote Cove data (14 MVC) are considered. Here, pink is ranked with brown as one of the most common colour selections (4 vessels or 28%). Therefore, the preference for pink exhibited in the African Nova Scotian communities is likely dependent upon availability and low cost, as the affluent Blucke house contained the smallest percentage of pink decorated wares.

In terms of the overall palette at Coote Cove, the four most popular colour choices are pink and brown (both present on 4 vessels or 28%, as noted above) and blue and black (present on 3 vessels or 21%). That green ranks as one of the least popular colours (1 vessel or 7%) at Coote Cove may be indicative of a difference in ethnoculturally-informed aesthetic tastes, as it typically ranks within the top three choices (or four in the small black Delap's Cove sample) within the African diasporic datasets. Only the black Delap's Cove sample is smaller than this one from Coote Cove, which represents multiple households, unlike the Delap's Cove sample. Therefore, it may be that the small



sample size (14 vessels representing multiple households at Coote Cove) presents a full understanding of aesthetic consumption practices of poor white households.

Like the Bahamian data, brown is within the top few colour choices in all of the samples, which appears inconclusive for analysis of aesthetic choices; it seems linked neither to socioeconomic status nor ethnocultural identity. It appears in the top three choices for affluent and poor, black and white, African diasporic and Eurocolonial in Nova Scotia. The preference for green decoration is noteworthy, as it appears to have constituted a significant choice for the Rear Monastery and Birchtown communities, including the Bluckes, but not for the white Irish Coote Cove residents. Its low incidence at black Delap's Cove by comparison with other African diasporic samples may simply be a function of the small sample size. Green was determined to have been a preferred colour in Wilkie and Farnsworth's African diasporic assemblage, but not for the white Eurocolonial planter. The presence of blue, indeed blue as a top ranked choice in Rear Monastery, the Blucke household and in black Delap's Cove, appears to indicate slightly different explanations in each case. Rear Monastery's residents' choice of blue decoration appears linked to a character of rural consumerism, the Blucke's to either urban or affluent consumerism and Delap's Cove, perhaps, to limited variability in available goods, consumption opportunities and/or means.

The Bluckes appear to have been betwixt and between identities: as African diasporic consumers (in the overall palette of colour choices) and as affluent members of post-Revolutionary colonial society in Nova Scotia (in the overwhelming consumption of



blue decorated ceramics). The Bluckes' fellow Birchtowners may have either been demonstrating their more restricted means or the African diasporic nature of their aesthetic choices (with brown as a preferred colour, and in the overall palette of their choices). When the commoners data from Birchtown is compared with the data from Rear Monastery (where the overall palette seems more African diasporic, but the balance of it more Eurocolonial), Birchtowners exhibit a more Africentric aesthetic, so their consumption practices may bespeak a more Africentric sense of ethnocultural identity, in accordance with Wilkie and Farnsworth's definition. Without a better understanding of the circumstances in which goods were consumed in public fora by residents of Rear Monastery, two possible explanations of the degree to which an ethnocultural aesthetic informed consumption practice remain. Either the African diasporic residents of Rear Monastery consumed goods differently because of their sense of identity or they consumed goods differently because of external pressures (racialized consumption contexts or means). The black Delap's Cove sample may have been too small to characterize a community of consumers, however a sense of limited means is intimated by the sample size, which may result from limited opportunities to participate in consumption activity due to means or external pressures. Further investigation of more households in this community may assist in choosing between these possible explanations.

In sum, if Wilkie and Farnsworth's study has indeed defined a model or range of Africentric colour consumption, then the Bluckes may have been emulating Eurocentric consumption practices in public fora but may have remained ethnoculturally Africentric



in private and semi-private fora. Birchtown's other Black Loyalist residents, 43 of whom had been born in Africa, may have had a more Africentric aesthetic entrenched in their local sense of ethnoculture. Certainly the great population of this place, at more than 1500, may have served to intensify the sense of an African enclave in Nova Scotia where Africentric aesthetics might more confidently have flourished. Black Loyalist residents at Rear Monastery appear to have suffered external pressures and limited means but maintained a certain Africentric aesthetic ethnoculturally. It may have been that, unlike at Birchtown, exhibiting that Africentrism had to occur in more private and semi-private fora because of the potential to develop and maintain less volatile public consumption fora in the rural environs of Rear Monastery and surrounding areas. Black Delap's Cove residents appear to have experienced limited opportunities, due to limited means or social exclusion, to participate in commercial consumption, but may have maintained an Africentric aesthetic. Indeed, the similarities between the black Delap's Cove data and that for the community at Birchtown may represent a greater impact on daily practices of the presence of slavery in the habitus' of these two communities and the continued need to cope with the legacy of racialized enslavement. Indeed, there may have been overcompensation on the part of the Bluckes. Finally, the Coote Cove residents shared an impoverished circumstance with many African diasporic households but, likewise, may have demonstrated a slightly different, perhaps ethnoculturally-linked aesthetic in their consumption practices of the goods available in the Nova Scotian market.



Table 2. Summary of Frequency of Decorative Motifs by Community/Sample (% of Assemblage)

Region of Settlement	Shell-edged	Annular	Floral/organic	Mocha	Sponged/stamped	Geometric	Lines/Wavy Lines/Banded
Rear Monastery (n=73)	5	11	19	1	7	3	12
Delap's Cove (n=10)	10	30	20	10	-	10	-
Birchtown (n=33)	3	15	10	-	3	3	-
AkDi-23 (n=89)	12	15	22	-	1	11	15
Coote Cove (n=14)	7	-	14	-	14	7	7



### *Design Motifs*

Wilkie and Farnsworth's Bahamian study concluded that the African diasporic consumers there preferred annular decoration or mocha wares, whereas the Eurocolonial assemblages exhibited a preference for shell-edged wares (1999:309). With respect to decorative motifs, floral/organic designs predominate among the Nova Scotian samples, as they constitute the most frequently consumed in Rear Monastery (14 of 73 vessels or 19%), the Blucke household (20 of 89 vessels or 22%) and Coote Cove (2 of 14 or 14%; ranked equally with sponged decoration in this last sample), thus cutting across both socioeconomic and ethnocultural lines. Only in black Delap's Cove and Birchtown is another motif more prevalent, namely annular wares. In these instances, Birchtown and black Delap's Cove, a distinction between black and white tastes as defined by Wilkie and Farnsworth's model, is suggested, as no annular decoration appears in the Coote Cove assemblage at all and floral/organic motifs rank second to annular in Birchtown (15% as opposed to 10%) and black Delap's Cove (30% as opposed to 20%). At Rear Monastery and the Blucke house, annular wares constitute the second most frequent motif identified (11% at the former and 15% at the latter). If, indeed, this is the result of ethnoculturally-linked aesthetic preference, then the predominance of floral/organic motifs might be explained as, simply, what was most available in Nova Scotia at the time. Admittedly, the sample sizes from these sites are not great, though this is not a surprising circumstance for the homes of poor folks, regardless of ethnicity. So, until additional sites can be analyzed and compared to these results, as conclusions, these observations can only remain tentative.



The Blucke's preference for the shell-edged motif ranked third in frequency (12%) as it did in the Birchtown community sample (3%) and black Delap's Cove (10%), though the last may simply be a function of the limited sample size. Shell-edged wares represent 4% of the assemblage from Rear Monastery and 7% of that from Coote Cove. Therefore, all assemblages included shell-edged wares, though their prominence in the Blucke sample was greatest both in absolute (14 vessels) and relative terms (12%). This suggests two related conclusions. First, the Bluckes' means allowed them to purchase more of what they liked. Second, they chose to purchase more shell-edged wares than some other motif types (geometric designs, clouded wares, sponged). In the other samples, shell-edged wares occur on a single vessel, with the exception of Rear Monastery where the incidence is 3 vessels. The sample size at Rear Monastery (73 MVC) is second only to that from the Blucke site (89 MVC), whereas the other three samples are significantly smaller, at 33 MVC (Birchtown), 14 MVC (Coote Cove) and 10 MVC (black Delap's Cove). That the incidence of shell-edged wares at Rear Monastery is slightly higher than the others, where shell-edged motifs are negligible, is, therefore, not alarming.

Wilkie and Farnsworth suggested that mocha designs were preferred by African diasporic people and not by the white Eurocolonial planters (1999:309). Mocha designs are present in only two of the samples, Rear Monastery (1%) and black Delap's Cove (10%), where each are only represented by a single vessel. Interestingly, no mocha ware has been identified in the Birchtown sample, the Blucke sample or at Coote Cove. If there is a linkage between these two places in the consumption of this waretype, then



perhaps its appeal was to the rural African diasporic resident's aesthetic in Nova Scotia, as opposed to more urban African diasporic or white aesthetic tastes.<sup>26</sup>

The discussion of West African artistic elements in Wilkie and Farnsworth's study includes mention of the presence of geometric lines, chevrons, bands and lines of dots in traditional crafts such as ceramics, wood carving, cloth production and personal adornment (1999:309). This suggests that it might be prudent to combine the annular motif category with other linear motifs that reflect a similar relationship to that suggested by Wilkie and Farnsworth in Africentric aesthetics between annular lines and other line motifs. In so doing, the frequency of this combined category in the ceramic assemblages from Nova Scotia would require combining annular, banded, wavy lines, and simple lines into this single category. There would be no change in the relevant motif choice percentages for Birchtown, black Delap's Cove or Coote Cove where none of the related motifs are present, though for Rear Monastery the frequency data would increase from

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<sup>26</sup> In each instance of the mocha design in the Nova Scotian assemblages, the motif was portrayed in pink, said to be a less frequently occurring variety of mocha ware decoration (Florida Museum of Natural History. 1995. "Annular Ware, Mocha – Index Type,"

*Historical Archaeology Digital Type Collection.*

[http://www.flmnih.ufl.edu/histarch/gallery\\_types/type\\_index\\_display.asp?type\\_name=ANNULAR%20WARE,%20MOCHA](http://www.flmnih.ufl.edu/histarch/gallery_types/type_index_display.asp?type_name=ANNULAR%20WARE,%20MOCHA)

Accessed: March 12, 2008). These may indicate items purchased as much for the colour pink as for the motif.



11% for annular wares alone to 23% for the combined category, thus inching out the frequency of the floral / organic motif category (19%) as the most abundant choice by 4%. While Wilkie and Farnsworth's frequencies for annular wares on African diasporic sites are much higher (50 – 80%) than this combined category in the Rear Monastery data, their sample sizes are significantly smaller; 8 loci with artefact counts between 1 and 17 and an average of 5 artefacts per locus which is smaller than the smallest sample in the present study.

The most striking change is in the Blucke household sample. Without a combined category, the floral/organic motifs are the most prevalent (22%) as they were at Rear Monastery and the annular wares next at 15% with shell-edged wares coming in third at 12%. When the related motifs are included, the combined category represents 30% of the motif choices; not only becoming the most prevalent choice over both floral /organic and shell-edged wares but, indeed, despite the large sample size, surpassing representation in any of the other Nova Scotian African diasporic assemblages.

Perhaps Blucke's taste for shell-edged wares represents an instance of emulative taste, as it seems that economic stratum affects the percentage of this ware type in an assemblage. What the reconsideration of a combined category suggests, however, is that while Colonel Blucke may have enjoyed the trappings of his affluence and participated in Eurocolonial government and society, his household and more private consumption practices may have been of a more Africentric ilk than that for which his fellow Birchtowners may have given him credit. This interpretation, however, rests on the



assumption that Wilkie and Farnsworth have identified ethnic (or ethnocultural) indicators in evidence of consumption practices. Given the variability that is seen between the African diasporic and Eurocolonial assemblages in Nova Scotia, as well as the variability between African diasporic assemblages, there is some doubt as to the applicability of their conclusions to a Nova Scotian or Atlantic Canadian context. Colour choice appears to have been impacted as much by economic factors as by aesthetic choice, although motif choice may be a better gauge of ethnocultural identity (or the private forms of expression of one's ethnic cultural heritage) in the Nova Scotian context.

#### African Diasporic Consumers

Bourdieu posits that taste "...classifies [objects], and classifies the classifier" and while he suggests that the explanation of taste and cultural consumption does not begin with aesthetic he does see pure aesthetic as "...rooted in an ethic..." (1985:5-6). Further, he states:

...nothing is more distinctive, more distinguished, than the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal or even 'common'...or the ability to apply the principles of a 'pure' aesthetic to the most everyday choices of everyday life, e.g., in cooking, clothing or decoration, completely reversing the popular disposition which annexes aesthetics to ethics (1984:5).

Bourdieu offers a starting point from which both insiders and outsiders of an ethnocultural identity may engage in the judgement of expressed ethnoculturally-derived



(in this case, Africentric) taste. In Bourdieu's framework, the development and expression of an Africentric aesthetic may be a practice of resistance or rebellion by African diasporic peoples in Eurocolonial societies through the expression of difference, as well as being an expression of ethnoculturally derived taste. In the first manner, the expression of such taste would be a practice consciously carried out in a public forum. Non-African diasporic actors in those public fora would misunderstand the choice as ill-informed of white hegemonic Eurocolonial culture, as opposed to rebellious, which might then serve, for those not enculturated into the Africentric aesthetic, to seemingly validate their racist perspectives. However, the ethic that is the root of the aesthetic taste so judged by non-African diasporic people is essentially misunderstood by them (as outsiders) and the resistance constituted in the act of such aesthetic consumption, therefore, equally misunderstood. A limitation evident in Bourdieu's explanatory framework, applied in this way, is an oversight of the element of active agency. The simplicity of an explanation based on the idea of resistance (and, therefore, a hegemonic approach to the analysis), perhaps inadvertently, feeds back into that structure identified by Herskovits as a myth of African diasporic peoples' past and the continual development of their cultures (Bourdieu 1984:174, 311; Herskovits 1941). It is this weakness that is also reflected in Chan's definition of African diasporic cultural landscapes as "inadvertent" (Chan 2007). The motivations, both conscious and subconscious, for ethnoculturally grounded tastes, must be viewed as products of routinized behaviours within a habitus that was intrinsically Africentric. These behaviours and practices happened in the normal functioning of households, as a family,



and as part of an ethnic community, through child rearing and daily life (Giddens 1984; Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999: 286, 310,315). The habitus and practices were Africentric because the people who created and inhabited them were of African descent. Also, as part and parcel of their socially-defined lifeworlds, their ethnicity impacted cultural landscape thresholds and boundaries as a force from both inside and outside the places in their African diasporic cultural landscapes (Cowan 1998; Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Wilkie 2001). In this way, the development of taste is a mechanism in one's habitus that is intrinsically defined by ethnoculture, indeed *is* ethnoculture.

Wilkie and Farnsworth's (1999) examination of Bahamian Black Loyalist identity construction, as seen through consumption of ceramic decorative colours and techniques, focused on the ethnocultural identities and Africentric heritage of these consumers. In so doing, their interpretation was grounded in the presupposition that these factors influenced consumption practices. Indeed, they conclude that consumption of specific goods was used to reinforce the consumers' African identity as the goods consumed bore resemblance to African-inspired aesthetic and religious traditions (Wilkie and Farnsworth 1999:304, 313). Mullins' examination of nineteenth century African American consumption behaviour suggested that, as consumers, these African diasporic people valued the practice of consumption as much as the object of it. He rejected the notion that the practice was simple emulation in a hegemonic society and promoted the idea, rather, that this practice was part of a complex process of identity negotiation with implications for both public and semi-private fora - an idea first promoted by W.E.B. DuBois (DuBois 1903; Mullins 1999:172). The choice to participate in the



practice of consumption was, therefore, a complex web of actions and reactions and, far from being a simple material symbolism expressed in public fora, there existed a “double consciousness” in consumption behaviour which makes Africentric choice difficult to see archaeologically (DuBois 1903; Mullins 1999:171; Wilkie 2000:236-237). The Bahamian study does not weigh this factor as heavily as ethnoculture, but Wilkie offers some credence to Mullins’ argument, which is based on DuBois’ notion of “double consciousness”, in her analysis of data from the Oakley Plantation:

African Americans...sought to manipulate the image white people outside the plantation held of them. One instance of this is seen in the use of Dr. Tichenor’s Antiseptic, a product associated with white supremacy and the Old South in the minds of white consumers. White consumers seeing an African American buying this product would believe that individual was recognizing and acquiescing to these same values. Instead, the African American consumer was masking the use of the medicine as part of a larger shared ethnomedical tradition....(2000:236-237).

In the last sentence she returns to the emphasis on ethnocultural factors, but in the earlier portion, Wilkie clearly acknowledges the existence of a double consciousness in African diasporic consumption practices as well as the situation of it in public and semi-public fora (i.e., at the point of sale or as display items in semi-public household / homestead areas – like yard shows) (DuBois 1903).



### Africentric Ethnocultural Identity in Taste and Consumption

The colour selection similarities between the Bahamian and Nova Scotian data seem to be overshadowed by the dissimilarities. Preferences for brown, green and pink may be significant in some Africentric communities, but its selection seems contingent upon availability and cost, as much as aesthetic enculturation or routinized consumption behaviours. The colour selection data suggest that the Bluckes were entrenched in the Eurocolonial aesthetic, but the amount of annular and line motif-decorated wares suggests some conflicts in identity negotiation between this and their Africentric identity. The preference for mocha wares may be linked only to African diasporic enculturation in the Caribbean, and to a rural aesthetic in Nova Scotia, given their restriction to the black Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery assemblages which were quite rural by comparison with Birchtown in its heyday.

Maintenance of brown as a decorative colour second in rank at Rear Monastery and in the Blucke household may indicate an ethnocultural aesthetic, while the preponderance of blue appears to indicate a circumstance of double consciousness that free Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia might have had to grapple with more than enslaved Black Loyalists in the Caribbean.

Blucke was not well liked by many in his community at Birchtown because of his close relationship with white colonial government. This raises the question as to whether the Bluckes were more Eurocentric in their sense of ethnocultural identity and tastes, or



more Africentric. Conversely (and quite likely if Mullins' propositions regarding consumption practices are correct), due to Colonel Stephen Blucke's increased contact with white colonial government as a result of his militarily-designated leadership of the Birchtown community, he may have been forced to work within a double consciousness in his consumption practices (DuBois 1903; Mullins 1999). Indeed, the maintenance of a colour palette similar to the enslaved Black Loyalists in the Caribbean, and of brown as the second most popular colour choice (not third or lower as in the Caribbean data), suggests there is a solid foundation for this argument. This bears further weight when taken in conjunction with the adjusted proportion of annular and related motifs in the Blucke assemblage, presuming Wilkie and Farnsworth's supposition of the colour and motif selections' being rooted in an Africentric aesthetic is a sound one.

In Nova Scotia, the consumption of goods with pink decoration seems to have been an economically relevant consumption choice. Two conclusions may be posited because of the following two factors. First, the similarity between African diasporic communities appears to increase when we expand our consideration of colour consumption to the four most frequently occurring colours. Second, this expansion to include the top four colour frequencies strengthens the apparent similarity with the presence of pink in the assemblage. The first conclusion is that African diasporic Nova Scotians remained, for the most part, among the poorer people in society despite a change in the legal status of many Black Loyalists and their descendents from that they held in the United States and Caribbean. This is not a startling conclusion, but the material evidence revealed here offers a more personal connection with those who suffered this



impoverishment. The second is that Wilkie and Farnsworth's models of ethnoculturally-relevant colour selections might be more applicable to a local context, either the Bahamas specifically or a single community, generally. This might be a function of the African cultural roots of the individual Black Loyalists living in the Caribbean, which may have differed from the African cultural roots of those Black Loyalists who came to Nova Scotia. Three colours in a specific order of consumption cast doubt on the ethnocultural identity of the Bluckes and the residents of Rear Monastery and black Delap's Cove. There only emerged a commonality between them and the other residents of Birchtown in the colour selection data when it was expanded to four and the ranking of the four colours was flexible. That the motif data may be a more robust method of investigating ethnoculturally-grounded aesthetics than colour is suggested by the consistent top ranking, as a first choice, of the annular and annular-like motif (combined category) throughout all four of the African Nova Scotian assemblages, and that this is common to the Caribbean Black Loyalists' assemblages. Further, not only were annular motifs absent in the Coote Cove data, but the one annular-like motif was not among the top-ranked categories.

The implications of aesthetic taste, then, are different, depending on a number of factors including forum of expression and the individual circumstances of the agent. If one was secure in one's freedom, as much as one of African descent might be in the climate of post-Revolutionary Nova Scotia, competing pressures in expressing that freedom might cause slight differences in consumption patterns from those who remained enslaved in areas of massive agricultural plantation slavery, such as the Bahamas.



However, not only the memory of life as a person of African descent in a slave society or as an enslaved person, impacted African diasporic people's consumption in Nova Scotia, but also the very existence of the institution of slavery and the threat of re-enslavement in Nova Scotia. Likewise, the use of objects need not maintain the meanings conferred by outsiders or manufacturers once in the private and semi-private places of homesteads and black communities, since, items can be ethnoculturally appropriated.

The collection of several pharmaceutical bottles in the yard area of BjCj-29 in Rear Monastery may indicate a possible relationship with the consumers discussed in Wilkie's Oakley Plantation study (Wilkie 2000). While the simple consumption of liniments took place among consumers from all cultural backgrounds, there is the possibility that Rear Monastery's black residents, grappling with a double consciousness in their consumption of decorated ceramics, also consumed these bottles for purposes other than that intended by the manufacturer or merchant. This recalls the discussion of yard shows in the preceding chapter. These pharmaceutical bottles, collected from the yard area, were consumed, perhaps with a double consciousness, in public fora, but may have been appropriated for Africentric uses in the private and semi-private contexts of the yardspace. If this is the case, then, despite a different relationship of brown ceramic decoration to blue than was seen in the black Bahamian data, the residents of Rear Monastery may have had a more Africentric sense of ethnocultural identity than the colour selection data suggest. This may be masked by the impact of a double consciousness, as per Mullins suggestion, while the motif selection data may offer the clearest indication of Africentric taste expressed in consumption choices (Mullins 1999).



As a final note, without an Africentric interpretive perspective on these goods and their uses, this analysis would quite simply not exist.



## **Chapter 8 – Africentric Traditions and Artefact Interpretation**

### Ethnogenic Bricolage and Cultural Continuities

Fennell encourages us to see cultures that have developed throughout the African diaspora as the results of ethnogenic bricolage (2007a). Ethnogenic bricolage is the notion that cultures that develop and transform in a multicultural environment combine ideas and practices which stem from a variety of cultures. It is impossible to hold, as some scholars have, that individuals who hailed from rich cultural circumstances in Africa could not cope with the multiculturalism of the Atlantic World. Diversity of dialects and social organizations coupled with a vibrant international economy and regional religious affinities that supported complex interactions between cultural groups were characteristic of the African cultures involved in the transatlantic slave trade. While racism and ethnocentrism were forces of considerable impact in the Americas, the strength of African cultures' adaptability ensured that the cultural bricolage of the Atlantic World did not eradicate Africentric cultural practices and principles (Leone at el. 2005:582-583; Thompson 1983:xiv; Thornton 1998:187). It has taken decades of scholarship to reach this understanding, which began with the assumption of an utter loss of African cultural principles and practice in the Americas (Raboteau 1986). The discourse moved then to notions of pan-African culture, then diversity and violent suffering to the point of cultural non-accommodation, and now acknowledges that, while



cultural diversity was a fact, cultural affinities existed in some key areas that lent themselves well to survival and transformation despite the horrors of the transatlantic system of slavery (Fennell 2010; Gundaker 1998; Herskovits 1941; Mintz and Price 1976; Thompson 1998; Vlach 1977, 1991). These later breakthroughs in thinking resulted in a groundswell of literature and, while there is credence in the Africentrism of the products, practices and traditions explored, continued exploration remains critical (Fennell 2000:285). It is essential that researchers strive to discern between actual Africentric survivals, the bricolage of ethnogenic nascence, and cultural reclamation. The latter is a valid cultural process, but it makes a stronger statement about the sense of ethnic identity of individuals than it does bespeak the continual propagation of Africentric traditions through the mechanism of the diaspora. The first task, however, is to establish whether there is potential for Africentric interpretation.

Research over the past decade and a half into the origins of people captured into the transatlantic slave trade has yielded insights into the degree of clustered disembarkation of culturally related peoples at certain destinations in the Americas (Eltis 2001, 2004; Eltis et al. 1999; Thornton 1998; Walsh 2001). Three broad areas have been identified along the coast of West Africa that correspond to broad linguistic families and units of African commercial engagement in the transatlantic slave trade. They are, roughly, 1) Senegambia to Cape Mount, Liberia, 2) Western Ivory Coast to Cameroon and 3) West Central Africa (the Angola Coast) (Thornton 1998:187-191). The last is the least linguistically diverse, though lingua francas existed throughout West African cultures to facilitate their economic interactions. The literature on this topic is formidable,



but a result salient to the current project is that the degree to which slave traders and slaveholders might have thought their mixing of people limited communication due to linguistic differences would have been minimal (Thornton 1998:187-188). Many of the African people enslaved had come from relatively cosmopolitan contexts, and the similarities they found in the company of other Africans and their descendents both reinforced the elements of sameness and encouraged bridging in areas of dissimilarity (i.e., localized cultural identities and dialects).

Rooted in the region of least linguistic diversity, West Central Africa, was a belief system known culturally as BaKongo (Fennell 2007c:200; Walsh 2001:145). Early on, Thompson drew parallels between symbols evident in African diasporic art, aesthetics and archaeological remains and the BaKongo cosmogram (Figure 42) (Ferguson 1992:10; Thompson 1983). Later archaeological scholarship has identified, in addition to Bakongo related material, the presence of elements of Yoruban religion (from the area of the Niger River delta, Nigeria and Cameroon, roughly) in African diasporic contexts (Fennell 2007c:223). Significantly, both traditions rely on private or covert home based practices, as evidenced in the African diasporic archaeological records. Also, in the African diasporic contexts, these have been identified where African individuals or their descendents blended these practices in non-Eurocentric mediation or empowerment practices (Brown 1994; Brown and Brown 1998; Ferguson 1992; Jones 1998; Leone and Fry 1999).



Presence in the diaspora of West African spiritualism or magico-religious beliefs (from both Yoruban and BaKongo systems) reflects their resilient nature, which was necessary for their continuity. Indeed, because of their cultural importance and regional pervasiveness throughout the African areas heavily involved in the transatlantic slave trade, these not only lent themselves well to travel but were likely important to peoples' ability to survive the trip and the destination (Fennell 2007b:130). The most tenacious elements of West African belief systems that could propagate throughout the African diaspora were those that were linked to practice, particularly private or covert practices, because of the impacts of enslavement and the tenacity of cosmology as an enculturated fact, generally. The physical and tangible practices associated with cultural knowledge allow reinforcement and propagation of the knowledge itself. Though one's physical circumstances might change, memories and knowledge are not entirely lost, and so practices can endure. The strengths these types of practiced spiritual and cosmological cultural knowledges offered enslaved African people were why they wanted to pass these practices on to offspring and others with whom they shared a sense of community. Practices linked to understandings of spiritual significance were important sources of empowerment and would have offered strength and empowerment. Through these practices individuals could continue to follow their enculturated beliefs, find comfort from abuses, and continue to participate in cosmologic structures broader than those that contrived their immediate circumstances (Thompson 1983:18-19). This is to say that when enslaved Africans and their descendents found themselves in dire physical, emotional, political or economic circumstances, the principles and practices of religious



and cosmological elements of their African and Africentric cultures were a source of power, safety, comfort and responsibility that lay within their reach (Fennell 2007c:200; Jones 1998:76; Piersen 1988:74; Rael 2002:48). On a related point, which also has implications for ethnocultural identity, Leone et al. point out:

...spiritual and healing practices among the enslaved population were closely related. The entwined areas of negotiation are often difficult to separate. The roots of poor health, sickness, and misfortune may lay more in the spiritual domain than in the physical world (2005:585).

The conditions of enslavement fostered ill health in a number of ways: physical, mental and emotional and, therefore, spiritual – particularly for people for whom spirituality had been such an important part of their ancestral habitus. It should not, then, be surprising that spiritualism that could bring about better health continued in the new circumstances of enslavement in the Americas and, perhaps, helped people combat their misfortune.

The concept of ethnogenic bricolage both offers a method of understanding the transformation of African traditions into Africentric ones, and strengthens the veracity of Africentrism of traditions in African diasporic cultures. It explains why the notion of straight cultural survivals and transmissions is too simplistic and how variability develops in a legitimate way that allows traditions to remain Africentric (or African-descended) but not African throughout the diaspora. Finally, it encourages scholars to think critically



about the nascence of traditions in African diasporic cultures and to avoid focussing too narrowly on African-derived explanations. Such exclusive focus would fail an argument for Africentrism of African diasporic traditions because of the variability that characterizes Africentrism in African diasporic cultures. Ethnogenic bricolage, as an explanatory model of ethnogenic mechanism, acknowledges the intertwining of diaspora-wide phenomena and local circumstances in the development of African diasporic traditions.

Perhaps the most easily illustrated example, archaeologically speaking, of both ethnogenic bricolage and Africentrism in African diasporic cultures is that of the practice of spiritualism or magico-religion. The key reasons that this example is a good one are because: a) while ethnicity can be difficult to see archaeologically, these covert and private practices identified in the archaeological record are often materially expressed and, therefore, empirical; b) ethnoarchaeological method allows the material evidence of these practices to be considered in comparison with other cultures (African, European, First Nations) which can also offer insight into specific chronological developments and cultural transformation sequences; c) the impetus to practice a materially-evidenced tradition in covert and private contexts speaks to the personal sense of (ethnic or) ethnocultural identity of its keepers and, finally; d) as an archaeologically-detectable phenomenon, it is quantifiable and comparable in frameworks of both space and time. This promotes consideration and understanding of cultural developments through pattern and variability from pattern, and thus, elucidates culture process.



### *Africentric Bricolage in Spiritual Practices*

The list of African diasporic archaeological sites where material evidence of practices linked to BaKongo and Yoruban belief systems has been identified covers the Caribbean, South America, the eastern seaboard of the United States and the U.S. Midwest region (Brown 1994; Brown and Brown 1998; Brown and Cooper 1990; Ferguson 1992, 1999; Franklin 1997, 2004; Fennell 2000; Ferguson 1992; Galke 2000; Jones 1998; Klingelhofer 1987; Laroche 1994; Leone and Fry 1999; Leone et al. 2001; Neuwirth and Cochran 2000; Orser 1994; Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1999; Sauer 1998; Thompson 1983; Wilkie 1997; Young 1996, 1997). The materials recovered have included: quartz crystals, mirrors, smooth black stones, glass beads, pottery with asterisks or crosses (simplified baKongo cosmograms) incised on them, drilled/pierced disks and coins, notched coins, white clay marbles with incised crosses, silver teaspoons with incised crosses, glass prisms, round iron kettle bases, white chalk, ash/white ash, white clay, iron wedges or knife blade fragments (sometimes found concentrated in an area), iron kettles, burned iron nails, shell and ash, concealed bricks with crossed lines surrounded by an ellipse, glass crystals, blue beads, drilled bones/bone fragments, unmodified skeletal elements, pipes (both with incised decoration and not), fist charms, out of place marine shells, sticks, roots, and white dishes or dish fragments. This list is not exhaustive. The contexts in which they have been found include northeastern corners, doorways / thresholds, sills, steps, under and near hearths, along cardinal axes, in concealed areas within houses and in the middle of work rooms used by the enslaved (Fennell 2007c; Jones 1998; Leone et al. 2005:585). Moving outside, items associated



with Africentric spiritualism have been found in and near water and in yards and trees (Adams 2007; Ferguson 1992). There is also mention in the historic record of “god houses” in the yards and homes of enslaved Africans and their descendents (Grimke 1839). The objects and contexts are distinctly tied to private and covert opportunities which are a significant element in the continuation of Africentric religious practices (Fennell 2007c:232). These practices result in minkisi and other material expressions of instrumental symbols and constitute evidence of active efforts to protect, heal, combat abuse and oppression and observe spiritual or cosmological tradition and responsibility.

Fennell cautions scholars seeking to understand possible Africentric meanings in African diasporic archaeological studies in his discussion of BaKongo<sup>27</sup> religious symbol expressions thus:

The particular context in which artifacts are found is critically important to the strength of an interpretation that those objects were created pursuant to beliefs and practices derived from Bakongo culture. Such an interpretation will be stronger if a variety of bilongo-like<sup>28</sup> objects are located in a concentrated collection, rather than being dispersed

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<sup>27</sup> While Fennell focuses on Bakongo belief systems, he acknowledges that many other African belief systems informed the development of African Diasporic cultural elements including Yoruban and Dahomean belief systems.

<sup>28</sup> Bilongo are the contents of minkisi (Fennell 2007c:213).



throughout the space of a dwelling. Such an interpretation will be stronger still if there exist multiple concentrations of bilongo-like objects, located in a spatial pattern that indicates the demarcation of the crossed lines of a dikenga<sup>29</sup> along the cardinal directions within a private space (2007c:218).

I contend that, in employing an Africentric interpretive perspective in the course of this research, a possible expression of Africentric magico-religious belief or spiritualism exists in the archaeological record from BjCj-29 in Rear Monastery.

#### Africentric Traditions at Rear Monastery, Nova Scotia

BjCj-29 is located on the side of an abandoned road through the forest, more than half a kilometre from the nearest modern dirt road, its yard populated with mature trees. When its residents were here it was, doubtless, an easily visible home in this black community. The old road hugs the yard's perimeter on its north and west edges, with the house set a mere eleven metres back from it. Travellers on the road, maybe going to and from the home identified some 500 m further along the road to the southwest, could

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<sup>29</sup> The dikenga is a core symbol of BaKongo culture and consists of intersecting vertical and horizontal axes (crossed lines at a right angle) set within a circle or ellipse with smaller circles or disks at the four ends of the crossed lines. Its cycling is counterclockwise (Fennell 2007c:203).





**Figure 37.** Cellar depression (outlined) of BjCj-29 house, the front of the house and north are to the right.



easily have carried on a conversation with people sitting in front of the home, perhaps on its veranda or working about the yard. Regardless of the volume of traffic, the yard area between the home's front and the road would have been an interstitial zone of semi-public/semi-private space. Objects placed here, and places created here, could serve the residents and mediate their relationships with members of the public whose social context derived from their use of the road. Whether the road would carry much traffic would not necessarily have been known at the time of home construction. The aforementioned places and any meaningful objects placed within them could also mediate relationships further afield, whether with broader Nova Scotian society or with a world beyond this one, a spiritual world.

The northeastern corner of the house was located in the semi-public/semi-private zone, as was its front entryway and attendant threshold (semi-public because it was at the face of the house toward the public road and semi-private because it was part of the structure of a private, free person's home). As mentioned earlier, material culture significant in African-derived diasporic traditions has been collected from northeastern corners and thresholds on other sites (Brown 1994; Brown and Brown 1998; Fennell 2000, 2007c; Leone and Fry 1999; Leone et al. 2005). At BjCj-29, artefacts were collected from these contexts that may suggest that the residents practiced Africentric beliefs and traditions related to those visible at other African diasporic sites. Two further objects collected from the front and rear of the house at its edges/sills may be among the most compelling evidence of the presence of beliefs or practices rooted in Africentric



spiritualism among the residents. Their individual crafting suggests intent and attention to detail and the objects' characteristics can be correlated with those from other African diasporic sites wherein their interpretation related them to Africentric magico-religious or spiritualism practices (Brown and Brown 1998; Ferguson 1992:119; Franklin 1998; Young 1995, 1996).

Interpreted collectively, the objects from Rear Monastery offer a new perspective on African diasporic material culture in this region. As such, this interpretation is not yet definitive. Additional quantification here is necessary to support it. The data's presentation and explanation is an exercise in how understanding might advance in Atlantic Canada, if consideration were given to interpretations that contextualize the data from this region's black past within the larger picture of the African diaspora. The next step shall require researchers to either challenge the interpretation through systematically defined negative evidence or expand it through quantification at other sites.

### *Interpreting the Material Culture*

Three objects were found embedded in a construction layer at BjCj-29 (lot 6) and resemble Africentric magico-religious traditions or folk medicine traditions identified in African diasporic sites elsewhere (Figure 43). These objects are an iron knife fragment, an iron fragment (perhaps of a fire poker) and a piece of white ceramic, likely part of a saucer. Iron is a material that has been regularly used in African-descended spiritual and magico-religious practices (Brown 1994; Jones 1998; Leone and Fry 1999; McDavid 1998; Ruppel et al. 2003).





**Figure 38.** Iron objects collected from a construction layer at the front of the house feature in Rear Monastery (BjCj-29) may be magico-religious objects used in Africentric traditional practices. The object at left is a knife blade and tang fragment, the object at right looks to be part of an iron (fire) poker or perhaps a drawer handle.



Lot 6 is a redeposited sterile soil associated with the construction event. It was mounded around the structure, including along its front face (Figure 37). This deposit was overlain by lot 3, which represents the majority of the occupation event. At the front of the structure, lot 6 appears to have been used to build up the area, perhaps for a porch or veranda, after having been excavated from the cellar hole. The locations of the knife and the iron fragment, the latter with the ceramic saucer fragment over it, were along the outer perimeter of the lot 6 deposit, seemingly placed as the house's foundation outline (or footprint) construction was drawing to a close and the structure's perimeter was taking final form. The knife was found at the veranda area's front face (approximately halfway along) behind a small boulder, embedded in the construction layer, with its blade oriented toward the road to the north of the house. The iron fragment with its ceramic cover was located on the northeastern corner of the veranda area, also immediately behind a large rock, which may have been a cornerstone of the veranda (Figures 39, 40 and 41). In each of these two locations, the objects appear to have been deliberately deposited because of their locations, their relationship with sizeable stones, and because they were the only artefacts identified in lot 6. The lot 6 deposit covered nearly 80% of the 2m x 2.5m excavation unit, was up to 23 cm thick in places, and immediately overlay the original sod layer. The lack of artefacts elsewhere in lot 6 is a stark contrast to the density of artefacts found in the occupation layer (lot 3) above. This contrast, in and of itself, is not surprising; however, the placement and orientation of the three objects collected from lot 6 is curious and so their isolated





**Figure 39.** Location of ceramic (cap?) piece behind cornerstone. Iron fragment was found beneath the ceramic piece. Trowel points north.





**Figure 40.** Exposing and preparing to remove the cover stone and lot 3 from the veranda area in Test Pit 2.





**Figure 41.** Looking west-southwest, excavated eastern half of front veranda area.

Locations of iron knife and “capped” iron fragment are behind the small boulder and veranda cornerstone, respectively.



presence may also be significant. I propose that when interpreted from an Africentric perspective, these objects are not merely curious, but meaningful.

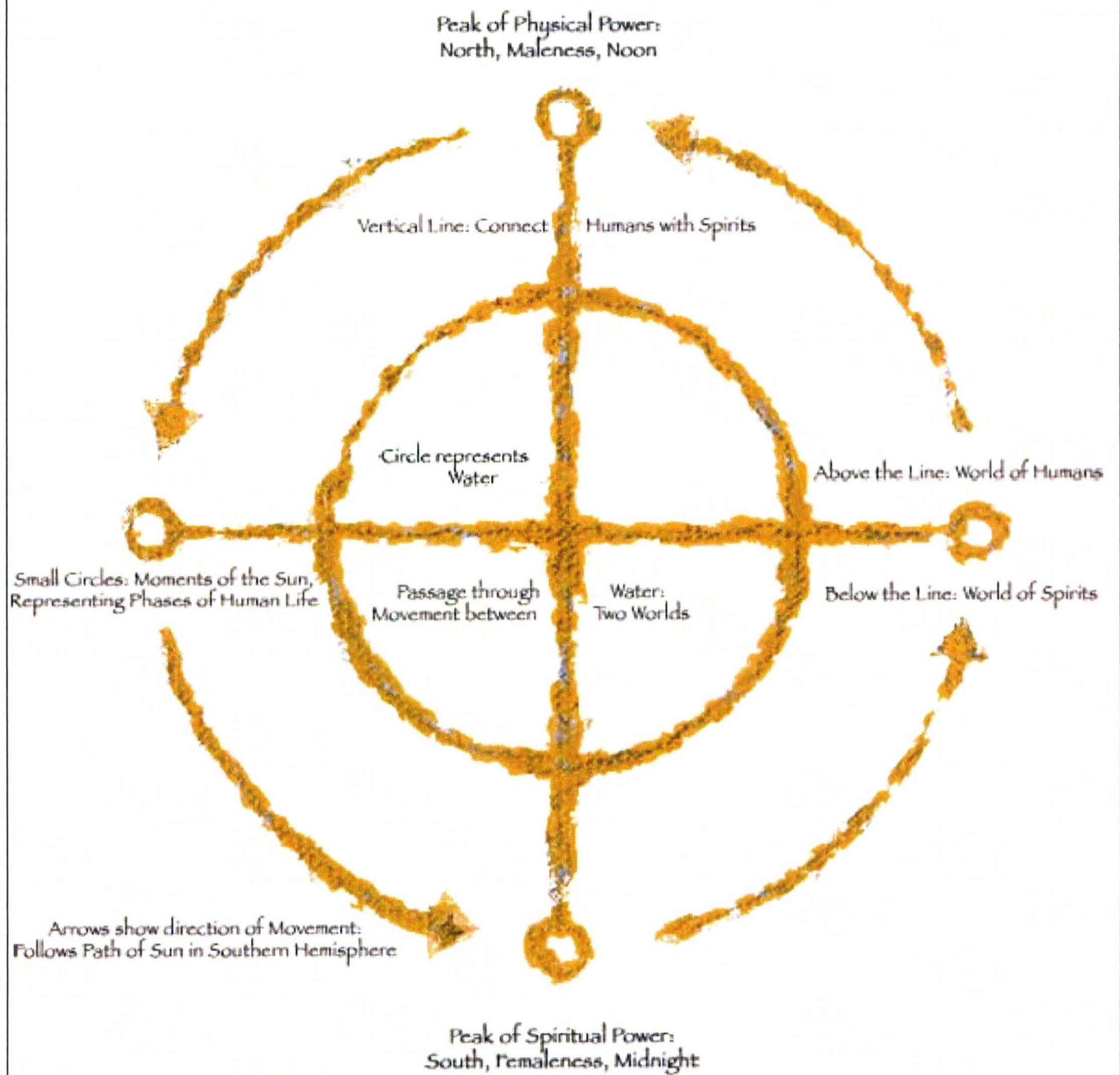
Central locations and cardinal directions are significant contexts that may correspond with the BaKongo cosmogram and the symbolism of the axes and quadrants that comprise it (Figure 42). Perpendicular transects oriented with the cardinal directions that are cognized and expressed materially through a room or home (dividing the space into quadrants with chalk, ash or minkisi at axis termini – thus creating dikenga lines) have been interpreted, in African diasporic contexts, as representing this cosmogram (Brown 1994; Brown and Brown 1998; Fennell 2007c; Leone and Fry 1999, 2001; Thompson 1998:41). These four moments of the sun (sunrise, sunset, noon and midnight) would also have meaning in Yoruban religious practices wherein four altars are situated at each of the four cardinal directions for supplication to the Orisa (Fennell 2007c:223).<sup>30</sup> At the Carroll House in Maryland and in other African diasporic contexts further south, particularly on plantation sites, the symbolic importance of northeastern corners and sills reflecting symbolically charged cardinal directions and room or structure perimeters has been evidenced by patterns in material culture, including minkisi, recovered from these contexts (Franklin 2001; Leone and Fry 1999, 2001; Ruppel et al. 2003; Samford 1988; Young 1995). If such divisions were cognized at this home in Rear Monastery, then the knife was roughly centrally located at the north on the north-

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<sup>30</sup> Yoruban deities (Thompson 1983:17).



# The Bakongo Cosmogram



**Figure 42.** Depiction of the BaKongo Cosmogram. Image courtesy Dr. Janet Woodruff.



south transect (or perhaps dikenga line), and the iron and ceramic at the northeast, which is the quadrant associated with birth or beginning that stems from rebirth coming from the spiritual world (Thompson 1998:40-41). As such, it is the most appropriate quadrant in which to call upon the strength of ancestors and spirits (Leone and Fry 1999).

That these objects were embedded in a construction layer may indicate their inclusion as part of the rooting of the resident(s) or setting up of the home. This might reflect a combination of European beliefs, wherein new buildings are blessed or ritually opened, and West African beliefs, wherein spirits must be moved with living people who move from one place to another (Fennell 2007; Jones 1998:106). In a discussion of West African water spirit rituals, Brown noted a Kongo proverb that states, "where your ancestors do not live, you cannot build your house" (Brown 2000). The objects so positioned at BjCj-29, when interpreted in accordance with an Africentric interpretive perspective, could indicate someone may have been moving spirits with them to a new home.

There are two other possible Africentric explanations for these items in these contexts wherein the depositors may have sought to draw upon spiritual powers to address a specific concern for the resident(s). The first derives primarily from Yoruban religious tradition. In Yoruban religion, metal (most frequently iron), is significant for protection, though it is also used in BaKongo minkisi (Brown 1994; Brown and Brown 1998; Fennell 2007c:223; McDavid 1998). The two iron objects, the knife fragment and other iron fragment, may have served as conjuring items to mobilize spiritual protection



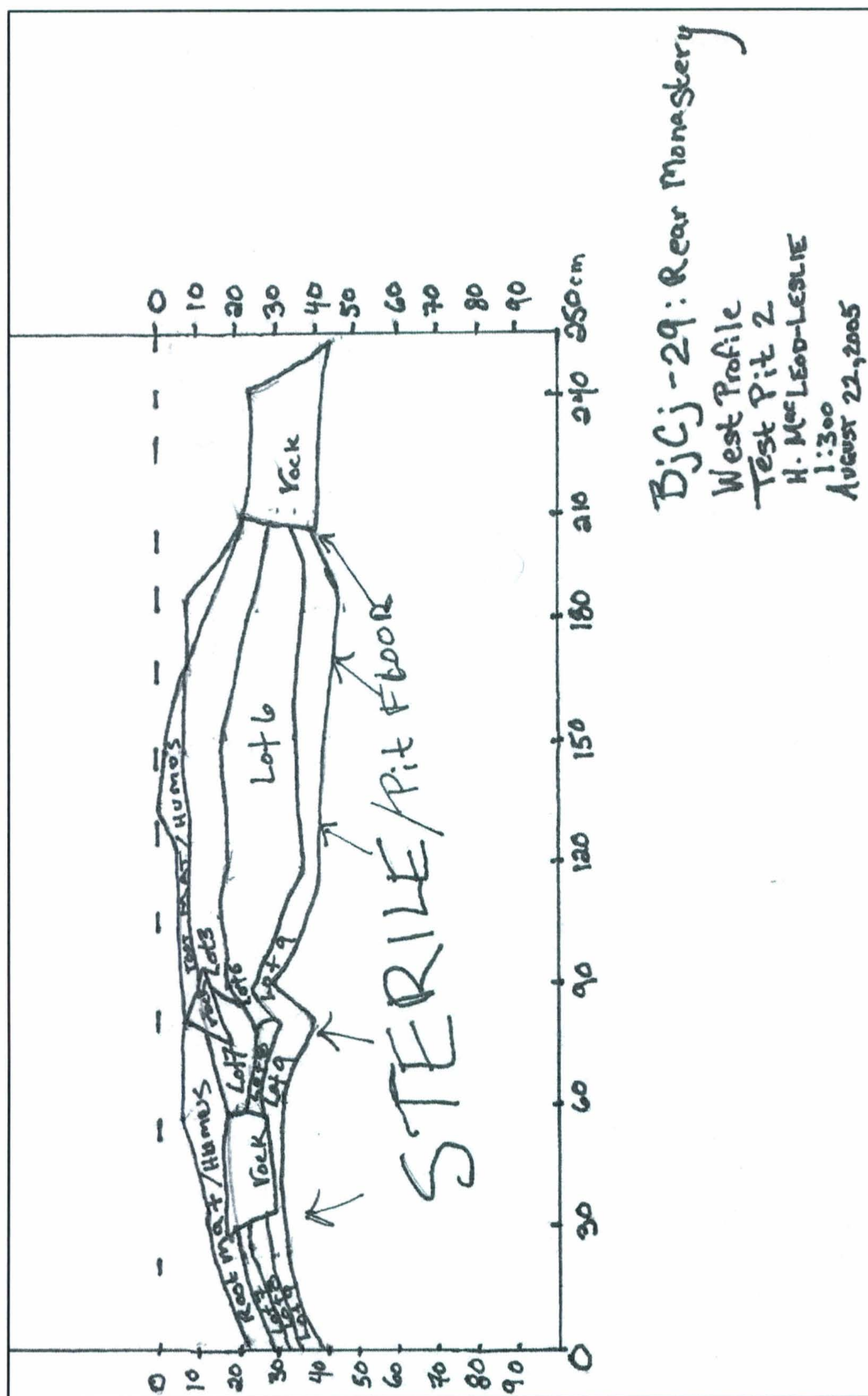


Figure 43. Profile drawing of west wall of Test Pit 2, BjCj-29 (Rear Monastery).



**Table 3.** BjCj-29 (Rear Monastery) – Deposit / Lot Descriptions

<b>Lot No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Event</b>
Lot 1	Littermat / root mat / humus – no artefacts	Modern accumulation
Lot 2	Sandy loam, mottled brown with some orangey-reddish with artefacts	Abandonment / Post abandonment accumulation
Lot 3	Gravelly orangey sandy clay with artefacts	Occupation
Lot 4	Darker brown loamy sand with charcoal and artefacts (in 0N11E/Test Pit 1)	Occupation
Lot 5	Rocks (in 7.5N11E/Test Pit 2)	Construction
Lot 6	Red-orange sandy, silty clay mottled redeposit – limited artefacts	Construction
Lot 7	Darker brown sandy-loamy soil, some gravel (but not as much as Lot 3) with artefacts	Occupation
Lot 8	Brown sandy, silty loam with artefacts	Construction / Occupation
Lot 9	Original sod? Medium-light brown sandy, clay soil	Pre-occupation



for the home and its inhabitants. The individual who placed the knife fragment could have been seeking protection from human or spiritual foes. The aggression that the knife symbolizes has also been represented by guns, both objects having obvious characteristics as weapons in protecting the conjurers (McDavid 1998; Thompson 1983). At the Curer's Cabin on the Levi Jordon Plantation, Kenneth Brown found a number of iron objects, but among the most relevant here was "...a concentration of small iron wedges, which could be described as contrived fragments of a knife blade..." located at the eastern point of the horizontal axis (Fennell 2007c:221). Brown cites Whitney Battle in suggesting that such Yoruban amulets are usually used to ward off evil and defend the interior of a space (McDavid 1998). It may make sense, then, that such a tool would be placed at the front entrance where outsiders are likely to enter or approach one's home. The iron (poker?) fragment covered by the ceramic piece at the northeastern corner might be another part of the conjuring act that would supply spiritual reinforcement of the protective ritual evidenced by the knife fragment at BjCj-29. That this element is in the northeastern corner and makes use of an overturned ceramic cover piece reflects the general form of a BaKongo nkisi. Interestingly, if this explanation were correct, then it would demonstrate the blending of Yoruban and BaKongo beliefs in Nova Scotia's African diasporic culture in the use of both an amula and an nkisi.

Another alternative explanation, again Africentric, is that they were used in a healing practice. In folklore collected from older generations of African Americans, a knife could be used to "cut the pain" (Whitehead 2006 pers. comm.; Leone and Fry 1999, 2000; Puckett 1926; Hurston 1935). Midwives used them, placing them below beds



during labour and childbirth (Orser 2001; Whitehead 2006 pers. comm.). If knives were being used to “cut the pain” in other African diasporic communities, perhaps they were also being used in Rear Monastery for this same reason. The placement in a central, front-facing orientation could indicate that the medicine called upon spiritual resources for healing (Leone et al 2005:585). The curved form of the iron piece may, in keeping with principles of sympathetic medicinal practices, mimic the shape of the body part or affliction it is purported to treat. As such, it may represent the deformation and joint thickening associated with arthritis. This would have been a common health issue for many involved in heavy physical labour, and particularly for African diasporic individuals since they were so often engaged in the heaviest work. Gladys Marie Fry’s extractions of magical and spiritually significant material culture references from African American folklore record the use of bent iron pokers specifically in association with rheumatism (Leone and Fry 1999:380). The ceramic cover piece found over the iron is reminiscent of minkisi deposits found on so many other African diasporic sites that the likelihood of its identification as such should not be excluded (Figure 43). Located directly behind a massive cornerstone, the location seems to be one meant not to be disturbed and the brown transfer printed ironstone seems to have served as a cap for the iron.

The pharmaceutical bottles collected from the yard feature at BjCj-29, briefly discussed in Chapter 7, suggest that at least one resident might have been suffering from rheumatism or arthritic pain. The only complete bottle was for Dr. Dow’s Pure



Sturgeon Oil Liniment and the other bottles appear of similar form, though perhaps for other products or brands. Liniments are substances applied topically for the treatment of muscle stiffness and joint pain. The efficacy of Dr. Dow's concoction is unknown, though if it were ineffective or the individual's pain too great, he or she may have turned to whatever method they thought might help, including folk healing methods. As the affliction could have developed before the builder constructed this home, perhaps they embedded a, hopefully, more powerful medicine to assist the liniments in common usage. The residents of this home in Rear Monastery might have remembered or been told of old ways – healing traditions brought from warmer climes with the Black Loyalists or earlier with the enslaved and free Africans and their descendents who also settled in this region.

If the iron and ceramic, together, formed an nkisi, it was small by comparison with those found on other African diasporic sites. This may, however, indicate the transformation of the knowledge where the other usual objects in an nkisi (crystals, fabric, paper, etc.), have been forgotten or new ideas are being fused with old (it may have been a local version of an nkisi). While minkisi are being found more frequently in the archaeological record of the African diaspora now that interpretive approaches allow for them, they have exhibited some variability in their composition. What seems to define them are their contexts (relative to a possible cosmogram or cardinal directions, and clandestine locations), general basic contents and, not infrequently, laying beneath a white ceramic cap (Historic Annapolis Foundation 2001). The ceramic may be important as a vessel or for its composition of clay, an important part of many minkisi, or its white





**Figure 44.** Mouth blown, hand tooled panel bottle bearing the embossing Dr. Dow's // Pure // Surgeon Oil // Liniment, c. 1880 – 1915 (Power 2007).



colour (Young 1996:145). The knife in conjunction with the curved iron fragment and ceramic cover in the same soil lot and their coincidence in an otherwise culturally sterile layer, together suggest that an Africentric interpretation is plausible.

#### *Other Objects of Note*

Fennell reminded us that Africentric interpretations of ritual beliefs and practices in material culture analyses must not only be correctly, but very carefully thought out. Isolated objects that can be made to fit a hypothesis do not, alone, prove a hypothesis but rather, are a “laundry list” (Brown and Brown 1998). Quantification of a constellation of contextualized items is essential. The above items work from the perspectives of both content and context, but could fairly be said to have been accidental. Two other items were recovered from BjCj-29 whose contexts are not as clearly significant because of seemingly unrelated materials found in the same general area, but their treatment does clearly indicate conscious or purposeful cultural modification that makes a strong argument for magico-religious intent. Taken with the possible amulets and nkisi, they may be considered to flesh out a constellation of items significant in Africentric spiritualism practices.

A small bone fragment with a hole pierced through it suggests that it was used as an amulet or charm. This, again, is seen in African diasporic practices to the south (Franklin 1998; White 1995). This bone is likely the distal end of a juvenile pig tibia and was drilled through, that is, it is not a naturally worn hole, nor the trace of another



animal's taphonomic impact on the material; the hole is a cultural modification (Matthew Betts 2007 pers. comm.). The worked bone artefact was collected from beneath the threshold of what appears to have been the front doorway, leading out onto the veranda area, at the northeastern corner of the house structure. The context, again, is suggestive: threshold, front entrance, northeastern corner. Beyond the potential significance of the object's collection context, the fact that a juvenile pig bone is being culturally modified requires careful consideration. One might think it more desirable to see a pig through to adulthood as a larger food source, but perhaps the age is representative of an appropriated meal (no doubt the blame for loss of a young pig would be easy to cast onto a coyote or other such non-human predator). This has been noted in African diaspora oral history and archaeological research as a common practice (Genovese 1976:599-601; McKee 1988:80-81; Rawick 1977:395; Young 1997:17).

Bone or tooth charms and disks are known at many other African diasporic archaeological sites, as are occasional animal sacrifices (Brown and Brown 1998; Davidson et al. 2006; Edwards 1998:267; Fennell 2010a; Franklin 1998; Ruppel et al. 2003; Thompson 1998:54). They have been interpreted as bilongo in nkisi, personal charms or tools for conjure. The purpose of the object from Rear Monastery for the user can only be speculated upon at this point, however, its intended use may have been to be suspended on a cord and its size would have made it suitable to wear either around one's neck or elsewhere, comfortably, in a discrete location. It is possible that it was used as an





**Figure 45.** Drilled bone artefact, fashioned from the distal end of a juvenile pig tibia (identified by Dr. Matthew Betts, Curator, Atlantic Provinces Archaeology, Canadian Museum of Civilization).



object of conjure, where drilling / piercing / breaking is an oft-seen modification (Fennell 2010a:35).

The context of the bone object's recovery, while in the northeastern corner of the structure, at its perimeter and at what is considered a doorway threshold, is not clearly definable as a place of purposeful deposition. Many artefacts were recovered from this location and several other deposits were identified in this more stratigraphically distinct area (specifically lots 7 and 8). This object was found in lot 7 which appears to correspond with a later period of the single occupation of the site. Indeed, the object may have been lost and found its way into this deposit as many charred wood and melted glass fragments were also found in this deposit, though not all objects were heat altered. Indeed, this object was not calcined and so was not heat altered and therefore constituted a separate source of material than the heat altered materials. In short, if the object was worn, the strand on which it hung could have broken, unbeknownst to its wearer. While its broad context is persuasive for an Africentrically-significant interpretation, the mixture of material culture in this location (at the southwestern corner of Test Pit 2) does not allow a clear determination of a purposeful deposit. Therefore, the most clearly definable elements of its interpretive value in this analysis relate to its cultural modification and possible use rather than its context of recovery.

In addition to the archaeological evidence for use of bone objects in magico-religious or spiritual practice from elsewhere, there is folklore evidence for uses of bone charms and objects of conjure amongst African diasporic Nova Scotians. These uses



include love magic and conjure charms (Fauset 1931:80,192,196). For the former use, it has been considered important to “fasten it in her [or his] clothes”, that is the one to be wooed would have worn the object. In each of the three noted references, the bones used are those of a toad and have been obtained by burying the toad in a box inside an ants’ nest and allowing the ants to eat the flesh from the bones. It is not clear whether the toad need be alive or dead when it is buried.

While there are some obvious differences in the bone object from Rear Monastery and those referenced in the folklore collection, an important point to note is that magico-religious traditions were known in African diasporic Nova Scotian populations and in these practices bones were used. In Fauset’s collection of folklore from Nova Scotia there are also references to the use of bottles, pins, burying of items and placing them within walls, withcraft, snakes and herbal medicines – all elements that have been identified as significant to varying degrees in many different African diasporic traditions. Indeed, this collection of folklore, in which 53 of the 75 informants were African diasporic individuals, is evidence that beliefs and practices of spiritualism were held by African Nova Scotians. It also suggests that a systematic effort to research the ethnogenesis of the beliefs collected here is both a promising and necessary project. For the bone object from Rear Monastery, such an effort may help narrow down the specific use for which it was made, but important to this study is merely that it was made, which implies purpose and intent.



A pipe bowl (Figure 46), found to the rear of the house (at the southeastern corner), has four notches carved into the rim of the bowl. These create a nexus at the centre of the bowl, where the smoke exits the pipe. The side of the pipe bowl is also modified. Once cleaned and closely inspected, it is notable that all of the scores on its exterior are oriented in the same direction. When coupled with the rim notching, the scores on the outside of the bowl may be interpreted as decorations (very organic-looking decorations, but purposeful nonetheless). This echoes evidence from other African diasporic sites where pipes of European manufacture have been decorated with West African-inspired designs (Emerson 1988; Orser 1998; Thompson 1998:37). These have included elaborate patterns of chevrons, bands, dots and lines.

The notching is reminiscent of cruciforms and, in particular, coin notching seen in the American south (Figure 18). Someone put effort into modifying this pipe bowl and no other pipe bowl fragments were collected from the site. It may simply represent someone's boredom or distraction. However, in many ways the pipe bowl seems special and the similarity of its rim treatment to objects of spiritual significance on other African diasporic sites, such as the notched coin from Locust Grove, suggests the plausibility of an Africentric interpretive perspective. Cruciforms have been found on the bottoms of bowls, spoon bowls, utensil handles and other such objects in African diasporic magico-religious contexts (Fennell 2010a; Ferguson 1992; Franklin 2004; Kelso 1984). The relationship of the pipe *bowl* to other *bowl* contexts of cruciforms and the quadrant





**Figure 46.** BjCj-29:387, decorated pipe bowl. Note uniformity of orientation of incised marks on outside of bowl and the form of incisions on its rim.



notching of circular forms, like the circle of the pipe bowl's rim, is a justifiable reason for including it as evidence of Africentric beliefs and practices in Rear Monastery.

In my previous discussion of *minkisi*, the importance of clay as an earthly element and mineral representation was mentioned in relation to the significance of earthenware *minkisi* caps. Kaolin, or white ball clay, also held special potential for uses in West African spiritual rituals not only because of its composition but because of its colour. Kaolin, chalk and ash have been identified in material expressions of spiritual practices on African diasporic sites, perhaps most notably in the archaeological records from the Levi Jordan and Locust Grove plantations. Recovered white material has included bits of chalk and ash as parts of *minkisi* or *amuets* and a white clay marble marked with an incised "x". White is significant in both Yoruban and BaKongo spiritual traditions (Thompson 1983:11, 134 – 138). White is the colour of the spirit world and white powder is used to cast the cruciform or cosmogram upon the ground as a ritual opening in BaKongo magico-religious and spiritualism practices (Fennell 2007b:131, 144). That some West African style decorated pipes are made of white substances, kaolin or white ball clay, may have been an important factor in their consumption and use in African diasporic spiritualism traditions.

Circular forms can be interpreted as representative of the BaKongo cosmogram. A full BaKongo cosmogram includes a circle around the cruciform. The inscribing of "x"s and quarter notching could be an effort to reinforce the spiritual and cosmological significance of the circle's form; an opportunity found (Fennell 2007b:131). The



combined elements of instrumental symbolism possible to infer in this one object, the modified pipe bowl from Rear Monastery, find credence not only in an Africentric interpretation, however, but in a First Nation sense of meaning as well.

In his discussion of colonoware, a type of low fired earthenware seen to be the product of both Africentric and First Nations' cultural knowledge, Leland Ferguson suggests that there was recognition of instrumental symbols common to both African diasporic and First Nations' (or Native American) individuals (Ferguson 1999:127). The meanings of water, clay and circle and cross motifs, while different between the two groups, were common to them in their usage for spiritual purposes. Since both populations were subjected to similar treatments in slave and colonial societies, and bear a great deal of common history since the arrival of Europeans in the Americas, the opportunities for cultural blending and sharing of cultural knowledge have been abundant. This circumstance, then, may be relevant to the interpretation of the pipe bowl from Rear Monastery.

In Chapter Two, I briefly presented some of the experiences and observations from my field survey research wherein I encountered people whose phenotypic visages looked First Nation, though their surname indicated African diasporic heritage, and vice versa. These anecdotes come from my work all across the province of Nova Scotia and, indeed, I continue to hear from people exploring this blending of ethnicities in their own heritage. I noted earlier that my research in Rear Monastery took me into many lives where this blending was obvious and many residents here were very kind and open in



discussing the strong relationship between the two cultural groups in the area. This requires that I acknowledge the possibility that the modified pipe bowl from Rear Monastery may represent a moment of ethnogenic bricolage in practice.

The research into African diasporic modification of pipes has demonstrated that they were modified according to an Africentric aesthetic. Their inclusion in African diasporic graves may represent items last used by the deceased that must be included in their grave, as was an African and African diasporic custom (Thompson 1983:134). Breaking such objects may, in a funereal context, represent a containing of spiritual essence. The BjCj-29 site is not funereal, but rather domestic, and this pipe bowl is more than decorated, it is transformed into an object of spiritualism or conjure with its cruciform-like notching.

In Mi'kmaw culture, pipes bear great significance in spiritual practices, in showing respect both for fellow humans and for spiritual beings. Pipe Bearers or Pipe Carriers are healers who are imbued with special knowledge and capacity for the responsibility of this cultural honour. Use of a sacred pipe allows its bearer to communicate with spiritual beings for guidance, respect, wisdom and caretaking. This is not unlike the more beneficent roles of amulas and minkisi.

In this place, Rear Monastery, the common cultural heritage of the African diasporic and Mi'kmaw populations is remembered and, indeed, visible. It then seems probable that an individual living within this cultural landscape, who may have been



engaged in spiritual practices of seemingly Africentric origins, may also have blended Mi'kmaw notions of appropriate and powerful spiritual medicines and practices with those from Yoruba, Kongo and African America. The pipe bowl may be a multivalent object, recognizable for both its Africentric and Mi'kmaw meanings.

### To Conclude

Time and again, the story is the same – artefacts, contexts, and African diasporic presence. Each of the objects from Rear Monastery discussed above has correlates on other African diasporic sites that have been both collected from similar contexts and interpreted as symbolically-charged objects according to Africentric beliefs. Likewise, these belief systems are known to be strongly spiritual and bespeak an ethnoculture that continued to maintain a strong bond between living and spiritual planes, negotiating this connectedness through material culture. There is good reason to believe the same thing was happening at Rear Monastery.

African Nova Scotian folk healing methods and other elements of culture, like those of many Nova Scotian communities, doubtlessly draw from a variety of origins on both sides of the Atlantic. For African Nova Scotians, their unique cultural history in this region, including the sociopolitical pioneering of a landscape of freedom as Black Loyalists and African diasporic people, provided them with many sources of tradition from which they could draw. African threads, African American threads, military threads, British imperial threads, North Atlantic threads, Mi'kmaw threads, and Nova



Scotian threads have all been woven together to form a unique fabric from which African Nova Scotians cut their cultural cloth (Thompson 1983:208).

The sharing of traditional knowledge between African diasporic and First Nations' populations is an accepted phenomenon and Nova Scotia was no exception (Katz 1997; Madden 2009). Earlier, the co-location of Black and Mi'kmaw communities was examined and, with respect to the ethnogenesis of African Nova Scotian culture, it is likely that this resulted in impacts on traditions less visible to the broader Nova Scotian public. What is seen in the archaeology at Rear Monastery as possible folk treatments for rheumatism or pain could derive from this interaction or blending of African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw knowledge bases or may derive from African diasporic traditions alone.

Laura Wilkie has postulated that the post-bellum period in the United States witnessed a return to traditional Africentric healing practices or, perhaps, a less veiled use of them (2000:234). The site examined at Rear Monastery which has yielded these persuasive pieces of evidence for Africentric traditions appears to date from the later part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. If these items were part of a post-bellum cultural resurgence or reclamation, I would think it less likely to find them in construction events but, rather, in more visible contexts than those in the veranda area. The African diasporic dynamics of post-bellum American society might have existed at an earlier time in Atlantic Canada, in the spirit of blacks' freedom in the Loyalist period after the American Revolution. Thus, the local circumstances of freedom would have, at



this earlier time, produced a local version of African diasporic culture and practice not completely unlike the resurgence or emergence of Africentric folk practices that Wilkie has identified, but not exactly like them either. A key point in Wilkie's suggestion is that, when greater societal freedom was available, African diasporic individuals either embraced more, or more frequently practiced, Africentric traditions. In Nova Scotia, despite the racism that continues to this day, African diasporic settlers likely experienced a similar phenomenon that has resulted in Africentric elements in the local variation of African diasporic culture, whether they are recognized as such by outsiders or not.

If correctly interpreted as objects related to Africentric traditions of spiritualism, magico-religion or folk healing, then the presence of this material evidence and the practices to which it is related suggest a perseverance of Africentric knowledge, handed down through generations in this place. This, consequently, suggests that the sense of ethnocultural identity held by African Nova Scotians is also, in part, Africentric.



## Chapter 9 – Conclusion

### Evidence of Africentric/African Diasporic Identity

The search for an African diasporic ethnocultural identity in the archaeology of African Nova Scotians has been a fruitful endeavour; providing alternative meanings and interpretations of commonplace items that, on other African diasporic sites, have been misidentified in some past interpretations. While no single Africentric ethnocultural identity emerged or was consistently distributed across the African diasporic communities in Nova Scotia, this research demonstrates that there is evidence that elements of such an identity did exist here. The best evidence, however, may not be in the aesthetic choices enacted in the circles of household fashions of the day (e.g., ceramic tablewares) as Wilkie and Farnsworth have suggested using their Bahamian data. Rather, it is to be more easily found in the construction of the homesphere and the private and semi-private spaces created within an Africentric spatiality; a habitus. At varying scales, the households', homesteads' and communities' cultural landscapes have demonstrated that positioning a research project's interpretive approach toward the inside of an ethnic group's perspective on material culture (use of an object as opposed to manufacturer's intent) has a profound impact on the ability to investigate ethnocultural identities archaeologically. That is, in order to truly have the opportunity to see what is in the archaeological record, one must allow for an past agents' ethnicity through adoption of an



Africentric interpretive perspective on material culture, including the spaces and places created and left behind by African diasporic individuals.

The development and persistence of an African Nova Scotian ethnic identity, distinct from non-African-descended Nova Scotians, is a fact. Whitfield (2006) cites the establishment in 1854 and subsequent growth of the African United Baptist Association (AUBA) as evidence of motivation to be distinguished as a distinct ethnic community, and realization of that goal. The broader importance of the AUBA as a structuring body in African Nova Scotian culture, beyond being a simple network of churches, is identified clearly in the opening paragraph of the “History” section of the AUBA website:

The AUBA has played an important part in nurturing the spirit for many Black Nova Scotians. This organization is far more than a religious organization; it has served as a centre for education opportunities, a trailblazer for social change and remains a strong voice for hundreds of black families throughout Nova Scotia (AUBA 2010).

This position indicates the organizing force that the AUBA has been in public realms of African Nova Scotia and the rest of the Atlantic Canadian reach of the organization. It also highlights the central and prominent role of spirituality in African diasporic culture in Atlantic Canada, because religion is the foundation of the AUBA. In discussing identity, I have differentiated between the publicly negotiated ethnic identity of African Nova Scotians, based largely on skin colour and the differences between black



and white social groupings such as the AUBA, and a more privately negotiated layer of identity. I have described the latter as ethnocultural identity, based on practices and traditions transmitted and carried out within the household and yard space – the habitus – through routinized practices. Whitfield's treatment of identity pertains to the former category of identity construction, however his conclusions and assertions are important to the argument made here that distinct ethnocultural identities, derived from the African diaspora, were present in Nova Scotia and became part of African Nova Scotian culture that persists today. These identities carried facets of ethnicity and that ethnicity influenced the fundamental grammar of black culture in Nova Scotia. It does not necessarily follow that every cultural group whose distinct identity is publicly negotiated will have a privately negotiated counterpart. For instance, reclamation of cultural heritage and identification with such at public celebrations (e.g., Highland games, ceilidhs, powwows) are often due solely to the surname or cultural affiliation of individuals who do not practice Irish or Scottish or First Nations' ethnocultural traditions as a matter of daily life or routinized behaviour.

Whitfield demonstrates that both the development of, and purposeful efforts to publicly assert, an ethnic identity as part of a public social identity framework, are clearly present in Nova Scotia. This indicates that Africentricity and difference based on longterm, African-derived heritage were still part of the sense of identity transported to Atlantic Canada within the people. This suggests that the possibility for a private cultural counterpart of the publicly negotiated facet of ethnic identity was also present. Of note is that this took place when being black and being of African descent were not in vogue



and, at times, were dangerous<sup>31</sup>. This last factor may help account for the cultural landscape at Delap's Cove.

### Agency in Africentrism

Agency connects public negotiation of a group ethnic identity and a privately-negotiated ethnocultural facet of an individual's identity. In other words, not every African Nova Scotian person who sought or held membership in, for example, the AUBA (or similar ethnically-defined social groups) participated, consciously or subconsciously, in Africentric ethnocultural practices nor operated according to routinized Africentric behaviours. Each African Nova Scotian family, indeed, each individual, drew upon a different set of experiences, including enculturation within a household and a community, from which to fashion their identity. At a time when virulent race-based abuse and oppression were daily factors in the lives of black people, whether individuals either had to suffer or could escape these horrible experiences and mitigate the effects of them on ethnocultural identity practices and/or routinization, would vary significantly from person

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<sup>31</sup> "Sundown" law was still in force in the mid-twentieth century in many Nova Scotian communities. An elder gentleman from Jordantown, Digby County relayed to me a story from his young adulthood in Digby in the 1960s. He remembered scrambling to get home from work in downtown Digby during the failing afternoon light of winter. I asked if he would actually have been thrown in jail if he'd been detected on the streets after dark to which he responded, "If I was lucky. I was more likely to have been beaten up" (Informant 4, July 2004).



to person dependent upon other aspects of their identity such as gender, wealth, age and social position.

Whitfield supports this notion, writing that, "...the black community did not agree about religion or politics... [and the] ...community developed by... [African Nova Scotians] represented a specific example of a much larger trend that scholars have identified of 'creative tension between social solidarity and difference among African Americans' " (2006:91). This reinforces the likelihood that what has been found and interpreted as potential material evidence of Africentric folk or spiritual practices and their attendant beliefs should not be expected to be evident in all archaeological sites associated with African Nova Scotians' past. Not all members of Nova Scotia's black communities agreed on issues of religion and politics. Agency was an important ethnogenic force throughout the African diaspora. Many, but not all, African diasporic group members were connected with African cultures during the period of legalized enslavement, and immediately after it, by skin tone, personal heritage, choice and/or routinized ethnocultural practices. The experiences of individuals in local circumstances, though, elicit a variety of ethnogenic responses, such as the degree to which a double consciousness might affect consumers' choices in a racist market or the sharing of knowledge and community bonding with nearby or related First Nations' communities.

Material evidence such as that found at Rear Monastery may not be widespread at African diasporic sites in Atlantic Canada, but the interpretations presented here offer important lessons to future researchers in the region. They demonstrate that not only may



such evidence be present but that, unless an Africentric interpretive perspective is adopted in the theoretical grounding of one's research design, the evidence that is there may go undetected and misinterpreted. The cultural messages of African diasporic peoples may be in plain view but remain unread and unconsidered and that would not be good archaeology.

### Properly Objectifying

Language is a powerful tool in guiding thought and understanding. The choice of one word over another can change how the same body of data is understood and used. Akin to Marshall McLuhan's idea of *extensions*, words are technology and, as such, we manipulate their application to change our own capacities (McLuhan 1964). The adoption of an Africentric interpretive perspective by archaeologists suddenly changes our understanding of an object from garbage to medicine or religious medium. The capacity that is being gained is not only the ability to achieve fuller insight into an object's meaning and people's pasts, but to shed ingrained racist and/or Eurocentric patterns of thinking and, perhaps more critically, attendant patterns of analysis. To such an end, very practicably, this new reality must affect the classification systems for artefact data. Rigid functional categories used in the identification of objects within databases must be augmented to accurately reflect the meaning of the object to the agent who last *used* the object and how he or she cognized its role in practice. As such, an incomplete iron fragment could also be categorized as a folk conjuring tool, healing object or some such comparably named class of artefact. One class could not replace the other as there would have to be opportunity for modification of the implied use should future research



determine that an inferred meaning was erroneous or suspect. However, identification of an object which relies on the function for which the original manufacturer of the item intended leaves no room to understand how the end user may have appropriated the object. For archaeological interpretation, the new, alternative or expanded ideological framework of the meaning and end use of the object and the context in which it came to be part of the archaeological record must predominate.

The site at Delap's Cove did not yield any specific small finds or private contexts related to folk or spiritual traditions and ethnocultural identity, illustrating that if such evidence is not there, the adoption of an Africentric interpretive perspective does not reconfigure the data to create Africentric evidence. For example, the presence of two annealed silver needles or pins in the boulder flue chamber beneath the hearth at BeDj-16 was not interpreted to be Africentric evidence as they were not found in a cluster nor were they found with any other bilongo-like artefacts. The context was tempting to read as of Africentric meaning, but no other bilongo-like items were found on cardinal axes or in the northeastern corner. Rather, the silver needles or pins were considered to have been lost by their owner or have fallen from the hearth detritus into the flue chamber. In addition to being an essential part of critically sound scientific methodology, critical analysis also may lend weight to the interpretation of the evidence recovered from the site in Rear Monastery which suggests Africentric spiritualism practices took place there.



### Africentric Landscapes

Landscapes constitute a plentiful record to understand the active agency inherent in African diasporic Atlantic Canadian decision-making in the past. This is particularly true of spatial organization outside of the purview of colonial governments and land surveyors. When Black Atlantic peoples were left to define their own pattern of settlement across landscapes, their choices, sociopolitical adaptations and motivating priorities are evident and distinct. The power to affect a choice need not be viewed as resistance, even when the choice suggests an option to *not* do something, such as living within view of a hegemonic group; agency is an equally viable explanation making the behaviour a choice rather than a simple reaction. The lesson of Delap's Cove pertains most directly to understanding blackness in Nova Scotia's past cultural landscapes. It sheds light on where to begin looking for black communities and how to cognize the structures of power and agency in landscapes that reflect not powerlessness, but rather economic power and (ethno)cultural strengths.

In Birchtown, the two complexes of rock mounds, which I hypothesize are Africentric commemorative structures, are located at the edges of the town area of the lands granted to the Black Loyalists. I further argue that their marginal locations indicate that the African diasporic settlers at Birchtown may have marked and protected the perimeter of their community with spiritual power structures, harnessing the strength of loved ones passed over into the spiritual world. Both complexes are also located close to watercourses, which is significant in Africentric spiritualism, as spirits travel underwater (Ferguson 1992; Thompson 1983).



Black communities survived shifts in their location while maintaining their centre, such as the shifting away from Tracadie Harbour for residents of Rear Monastery, Upper Big Tracadie and Lincolnville or from Digby and the Annapolis Basin by residents of Brindleytown to Acaciaville, Jordantown, Conway and Marshalltown, which demonstrates the internal sociostructural strength of these communities.

Whitfield identified a trend in Nova Scotia's African diasporic population in the 1800s toward not isolation but independence (2006:116). I believe an important precursor to this was the trend of earlier, rural African diasporic settlers to locate themselves within landscapes of self-determination, fostering the development of the imaginaries or cultural landscapes of their independence in Nova Scotia, thus increasing opportunities for ethnoculturally significant practices like those I have inferred at Birchtown, Delap's Cove and Rear Monastery. It was necessary that such spatial organization and ethnocultural practices take place in locations outside of white Eurocolonial or white Nova Scotian settlements. The incorporation of natural landscape features in demarcating community edges and mechanisms of a community's regional privacy demonstrates both the purposeful perception of the utility of these features as assets and the definition of various types of space (public, private, etc.).

#### Consumption and Taste in African Nova Scotian Communities

It is no surprise that ethnocultural identity seems most tangibly expressive in the homesphere, the environ of subconsciously routinized practices instilled as a fundamental



part of identity in childhood, a part of natural daily life – the habitus. The homesphere, and the creation of a proper and safe homesphere, is heavily influenced by ideas and practices learned in the close relationships of family and ethnocultural community that are reified in spatial organization. That these close relationships are also influenced by the oppressive conditions of a wider, racist society would, in the homes and communities included in this archaeological study, have served to intensify restriction of ethnoculturally-grounded practices and beliefs to the private fora of homespheres. Racist external pressures would also influence geographic independence or isolation of black communities. This may be part of the reason that the more Eurocentrically-rooted ceramic tableware fashions did not prove to be as clearly indicative of Africentric aesthetic in Nova Scotia as Wilkie and Farnsworth's dataset for The Bahamas; the requirement to consume goods in public fora wherein freedom from ethnic identification was unavailable fostered a double consciousness in consumption behaviour. That said, the preponderance of the green and pink decorative colour choices, the annular and mocha motifs, and the balance of blue and brown decorations in each unique Nova Scotian sample offer an argument for either their particular demonstration of an Africentric aesthetic or an Africentric rural one, either of which is an equally plausible explanation of the Bahamian data. The exploration of the Blucke assemblage, in terms of its contrasts with the Birchtown community sample and correlation with the Rear Monastery sample, represent the start of an interesting discussion of the individual African diasporic consumers in Nova Scotia and the markets in which they conducted their consumption activities. The old notion of emulative behaviour in black consumers'



choices was essentially ethnocentric and racist, and gave no consideration of the idea that a different significance might be accorded a consumed good than that which it was accorded at the time of manufacture.

Price seems to have been the deciding factor for most African Nova Scotian consumers, regardless of cultural backgrounds. Although the Blucke household had a greater abundance and diversity of wares, that more was consumed tells us that cost was a factor in the decision to consume, as much as a lack of means and an item's cost. However, Paul Mullins' conclusions regarding the consumption of brandname products and prepackaged goods offers an interesting alternative perspective that merits further exploration in Atlantic Canada (1999b:176,178). Indeed, as racism has been identified as an ongoing problem in Atlantic Canada, as provincial news outlets will attest, this aspect of consumer behaviour may offer a fruitful avenue for exploring the impacts of that long legacy in a tangible and quantitative way.

### Closing Remarks

This research has illuminated the role of natural landscape in the definition of cultural landscape by African diasporic people throughout the Black Atlantic World, of which Atlantic Canada is a part. As well, it has demonstrated the empowerment inherent in socioeconomically marginalized communities through their being categorized as spatially marginalized. In this way, non- marginalized communities may arrogantly assume themselves to be the centre of spatial arrangement and assume their place defines the preferred space. By ensuring that spaces exist which hegemonic social groups



consider to be non-places, places of significance to members of the socioeconomically marginalized can take root. Further, the scant detail of historical records of these places, usually in written or graphic documents authored by the socioeconomically powerful, leaves archaeology as the most detailed record of the existence of such places, and the best means of explaining them.

In the broad spectrum of African diasporic research, this dissertation may seem somewhat elementary. However, as the state of African diasporic recognition in Atlantic Canada, indeed across Canada, is so nascent and undeveloped by comparison with other areas of the diaspora, investigation of the most basic problems is essential to building a solid foundation upon which local scholars may advance the discourse. The local discourse needs an introduction to the application of African diaspora archaeological results and advancements as well as a point from which to begin the necessary critical review and comparative analyses within this region. This research begins to fill those needs. It is also necessary that the current research be positioned within the larger context of African diasporic archaeology and ensured that the arguments made herein demonstrate explicitly how they pertain to that wider discourse.



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