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Archaeological Investigations at Rowan Oak: Searching for Evidence of Antebellum Slavery

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Searching for Evidence of Antebellum Slavery

by

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ABSTRACT

Although best-known as the home of William Faulkner, Rowan Oak and a number of associated outbuildings were built by Robert Sheegog, a wealthy individual who owned multiple plantations and dozens of slaves. Sheegog held seven to nine slaves at Rowan Oak, renting some out to the University of Mississippi for labor-intensive tasks such as constructing the Lyceum and other campus buildings. Although it is known that enslaved individuals lived and worked on the property of Rowan Oak, the location of their housing remains a mystery. Through the use of archaeological survey methods, structural evidence beyond the extant buildings has been uncovered.

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Introduction

Making up approximately one-third of the pre-Civil War population in the South were over 4,000,000 African Americans, almost 95 percent of whom were enslaved (Pessen 1980:1121). It is often difficult to even imagine slavery as a practice, let alone one so common and ingrained in everyday nineteenth-century life. During that time, plantations were thriving thanks to the plethora of enslaved peoples held by the wealthy (Vlach 1997:151). It was the work of those enslaved peoples that supported the entire economic structure of the antebellum South (Parker 1970:1). Crops, specifically cotton, were the main source of profit-making as the South was notably the "great supplier" of cotton to the United States and northwestern Europe (Parker 1970:1). Looking past the hustle and bustle of plantation life, many wealthy individuals also held properties in close proximity to towns (Wilkie 1976:250). Within these townhomes were a number of enslaved individuals who presumably performed tasks for the house and property owned by the master (Wade 1964:4).

When working to understand any type of home built during antebellum times, it is important to remember that the full story of life, both in the house and on the property, is often impossible to see from the surface. Even in written documents from and about houses, there often are missing or hidden pieces. Zeirdan and Calhoun (1990:80) agree that "a traditional title search may reveal the owner but not the actual residents." The

stories of the slave owners, especially those who were of the upper class and white, often are relatively well-recorded in documents, scholarly research, and stories from their contemporaries and descendants. For the enslaved, though, stories are generally either nonexistent or exceedingly fragmentary.

Through the use of archaeological methods, both noninvasive and invasive, archaeologists have been able to uncover details of the everyday life of residents living on antebellum properties, highlighting the missing stories of the enslaved. Archaeologists began to focus on the archaeology of slavery in the 1960s (Singleton 1995:119). The first individual to use archaeological methods as a means of understanding the relationships between the enslaved and their owners was Charles H. Fairbanks (Singleton 2009:1). Learning information about slave life on historic properties has evolved since the time of Fairbanks to encompass many methods of uncovering and interpreting truths hidden beneath the soil (Singleton 2009:1). Even through employing archaeological methods, it may be impossible to identify aspects of individuals who lived there in the past (Zeirden and Calhoun 1990:80).

This thesis aims to present research on the usage of archaeological survey methods at the townhouse and surrounding property of Rowan Oak in Oxford, Mississippi (Figure 1) to identify the locations of potential outbuildings that may have been used by the enslaved during the antebellum period. Although best-known for its association with William Faulkner, Rowan Oak and several outbuildings were built in the late 1840s by Robert Sheegog, a wealthy individual who owned multiple plantations and dozens of slaves. During the time Sheegog owned and operated the estate, it was referred to as the "Sheegog Place" (Trotter 2017:16). For the purposes of this thesis, though, the

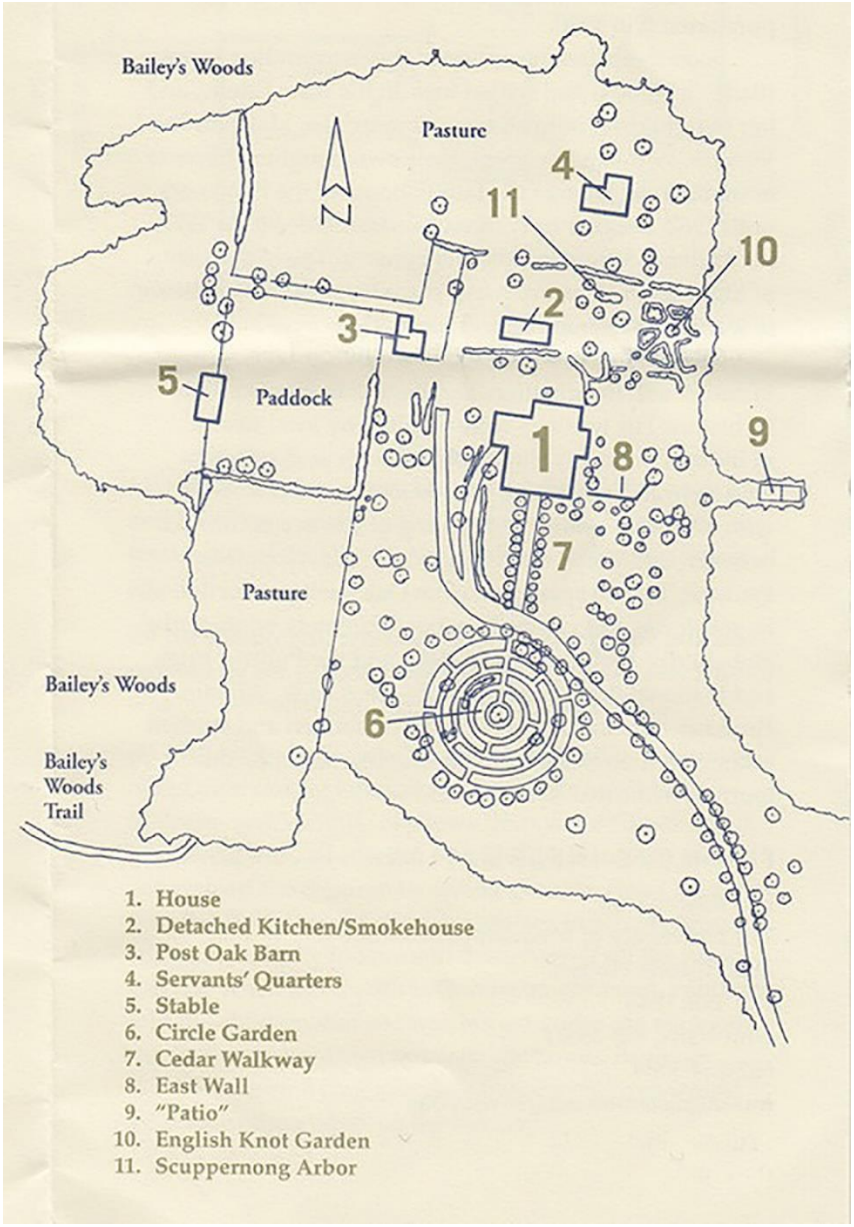

Figure 1. Map showing the main house and surrounding property of Rowan Oak (Rowan Oak 2015).

property will be referred to by its current name, which was given to the estate in the 1930s by William Faulkner, “Rowan Oak” (Trotter 2017:43).

This study, although focusing on only a small piece of the history of slavery, contributes valuable information to a variety of topics including a better understanding of slavery in the antebellum South, antebellum townhomes and their associated outbuildings, the relationships between the enslaved and their owners, and the relationships between the enslaved and their material culture. Most importantly, this thesis aims to give a voice to the enslaved individuals who lived and worked on the Sheegog estate. It is the stories of these individuals that have been silenced and hidden for far too long.

Methods used on this project included shovel testing and the excavation of test units during the fall of 2016 and 2018 in conjunction with a course entitled Public Archaeology: Theory and Method (Anth 413/613), which was offered to students at the University of Mississippi (UM). Noninvasive methods also connected with that course included a magnetometer survey during Fall 2016 and surface collection in Fall 2018. During the summer of 2018, the Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) at UM conducted a ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey as well. A portion of this work was supported by a grant from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at UM. A combination of data gathered from all aspects of this project points to evidence of potential structures that could have been actively used during the time Robert Sheegog owned the estate.

Background

The purpose of this section is to provide a larger context for understanding the usage of potential outbuildings at Rowan Oak while it was owned by Robert Sheegog. The archaeology of slavery has been a practice since the 1960s, and it is used to identify aspects concerning the lives of the enslaved (Singleton 2009:1). Known activities of the enslaved in both plantation and townhouse settings during the antebellum period contribute to the appreciation and interpretation of the ways in which the enslaved at Rowan Oak operated both on the property itself and on the early campus of UM.

While the archaeology of slavery started to grow in the 1960s, 10-20 years passed before professionals began to assess issues such as the cultural aspects of contact between European Americans and African Americans (Samford 1996:88). Through the years, professionals have been able to recover archaeological evidence of the heritage, diet, health, housing, literacy, social status, and means of resistance of the enslaved (Fountain 1995:67). Such an undertaking required the combined efforts of many disciplines including archaeology, history, anthropology, and folklore (Samford 1996:88). Thomas (1998:531) suggests that the archaeological aspect can be used to help understand social relations of the enslaved and their masters as well as the economics of slavery, which largely supported the entire economic system of the South (Parker 1970:1). It is through the study of material culture in combination with social histories and customs that the entire picture of slavery begins to be revealed.

Modern professionals who focus on the archaeology of slavery in the Deep South have chosen to excavate sites that served as bustling nineteenth-century plantations (Samford 1996:89). Within plantation settings, the majority of enslaved individuals worked in the fields (Harper 1985:123). In general, field hands were expected to wake up before dawn, prepare meals, feed livestock, and get to the fields before the sun rose (Blassingame 1979:250, 272). Upon returning from the fields at sunset, they would then care for livestock, put away tools, and cook for themselves (Blassingame 1979:250, 272). Depending on the crop(s) grown on the plantation, some slaves had other, more specific tasks such as ginning cotton or boiling sugar cane for hours at a time (Blassingame 1979:250). Some plantation owners employed a task system in which enslaved individuals were assigned specific tasks according to their age, sex, and health (Hudson 1997:3). In these situations, the masters would barely have a hand in day-to-day activities (Hudson 1997:3).

Enslaved individuals working in the domestic sphere, within the world of the master, formed a kind of elite group among the slaves (Hudson 1997:1). These domestic slaves consisted of nurses, cooks, body servants, butlers, chambermaids, coachmen, and artisans (Harper 1985:123). Unlike those working in the fields, the enslaved who lived and operated in and around the main house were subjected to the watchful eyes of the master and his family; therefore, these enslaved individuals often had to deal with every want, need, and care of those living in the house, including those of a sexual nature (Blassingame 1979:173, 251).

Although archaeologists have focused on plantations, enslaved people were certainly present in towns and cities as well (Vlach 1997:151). Slaves held within the

urban townhouse settings had a very different life than those within the more rural plantation settings. While plantation slaves worked the fields and took care of the house, those in cities were seen in public, sometimes more than their owners. In addition to serving as the face of businesses, many enslaved males were required to participate in physical labor such as working in factories and constructing roads, bridges, and other installations related to the development of cities, suggesting that at least some of these enslaved males were mechanically skilled (Wade 1964:4). Enslaved females typically held more domestic responsibilities centered around the estates and the people who lived on them, performing tasks that included cooking and baking, washing clothes, sewing, and gardening, while also staying close to the big house in case the master or his family required anything else of them (Wade 1964:28). Some enslaved females, namely those who were pregnant, were rented out to perform the same types of tasks within cities (Zaborney 2012:29, 31).

There is an overwhelming lack of archaeological evidence of enslaved peoples from townhouse contexts in the antebellum South. Because of this, many aspects of urban slavery during the antebellum period are unknown or unclear. Ellis and Ginsburg (2017:6) point to a few previous studies that focus on identifying living quarters of the enslaved within cities. Among those mentioned are John Michael Vlach's idea of the "plantation compound," an L or U-shaped wing attached to the back of townhouses in Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah that provided slaveholders with the ability to closely monitor enslaved servants (Ellis and Ginsburg 2017:5). Bernard L. Herman's investigations in Charleston led to the understanding that enslaved servants and workers would have been sleeping in utilitarian buildings including the kitchen, carriage houses,

wash houses, and even within the master's own house (Ellis and Ginsburg 2017:6). Catherine Bishir (2010:13) conducted a similar investigation at the Bellamy Mansion Compound in Wilmington, North Carolina and found that a detached building was specifically created and used for housing enslaved workers on the property. There are few commonalities among these studies, but one aspect is obvious: a universal construction for housing enslaved servants and workers did not exist.

In Oxford, Mississippi, it is known that a number of slaves were hired out to provide labor related to the construction of the UM campus (Figure 2) (UMSUWG 2015:21). The duties of slaves working on the UM campus consisted of clearing land for the original campus buildings, creating hand-fired clay bricks for all buildings, building a variety of original campus structures, and creating "Hilgard's Cut" (UMSUMG 2015:22). All of these tasks were massive undertakings that required a great deal of time and labor, especially Hilgard's Cut which provided a means for the Mississippi Central Railroad to come through Oxford with hopes that passengers would be provided with the opportunity to see the new university (Federal Writers' Project 2013:259). Presumably, these intense tasks would have been those of enslaved men, some skilled. The slaves who performed these tasks came from the homes of Jacob Thompson, J.E. Market, Robert Sheegog (Figure 3), and many other unnamed slave owners in the area (UMSUMG 2015:21). Enslaved women, perhaps, would have been required to build morning fires, clean, cook, wash clothes, and empty chamber pots (UMSUMG 2015:6).

As the owner of over 6000 acres of land in four counties and almost 90 slaves, Robert Sheegog could afford to hire out a few people for the construction projects of the original UM campus (Lawrence and Hise 1993:9). Sheegog came to America

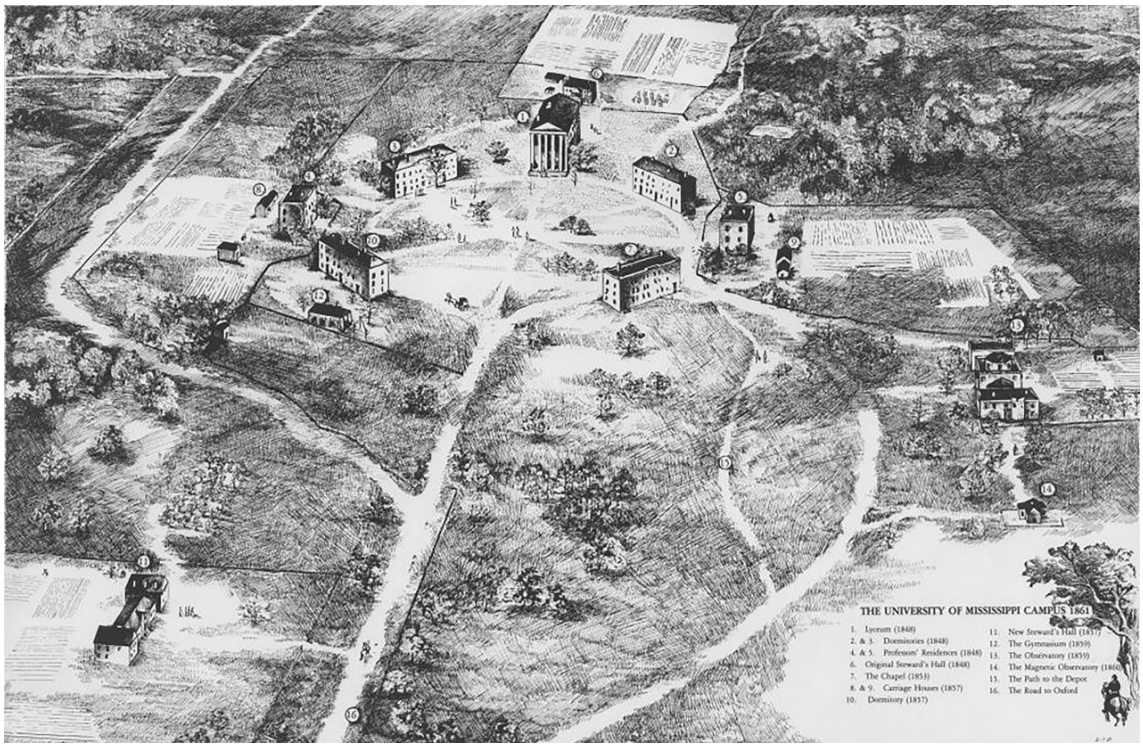

Figure 2. Illustration of the UM campus in 1861 (UMSRG 2016).

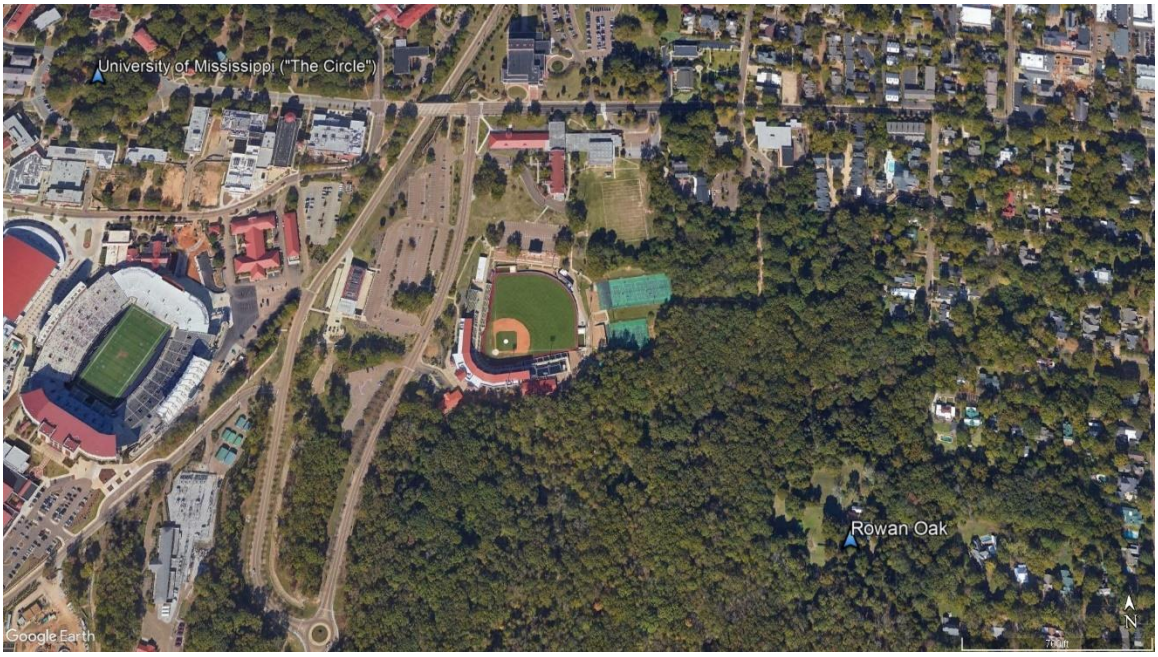

Figure 3. Aerial photograph showing the location of the University Circle in relation to Rowan Oak (Note: “The Circle” is the original part of campus).

from Ireland, first settling in Hickman County, Tennessee and then Oxford (Trotter 2017:15). Upon his move to Oxford, he received the deed to eight city lots along what is now known as Old Taylor Road (Trotter 2017:16). It is on this property that he had his home and associated outbuildings constructed in the year 1848 (Trotter 2017:16). The house was in the Greek Revival style, a common house type during this period, and was built by William Turner (Lawrence and Hise 1993:9). Outbuildings known at that time included a detached brick kitchen, a tenant house, and a stable (Rettig 1976:2).

What Rettig (1976:2) calls a kitchen, architectural historian Carl Lounsbury (2018:2) calls a slave quarter that was later converted into a kitchen by the Bailey family who acquired the house from the Sheegogs in 1872 (Figure 4). Lounsbury (2018:1) based this assumption on the architecture and past usages of similar buildings in northern Mississippi towns including Oxford, Holly Springs, and Columbus. When the property was listed for sale in 1870, a cistern, servants' rooms, kitchens, a carriage house, and a stable were advertised, contrasting with the earlier list of only three outbuildings (Lounsbury 2018:1, 9). Lounsbury (2018:1) suggests that the "servants' rooms" could have referred to the standing brick structure while one or more separate kitchens stood nearby. Many of the buildings listed in the advertisement of 1870 do not survive, but traces of them may come to the surface through archaeological investigation (Lounsbury 2018:9).

The exact number of slaves held in Oxford by Sheegog is unknown, but a few census records listing at least some of them survive. These include an 1850 census that lists nine slaves and an 1860 census that lists seven (Lounsbury 2018:10). In 1860, the census included an additional portion called a slave schedule that focused on the value of

Figure 4. Brick Structure located north of the main house at Rowan Oak, facing north.

personal property in addition to real estate (Schepp 2008:68). Listed in the slave schedule was the name of the owner and the unnamed enslaved individuals held on a given property (Schepp 2008:68). One of these slave schedules survives from the 1860 census at Rowan Oak, listing eight slaves along with their age, sex, and race (Lounsbury 2018:10).

Methods

The methods employed in the archaeological investigations at Rowan Oak were chosen in an effort to provide the most information in a limited time with limited participants. The aim of using these methods was to find any evidence that points to slavery on the property during the Antebellum period. Geophysical survey methods were used to suggest locations that might contain artifacts associated with enslaved servants, including evidence of potential outbuildings that no longer stand on the grounds. Shovel tests and test units were excavated in an effort to recover artifacts and suggest the ways in which they could have related to inhabitants of Rowan Oak over various time periods.

During the Fall semesters of 2016 and 2018, students at UM were offered a course entitled Public Archaeology: Theory and Method (Anth 413/613) that highlighted the public aspects of archaeology. In the 2016 session, the course was taught by Tony Boudreaux and Maureen Meyers, while the 2018 session was instructed by Boudreaux alone. While students learned basic laws that govern cultural resources management, the course also involved learning a great deal of hands-on archaeological methods, focusing on Phase I survey. This type of survey focuses on identifying archaeological resources present within a given area, typically for the purpose of determining eligibility for

inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, a distinction that Rowan Oak already has (Neumann et al 2010:93). Students had the opportunity to conduct a portion of Phase I survey, including systematic shovel testing and geophysical survey on the property of Rowan Oak. Public Archaeology Day was one of the major events held in conjunction with the course. This day was devoted to inviting the general public to the property of Rowan Oak for an opportunity to learn about archaeology, allowing students in the course to engage with visitors about archaeological topics. Students outlined the work they had done and demonstrated proper archaeological techniques.

The property on which Rowan Oak is located was chosen as the focus for the course in both years it was offered. Conducting archaeological fieldwork at Rowan Oak involved collaboration among several organizations that included the UM Slavery Research Group (UMSRG), CAR, and the University Museum which oversees Rowan Oak. The location of Rowan Oak was chosen mostly because of its past relationships between Sheegog's enslaved workers and the university, as well as the ease of access to the property.

Archaeological survey at Rowan Oak included both invasive and noninvasive methods. Invasive survey methods included both shovel tests and test units in the Fall of 2016 and shovel tests in the Fall of 2018. During both 2016 and 2018, shovel tests were spaced roughly 10-m apart along transects that were also spaced 10-m apart. Transects were distinguished by letter, and shovel tests along each transect were numbered. Shovel test pits typically were dug around 30-cm deep from the surface to sterile soil, allowing the recovery of any cultural material within the pit. Students worked in teams of two or more, with members of each team digging, recording information about the pits, and

screening using quarter-inch screens (Figure 5). All shovel test locations were shot in with the total station, allowing for them to be tied to the overall grid of the property and later to real-world coordinates. A total of 44 shovel tests were dug; of these, 24 were dug in 2016 and 20 in 2018. In 2016, six 1-x-1-m test units also were excavated, mostly to demonstrate proper archaeological techniques for the public during Public Archaeology Day.

Noninvasive methods used in the archaeological investigations at Rowan Oak consisted of a magnetometer survey in the Fall of 2016, a GPR survey by CAR in the Summer of 2018, and surface collecting in the Fall of 2018 (Figure 6). Geophysical survey methods typically are used to suggest the best locations for selective excavation and shovel testing. The magnetometer and GPR were chosen due to their ease of use and the relative openness of the property.

During the GPR survey, transects were spaced 50-cm apart, but at no set length due to the instrument's ability to track lengthwise movement on its own. The GPR works by systematically sending radar signals into the ground from a surface antenna, then measuring the strength and elapsed time of signal returns by means of its receiving antenna (Conyers 2006:136). When the signal hits any object in the ground and bounces back, the return will be relatively quick and strong, leading to an anomaly that can be further investigated with archaeological excavation (Conyers 2006:136).

The magnetometer requires a grid system, that typically measures either 20-x-20-m or 50-x-50-m (Kvamme 2006:214). The instrument works by comparing magnetic signatures within the ground to the earth's overall magnetic field, most effectively detecting iron artifacts and soils that have been altered by means of digging or burning

Figure 5. UM student team digging a shovel test south of the Barr House, facing northeast (from left to right: Ezell Mays, Marina Noble, and Benjamin Davis) (image courtesy of CAR).

Figure 6. Stephen Harris of CAR conducting GPR survey east of the main house at Rowan Oak, facing southwest (image courtesy of CAR).

(Kvamme 2006:210, 216). Both the magnetometer and GPR collect data that are used to create images used for interpreting what lies beneath the surface (McCoy and Ladefoged 2009:275).

The shovel tests and test units from 2016 as well as the shovel tests and surface collection from 2018 yielded a variety of artifacts. These artifacts are an important contribution to understanding the material culture of individuals on the property. Because the property has been constantly used since the 1840s when Sheegog first settled there, and perhaps even before that, artifacts recovered could be from a wide array of time periods. An analysis of the artifacts is used to separate specific classes of material remains and date different occupations at the site. By analyzing things like pottery and glass, a window into the lives of those on the property during the Sheegog time period is opened, though it may be a hazy view.

The analysis of artifacts in conjunction with their spatial distribution can suggest potential locations of outbuildings that no longer survive, or it can be connected to past activities associated with standing structures. Artifacts belonging to the architectural category, those used in some aspect of the construction of past buildings, consist of brick, nails, and flat glass (South 1977). It is possible to assign relative dates to nails based on differing production techniques. The nails recovered from Rowan Oak belong to two classes: machine-cut and wire. Machine-cut nails, although manufactured from around the time of the American Revolution to present, are typically attributed to sites that were occupied in the 1830s or later (Adams 2002:67). The machine cut nails found at Rowan Oak look to be cut on opposite sides with machine-made heads, which Adams (2002:68) attributes to 1810-present, encompassing the period Sheegog would have been building at

Rowan Oak. Wire nails, though, were not mass produced in North America until the mid-1880s, after some structures at Rowan Oak had already been built (Edwards and Wells 1993:2).

Artifacts associated with domestic use, or "kitchen artifacts" according to Stanley South's (1977:95) typology, include container glass, pottery, and coal. These materials are most often centered around activities within the kitchen (i.e., cooking, eating, etc.), but also are found within midden deposits (South 1977:99). Dating the manufacture of container glass and ceramics can be a bit misleading as the manufacture date rarely lines up with the time of usage (Adams 2003:38). Additionally, the small size of the ceramic sherds and glass shards recovered from shovel tests at Rowan Oak make fully identifying and dating these materials nearly impossible.

A few ceramic pieces have been identified, though, including salt-glazed stoneware, pearlware, and whiteware. There are many types of salt-glazed stoneware, but the features on the sherds recovered from Rowan Oak align most closely with British Stoneware, which has a date range of 1671-1915 (Monticello Department of Archaeology [MDA] 2014:19). At least one piece of pearlware was recovered from Rowan Oak, but there could be more, as the defining feature of this type, a bluish tint seen in pooled glaze most evident around foot rings, often is difficult to distinguish from whiteware (MDA 2014:16). A date range of 1780-1840 is attributed to pearlware (Florida Museum of Natural History [FMNH] 2019). The most common type of ceramic found at Rowan Oak is whiteware, a refined earthenware consisting of white paste with a clear lead glaze produced from the 1830s to today (FMNH 2019).

Dating the container glass recovered from Rowan Oak is even more unclear than ceramics. Largely, ceramics are identified by their color, decoration, and glaze type, but container glass lacks the latter two attributes. Color is not useful for dating container glass because color differentiation does not have a direct relationship with glass type (i.e., soda, potash, and lime glass) or the technology used during production (i.e., free-blown, mold blown, pressed, or machine made) and is only weakly connected to function (Jones and Sullivan 1989:12).

Results

This section outlines the results of archaeological investigations at Rowan Oak in 2016 and 2018. The interpretations in this section, including the recognition of artifact patterns, describe locations and possible relationships between artifact classes for the purpose of contributing to a greater understanding of past habitation on the property. The areas surveyed for this thesis make up an approximate total of 1.19 acres (0.48 hectares), including the land from the north side of the main house to the northern tree line; the area surrounding and extending from the east side of the brick structure, referred to by Lounsbury (2018:2) as living quarters for the enslaved, to the eastern tree line; and the open field west of the Caroline Barr House (see Figure 1).

The magnetometer survey conducted in 2016 yielded inconclusive results, perhaps due to varying magnetic signatures related to the presence of modern metals or a lack of materials in the area surveyed. The GPR survey, on the other hand, did result in the presence of cultural signatures (Figure 7). Contrasting colors represent different intervals of the signal's returns to the receiver (Conyers 2012:157). The results show a

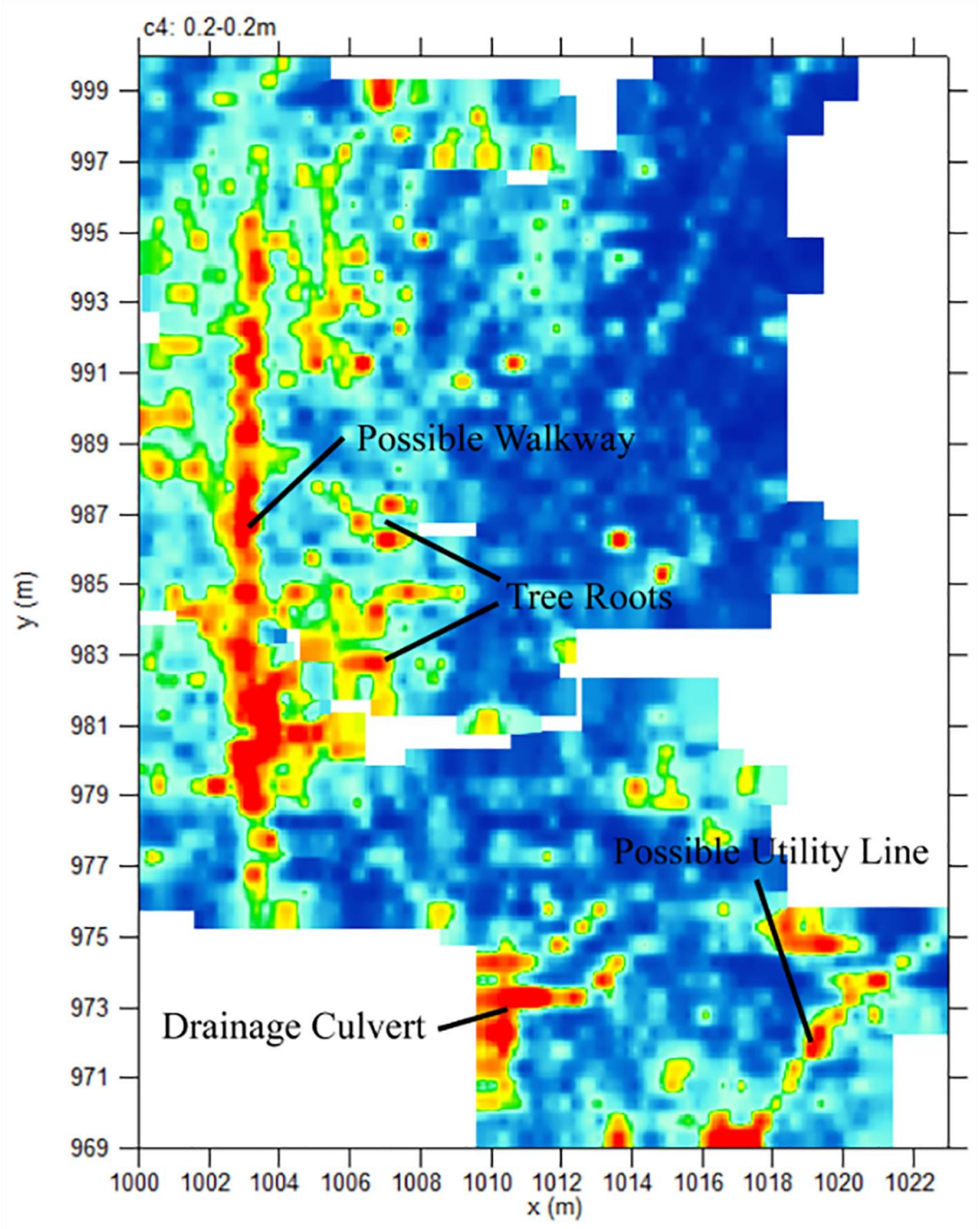

Figure 7. Results from GPR survey (Galle et al 2018) (Note: Main house located in unsurveyed area in southwest corner of GPR survey area).

variety of anomalies, most of which are non-cultural. There is, however, a possible walkway that may have led from the main house to one or more of the outbuildings located north of the main house.

Although many different artifacts were found as a result of shovel testing and surface collection, the analysis for this thesis focused on artifact distributions related to two classes: an architectural class consisting of wire nails, cut nails, brick, and flat glass; and a domestic or kitchen class consisting of container glass, ceramics, and coal (Table 1). For the purpose of understanding potential structures at Rowan Oak, both classes of artifacts are complementary. The architectural artifacts can be attributed to the remains of structures that once stood on the property or the remains of repair work done on past or present structures. Domestic or kitchen artifacts suggest activities such as food preparation, eating, and drinking as well as heating the structure. A concentration of both architectural and domestic artifacts could suggest two possibilities: remnants of structures that no longer exist or midden deposits made up of trash.

Shovel tests containing wire nails are concentrated in the southeast portion of the surveyed area (Figure 8). They are found primarily north of the big house and in the area surrounding the brick structure. With constant activity on the property since the time of Sheegog, recovering artifacts like wire nails that date to more modern times is expected. These wire nails could be remnants from activities associated with the Bailey family, the Faulkner family, or even UM which owns and maintains the property now.

Cut nails are concentrated in the same area as their more modern counterpart (Figure 9). It is certainly plausible that these older nails are remains of a structure or

Table 1. Artifacts evaluated for this thesis.

Context	Brick (weight in g)	Coal (weight in g)	Wire Nails (count)	Cut Nails (count)	Flat Glass (count)	Container Glass (count)	Ceramics (count)
2016-STP-A1	21.8	26.2	-	-	5	2	-
2016-STP-A2	1	4.8	1	-	-	-	-
2016-STP-A3	1.6	6.3	-	-	4	15	1
2016-STP-A4	46.8	1.8	-	-	-	1	2
2016-STP-A5	0.5	0.5	-	-	-	-	-
2016-STP-A6	12.6	3	-	-	-	-	-
2016-STP-A7	2.5	0.5	-	-	-	-	-
2016-STP-A8	1.3	-	-	-	-	1	-
2016-STP-B1	-	2.9	-	-	1	-	-
2016-STP-B3	0.5	5.2	-	-	-	-	1
2016-STP-B4	14.9	2	-	-	-	1	1
2016-STP-B5	15.1	1	-	-	-	-	-
2016-STP-B6	7.6	0.01	-	-	-	1	-
2016-STP-B7	1.2	0.01	-	-	-	-	1
2016-STP-C1	-	29	-	-	-	4	-
2016-STP-C2	3.6	2.4	-	-	-	-	1
2016-STP-C3	17.1	2.1	-	-	-	2	-
2016-STP-C4	115.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
2016-STP-C5	1.7	-	-	-	-	1	-
2016-STP-C6	36.7	-	-	-	-	-	1
2016-STP-D1	3.2	0.1	-	-	-	-	-
2016-STP-D2	0.01	5.7	-	-	-	-	-
2016-STP-D3	-	0.8	-	-	2	-	-
2016-STP-X1	14.7	6.1	-	1	4	4	-
2018-STP-A1	27.6	30.6	-	1	2	1	1
2018-STP-A2	2714	2740	-	2	1	3	-
2018-STP-A3	43.1	86.8	3	2	8	3	6
2018-STP-A4	1065.7	120.9	1	-	-	-	-
2018-STP-A5	303	352.1	-	21	-	6	1
2018-STP-A6	8.4	28.47	2	5	-	3	2
2018-STP-B1	1880	626	-	4	2	5	1
2018-STP-B2	222.79	11.29	-	-	-	1	-
2018-STP-B3	334.08	53.6	-	1	-	1	1
2018-STP-B4	325.7	1287.1	3	17	16	5	15
2018-STP-B5	17.9	50.51	-	6	2	2	3
2018-STP-C1	7.02	9.44	-	-	1	-	1
2018-STP-C2	-	-	-	-	1	3	-
2018-STP-C3	1729	1252	3	3	-	2	6
2018-STP-C4	42.5	135.5	-	3	-	3	-
2018-STP-C5	33.3	24.7	2	2	51	1	3
2018-STP-C6	142.7	346.6	1	10	2	26	3
2018-STP-D1	63.68	45.6	2	1	2	10	7
2018-STP-D2	528	490	-	-	2	1	1
2018-STP-D3	-	2.4	-	-	2	-	1
Totals	**9808.58**	**7794.03**	**18**	**79**	**108**	**108**	**60**

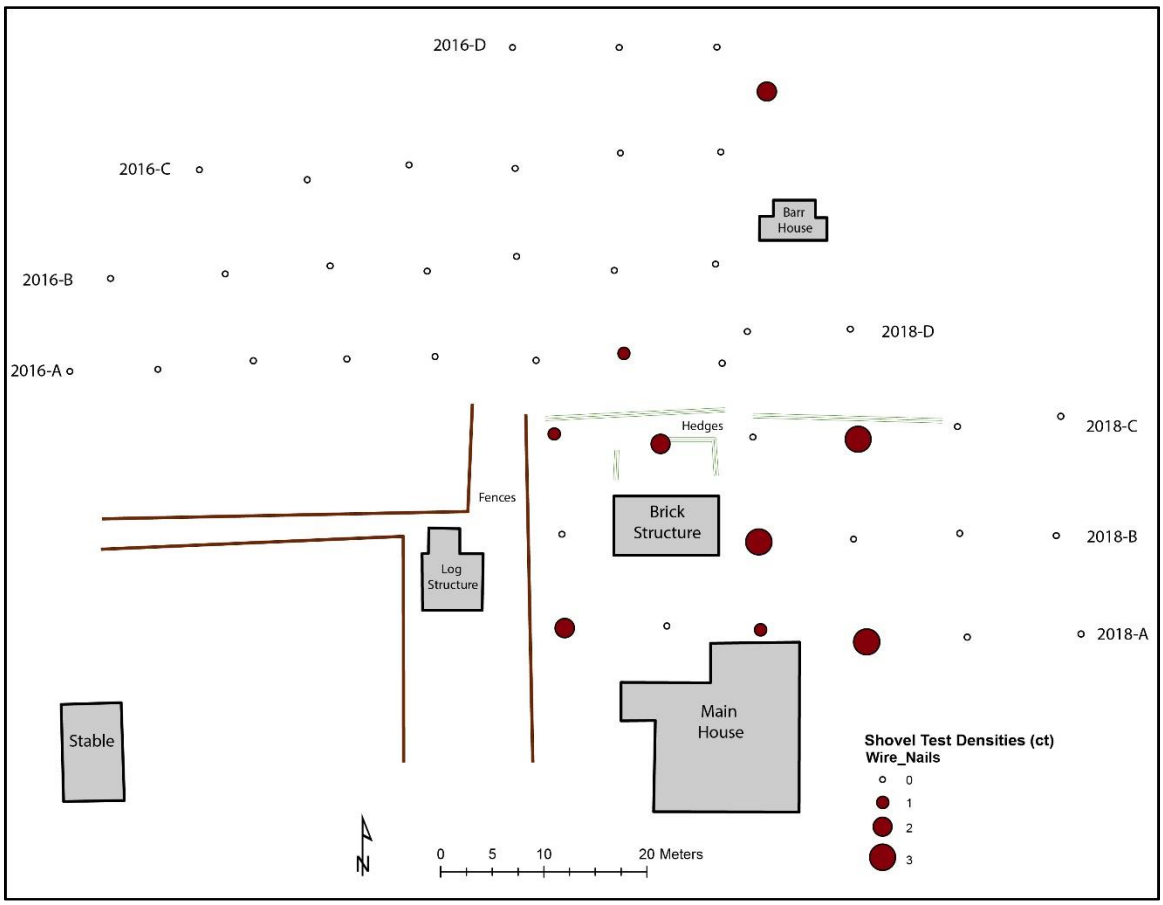

Figure 8. Distribution map showing densities (count) of wire nails in shovel tests.

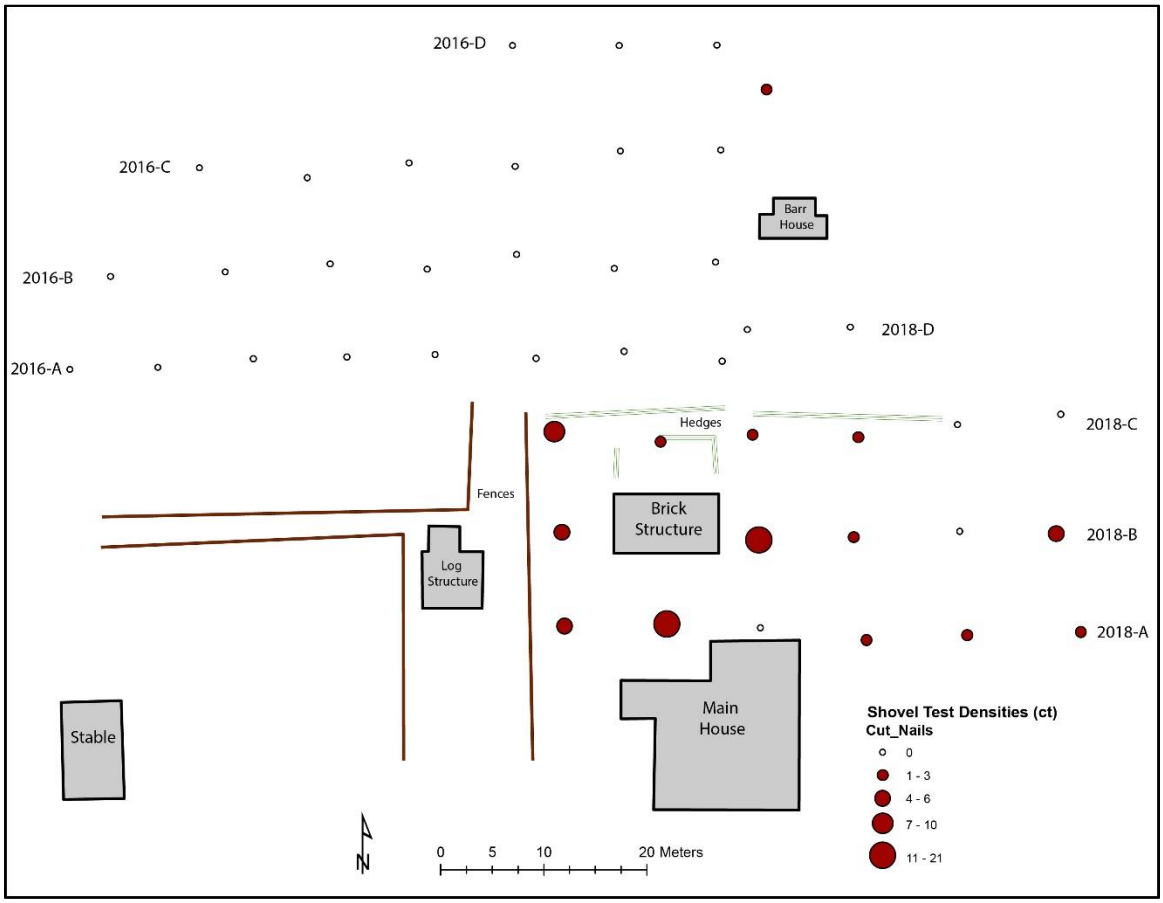

Figure 9. Distribution map showing densities (count) of cut nails in shovel tests.

structures that once stood in this location. Neither cut nails nor wire nails were found in the open field to the northwest, which covers the majority of the survey area.

Small amounts of brick were scattered throughout the entire survey area with major deposits recovered north of the big house, in the same area as both wire and cut nails and in the section extending to the far southeastern portion of the project area (Figure 10). As with the cut nails found in this location, it is possible that these concentrations of brick are remains from previous existing structures; but as with the wire nails present in this same piece of land, the presence of brick could have resulted from repair work on standing structures. Nevertheless, the presence of brick concentrations in this area points to activities associated with structures.

Flat glass, which can be attributed to remnants of windows, was found in shovel tests in the central and southeast portions of the surveyed area (Figure 11). The largest deposit of flat glass was found directly north of the standing brick structure. Lounsbury (2018:5) discussed Faulkner's transformation of this building from a kitchen used by the Baileys to his own smokehouse. In the process of converting the building into a smokehouse, Faulkner is said to have removed at least some of the windows and filled the spaces in with brick (Lounsbury 2018:5). Although Faulkner's transformation could explain the large deposits of flat glass close to the brick structure, flat glass concentrations further east are seen in conjunction with other architectural materials as further evidence of the presence of one or more past structures.

Container glass was recovered from many shovel tests throughout the project area (Figure 12). While container glass can be attributed to kitchen activities, common sense and real-world experience dictates that individuals carry and use various containers

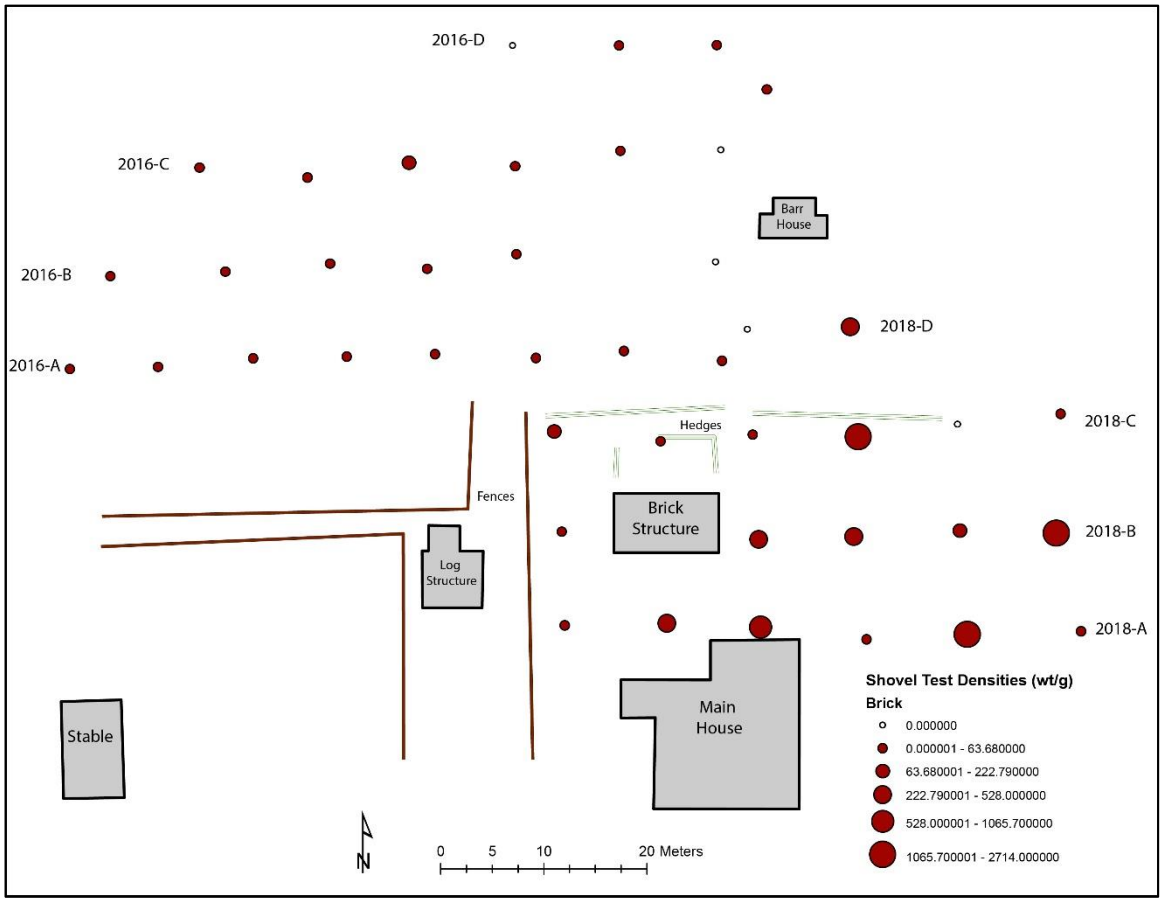

Figure 10. Distribution map showing densities (weight in g) of brick in shovel tests.

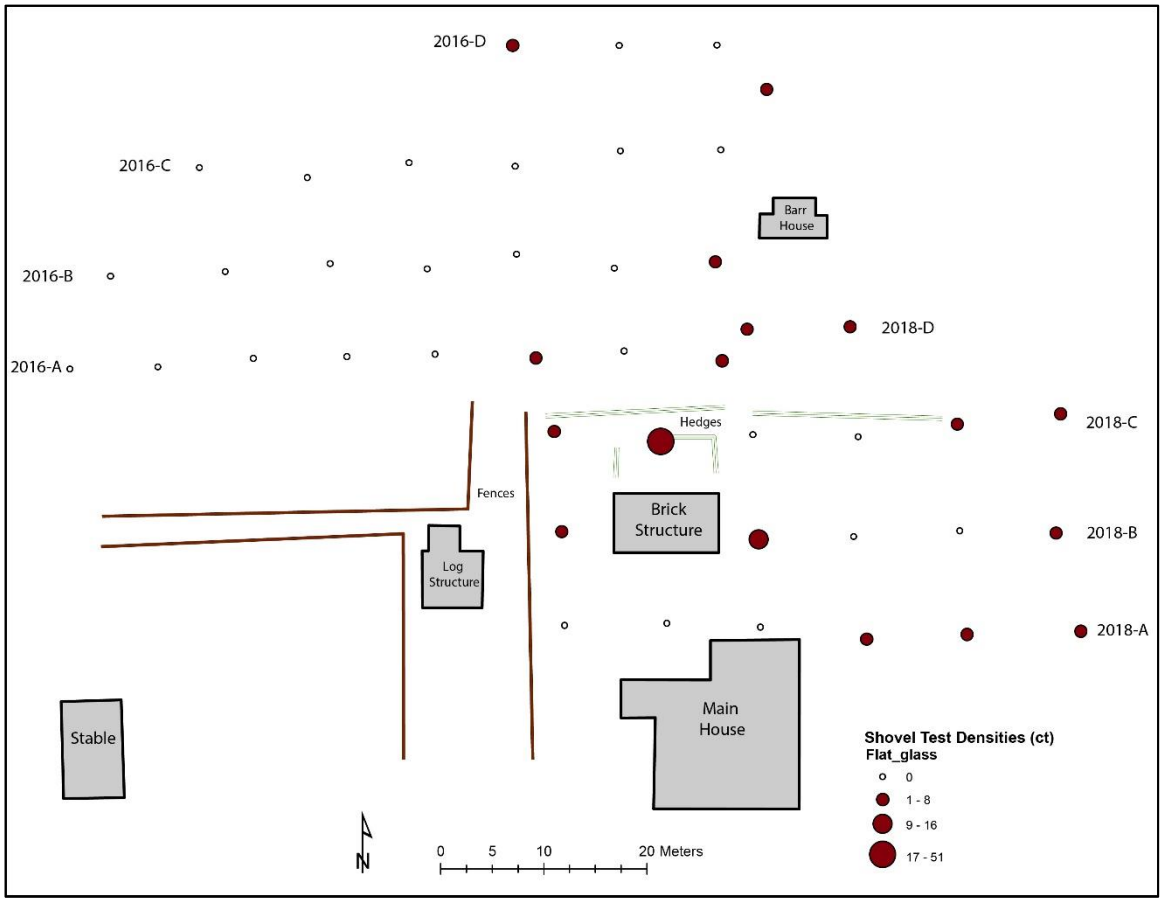

Figure 11. Distribution map showing densities (count) of flat glass in shovel tests.

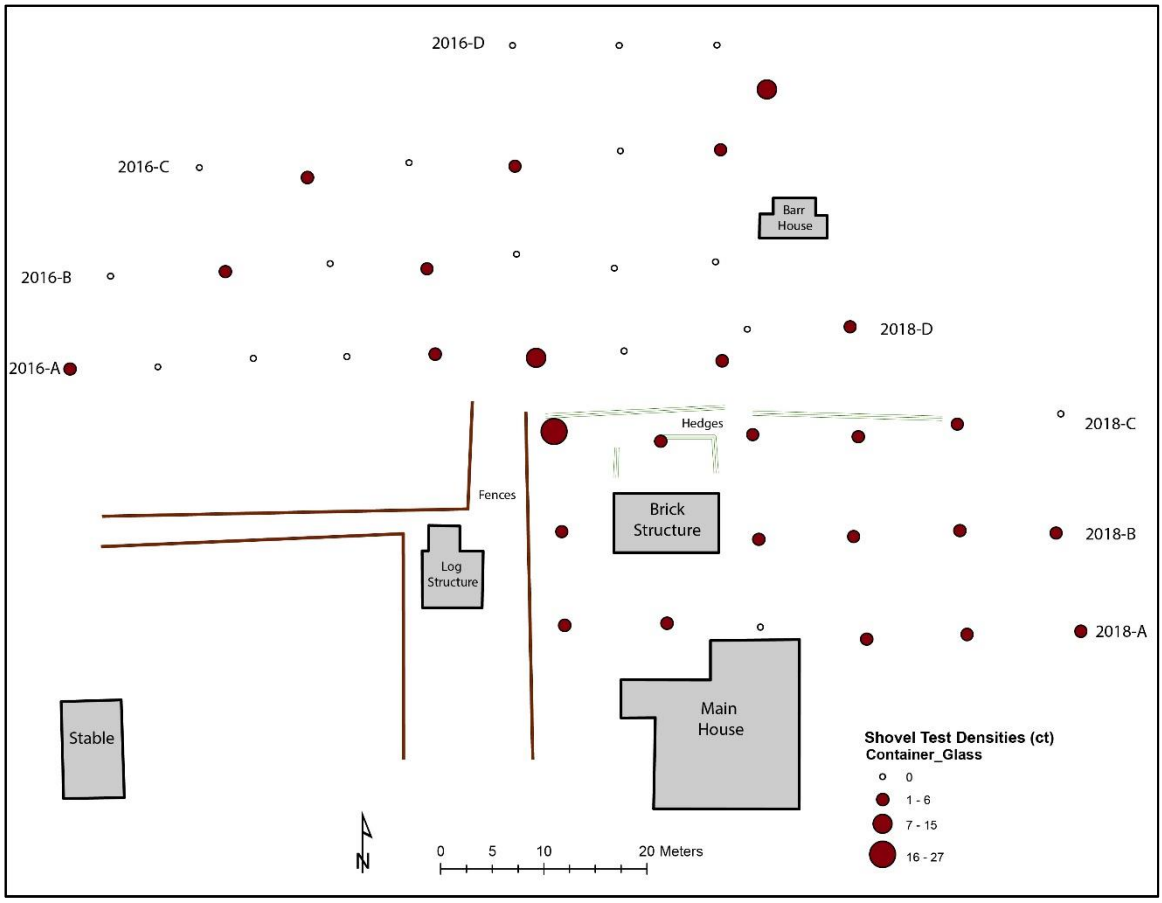

Figure 12. Distribution map showing densities (count) of container glass in shovel tests.

outside of the kitchen setting, from children playing with bottles to people watering plants and even adults hiding their consumption of alcoholic beverages. In fact, there is a rumor that William Faulkner did just that, secretly consuming alcohol while completing mundane tasks like feeding his horses (William Griffith, personal communication 2018). It is no surprise, though, that concentrations of ceramics were found in the central to southeastern portions of the surveyed area, the same portions as the architectural artifacts.

Ceramics, like container glass, are spread thinly throughout the survey area with larger deposits in the section north of the big house (Figure 13). The ceramic sherds recovered were very small and lacked clearly defined details, so the types of vessels they might have come from are unclear. Ceramics, like container glass, are most closely associated with kitchen activities, but would, no doubt, have been used outside of that setting as well.

Like the distribution of brick (see Figure 10), small deposits of coal were spread relatively evenly throughout the entire survey area with concentrations in the section north of the big house (Figure 14). Coal typically was used in food preparation or to heat buildings, so its presence in the same area as other domestic artifacts as well as architectural artifacts suggests activities related to a pre-existing structure.

The combination of architectural and domestic artifacts in addition to the possible walkway shown in the GPR results (see Figure 7) in the same section of the survey area points to some type of activity. One explanation is that in the past, maybe during the antebellum period, there was a separate structure that could have been inhabited by the enslaved. The standing brick building north of the main house could have served this purpose, or, although no longer existing, there could have been another structure to the

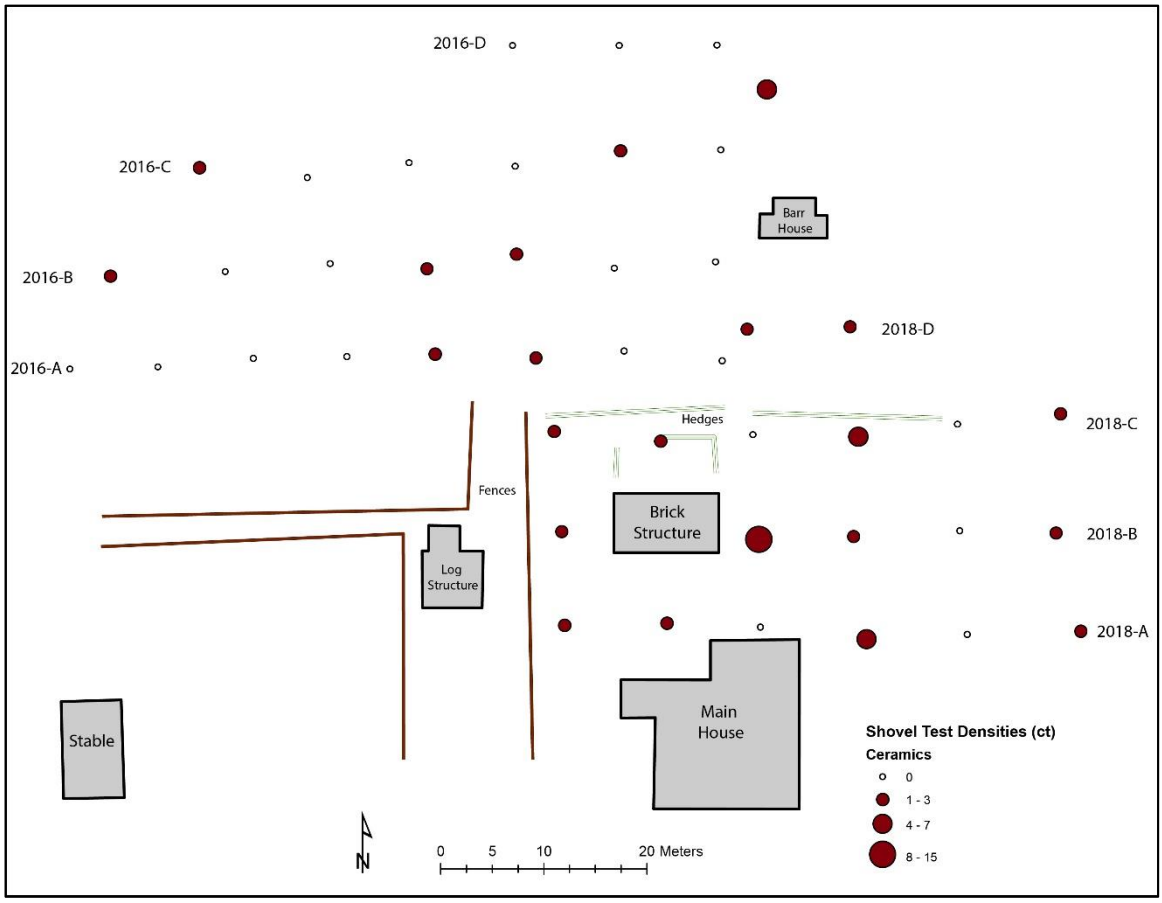

Figure 13. Distribution map showing densities (count) of ceramics in shovel tests.

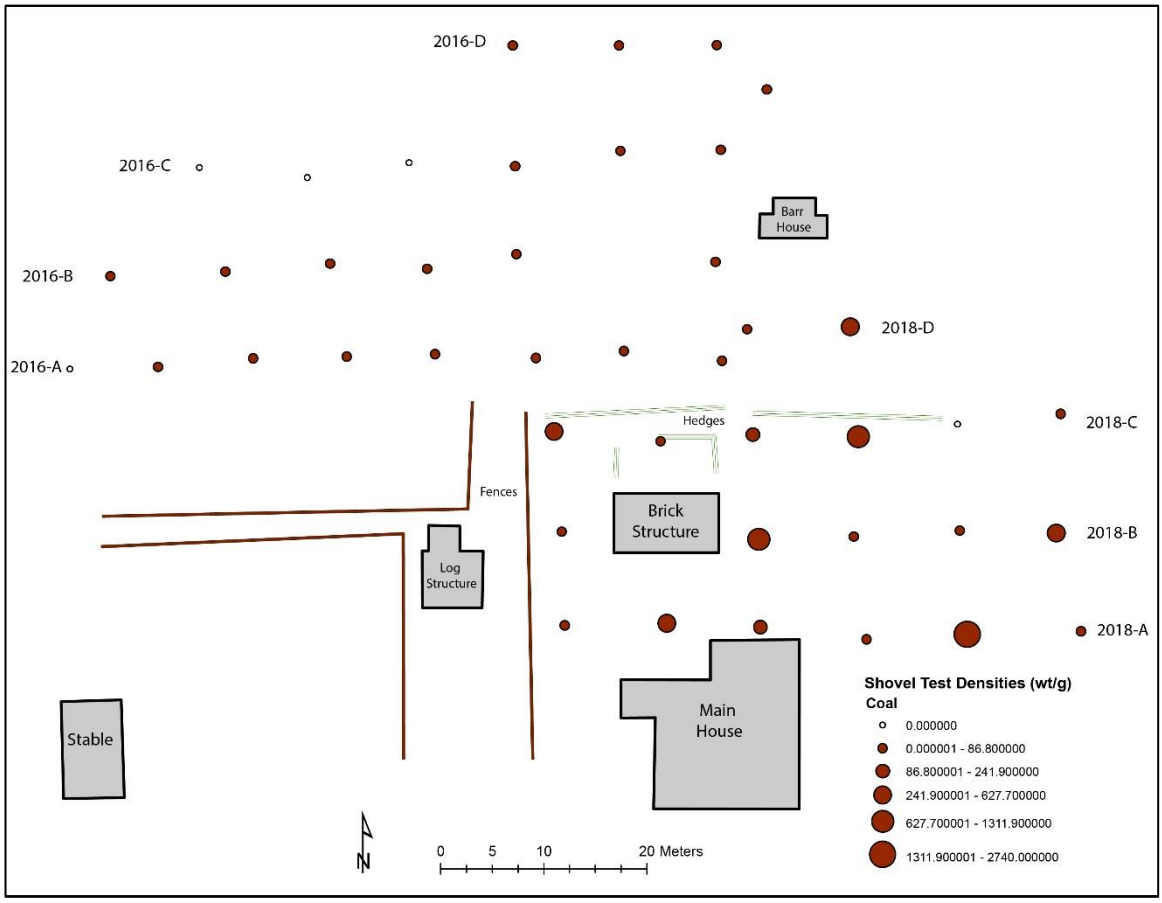

Figure 14. Distribution map showing densities (weight in g) of coal in shovel tests.

east of the brick building reserved for housing the enslaved. Further, if there is indeed a walkway present, where did it lead to? Structures that no longer exist could have been connected by this walkway leading from the north side of the main house.

There are noticeable contrasts between artifact concentrations associated with the southeastern portion and any other part of the surveyed area. The distribution of artifacts in the area north of the main house could have been associated with activities within the main house itself or within the brick structure that has been identified as a possible slave dwelling. Without further archaeological investigations, it is nearly impossible to attribute the artifacts to specific actions, people, or time periods. The center of activity must have been in the southeastern part of the survey area, as the open field in the northeastern section and the area surrounding the Barr house show exceptionally low densities of artifacts associated with both domestic and architectural use.

Although this thesis is concerned mostly with the antebellum period, there has been constant activity at Rowan Oak since then. In the past, there has been speculation that the Barr House was built on top of the location of earlier slave quarters (William Griffith, personal communication 2018). The Barr House (Figure 15) was built around 1930 when Rowan Oak was purchased by William Faulkner (University of Mississippi Slavery and Research Group [UMSRG] 2016). The house was named after Caroline Barr, also known as Callie Barr, a woman who worked for the Faulkner family from the 1880s until her death in 1940 (Sensibar 2009:20). Little evidence was found in support of the rumor that the house was built on top of past living quarters for the enslaved. Cut nails dating to the time of Sheegog would have been associated with the pre-existing structure,

Figure 15. House of Caroline Barr, facing north.

raising the expectation of large deposits of those nails nearby the extant structure. Figure 9 shows otherwise, as the area around the Barr house produced only 1-3 cut nails.

Although mostly in small amounts, the artifact distributions at Rowan Oak show that every type of archaeological material evaluated for this thesis was found directly north of the Barr House, with deposits of coal and brick directly to the west. Due to the presence of all seven types of artifacts in this specific location, the area could be interpreted as a trash dump. Trash dumps are identifiable by the presence of intentional placement of refuse in a single location over a period of time (Needham and Spence 1997:80). There is no evidence that the southeastern portion of the surveyed area served as a trash dump, though. The southeastern area shows a level of variation in the exact recovery locations. While artifacts are concentrated in this area, all seven types were not recovered from the same shovel test pits.

Conclusion

Although the focus of the archaeology of slavery concerning the nineteenth century has been placed on thriving plantations that held dozens or even hundreds of enslaved people, townhomes housing just a few enslaved individuals are important historical resources as well. Understanding the full picture of life in the past involves looking beyond the popular, well documented individuals and into the often unnoticed and silenced ones. Evaluating the presence of enslaved peoples at Rowan Oak is a small but important piece to be added to the puzzle of nineteenth-century urban slavery.

Robert Sheegog and his family owned and operated Rowan Oak, known in his time as the “Sheegog Place,” from 1848 until it was sold to the Baileys in 1872

(Lounsbury 2018:2). Based on census records from 1850 and 1860, Sheegog held seven to nine enslaved individuals at Rowan Oak (Lounsbury 2018:10). Enslaved males living in townhomes like Rowan Oak sometimes would have been rented out to perform labor-intensive tasks such as building bridges, roads, and structures (Wade 1964:4). At least some of those slaves held by Sheegog had such jobs, as they were rented out to UM for the purpose of constructing buildings and other infrastructure related to the campus (UMSUWG 2015:21). Enslaved females, on the other hand, presumably would have held more domestic-centered tasks such as taking care of children, washing clothes, and cooking (Wade 1964:28). They also could be rented out to perform the same types of domestic tasks within cities (Zaborney 2012:29, 31).

Using archaeological methods to uncover potential evidence of slavery at Rowan Oak, including a possible structure that could date to the nineteenth century, took the combined efforts of UMSRG, CAR, the University Museum, and UM student participants in the Public Archaeology course. Methods used for this project included shovel testing and the excavation of test units during the Fall of 2016 and 2018, a magnetometer survey in Fall 2016, and a GPR survey in Summer 2018. The survey over the two years resulted in the identification of a possible non-extant nineteenth-century structure just north of the main house that could have served as a slave dwelling or kitchen. This area showed signs of activity including the presence of a potential walkway and concentrations of wire nails, cut nails, brick, flat glass, container glass, ceramics, and coal. The same level of artifact distribution was not seen in other parts of the survey area, and there were no other obvious signs of activity from the GPR and magnetometer surveys. There was a notable absence of high artifact densities in the open field northwest

of the brick structure. Some evidence of activities that post-date the Sheegog time was seen in the area north and west of the Barr house.

So far, just over one acre of Rowan Oak has been surveyed. With the estate measuring over 31 acres (12.54 hectares), there is still much work to be done. From the advertisement which listed the property for sale in the 1870s, it is known that there were a number of outbuildings which have not survived. While some of those past structures could be within the relatively open area that was surveyed over 2016 and 2018, many could have been in the now wooded area that surrounds it. Further Phase I survey in the remaining ca. 30 acres may produce more structural evidence and, consequently, more areas of focus for further excavation.

Within the area surveyed in 2016 and 2018, the section north of the main house and east of the brick structure should be the focus of future archaeological work. This area showed the greatest concentration of architectural and domestic artifacts. It is likely that archaeological investigations in this area could shed more light on past occupations of the property. Large deposits of cut nails that could date to the period when Sheegog owned the property were located in the area just north of the main house and around the brick structure that may have been used as a slave dwelling (see Figure 9). For the purposes of making meaningful connections between Sheegog and the enslaved individuals living and working at Rowan Oak during the antebellum period as well as those Sheegog may have rented to UM, focusing on this particular area for more extensive excavation in the future may provide the most useful information.

Stories of William Faulkner's ownership of the townhouse and surrounding property of Rowan Oak dominate the historical perspective of the site. Little attention is

given to Robert Sheegog, the original owner of the property, and even less to the enslaved individuals owned by him. These enslaved individuals could have spent an extensive amount of time on the property, yet the location of their housing, probably the one place in this world they felt the most safe and secure, is unknown. By using archaeology to identify potential locations of activities involving these individuals, their stories may be heard, and they may finally have a voice after having been silenced for numerous years. Extensive archaeological investigations can be used to reconstruct the entire landscape and maybe even identify more pieces of the puzzle that made up antebellum Rowan Oak.

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