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# Archaeological Investigations at Skidaway Island's Benedictine Monastery & Freedmen School

## Interim Phase II Report

Laura Seifert

Armstrong State University

August 2017



Armstrong

## **Phase II Interim Report**

### **Benedictine Monastery and Freedmen School, Skidaway Island, 9Ch78**

Laura Seifert

Armstrong State University

August 2017

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Introduction**

This report is an intermediate report during the Phase II excavations. The tentative conclusions drawn here will be hypotheses to guide further work. Continuing test pit excavation is anticipated in the fall 2017 semester. Plans for the next steps are in the final section of this report.

The Benedictine monastery and Freedmen school site location has long been known (1974 site form). When The Landings community was initially developed, a 0.62-acre lot was set aside to preserve the core of this important archaeological site. However, this lot is a small fraction of the whole archaeological landscape. Recently, residents and staff became concerned when an adjacent lot was sold, and the landowner intended to

develop the lot, likely destroying archaeological resources in the process. Fortunately, the landowner, Andy Dyer, approached The Landings staff and was eager to preserve or mitigate where possible. The Phase I shovel test survey was conducted in the spring 2016 semester. Phase II research was conducted during the fall 2016 and spring 2017 semesters. Six 1x2 meter test units were excavated to subsoil, two in each area of interest identified during the Phase I excavations.

This is a highly significant site. Archaeological research on schoolhouses is scarce, and investigations of African-American schoolhouses are even more rare. To date, little archaeological research on American Benedictine monasteries has been found, and none in Georgia.

## **Archaeological and Historical Background**

### *Schools and Education*

By the 1860s, free public education was fairly standard for white students, although the Civil War would disrupt schooling. Schoolhouses were often the community focal point, hosting religious and social activities in addition to education (Rotman 2009:71-73). After the Civil War, there was an immediate demand for schools for former slaves. However, from 1860 to 1880, most whites did not believe in mandatory public school because it upset the societal order and “planter regime”. “The result was a postwar South that was extremely hostile to the idea of universal education” (Anderson 1988:4). Despite the pressure against them, freedmen’s schools were increasingly common in the post-Civil War South. In the five years after the Civil War, the federal government spent six million dollars on approximately 2,500 Southern schools for 150,000 children. Curriculum focused on reading, writing, and math (Bonner et al 1979:xi, xii).

John W. Alford, Inspector of Schools and later General Superintendent of Schools for the Freedmen’s Bureau, saw much “self-teaching” and described “native schools” run by African Americans outside of the support and control of the Freedmen’s Bureau. These were found throughout the South especially where there were no Freedmen’s Bureau or northern Missionary schools. One local example is Susie Baker King Taylor, who participated in the first all-black Union army regiment and was the founder and only instructor of the first school for new freedmen in post-Civil War Savannah. She later opened several more schools.

In December of 1864, Savannah’s African-American leaders, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, and General William Sherman met to support the creation of black schools and developed a plan for establishing a free school system. In 1865, the Georgia Education Association was formed to supervise schools, establish policy, and raise money. On January 10, 1865, there were 1,000 African-American children in Savannah’s seven new schools. One of these schools was in the former Bryan Slave Mart near Ellis Square. In 1866, there

were 28 schools in Savannah, 16 of which were black schools. The Georgia Education Association quickly became an auxiliary organization as the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association both wanted control.

The Beach Institute is another independent school open from 1867 to 1919. The American Missionary Association founded the school, which was funded by Scientific American editor Alfred E. Beach, the Freedmen's Bureau, and donations from citizens. The opening enrollment was 600 students, with a mostly white staff. The Beach Institute charged tuition until becoming a free public school in 1874. The American Missionary Association reopened the school in 1878 after a fire. There were also "Sabbath schools", or church sponsored schools, which were often established before public and free schools were available. Usually meeting on weekends and evenings, these schools were established with local black community support and taught by black teachers, although sometimes they had white churches' support. Because many schools were independent of Freedmen's Bureau, they are not in official histories or official accounts (Anderson 1988:4-13, Jones 2014:154-157, Bryant 2014:169-).

By 1870, every southern state had constitutional requirements for public schools and state financing (Anderson 1988:19). By the late 1800s, schoolhouses were very common public buildings, as were churches. Increased state involvement made the schoolhouse a "recognizable architectural form" (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:107). The 1890s through the 1930s was a time of school consolidation, and many schools changed from one room schoolhouses to multi-room buildings with professional teachers (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:107).

"The convergence of literacy, leadership, and religion are frequently recognized as mutually reinforcing motivations for African-Americans of that era to seek educational opportunities, often against overwhelming odds" (Agbe-Davies and Martin 2013:108). Education meant full citizenship for African-Americans. Education, and literacy in particular, meant that African-Americans could vote, read the Bible, and read labor contracts, which meant they could fairly negotiate wages and labor. Education made land-owning more possible, which was important not just for avoiding wage labor, but owning land allows for a greater sense of belonging and security in a community (Burton 2014:29-30).

The archaeological literature review revealed the paucity of information available on schoolhouses, despite their importance and ubiquity in the American experience. The few sites excavated make for valuable comparisons, not just for similarities, but also for the differences to this site. Most schoolhouses investigated archaeologically had a low artifact density. Most artifacts were architectural, and very few educational artifacts were present: slate pencils, writing slates, and toys such as marbles were found. Domestic artifacts recovered are often from the site's use as a social center (Rotman 2009:71-73). These findings are somewhat consistent

with the monastery site Phase I research. However, we should question how much this site was used as a social center. We expect more domestic refuse as this site was not just a school, but a church and monastery. In short, it was a home. Previous archaeological investigations of schools have focused on identifying the schoolhouses and associated outbuildings, understanding their construction and remodeling, and exploring issues of lighting, heating, furnishing, and sanitary facilities (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:122-126).

Very few African-American schoolhouses have been excavated. Archaeologists at New Philadelphia, Illinois, have tentatively identified the location of an African-American schoolhouse. New Philadelphia was established as a town for whites and blacks by a freedman, Frank McWhorter. Education was a priority, and the “schoolhouse served as an important focus of community life” as there was no public school for African-American children in 1850s and 1860s Illinois (Agbe-Davies 2013:1). Documentary evidence, particularly deeds and oral histories, as well as geophysical evidence led archaeologists to explore Lots 1 and 2 of Block 8, suspected to contain the 1848 school. While small amounts of artifacts were found (lamp chimney glass, whiteware, yellowware, nails, brick), no features were found. It is likely the architecture was very ephemeral, and therefore little evidence remains. Several nearby features contained slate fragments, adding to the evidence that a school was in the area. However, these school artifacts are only 0.9% of the entire assemblage. (Agbe-Davies 2013:1-18, Agbe-Davies and Martin 2013:109-114).

Agbe-Davies also excavated the Old Elliot School, which was established by and for black Bermudians after emancipation. This symbolically powerful school, established in 1848, is still standing. The original trustees were twelve men who bought the land, raised funds, and built the school themselves, as many were craftsmen. Bermuda’s government contributed money for annual expenses. The first class of students were 34 boys and girls who learned the basics: spelling, reading, writing, grammar, math, geography, catechism, and sewing. Two trenches were excavated under the floors in order to understand the building’s construction and use. While Trench 2 proved to be modern and mixed, Trench 1 contained intact strata and features with fragments of writing slates, slate pencils, pen nibs, shoe fragments, buttons, a glass marble, a scissor fragment, graphite pencil leads, and metal ferrules. The artifact findings conform to the expectations of a school. There are few ceramics or animal bones, and interestingly, more educational artifacts from the older layers. A “non-domestic artefact pattern” was found. Major repairs, including a new roof and raised walls were identified. The entrance door was moved. The original door on the north wall was Gothic Revival (Agbe-Davies 2002:129-150). “In addition to being popular, the Gothic style was thought to be suitable for settings where instruction (spiritual or intellectual) and contemplation were the primary activities” (Agbe-Davies 2002:144-145).

The Penn School (now Penn Center) on St. Helena’s Island offers the closest available contrast to Skidaway’s school. St. Helena’s Island, South Carolina, had a mostly African-American population when the

United States Navy arrived in 1862, and many landowners left at this time. Laura Towne and Ellen Murray founded the Penn School in the same year. Ms. Towne and Ms. Murray came to St. Helena's as young women and spent the rest of their lives dedicated to the school, which still lasts today as the Penn Center, a community center and museum. Laura Matilda Towne graduated from the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, and the Port Royal Relief Committee of Philadelphia appointed her to the Penn School. In addition to teaching, Towne continued her medical practice, as the only qualified person on the island (Burton 2014: 1-16, 20)

Classes started in June of 1862, and on September 22, the brick church was offered as a building for the school. At this point, the school had 80 students. By October, the school had grown to 110 students, and Charlotte Forten, an African-American teacher was hired. By December 15, 1862, the school had 147 students registered, but daily attendance varied widely. The school was open seven days a week, including Sunday school. The curriculum was a New England model with rigorous reading, writing, spelling, grammar, diction, history, geography, math, and music. However, there was no "school culture" on the island, and there was a language or dialect barrier between the northern teachers and Gullah-speaking students (Burton 2014: 16-21).

During the Civil War, the island's residents faced many hardships including violence, illness, heat, and lack of food. Many displaced people arrived on St. Helena's during the Civil War. The Union Army sometimes kidnapped freedmen for unpaid labor. But the students persisted. In 1864, the school had 194 students. General Saxton offered to have a new schoolhouse built, which was ready in January 1865 and was a "gift of the Freedman's Aid Society of Pennsylvania" (Burton 2014:25). The frame building had three rooms and was one of the first prefabricated buildings in America. It was "put into service as the first real schoolhouse in the South designed for the instruction of former slaves" (Burton 2014:25). In December of 1868, the school began "normal practice", or training teachers. As there were no clocks on the island, Towne's family donated a school bell that could be heard three miles away, although some students walked as far as five or six miles to school (Burton 2014:24-25).

During Reconstruction, the American Missionary Association supplied volunteer teachers. Charities also funded the school, which meant constantly searching for support, but this also allowed for independence. For example, public schools did not have African-American teachers, but the Penn School did. The 1870s had the island residents dealing with poverty and lack of food, but there was a brief interracial democracy. By Reconstruction's end in 1877, African-American rights were no longer enforced and political violence was common. In the 1890s, disenfranchisement took hold, but unlike most areas, St. Helena's Island had a relatively high level of African-American land ownership. Laura Towne died February 22, 1901, and she saw the school passed to a new leadership (Burton 2014:26-43). The Penn School was wildly successful despite many challenges.

Mitchelville, on South Carolina's Hilton Head Island, was a town founded by the Union Army for freed African-Americans. Several archaeological investigations have examined Mitchelville (Trinkley 1986, Espenshade and Grunden 1991, Butler et al 2013). In 1866, Hilton Head Island had five school districts, including Mitchelville. The town had primary, intermediate, and a high schools taught at three different churches. The primary school met four and one half hours per day with attendance ranging from 52 to 108 students. The intermediate school had 15 to 40 students, and the high school, which met five hours per day, had 62 to 90 students. There was no dedicated schoolhouse, and the churches which hosted the schools were unheated in the winter, small, and not equipped for schooling (Trinkley 1986: 96-97). However, the numbers of students speak to the need and desire for education.

### *Benedictines*

Benedictine monks take three vows: stability, *conversatio morum suorum*, and obedience. Stability means that becoming a monk is a life-long occupation, and a monk stays in the same monastic community for life. In 1907 the Congress of Presidents of the Black Monk Congregation determined, "By the vow of stability, the monk attaches himself to the monastery of his profession, he associates himself to the monastic family there existing, and promises he will never withdraw his neck from the yoke of regular observance according to the Rule of St. Benedict" (Butler 1924:124). *Conversatio morum suorum* is generally translated "conversion of manner or habits", meaning the individual adopts the life of a monk including the Rule of St. Benedict (often simply called "the Rule"). This vow includes the vows of poverty and chastity. St. Benedict defined poverty as having no personal possessions. All property was held in common, and when a monk joined a monastery, he turned over everything to the monastery. Nineteenth century Benedictine monks lived lives of material simplicity and frugality. They were not in need but had reasonable accommodation. Monks even gave away unnecessary things to the poor, including used clothes. No wastefulness was permitted, but they did not live in extreme poverty. The third vow, obedience, means obedience to God, obedience to superiors, obedience to self (discipline), and obedience to one another, essentially respect for others (Butler 1924:123-146).

Monasteries were governed as a family, with the abbot as the father. While the abbot has full authority over the monastery, it is also his responsibility to take care of everyone like a father. The abbot holds his position for life and has very wide power, however, on some issues, the monks will vote. Each monastery is also operated as a separate entity in which the monks stay within the community for life, according to the vows (Butler 1924:184, 200, 226-227). In the early twentieth century, smoking was "allowed at discretion" (Butler 1924:307). While the Rule says monks may not eat meat and may not drink wine, since Reformation, moderation has been the rule. External schools attached to Benedictine monasteries also became common in the last few centuries. Most were secondary education schools. In American monasteries, Benedictine schools had 3,000 students in the 1920s (Butler 1924:307, 326).



Founded in 1846 by Boniface Wimmer, St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, was the first Benedictine outpost in America. The Skidaway monastery was one of many missions started by Wimmer under the St. Vincent Archabbey's umbrella. These early monks "were little more than transplanted replicas of European monastic ideals (Rippinger 1984:295). The religious horarium, or daily schedule, was the same, and many monastic traditions such as beer with meals and the liturgical ceremony and rubrics were preserved. However, soon these now American monks began to change and adapt to their new homes. The American monks became more missionary, more pastoral, more practical, and more individual. In a word, they became more American, a change that was criticized by their tradition-bound European counterparts. The American Benedictines identified as European immigrants, which was a very American experience in the nineteenth century and often had close connections with immigrant aid societies. "The principle means by which the Benedictines came into contact with the immigrant were their education institutions" (Rippinger 1984:302). While the Benedictines tried to introduce their European classical education tradition, often this did not work, especially on the frontier. Schools set up as seminaries and liberal arts schools had to be transformed to teach science, agriculture, and crafts (Rippinger 1984:294-302).

#### *Site History (9Ch78)*

As this is an interim report and the prehistoric component of this site is both small and not the main focus of our research, no detailed Native American culture history will be supplied. However, all Native American artifacts and strata are recorded and curated the same as everything else.

Hampton Place plantation got its name from Hampton Lillibridge who purchased this tract of land adjacent to his current holdings from Thomas Gibbons for \$1,500 in 1800. This plantation remained in the family for several generations, passing to his daughter Henrietta Lillibridge, who married James Bilbo in 1812. Their eight surviving children inherited the property, selling it to Alvin N. Miller in 1855 for \$3,000 in order to settle their parents' estate and split the inheritance. Alvin Miller sold the property to William Wade four years later, apparently swapping the plantation for a lot in Savannah "known as lot number five (No5)" (Folder 184, MS 1355). At this time, the plantation was extensively improved, and the sale included all improvements and contents such as buildings, stable, yards, gardens, stock, hogs, cows, carts, wagons, boats, "plantation utensils, household and kitchen furniture, corn, fodder, and provisions" (Folder 184, MS 1355). "Three negro slaves named Harry, Hetty, and Maria" were also included in the sale dated 28 May 1859 (Folder 184, MS 1355). William Wade then sold the property to Reverend John Barry on 31 May 1859 for \$9,000. But a second document dated 6 June 1859 records Rev. Barry paying \$1 now, and \$2,500 in 12 months for Hampton Place plantation (Folder 182-186, MS 1355).

After the Civil War, Savannah's Catholic diocese invited French Benedictines to start schools for

African-American children. In 1874, St. Benedict's Parish was created, and the monks built a successful school on Perry Street and a church on Harris and East Broad streets in Savannah. In 1876, they expanded to a school on Isle of Hope. Unfortunately, several of the monks and students succumbed to a yellow fever outbreak. This church, Our Lady of Good Hope Chapel, was later revived and is an active congregation.

Bishop William Gross requested more Benedictines from St. Vincent Archabbey in Pennsylvania. Abbot Boniface Wimmer, St. Vincent founder, sent Father Oswald Moosmuller and Father Maurice Kaeder. They arrived at Isle of Hope in March of 1877 but found the site in very bad shape and still contagious. The Benedictines turned to 717-acre Hampton Place, the plantation that was originally purchased by the Catholic diocese to start an orphanage. Those plans were halted when the plantation's main house was lost to fire. Since this property could no longer fulfill its intended purpose, Bishop Gross petitioned the court to transfer the property to the Benedictine Order, and the deed was recorded on July 9, 1877 (Folder 182-186, MS 1355).

As Father Oswald began his work on Skidaway Island, he found several African-American families already living on the property. Three African-American monks also joined the Skidaway mission. Father Oswald wrote that two "would be able to teach ordinary branches in school, the third [would] do housework" (Oetgen 1969:3). First, the monks had trees cut down to build the "monastery, a dormitory for the students, and a storehouse... Our support must come from the farm of 713 acres of which 300 acres are cleared land. This year we expect to plant 40-50 acres of rice, corn, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, and sea-island cotton" (Oetgen 1969:4). Oetgen's 1976 article provides some clarity, "He [Father Oswald] arranged to have the necessary buildings constructed at Skidaway, and in June of 1878 he moved to the island with the small band of monastic candidates who had gathered around him since his arrival (1976:14). Perhaps Father Oswald hired locals on the island to construct the buildings, rather than the monks doing the construction. A 1938 letter from Joseph D. Mitchell to Thomas Gamble also mentions an "old cemetery at Skidaway alongside the ruins of the old monastery" (Gamble 80).

The Skidaway school began as a manual labor school, meaning that the students would spend part of their day in school and the rest working in the fields. The students would not pay tuition, but instead the crops produced would be sold to support the school. Oswald intended to make the community self-sufficient, however, the agricultural work was never very successful. Abbot Wimmer regularly visited many of the missions he started throughout the United States, including the "Georgia mission", which he described in a December 1882 letter as an "agricultural school for Negro boys where they are now receiving instruction in all regular school subjects". He added, "The Negro mission is very close to my heart" (Oetgen 2008:486-487).

The buildings took longer than expected and it was not until June of 1878 that the blessing of the new

buildings ceremony took place with great fanfare. In September 1878 when classes began, there were approximately 500 people, mostly African-American, living on Skidaway Island, none Catholic. However, Father Oswald received more help in Siricius Palmer, an African-American student priest, who would do much of the teaching. (Oetgen 1969:3-4). Additionally, Brother Rhabanus Cononge, a black monk from New Orleans and the first African-American Benedictine in the United States, and Brother Philip Cassidy joined the Skidaway mission (Oetgen 1997:348, Oetgen 2000:163-164). The school started with 12 students, and Wimmer had to buy more beds because some of the boys were sleeping on the floor. But by November, they were down to seven boys. "Four 'had to be dismissed,' and one left of his own accord" (Oetgen 1969:5). The students and monks experienced serious cultural differences and some misunderstanding. Students were expected to be up at 5 am for Mass and meditation, had to work for four hours, and then attended school for two hours. Jerome Oetgen, OSB, observed, "A stern disciplinarian and a Teuton, Fr. Oswald had not taken into consideration the temperament of a naturally easygoing and demure people who lived in a climate which demanded slow motion and ease" (1969:6). In addition to the school, Father Oswald also began a program to drain the marsh to improve living conditions for everyone on the island. He also planted eucalyptus in an effort to control malaria (Oetgen 1976:17).

Father Oswald wrote in an 1878 letter, "Though they are poor and can pay nothing at all, nevertheless I think they bring the blessing of God into the house... You ought to animate some good novices for this mission, but you must not forget to tell them that here on Skidaway we have no beer, no wine, no fresh beef, nor many other luxuries of that kind; nevertheless we enjoy good health and like the place very well" (Oetgen 1976:16). Not all of the monks who worked at Skidaway were as enthusiastic or dedicated as Father Oswald. In 1880, Brother Fridolin Stehle wrote a letter back to St. Vincent Archabbey complaining of the conditions and speaking ill of African-Americans. Abbott Wimmer responded,

"You did not go to Skidaway to do *your will* (otherwise you would not be a religious with the sacred vow of obedience), but to do *my will* or that of your immediate superior who rules in my name; whereas *I* also many not follow *my own will*, but do command that which I recognize as the will of God, namely, to found an institution for Negroes whereby many Negroes will retain their Catholic faith or be converted... Even if all were true what you have written, we should make even greater efforts to help these unfortunate Negroes. They are also people and God's children" (Oetgen 1997:372-373).

Wimmer continued in this manner for some paragraphs.

During a visit from Abbott Wimmer in 1879, the Benedictines decided to create a new black parish in Savannah, Sacred Heart, on Habersham street. Father Oswald started the new parish, while Rev. Melchior Reichert took over on Skidaway Island. Father Melchior wrote in a 1938 letter to Thomas Gamble, "I found Father Oswald, several brothers, and some boys there, all living in a log house." (Gamble 84). The 1880

United States Census records three Catholic priests, O. Moosmiller (age 47), M. Reichart (age 28), and S. Palmer (age 27). Interestingly, the census lists Palmer as white, while every other source consulted describes him as African-American. Also listed in the household are: F. Rosenfelder, A. Sochnle, B. Cannong, and A. Mason. Eight students are listed as living in the household: C L Franklin, James L Franklin, Robert Burksteiner, Henry Cook, Robert Davis, Henry Clending, John Hayes, and Richard Allen. All are male, and all are single. Table X enumerates the data available and Figure X is an image of the original census (United States Census 1880). None of these men appear in the 1900 United States Census for the Sea Islands around Savannah (United States Census 1900). Unfortunately, the vast majority of the critical 1890 U.S. Census was lost in a fire (United States Census 1890, census.gov). Under Father Melchior's leadership, there were eight monks and 12 students in April 1881 and 20 students by 1883 (Kelly 1980:85).

10	264 319	Moosmiller Rev. O.	47	M	47	/	Catholic Priest			Germany	Germany	Germany
11		Reichart Rev. M.	28	M	28	/	" "			Pennsylvania		
12		Palmer Rev. S.	27	M	27	/	" "			Dist. Col.	Pa.	Ind.
13		Rosenfelder F.	30	M	30	/	Farmer			Germany	Germany	Germany
14		Sochnle A.	30	M	30	/	Boatman			Germany		
15		Franklin C. L.	13	M	13	/	At School		1	Georgia	Pa.	Pa.
16		James L.	12	M	12	/	" "		1	Georgia	"	"
17		Burksteiner Robert	13	M	13	/	" "		1	Georgia	"	"
18		Cook Henry	14	M	14	/	" "		1	Maryland	Ind.	Ind.
19		Davis Robert	15	M	15	/	" "		1	Maryland	"	"
20		Clending Henry	17	M	17	/	" "		1	New Jersey	N. Indies	N. Indies
21		Hayes John	14	M	14	/	" "		1	New Jersey	N. Indies	N. Indies
22		Allen Richard	8	M	8	/	" "		1	Georgia	Pa.	Pa.
23		Cannong B.	32	M	32	/	Cook		1	Louisiana	La.	La.
24		Mason A.	32	M	32	/	Servant		1	Delaware	Ind.	Ind.

Portion of 1880 United States Census showing the Monastery household

A contemporary photograph hand-labeled, “Skidaway Island, near Savannah, Ga, Chapel and house” shows a smaller building in disrepair that could be the “log house” described by Father Melchior, based on the corners, which appear to be interlaced logs. In front of the log building is a very substantial building, a large portion of which is clapboard supported by brick piers, and a smaller portion appears to be tabby. The copy of the historic photograph available to researchers is not extremely clear. This photograph is reproduced on the next page. The foundation of the tabby portion is blurry, but it is tempting to match this portion of the building with the tabby foundation on The Landings property. While both parts of the building touch, they appear to have been built at different times, not just due to differences in construction, but because the rooflines do not line up. The closer portion of the larger building is the church, which is evident from the steeple. The 1974 state archaeological site form states, “The site consists of a large collapsed structure with a tabby foundation and brick walls. It was roofed with what looks like tin.” In the historic photograph, no brick walls can be seen in this building, but brick piers and (likely) brick chimneys can be seen as well as several sets of wood steps and doors. Additional details are arched windows in the church portion of the building and potentially shutters on the windows. An additional photograph published in Kelly (1980:84), of which no original has been found, shows a second clapboard building identified as the “Negro School”. This two-story building has an oddly-shaped upper level balcony, a cupola-type of structure on the roof, and approximately 18 students and monks

posing in front of the building. One individual holds an American flag. Both photographs show fairly clear lawns surrounding the building, and the school picture has a fence in the background.



*Skidaway Island, near Savannah, Ga.  
Chapel and house.*

Abbot Wimmer described the school in 1886, “We have 700 acres of land with an industrial school for Negroes... On Skidaway, the young Negroes are instructed in domestic work and farm work and learn the habit of work. They also learn fishery, which is the main work of this island and their livelihood... The fathers have already entered 114 Catholic baptisms in their sacramental registry” (Oetgen 2008:534). However, the school never succeeded financially. Father Melchior tried to raise money throughout Georgia. The mission’s greatest supporter, Abbot Wimmer, died in 1887. Also in 1887, Father Melchior went to Sacred Heart in Savannah, and Father George Lester took over the Skidaway mission.

Oetgen (1969:9) writes, “a tidal wave in 1889, which ruined the fresh water on the island, as well as a fire in the same year which destroyed several of the monastery’s buildings, determined the end of the monastery and school for Negroes on the island. The Benedictines withdrew from Skidaway in 1889.” A much later source by the same author states that the school closed in the 1890s (Oetgen 2000: 164). No other

references have been found for an 1889 tidal wave. There were no strong hurricanes that year (Fraser 2006). A non-contemporary newspaper article said isolation “made the plan impractical” but gives no date for the closure (Gamble 34). Father Melchior wrote, “It was not easy to get men to go to the Island which was then given up” (Gamble 84), but he does not give a specific year. Melchior continued his work in Savannah before moving to Belmont, where he served for several decades (Oetgen 1969:9-10). Sources conflict as to exactly when the land transferred from the Benedictines to a new owner. Oetgen (1969:9) reports that Abbott Leo Haid sold the land in 1917. However, Kelly (1980:86) writes that the Floyd family bought the property in 1906 and remodeled the 17-room monastery as a vacation home. In 1941 Union Camp bought the property and only the wooden monastery was standing, although uncertainly. In 1949 the remaining buildings were dismantled by Union Camp staff.

There were many challenges facing the monks. First, the concept of a manual school was incompatible with many ex-slaves’ desires for their children. They wanted students to get an education so they could leave the fields for better jobs and opportunities. Father Oswald wrote, “I was told in Savannah, that my plan of having a Manual Labor School for colored boys does not please the majority of the Negroes. The first reason is that most of them have a horror of farm work. The second cause seems to be that they want their boys to get an education which fits them for positions of clerks, bookkeepers, anything else but farmers” (Oetgen 1976: 14-15). In response to the local’s needs, Father Oswald modified his plans to have an agricultural school. The school was then ““designed to benefit two classes of students... those who wish to get a business education qualifying them for such positions’ and those ‘whose circumstances or wishes incline them to seek a more limited and practical course of instruction in farming as a profession’” (Oetgen 2000:163-164).

Oetgen presented an estimate of 80 school-age children on Skidaway Island during the monastery era (Oetgen 1976:15), but there were only 20 students at the height of the school. There were several reasons for the low enrollment, in addition to the type of education offered. Also, all of the Skidaway Island families were Protestant, and their Protestant preachers were not supportive of the Catholic school. Several men told Father Oswald they had promised their Baptist preachers not to send their children to Catholic school. One deacon threatened to excommunicate anyone sending their children to the monastery school (Oetgen 1976:15). Abbot Wimmer wrote in an 1877 letter: “Father Oswald and his companion, Father Maurice Kaeder, do not have an easy job in Georgia. Their efforts to convert the Negroes, a difficult task in itself, are made even more difficult by the opposition of different Protestant sects. Father Maurice is an excellent preacher and lecturer in English. He tends not to neglect the white people. Fathers Oswald and Maurice have no income and depend entirely on St. Vincent. This is not a profitable business for me, but we do the work on the one hand because of pity for these entirely neglected Negroes and on the other hand because of the need to find new fields of activity for my young people...Already we have one Negro brother” (Oetgen 2008:420-421).

White protestants were “also anxious to thwart the Catholic influence on the black population” (Oetgen

1976: 15). Lobbying from Savannah's white Protestants encouraged Chatham County to open a public school soon after, and many students attended that public school. Father Oswald countered this move by having Siricius Palmer, the young black cleric, apply for and, as the most qualified applicant, get the position of schoolmaster at the public school (Oetgen 1976:16). Abbot Wimmer noted in 1883, "In the South, the Catholic element is insignificant and the population in general opposed to the growth of such institutions" (Oetgen 2008:496).

It needs to be noted that the majority of this history comes from the written documents of the monks. To this date, the only historical records from the African-American students and workers is the 1880 United States Census. This research avenue will continue as the project progresses.

## **Research Questions**

Our basic Phase I survey research questions will continue to apply:

- Is this definitely the site of the Benedictine monastery and freedman school?
- How can we identify the site of the Benedictine monastery and freedman school?
- How much of the site is preserved? Which portions of the site have been preserved?
- What is the layout of the buildings and other living spaces?
- Can we identify outbuildings?
- Is there evidence of earlier or later occupations on the site?

Phase II research questions fall under several categories: lives of Freedmen, the architecture and institutions of schools, the lives of the Benedictines, and the architecture and institutions of monasteries and churches. The research questions discussed below are wide-ranging and ambitious. Several field seasons will probably be necessary to answer a majority of the questions, if it is possible to answer all of the questions.

What was the quality of education? Were the students learning reading, writing, and mathematics? Or were they learning technical trades? Both? Artifacts may lead us to understanding the type of education the boys received. Few education-related artifacts will indicate a primarily book-based education focused on reading, writing, and mathematics. However, tools, waste materials, hardware, pins and needles, science equipment, measuring devices, and musical instruments can indicate a technical education as well (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:125-126). Were the students given a religious education?

Education was important for more than simply obtaining a better job. Literacy meant the possibility of voting. Competence in mathematics meant the ability to fight economic exploitation. Education was

empowerment (Agbe-Davies and Martin 2013:108). Contemporary educational theory stated that the goals of universal education were to create better citizen voters, both for political and economic reasons. Only an educated citizenship could be expected to make competent decisions (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:126). But did these European Benedictine monks subscribe to these values? Were they concerned with religious education or conversion? Were they motivated to educate those disadvantaged in society?

How are the Benedictine values and concepts represented on this site? Can we see Benedictine concepts in the architecture, spatial arrangements, or diet? Do we find any religious objects? Finding religious objects is unlikely as they would be highly valued and curated. Are any personal property items present, and can we see evidence of monastic life? Are there market products present? How much contact did the site's inhabitants have with Savannah and the larger region?

Non-architectural artifacts were sparse in the Phase I excavations, which follows with other excavated school sites. In lamenting the lack of scholarship on schoolhouse sites, Gibb and Beisaw suggest several approaches for further, rigorous study. First, archaeologists should look closer at the architecture and outbuildings to see how the landscape was used. All extant ruins should be thoroughly documented. Archaeologists should look for evidence of the initial construction, modification, repair, and expansion. What upgrades were made to the lighting, heating, and sanitary facilities over time? While it initially seems this suggestion would not apply to our very short-lived monastery site, we need to look at how buildings or building materials from the plantation era may have been modified or reused by the Benedictines. Gibb and Beisaw suggest we can look at gender by identifying male and female privies (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:125-126). Again, this will probably not be relevant at a boy's school run by monks. However, evidence of women on site should not be dismissed.

## **Methodology**

Students taking Seifert's *Field Methods in Public Archaeology* and *Historical Archaeology* classes as well as Anthropology Club members at Armstrong State University were the field and lab crew for this project. Seifert conducted lab work and analysis in the Armstrong State University Anthropology Lab with the help of Research Assistant Chase Freeman and many Armstrong student volunteers.

Several aboveground, architectural features are obvious on the landscape: Three brick piers at the northern end of the property (Area 1), an intact portion of a brick pier (or wall) on the western edge of the property (Area 2), and the brick and tabby rubble pile at the southern end of the property (Area 3). Architectural artifact clustering and distance between the features suggested each area indicates a distinct



building, so Phase II work focused on discovering more about each structure. Each unit was judgmentally placed based on the aboveground architectural debris, as no subsurface features were found to guide unit placement. Each unit was excavated in arbitrary 10 cm levels, unless natural levels or features were encountered. Shovel testing revealed artifacts from many different eras, but few distinct soil layers. Maintaining arbitrary stratigraphic levels was important in understanding the development of the site over time. Additionally, since the site will be developed, each unit was excavated to subsoil.



Area one during Phase I excavations. One of the brick piers is obvious in the foreground.

Phase I excavations showed Area 1 had few non-architectural artifacts but a large amount of architectural debris and large piers, which indicate that a building of substantial size sat here. While this Area held the least archaeological potential, a downed tree prevented work on Area 3 and made it more difficult to excavate Area 2. Therefore, the 2016-2017 academic year excavations started at Area 1. Three visible brick piers suggest a building's corner, but are not truly perpendicular nor do they form an exact right angle. The area between the piers was probed for additional underground piers or foundation. Some hard material was encountered, and this information helped guide the placement of the units. Rectangular (1x2 meter) test units were placed to test the hypothesis that this is a building (Test Units 1 and 2). Test unit locations were attempting to span the walls of the building.

Area 2 is hypothesized to be the church and monastery. This brick pier may indicate the clapboard end of the building in the early photographs. Therefore, the opposite, white end of building is the intact tabby basement on The Landings' property. Two 1x2 meter test units (3 and 4) were placed into the hillside using the tabby basement foundation as a guide. Placement attempted to span the north wall of the building's foundation.

Area 3, hypothesized to be the schoolhouse, holds great potential. Most of the artifacts datable to the monastery-era were found here. Additionally, the only potential school items, four tiny slate fragments, were clustered here. Slate could also be an



Students excavating Phase I shovel tests in Area 2.

architectural element, such as slate roofing tiles. Window glass strongly clusters around the rubble pile. The window glass sample size is not large enough to measure and get a date. Chimney lamp glass also clusters in the southern half of the property. Properly lighting a school was of concern to nineteenth century teachers (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:122, Rotman 2009:72). Gibb and Beisaw's article focused on sites in the northeastern United States, so stove pieces and heating-related artifacts were discussed. At the monastery site, we should also question how the building was cooled. The concentration of window glass around Area 3 may answer some questions of both building cooling and lighting. Rectangular units were placed on the north and east sides of the brick and rubble pile (Test Units 5 and 6).

Finally, Gibb and Beisaw state that a large excavation sample size will be needed to get enough information to draw conclusions. These sites "certainly require a more intensive sampling than a few systematically excavated shovel tests and a handful of judgmentally placed excavation units" (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:125-126). We will hope to continue excavating as much as possible until the site will be developed to get as large a sample size as possible.



Students excavating Area 3 during Phase I testing. The brick and rubble pile is to the left in this photograph.

## Results

### *Test Unit 1*

Test Unit one had simple stratigraphy. Level 1 was topsoil, 10YR2/2 very dark brown sand. This level was excavated in a 10 cm natural level. This level contains few artifacts: brick, a cut nail, mortar, alkaline glazed ceramic, whiteware, redware, oyster shell, and bottle glass, including manganese dioxide decolorized glass, which gives this layer an 1880 TPQ.

Level 2 was also 10YR2/2 very dark brown sand and a 10 cm arbitrary level. Levels 1 and 2 had very heavy root bioturbation. This level contained more artifacts including architectural debris (brick, window glass, cut and wire nails, a staple, unidentified hardware, a metal pipe, plaster, and large amounts of mortar), kitchen artifacts (gray salt-glazed stoneware, coarse earthenware, redware, animal bone and teeth, oyster shell, and bottle glass), and four .22 cartridges. Also notable is a piece of hardware that is likely an electrical element, possibly a knife switch or fuse box part. This indicates this layer is more recent than the 1880 TPQ from manganese dioxide decolorized glass would suggest.

Level 3 begins a new stratigraphic layer that is 10YR3/2 very dark grayish brown loamy sand mottled with 10YR2/2 very dark brown loamy sand and very small amounts of gray clay. This layer is a 10 cm arbitrary level. Artifacts include brick, mortar, wire nails, pearlware, coarse earthenware, bone, shell, bottle glass, table glass, metal lids, an unidentified finial, and another knife switch or fuse box piece.

Level 4 was 10YR5/3 brown loamy sand and was a 10 cm arbitrary level. This level contained few artifacts such as nail fragments, mortar, oyster shell, bottle glass, and a white clay pipe bowl.

Level 5 was another 10 cm arbitrary level with 10YR4/3 brown sand. The level contained brick, one cut nail, three wire nails, unidentified hardware, mortar, Native American ceramic, and rubber hose fragments that may be from garden hose. These hose fragments cross mend.

Level 6 was 10YR4/6 yellowish brown sand and small amounts of clay. This level is 15 cm deep. The layer is subsoil and did not contain artifacts.



East wall profile of Test Unit 1.

## *Test Unit 2*

Test Unit two had simple stratigraphy and was very similar to Test Unit 1. Levels 1 and 2 were the darkest, topsoil levels. Levels 3, 4, and 5 are the same stratigraphic level, which dates to the monastery era. Feature 1 was older, probably dating to the plantation era, but was shallow and unimpressive.

Level 1 was an arbitrary 10 cm level that was 10YR2/2 very dark brown loamy sand. Artifacts found include brick, window glass, lots of mortar, plain pearlware, oyster shell, bottle glass, table glass, and a .22 cartridge.

Level 2 was also an arbitrary 10 cm level that was 10YR2/2 very dark brown loamy sand. Artifacts include brick, wire nails, a metal pipe, lots of mortar, bone china, coarse earthenware, transfer print ware, oyster shell, bottle glass, table glass, a .22 cartridge, chimney lamp glass, and a metal "1". A bottle neck with a fine lipping tool finish gives this level an 1880 TPQ.

Level 3 was 10YR3/2 very dark grayish brown loamy sand mottled with 10YR2/2 very dark brown sand. This is a 10 cm arbitrary level. This level had much architectural debris including brick, window glass, equal amounts of cut and wire nails, and mortar. Notable artifacts include a brass button and a lead alloy caster wheel. Kitchen artifacts include plain pearlware, underglaze blue painted ware, dipped ware, bone, oyster shell, bottle glass, and cut glass. One bottle glass sherd is embossed with "T WHISKEY". Unfortunately, the letters before T were missing, making it very difficult to more accurately identify this company or brand. This level also has an iron pipe protruding from the south wall. The pipe is terminated to the north, with a junction that points upward, but there is no attached pipe, so the pipe is open.

Level 4 was a 10 cm arbitrary level with 10YR3/3 dark brown loamy sand. Level 4 contained fewer artifacts including brick, cut and wire nails, mortar, mocha ware, Native American ceramic, oyster shell, and bottle glass. Colorless bottle glass gives this level a circa 1870 TPQ. Several large, decaying roots were found. Initially, they were pedestalled and treated as if they were architectural beams. However, the presence of bark and the shape of the wood strongly suggests these were roots, not architectural. A second, smaller iron pipe was found in this level. This pipe spans the unit north to south.

Level 5 was 10YR4/2 dark grayish brown sand mottled with 10YR5/3 brown sand and 10YR5/2 grayish brown sand. This level is another 10 cm arbitrary level. Artifacts found include brick, cut and wire nails, mortar, hand painted pearlware, oyster shell, and bottle glass.

Feature 1 was below Level 5 and intruding Level 6. Feature 1 is approximately one meter east/west and 70 cm north/south. The feature continues into the north wall and is only 12 cm deep at the most. The feature contained small amounts of brick, window glass, cut nails, coarse earthenware, redware, oyster shell, and unidentified metal fragments.

Level 6 is 10YR5/4 yellowish brown sand. This level is a 10 cm arbitrary level. A few pieces of brick and mortar were found high in the level. Below this level is subsoil.



Test Unit 2 north profile. Note the two iron pipes and many roots. The soil was very loose sand, which it difficult to excavate neatly.

### *Test Unit 3*

Level 1 was topsoil that was 10YR3/2 very dark grayish brown, very loose loamy sand. This level was dug as an arbitrary 10-14 cm deep level and contained a mixture of older and newer artifacts. There was a high amount of architectural debris, including whole bricks, plaster, mortar, and cut and wire nails. Other important artifacts included a glass button, spoon, and a nearly whole projectile point with a small amount of tabby attached.

Level 2 was a 10cm arbitrary level containing 10YR3/3 dark brown loamy sand. Artifacts included architectural debris such as brick, mortar, plaster, cut and wire nails, roofing tin, and wood. Very small

amounts of kitchen artifacts included refined earthenware, bottle glass, and, oyster shell. Notable in this level was a cope hook, a decorative hook for closing a monk's cape during a benediction. Father Andrew Campbell, Archivist at St. Vincent Archabbey, identified this artifact.

Level 3 is another 10 cm level with the same soil as Level 2, but this level contained significantly more architectural rubble: brick, mortar, plaster, architectural wood, window glass, cut and wire nails, and roofing tin. This level contained more kitchen artifacts including bone china, Ironstone, Rockingham glazed earthenware, and many sherds of bottle glass including a hob-skirted Coke bottle, cup bottom molded bottle, a continuous thread finish, and bottle glass with an applied color label, which gives this level a TPQ of 1935.

Level 4, a natural level 4-8cm thick, had mottled soil throughout the unit: 10YR3/1 very dark gray sand, 10YR3/3 dark brown sand, and 10YR5/4 yellowish brown sand. This level contained less, but similar types of architectural materials including brick, mortar, plaster, architectural wood, window glass, and cut and wire nails. The only ceramic is one whiteware sherd, and the layer also contains oyster and clam shell, bottle glass, a .22 cartridge, and chimney lamp glass.

Level 5 contained 10YR4/2 dark grayish brown sand mottled with 10YR3/4 dark yellowish brown sand. This level was in the north end of the unit, extending 40-65 cm from the north wall. This level had small amounts of the same architectural debris as above levels as well as a large staple. Ironstone, whiteware, oyster shell, and bottle glass were the kitchen artifacts found. Manganese dioxide decolorized bottle glass gives this level a TPQ of 1880. A bedspring, a flake, a screw, and two sherds of chimney lamp glass were also found. A small, thin fragment of slate with a right angle on one edge may be a portion of a writing slate.

Level 6 was 10YR2/2 very dark brown sand and was only in the unit's north end, extending 40 cm from the unit's north wall and was 12-14cm in depth. This level was below the substantial architectural rubble, although small amounts were found. Shell, bottle glass, and glass tableware was also found. Colorless glass provides a circa 1870 TPQ. Levels 5 and 6 as well as potentially the northern portion of Level 4 are a complex feature that is possibly the trench for a 3 cm diameter metal pipe.

Level 7 is a 10 cm arbitrary level extending over the entire unit. Soils were 10YR3/4 dark yellowish brown sand. This level still had a fair amount of architectural debris including brick, mortar, plaster, window glass, a large staple, cut nails, and a portion of a hook and eye latch. This level also contained eight buttons, two eyelets, Ironstone sherds, bone and oyster shell, bottle glass, and tableware glass. One bottle base formed by a post bottom mold is embossed with "WF&S/2/MIL". This was made by the Northern Glass Works and

dates between 1896 and 1900. A partial table knife, chimney lamp glass sherds, and a flake were also found. This level may represent a living surface just after the site was abandoned or may relate to the monastery.

Level 8 soils were 10YR3/3 dark brown sand mottled with 10YR4/3 brown sand that extended across the unit to a depth of 5-12 cm. The unit's north end was more dense with artifacts, although there was possible contamination from above as the walls were very dry and crumbly. Brick, mortar, plaster, window glass, a large staple, and cut nails were found. Other notable artifacts include an iron button, chimney lamp glass fragments, a percussion cap, and a slate pencil. Pearlware, whiteware, bone, oyster shell, and bottle glass were found, and the colorless bottle glass again gives an approximate 1870 TPQ for this level. The soils and artifacts indicate that Level 8 is a buried A-horizon or the living surface during the monastery era.

Level 9 was a 10 cm arbitrary level with 10YR3/4 dark yellowish brown sand mottled with 10YR4/4 dark yellowish brown sand. This level had fewer artifacts including brick, shell, plaster, bone, oyster shell, charcoal, a shell button, and four flakes. This level is a transition to subsoil.

Level 10 was 10YR3/6 dark yellowish brown sand mottled with 10YR4/4 dark yellowish brown sand and only contained one oyster shell and one flake. Below this level is subsoil.



Test Unit 3 south wall profile.

#### *Test Unit 4*

Level 1 was 10YR3/2 very dark grayish brown loamy sand and was a 10-12 cm deep arbitrary level. This layer, as well as Test Unit 3 Level 1, had a large amount of root bioturbation from nearby trees. This level had much architectural debris: brick, plaster, mortar, window glass, cut and wire nails, and a ceramic pipe sherd. Some of the window glass has a curved edge to fit “arch windows” or “radius windows”. A historic photograph of the church and monastery shows arch windows. This level also has bottle glass (including a bottle neck with a crown cap), bone, oyster and scallop shell, and a large variety of eighteenth and nineteenth century ceramic sherds. A porcelain button, .45 copper cartridge, chimney lamp glass, a flake, and two small pieces of plastic were found.

Level 2 is a 10 cm arbitrary level consisting of 10YR3/3 dark brown loamy sand. Window glass sherds were abundant in this level (n=286); other architectural materials include mortar, plaster, cut and wire nails, unidentified hardware, and roofing tin. The roofing tin appeared at the bottom of Level 2 and is the interface between Levels 2 and 3. Kitchen artifacts included Ironstone, coarse earthenwares, pearlware, bone, oyster shell, a variety of bottle glass, and a glass bottle stopper. Manganese dioxide decolorized bottle glass provides the 1880 TPQ for this level. Eyelets for shoes, two .22 cartridges, a shotgun shell, and chimney lamp glass were also found. The upper part of this level is probably topsoil and certainly post-dates the monastery.

Level 3 is a 10 cm arbitrary level consisting of 10YR3/2 dark brown loamy sand. This level has a heavy amount of architectural debris including brick, plaster, wood, window glass, cut and wire nails, unidentified hardware, and roofing tin. A bottle neck with a fine lipping tool finish provides the 1880 TPQ for this level. This level had a high amount of clothing artifacts including six buttons, one eyelet, and a safety pin. This level also contains bottle glass, table glass, one bone fragment, oyster and scallop shell, and a mix of late eighteenth and nineteenth century ceramic sherds. This level also contained two percussion caps, two copper cartridges (a .22 and a .45), chimney lamp glass, harmonica fragments, a screw, and a stone flake. Levels 2 and 3 are the same natural strata.

Level 4 extends one meter from the south wall of TU 4 and is 9-18 cm deep. The soils are 10YR3/2 dark brown loamy sand, mottled with 10YR5/6 yellowish brown sand. This level contained heavy amounts of architectural debris including brick, plaster, mortar, wood, window glass, cut and wire nails, unidentified hardware, and roofing tin. A bottle base with an Owen’s scar gives this level a 1903 TPQ. This level and Level 5 also contain window glass from “arch windows” or “radius windows”. A caster wheel, an escutcheon plate, and two other unidentified metal furniture parts were found as well as an unidentified jewelry part, percussion cap, .22 copper cartridge, a shotgun shell, and chimney lamp glass. Kitchen artifacts include whiteware, yellowware, bone, shell, and a mix of bottle and table glass.



Level 5 covers the same area as Level 4 and is 5-11 cm in depth. The soils were 10YR3/3 dark brown sand. This level has similar architectural rubble to Level 4, but somewhat smaller amounts. This level contained animal bone, shell, a variety of bottle glass and table glass, and very small amounts of pearlware. A bottle neck's crown cap finish gives this level an 1892 TPQ, however, the bottle is fully machine made, which means the TPQ is likely closer to 1900. A small tin enameled pot and several small sherds of metal cans, charcoal, one melted glass sherd, and three percussion caps were found as well.

Level 6 was a 10 cm arbitrary level with 10YR4/3 brown loamy sand mottled with 10YR5/4 yellowish brown sand and 10YR3/2 very dark grayish brown loamy sand. This level had small amounts of architectural debris and very few kitchen artifacts (bone china, bottle glass, and shell). Additional artifacts include a hook and eye (but not a matched set), Native American ceramics, chimney lamp glass, and two stone flakes. This layer is nearing the bottom of the cultural materials. In the northern two-thirds of the unit, subsoil is below this layer. This layer is likely monastery era, with a circa 1870 TPQ from colorless bottle glass.

Level 7 is the same stratigraphic level as Levels 4, 5, and 6. This area was pedestalled because roofing tin was extending into the eastern wall of the test unit. In between the close of fall 2016 excavations and December 2016, the roofing tin was removed by someone or some weather. The roofing tin was found beside the unit and recovered. Level 7 is the pedestalled area, extending 90 cm from the south wall and 25 cm from the east wall. The level was 16 cm deep, and the soil was 10YR3/2 very dark grayish brown sand. The level contained a mix of architectural debris, nineteenth century ceramics, oyster shell, mixed bottle glass, and one stone flake. A bottle base made with a cup bottom mold gives this layer an 1870 TPQ.

Level 8 extends 45 cm north from Test Unit 4's south wall and is 16 cm deep. The soil was 10YR3/3 dark brown sand. This level is the last remnant of the darker feature containing rubble. In the southwest corner, there was a small void in the soil, which is a possible animal burrow. Pockets of orange soil were found in this area. Architectural artifacts include window glass, cut and wire nails, very small fragments of roofing tin, plaster, and mortar. Ironstone, oyster shell, and bottle glass were also found. A cup bottom mold on a bottle base also gives this layer an 1870 TPQ. Levels 4, 5, 7, and 8 are the complex feature that is probably the trench for a 3 cm diameter metal pipe running east/west on the border between TU 3 and 4. This feature is the same as TU 3 Levels 4 through 6.

Level 9 was 10YR4/6 dark yellowish brown sand mottled with 10YR4/3 brown sand. This level is an arbitrary 10 cm level that was sterile subsoil.



Test Unit 4 south wall profile

### *Test Unit 5*

Level 1 was 10YR2/2 very dark brown sand and was dug in a 10-18cm natural level. This topsoil contained a heavy amount of architectural debris including brick, window glass, cut and wire nails, small sherds of roofing tin, and mortar. Several pieces of an extremely worn shoe sole were found as well as an eyelet. Ironstone, creamware, dipped ware, bone, oyster shell, and miscellaneous bottle glass were also found. A crown cap finish on a bottle neck provides an 1892 TPQ. This level also contained chimney lamp glass, a small fragment of a sieve, and a brass washer. There is a brick pier in the northeast corner of the unit, starting just below the surface and extending 22cm down into Level 3.

Level 2 is an arbitrary 12 cm level with 10YR3/2 very dark grayish brown sand. Level 2 also contained a heavy amount of architectural debris including brick, window glass, cut and wire nails, small sherds of roofing tin, plaster, wood, and mortar. A shoe sole fragment mends with the portion from Level 1, and eyelets match those from Level 1. Additionally, this level had a brass suspender buckle. This level contains a large variety of eighteenth and nineteenth ceramics, animal teeth and bone, shell, table glass, and a mix of bottle glass types. Notable artifacts include bottle glass embossed with the words "DIETZ" and a bottle labeled, "St. James Beverage Co./ SAVANNAH GA/ CONTENTS 9 3/4 Oz." The DIETZ glass is likely from an DIETZ Junior oil lamp. The St. James bottle is fully machine made and dates to ca. 1918-1920 (NEEDS CITATION). Four copper cartridges, a Minie ball, rubber hose fragments, thermometer glass tube, chimney lamp glass, miscellaneous hardware, a stone flake, and a small, thin slate fragment were also found. Levels 1 and 2 are post-monastery and likely more recent topsoil.

Level 3 soils were 10YR2/1 black sand mottled with 10YR3/4 dark yellowish brown sand that was three to eight cm deep. This level contained lesser amounts of architectural debris including brick, window glass, cut and wire nails, small sherds of roofing tin, tabby, and mortar. Another small piece of shoe sole was found that is similar to those found in Levels 1 and 2. Kitchen artifacts include porcelain, Ironstone, whiteware, edgeware, bone, oyster shell, table glass, and mixed bottle glass.

Level 4 soils were 10YR3/1 very dark gray loamy sand. This level was dug as a natural level, and the southwest corner was dug deeper than the rest of the level as darker soil was found here. Darker soil persisted deeper in this corner, although due to the sandy nature of the soil, no definite feature boundaries could be discovered. This darker soil in the southwest corner persisted to the bottom of the unit. This feature would eventually be seen in the south wall profile of the unit, however, there was also significant bioturbation disturbance, which probably contributed to the indiscernible edges of the feature. Fewer artifacts were found in this level, including very small amounts of architectural debris, Ironstone, hand painted pearlware, shell, bottle glass, a bullet, and chimney lamp glass.

Level 5 was an arbitrary 10 cm level, and soils were 10YR3/6 dark yellowish brown sand mottled with 10YR2/2 very dark brown sand. Artifacts within the level include window glass, a cut nail, mortar, Native American ceramics, oyster shell, and a .22 cartridge.

Level 6 was another arbitrary 10 cm level with lighter colored soil, 10YR3/4 dark yellowish brown sand. This layer contained few artifacts, and the artifacts continued to be mixed: architectural debris, shell, colorless bottle glass, chimney lamp glass, a stone flake, and a biface fragment. The colorless bottle glass gives this level a TPQ of circa 1870.

Level 7 had the same soil as Level 6 and was a final 10-20 cm level. The few artifacts found came from the southwest corner, which proved to be a feature once seen in the wall profile. A rotting, in situ large root was found at the deepest part of the southwest corner. Artifacts found include architectural debris, bone, oyster shell, and two stone flakes. Levels 4, 5, 6, and 7, which includes the southwest corner feature, are monastery-era levels. Below this level is subsoil.

### *Test Unit 6*

Level 1 was 10YR2/2 very dark brown sand. This layer was topsoil and was removed as one natural layer. This layer had much architectural debris including brick, partially burned wood, window glass, cut and wire nails, concrete, and mortar. Many iron springs were found in the northern half of this unit. Once the layer



Test Unit 5 South wall profile. Note the feature in the southwest corner of the unit.

was completely removed, the metal bedspring frame from a mattress was uncovered. No cloth was present, and the metal was extremely corroded. There were a few kitchen artifacts such as Ironstone, oyster shell, and bottle glass including one sherd formed by cup bottom mold (TPQ 1870).

Level 2 was 10YR2/2 very dark brown sand but appeared slightly lighter in the wall profile. This level was a 10 cm arbitrary level. Artifacts include much architectural rubble, cut and wire nails, a rectangular door hinge, and small amounts of roofing tin. Most of the bedspring fragments were removed with this layer. Only the outermost frame remains in situ and continues into the north and east walls. The bedframe was in extremely poor condition, heavily rusted, and most held together with roots. Fragments were removed as this layer was hand excavated. Kitchen artifacts include Ironstone, hand painted pearlware, transfer print ware, edgeware, Native American ceramics, bone, oyster shell, bottle glass, and table glass. This layer also contained a .32 cartridge, shotgun shell, chimney lamp glass, and one small piece of slate, which could be from a writing slate.

Level 3 was a 10cm arbitrary level containing 10YR3/2 very dark grayish brown sand. This level contained brick, window glass, cut nails, roofing tin, mortar, plaster, and concrete. Kitchen artifacts include Ironstone, pearlware, transfer print sherds, bone, oyster shell, and bottle glass, including manganese dioxide decolorized bottle glass, which gives the layer an 1880 TPQ. Other notable artifacts include a small porcelain button, a .22 cartridge, chimney lamp glass, and three small fragments of slate, which are possibly from a writing slate.

Level 4 was intended to be another 10 cm arbitrary level, but it was stopped shortly after excavation started as a new feature was encountered. Feature 5 was bisected and excavated, then Level 4 was continued. Level 4 soils were 10YR3/4 dark yellowish brown sand. Level 4 had fewer artifacts than above, including brick, cut nails, small fragments of roofing tin and mortar. Kitchen artifacts include hand painted pearlware, transfer print, Native American ceramics, bone, shell, and bottle glass. The ceramics provide a 1795 TPQ, however, the chimney lamp glass and button suggest a much later TPQ. Additional finds include a porcelain button, a white clay pipe stem, chimney lamp glass, and a stone flake.

Feature 5 was in the unit's southeast corner and continues into the unit's south and east walls. Intruding Level 4, the feature was only 14 cm deep, extending over one meter north/south and 60 cm east/west. Artifacts include cut nails, mortar, plain pearlware, Native American ceramics, shell, and colorless bottle glass, which gives the feature a circa 1870 TPQ.

Level 6 was 10YR3/4 dark yellowish brown sand mottled with 10YR4/2 dark grayish brown sand. This level is a 10 cm arbitrary level. Very few artifacts were found: one brick fragment, ten Native American ceramic sherds, and one small iron concretion. Levels 3, 4 and Feature 5 are monastery-era. Level 6 is potentially monastery-era, but transitioning into subsoil and the Native American occupation.

Level 7 was a 10 cm arbitrary level with 10YR4/4 dark yellowish brown sand. This layer contains one Native American ceramic, one oyster shell, and two stone flakes. Subsoil is below this layer.



Test Unit 6 east wall profile.

## Interpretation and Conclusions

In general, we can state that we have positively identified the site of the Benedictine monastery and Freedman school. The cope hook, slate pencil, slate fragments, and time frame of the artifact assemblage all confirm the site's initial identification. The site is well preserved with distinct layers. Few modern disturbances have been found. Oetgen identified three buildings initially constructed for the Skidaway mission: "a monastery, a dormitory for the students, and a storehouse" (1969:4). Portions of the church, monastery, and school may have been identified in Test Units 3 through 6. No outbuildings such as privies have been definitely identified so far, but the storehouse may be located at Test Units 1 and 2. A more detailed hypothesis of the layout of the buildings and other living spaces will be discussed below.



Cope hook



Slate pencil



Shoe sole, eyelets, and ceramics

There is evidence of earlier and later occupations on the site. Small amounts of Native American ceramics and stone flakes are found in the lowest layers of units. Plantation-era ceramics and other artifacts have been found, but no direct evidence for the plantation buildings or occupation areas have been identified. Later occupations including the Floyd family's vacation home or the Union Camp occupation may be present at Test Units 1 and 2 as well as in surface finds.

### *Test Units 1 and 2*

Most levels throughout Test Units 1 and 2 have substantially the same types of artifacts, which are a mix of architectural and domestic kitchen wares and little else, and seemed to suggest one occupation. However, on deeper investigation, this area is difficult to interpret, unlike the distinctly stratified Test Units 3-6. Test Units 1 and 2 also have substantially fewer artifacts than the other test units. At least some of the upper layers post-date the monastery, if not all layers in Test Unit 1. The key information is the electrical elements found in Test Unit 1, Levels 2 and 3. These levels both contained an artifact that is a graphite bar with a copper nut and bolt, which secures a broken-off copper bracket. These may be pieces of a knife switch or parts of a fuse box (John Roberson, Pers. Com.). Either way, these pieces are likely electrical in nature, and point to a

later occupation than the monastery. Test Unit 1, Levels 4 and 5 are potentially monastery era. Pieces of a “rubber” garden hose were found in Level 5. A patent search indicated rubber hoses were around from the 1860s, but the exact material of this hose is unknown. This is an avenue of further research to better date this artifact and therefore this area of the site.

Test Unit 2 levels date to the late 1800s with the exception of Feature 1 and Level 6. Feature 1 is likely plantation era, but the feature has little depth. Level 6 is nearly subsoil, containing only one fragment each of brick and mortar.

More evidence suggesting that these test units do relate to the monastery era is the similarity in artifact patterns to those found in Test Units 3, 4, 5, and 6 with high levels of architectural materials, small amounts of kitchen artifacts, and very few small finds. Another similarity to the other test units is the mixed ages of the domestic artifacts, generally older ceramics and younger bottle glass. This artifact patterning will be discussed more thoroughly below.

The small amounts of architectural materials and other artifacts present suggest this is area saw less intensive use than other areas investigated, perhaps indicating this is the storehouse (Oetgen 1969:4). However, we found two iron pipes, which means the building had somewhat modern plumbing. Based on the pipes’ size, they were likely water pipes. The brick piers visible on the surface are substantial, and the bricks are more modern than those found elsewhere, again, suggesting a later occupation than the monastery. Given this mixed evidence, this area may have been lightly used by the monks, as it is not far from the other buildings, and later occupied by others. We have not identified the Floyd family’s early 1900s house, or, less likely, this area may relate to Union Camp employees. Older artifacts in Feature 1 are likely remnants from the plantation era.

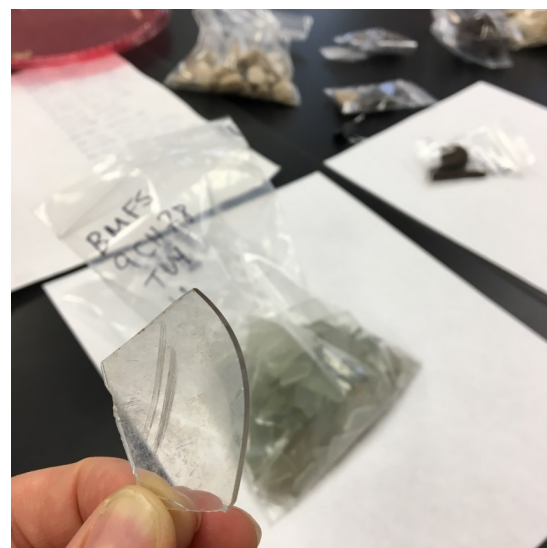
### *Test Units 3 and 4 Architecture*

In the St. Vincent Archabbey archives is a historic photograph marked “Skidaway Island, near Savannah, Ga. Chapel and house” (this photograph is reproduced on page 12 of this report). The building is constructed of two different materials: a “white end”, potentially tabby, and a darker portion in the foreground, which is clearly clapboard. We hypothesized the white end of the building lies on The Landings’ property where a tabby basement is preserved, and the clapboard end of the building extends to the brick pier on Dyer’s property. This hypothesis has held up. Test Units 3 and 4 were specifically placed to catch the clapboard edge of the building. Of particular interest is a feature at the interface between Test Units 3 and 4. These levels may mark the location of a wall or may be the trench for a small iron pipe.

Test Units 3 and 4 are situated into a small slope. The layers of this slope likely built up as the building fell down. In both units, Levels 1 and 2 are topsoil and post-monastery. In Test Unit 3, Levels 3, 4, 5, and 6 are all “destruction” levels of building collapse. Level 7 may be monastery era, or an occupation directly after the monastery. Levels 8 and 9 are the monastery occupation, and Level 10 is subsoil. In Test Unit 4, Levels 3, 4, 5, and 7 are destruction levels. Levels 6 and 8 are monastery era, and 9 is subsoil.

The building in the historic photograph is a substantial building, which when collapsed or intentionally destroyed would account for the amount, type, and diversity of materials encountered including brick, mortar, plaster, wood, and nails. The collapse layers contain enormous amounts of window glass (n=1,049) compared to 106 fragments in the monastery layers. Some of the window glass sherds had intact corners and curved edges, which match the historic photograph. The church end of the building has arched windows on the second floor and on first floor at the building’s front. What is not visible in the picture is the inside of the building. Large amounts of plaster were recovered from the collapse layers, suggesting a formal, more elaborate building. Undecayed wood (n=72) was also found, including a few pieces with right angles and some with paint. This wood could be from window frames, clapboard siding, shutters, or lathing. Smaller amounts of mortar than plaster and the plethora of nails suggest this building was of wooden construction with brick piers. Large and small fragments of roofing tin were also found with the larger sheets topping the rubble layer in Test Unit 4. Some of the larger roofing tin pieces were over two feet in length.

Cut nails dominated the nail assemblage (n=355), but wire nails were present (n=85) as well as 155 unidentified nails or nail fragments. This nail pattern fits with the time frame. In lower layers few, if any, wire nails are found. In higher layers, wire nails are found in small numbers. Generally, American buildings before 1883 were made entirely with cut nails, although wire nails were used for other applications like wooden boxes. After 1897, all American buildings were likely made with the cheaper wire nails (Adams 2002:70). We would expect the 1878 monastery buildings to be constructed with cut nails, but any repairs, additions, or later buildings could have wire nails. This is exactly the pattern we see in the strata.



Curved glass from the church’s arched windows being analyzed in the lab.

The building’s size and detail in the photograph matches the artifact assemblage. After reviewing the strata and artifacts, the hypothesis holds that Test Units 3 and 4 are the clapboard end of the building depicted in the historic photograph. The building’s substantial construction and finishing details (such as plaster) also



suggests the monks intended to stay on Skidaway Island long-term, which makes the puzzle of their leaving after less than two decades more interesting.

### *Test Units 5 and 6 Architecture*

Test Units 5 and 6 are to the north and east, respectively, from a brick and tabby debris pile at the property's southern end. Consistent with the Phase I test pits, these two units were placed to examine the rubble pile, which is hypothesized to be a third building. This building may be the run-down, rough-looking building behind the church in the historic photograph. The building's corners in the photograph are jagged, suggesting a log construction with the logs interlinked at the corners. This could be the early "log house" Father Melchior mentioned.

These units had more simple stratigraphy than Test Units 3 and 4 and contained a different architectural artifact signature. Both units' upper strata (Levels 1-2) date after the monastery and into the early 1900s. Test Units 5, Level 3 also probably dates to the monastery, but contains a mix of wire and cut nails. There is no distinct destruction level, but the upper levels do contain more architectural rubble than the definitive monastery strata (Test Unit 5, Levels 4-7 and Test Unit 6, Levels 3-5). Test Unit 5 and 6's upper level (1 and 2) architectural materials include brick (n=194); mortar (n=98); wood, some of which is partially burned, (n=54); window glass (n=395); cut nails (n=237); wire nails (n=96); and nail fragments (n=155). The burned pieces of wood suggest this could be the building that burned shortly before the monastery was closed. However, these relatively few pieces are certainly not conclusive. These levels had 155 fragments of roofing tin, but all were very small and fragmentary. Like Test Units 3 and 4, the high proportion of nails over brick and mortar suggests a wooden building with brick piers. Unlike the building at Test Units 3 and 4, there were many fewer pieces of window glass in the upper levels and monastery levels. There were only two possible pieces of plaster, suggesting this was a more practical, less formal building than Test Units 3 and 4. The monastery levels contained the same types of architectural materials as the upper levels, but in smaller numbers. These levels also had only cut nails, suggesting this could be one of the first buildings constructed in 1878, before the use of wire nails. An additional difference was that the monastery levels lacked wood.

A deep feature was found in Test Unit 5's southwest corner, although it was disturbed by bioturbation. This feature was bisected by the south wall. A small brick pier was found in the northeast corner. Each of these features needs more exploration to find patterns to discover the orientation and construction of the building.

### *Artifact Patterning, Test Units 1-6*

There are numerous artifacts patterns that have been identified: Carolina Artifact Pattern (later revised),

the Frontier Artifact Pattern (later revised), the Carolina Slave Pattern, the Georgia Slave Artifact Pattern, Piedmont Farm/Yeoman Farmer Pattern, and Public Structure Artifact Pattern (later adjusted) (Trinkley 1986, Willoughby 2007). Each pattern is associated with a type of site and time period. Artifact patterning has been criticized for being overly simplistic and reductionist (Willoughby 2007:48). These criticisms have merit, in particular for use at this site, as none of the patterns fit the time frame or type of site. However, when this tool is used conservatively and as a starting point to understand the broad nature of the artifact assemblage, it can only be helpful.

In comparison to the established artifact patterns, this site’s artifact group patterning is most similar to the Georgia Slave pattern, marked by very high levels of architectural materials, moderate amounts of kitchen materials, and very few small finds. Making this comparison is problematic, of course, as the time frame and social statuses are very different. Excavations at Mitchelville, a Freedmen town on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, show somewhat similar patterning. Two of the areas excavated nearly fit the similar Piedmont Farm/Yeoman Farmer Pattern, but one area is “within its 95% predictive range” of the Georgia Slave Artifact Pattern (Trinkley 1986:265-267). Trinkley also cites Stanley South’s explanation that sites occupied for a short time period will have a disproportionately high amount of architectural materials compared to kitchen artifacts (1986:265-267). This may explain the artifact patterns at the monastery site as well. Additionally, the patterns could simply indicate a low economic status and the few personal items both the students and monks possessed. However, in the monks’ case, this economic status would be mostly through choice and following a monk’s materially-simple lifestyle.

	TU 3, Level 7		TU 3, Level 8		TU 4, Levels 6, 8	
Type	Numbers	percentage	Numbers	percentage	Numbers	percentage
Architectural	183	72.6	87	59.2	107	64.8
clothing	10	3.9	1	0.7	2	1.2
Furniture	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kitchen	55	21.8	42	28.6	42	25.5
Materials	4	1.6	10	6.8	9	5.5
Personal	0	0	1	0.7	0	0
R-Armaments	0	0	1	0.7	0	0
Z-Activities	0	0	5	3.4	5	3
Totals	252		147		165	

Artifact Patterning in Test Units 3 and 4

	TU 5, Levels 4-7		TU 6, Levels 3-7	
Type	Numbers	percentage	Numbers	percentage
Architectural	48	43.6	154	52.9
clothing	0	0	2	0.7
Furniture	0	0	0	0
Kitchen	44	40	104	35.7
Materials	9	8.2	12	4.1
Personal	0	0	0	0
R-Armaments	2	1.8	1	0.3
Z-Activities	7	6.4	18	6.2
Totals	110		291	

Artifact Patterning in Test Units 5 and 6

	Georgia Slave Pattern	Piedmont/ Yeoman Pattern	Carolina Artifact Pattern	Frontier Artifact Pattern	Public Structure Pattern
Architectural	67.9-73.2%	35.8-56.3%	19.7-31.4%	43.0-57.5%	43.5-48.3%
Clothing	.3-1.7%	1.8%	.6-5.4%	.3-3.8%	0-2.5%
Furniture	0-.1%	.4%	.1-.6%	.1-.3%	0-.2%
Kitchen	20-25.8%	40-61.2%	51.8-69.2%	22.7-34.5%	45.2-52.0%
Tobacco	.3-9.7%	0%	1.8-13.9	1.9-14.0%	1.0-4.6
Personal	.1-.2%	.4%	.1-.5%	.1-.4%	0-.1%
Armaments	0-.2%	0%	.1-1.2%	1.4-8.4%	.01-1.7%
Activities	.2-.4%	1.8%	.9-2.7%	.7-6.4%	.87-2.0%

Established Archaeological Artifact Patterns (Trinkley 1986, Willoughby 2006)

### *Artifact Analysis from Test Units 3-6*

This site is different from most every other school site archaeologically investigated because it has domestic, religious, and educational components. Unlike many school excavations, this site has many artifacts (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:125-126). However, it is difficult to separate the deposits of the white European-born monks, black American-born monks, and African-American students.

The monastery levels have relatively few artifacts that mostly consist of architectural debris and small amounts of kitchen artifacts including ceramics and bottle glass. There is an interesting dichotomy between the glass and ceramic artifacts. Some ceramics are contemporary with the monastery (Ironstone), but most pre-date the distillery including plain pearlware, hand painted wares, and transfer printed wares, all dating from the late 1700s to approximately 1840. The age of the ceramics may speak to the economic status of the monks, who might have purchased outdated and therefore cheaper materials. Whereas the bottles would be newly purchased with whatever foodstuff or medicine was needed. The bottle glass firmly dates to the monastery era.

One of the few diagnostic bottle glass sherds is an amber base embossed with “WF&S/2/MIL”. Northern Glass Works manufactured this bottle in Wisconsin between 1896 and 1900 ([http://www.slabs.org/antiquibles/glass\\_bottles.htm](http://www.slabs.org/antiquibles/glass_bottles.htm)). This was recovered in Test Unit 3, Level 7 and is likely a beer bottle. It is the only artifact in this level that post-dates 1890. This one artifact is intriguing because points to the monastery lasting longer than previously thought and shows the monks had access to more resources than previously believed. Alternatively, this artifact is evidence that Level 7 dates a later occupation of the property, either a Skidaway Island resident who took over the site when the monks left or the Floyd vacation home, which does not start until 1906 at the earliest. The rest of Level 7 is consistent with the monastery levels. One piece of glass tableware was found in the monastery levels, which also points to the materially simple life of the monks. Shell (n=164) and very small amounts of bone (n=22) are also present, indicating the monks were eating what was locally available. Lack of animal bone could be because of acidic coastal soils, but it could also be confirmation of Moosmuller’s writing that the monks had, “no fresh beef, nor many other luxuries” (Oetgen 1976:16).

The monastery levels contain few personal artifacts. One of this site’s challenges is determining what artifacts were deposited by the monks, what artifacts were deposited by the students, and what may have been shared. Small finds, while rare, can be very telling. Buttons were the most numerous small finds (n=21 with n=11 in monastery strata) with nine buttons coming from Test Unit 3. Buttons may give insight into the students. As the monks would wear their simple tunics cinched at the waist with a belt, buttons may be from student’s clothing. Buttons have been researched as an insight into African-American style and ethnic expression. Two metal eyelets, likely from a shoe, and a potential hook and eye were also found. Large fragments of two different shoe soles were found in the upper levels of Test Unit 5. The shoe soles were extremely worn and were likely disposed of.

A slate pencil and three small fragments of slate, possibly from a writing slate, were also found in the monastery levels. Only three white clay pipes were found on the entire site. Chimney lamp glass was found throughout Test Units 3, 4, 5, and 6, and 26 of the 134 sherds were found in monastery levels. In Test Unit 3, a

broken, but nearly complete, glass oil lamp base was found. The reconstruction shows the lamp is very simple in design, possibly reflecting the monk's simple tastes and vows (Father Andrew, pers comm).

Stratigraphically above the monastery levels are the building's destruction layers. Many deposits from the building's destruction contain a wide variety of artifacts, mostly trash presumably from the occupation of the monastery or potentially from the Floyd family occupation, who renovated a monastery building and used it as a vacation home, according to Kelly (1980:86). The destruction-level kitchen artifacts follow a similar pattern to the monastery-era ones: some later 1800s ceramics (Ironstone, yellowware, and Rockingham-glazed earthenware) are mixed with small amounts of late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century ceramics (plain pearlware, painted wares, and transfer printed wares). The ceramics (n=24) are overwhelmed in number by the bottle glass (n=127). All of the dateable bottle glass is from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Small amounts of animal bone (n=19) and more shell (n=161) is present. More table glass (n=22) was found in the destruction layers. These are more likely to represent Floyd family deposits. Small numbers of metal can fragments and a tin-enameled pot, missing its handle, were also found in the destruction levels. Personal artifacts are similar in number and type to the artifacts from the monastery levels. Seven more buttons as well as a large grommet, and part of a safety pin were found. One difference was the high number of furniture artifacts found including a caster wheel, an escutcheon plate, a bedspring, and three unidentified artifacts: a delicate piece of copper and iron hardware with an engraved design and threading, a finial with an iron strap, and pewter back-plate for a drawer-pull. More chimney lamp glass (n=40) and 11 armament artifacts were found. One piece of slate (potentially from a writing slate) and three pieces from a harmonica may be from the African-American students. In December 1878, Father Oswald had a letter writing exchange with Abbott Wimmer requesting funding for musical instruments and an instructor,

“If we could organize a brass band for the Negroes, not only the people here, but also from other islands would be won over to the Faith. Of course, in church, I would allow nothing else than Gregorian chant, but the band could entertain the worshippers before and after the services. On Christmas Day some of our Negroes somewhere got a big drum, two fifes, six muskets and a sword. They were around the house all day and made an awful noise” (quoted in Oetgen 1976:16).

Father Oswald was denied. But this anecdote illustrates the enthusiasm for music amongst the students, while making it seem less likely that the harmonica belonged to the monks.

Many of the levels below the monastery-era contain Native American artifacts, particularly stone flakes and ceramics. These artifacts are few in number and were not analyzed beyond identification in the catalog.

## *End of the Monastery and School*

As discussed in the historical background section, sources do not agree on the exact date of the monastery's closure. All of the reported dates fall within 1889 and 1899. Future excavations will continue to use the strata to determine when the monastery closed, but might be somewhat challenging because of the Floyd family deposits. We have yet to identify where the Floyd family resided.

One interesting clue is the bottle base from Test Unit 3, Level 7 that was previously discussed. This level contains many kitchen and personal artifacts including many buttons and is consistent with the monastery findings except for a bottle manufactured by the Northern Glass Works. The base has embossed letters on the base: "WF&S/2/MIL" and dates to 1896-1900. This layer seems to be an occupation layer, but exactly who? Was the monastery still active in the late 1890s? Were some of the African-American families still working the plantation and living here? Or is this from the post-monastery Floyd family era.

## **Recommendations and Future Work**

Excavations are scheduled to continue in the fall of 2017. Test Units 1 and 2 were the least productive in understanding the Benedictine monastery and Freedmen school. These areas may post-date the monastery and likely relate to later occupations. With limited time, these are low priority for further excavations.

Test Units 3 and 4 contained exciting finds. However, these test units are very close to the boundary between The Landings property and Mr. Dyer's property. Between the tree cover, which makes excavating difficult, and the likelihood that this area will be better preserved, no more test units should be excavated in this area now.

The architectural debris at the southern end of the property, where Test Units 5 and 6 were located, is the area in most need of more work. The debris pile needs to be thoroughly documented. Test Units will be placed on all four sides of the brick and rubble pile to better ascertain how the building was situated on the landscape. More test units will also mean a bigger sample size of monastery-era artifacts for analysis.

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