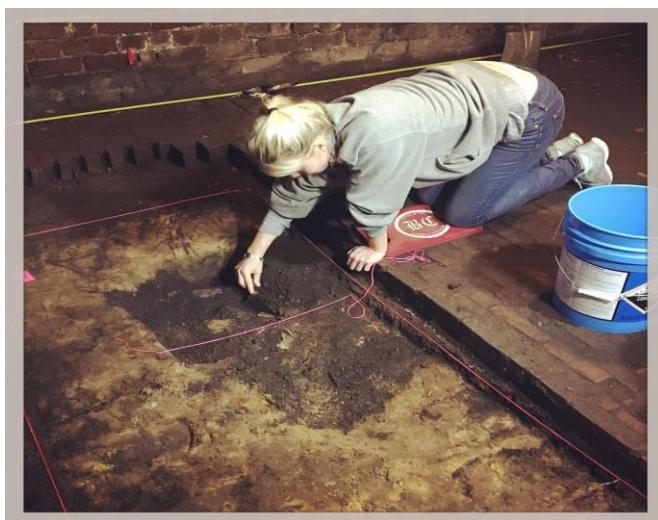


EXCAVATIONS IN THE CARRIAGE HOUSE BASEMENT OF THE SORREL-WEED HOUSE



Excavations in the Carriage House Basement of the Sorrel-Weed House

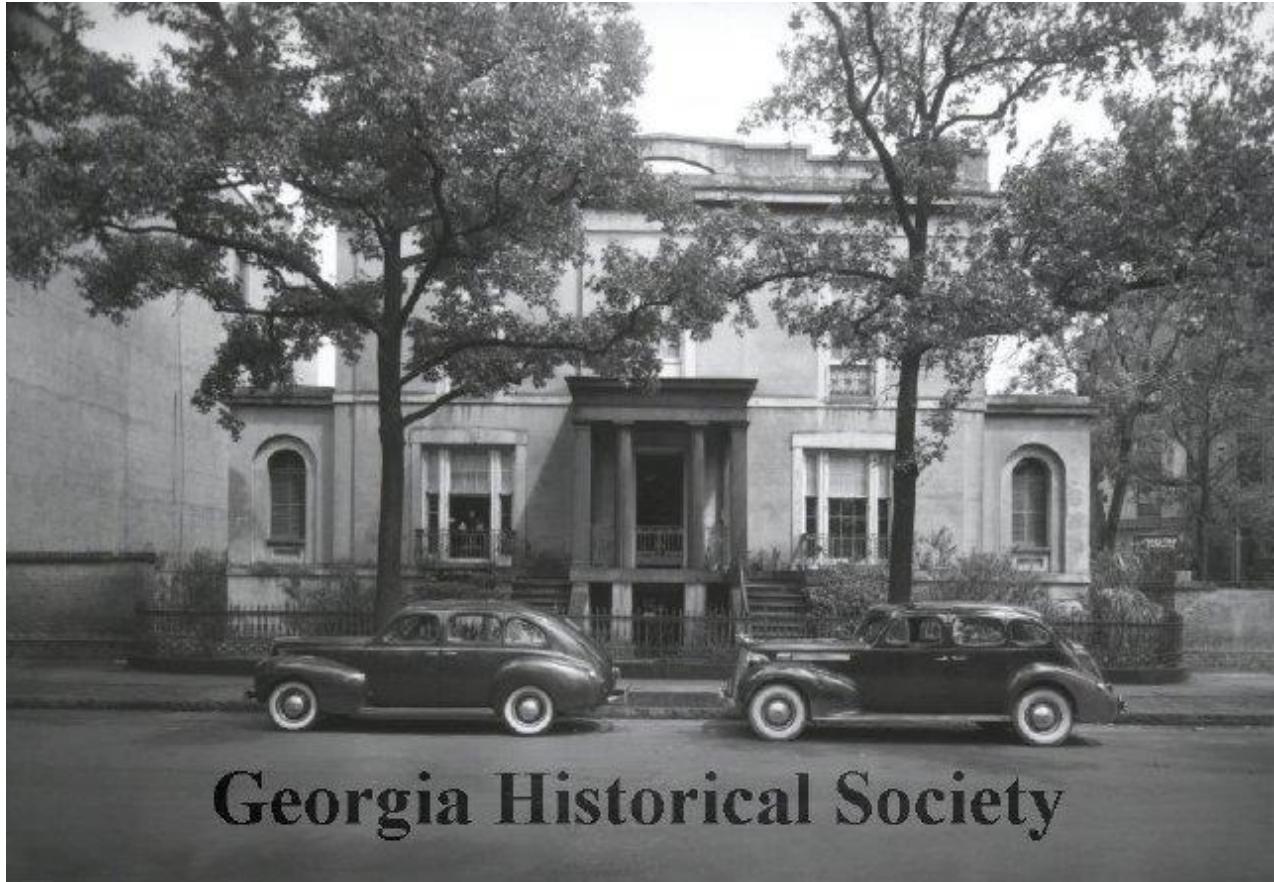
Kelly Westfield

Historical Archaeology
Professor Laura Seifert
Armstrong State University

Spring 2017

“Domestic tranquility proved to be illusive, and indeed, impossible, in the South’s most elegant homes. Tourists of the American South suspect this horror and even seek to safely confront it, which is perhaps what makes Sorrel-Weed the most infamous historic home in Savannah.”

---Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South*, 2015



The Sorrel-Weed House, ca. 1940. Photo Courtesy of Georgia Historical Society Digital Photo Collection, Foltz Photography Studio (Savannah, Ga.), photographs, 1899-1960

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Laura Seifert for offering this project to me and for her time and expertise in subsequently overseeing and directing it. This opportunity stemmed from what was the first archeology class in my academic career and excited about the prospect of doing field work, I sought Professor Seifert out for ideas. Despite having no knowledge of my scholarly background or efficiency as a student, she immediately presented excavations in the basement at the Sorrel-Weed House as an option and worked very quickly to put the project in motion. Our excavations and the research that ensued allowed me to gain invaluable experience and has nurtured a new interest in archaeology that would not have been possible otherwise, for which I am deeply grateful and indebted to Professor Seifert.

I would also like to thank my classmates in *Historical Archaeology* and other Armstrong students who generously and enthusiastically donated their time to help with the excavations. Without their efforts of sifting, sorting, carrying, digging, and their willingness to spend time in a dark and cold basement that always required cautious navigation, this project would not have been feasible. Finally, the staff at the Sorrel-Weed house were unremittingly hospitable and accommodating, and ultimately our excavations in their carriage-house basement were only possible due to their approval and their interest in what the archaeology might be able to reveal about their home's history.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Research Questions

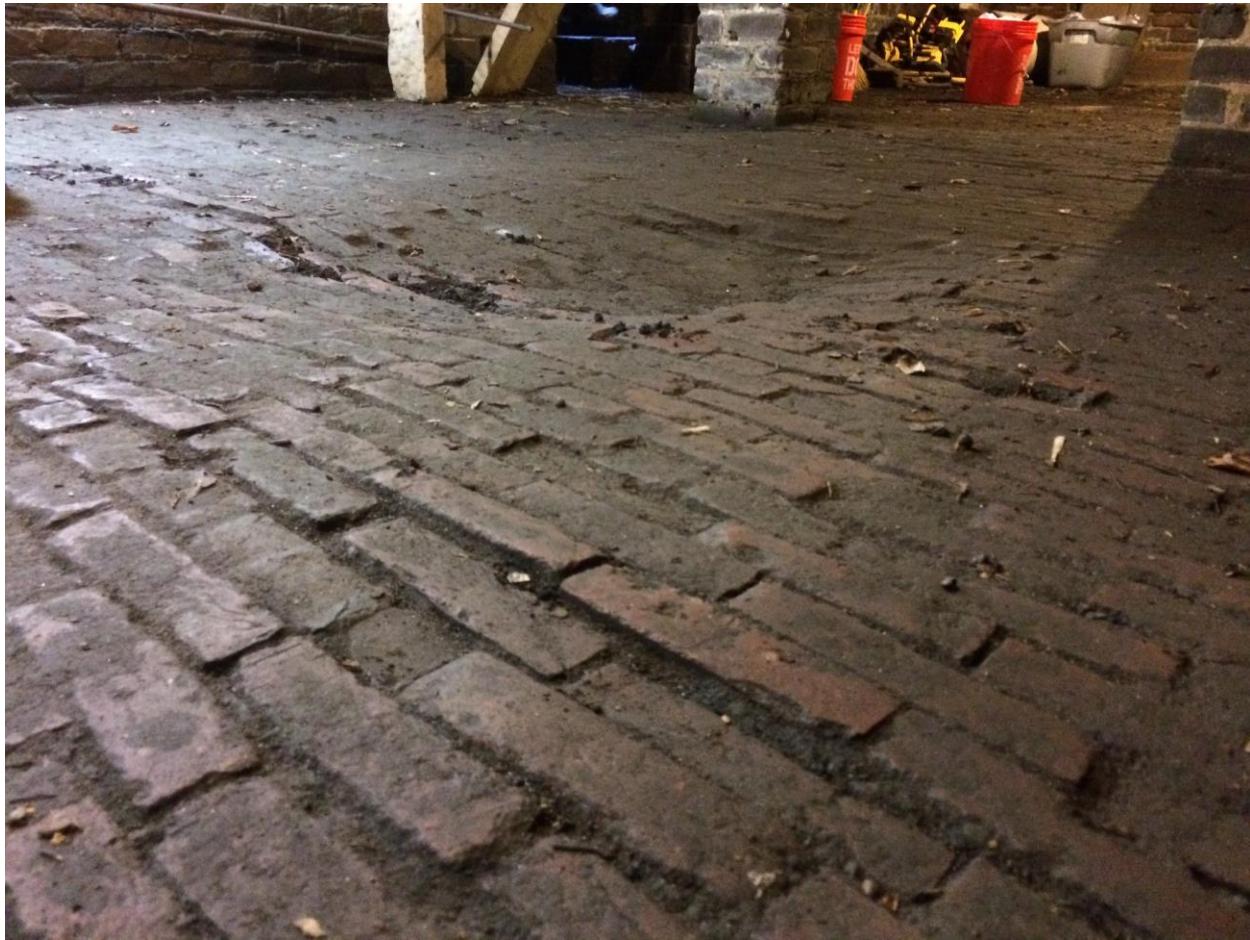
In January 2017, my interest in incorporating field work as a part of a final project in Historical Archaeology coincided with the desire of the Sorrel-Weed House staff to investigate the cause of a depression in the floor of the home's carriage house basement.¹ The Sorrel-Weed House, a privately owned Greek Revival mansion that is a prominent entity in Savannah's ghost tour industry, had only recently approached Laura Seifert, Co-Director of Digging Savannah and my instructor at Armstrong State University, about undertaking this as an archaeological study. Consequently, it was decided in early January that excavations would begin in the basement of the carriage house to uncover the source of the depression in the floor. Excavations took place between February 3rd and March 3rd and were open to the public. Fieldwork was conducted by Armstrong students under the direction of Professor Laura Seifert, and the artifacts were processed in Armstrong's Anthropology Lab.

The inquiry of the Sorrel-Weed house staff regarding the depression in the floor of the carriage house basement was prompted by the strong belief on the part of the Sorrel-Weed House staff that it was caused by the remains of a former slave that once lived at the home. The depression then was potentially physical evidence to reinforce Sorrel-Weed's current interpretation program, which largely focuses on the home's exceptional level of paranormal activity that stems from the story about the unfortunate slave. Oral tradition dictates that a suicide and a murder took place in the home in 1860.² The home's original owner Francis Sorrel, a wealthy merchant and cotton factor, was rumored to have been involved in a sexual relationship with one of his slaves, the one believed to be buried in the basement. When Mr.

¹ The two-story detached building that sits at the back of the Sorrel-Weed lot will be referred to as the carriage house. However, there is no historical documentation yet found to establish that this building was used as a carriage house.

² *Oral tradition* is not synonymous with *oral history*. Oral tradition indicates information that has been passed down and cannot be linked to anyone who actually witnessed an event. Oral history is the opposite, and involves the retelling of a past event by a person who witnessed or has first-hand knowledge. In the case of the Sorrel-Weed House and the tragic story which guides their interpretation program, this falls into the category of oral tradition, as the story cannot be corroborated by an eye-witness oral account. Oral tradition vs. Oral history is discussed in Russel J. Barber, *Doing Historical Archaeology: Exercises Using Documentary, Oral, and Material Evidence*, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994), 27.

Sorrel's wife learned of this, it is rumored that she took her life by jumping from the home's upper level. Sometime shortly after this, the slave involved in the affair with Mr. Sorrel was



Depression in the floor of the carriage house basement at the Sorrel-Weed Home.

found hanged in her quarters of the carriage house. Based on these events, the staff believes that in an attempt to conceal what had transpired, the slave may have been buried in the basement of the carriage house by members of the Sorrel family.³ Although this story may have originated at one time from an oral or documentary source, presently it only borders on oral tradition. At present, no sources can be found to corroborate it. It is necessary to be incredulous about this account, but trace amounts of the story can be linked to documentary evidence. And while this specific story may never be verified, it unequivocally represents commonplace segments of southern antebellum history. Sexual exploitation by slave owners, unilateral extramarital affairs, and oppressive gender codes were legion in the antebellum south.

³ Sorrel-Weed House Staff, Personal communication, January 2017.

Excavations in the carriage house basement have the potential to reveal details about the lives of the enslaved and free people who once worked and lived at the Sorrel-Weed House. Learning about enslaved people and their experiences through documentary sources is limited, as is the reliance on written documents in the exploration of any historical event. Documentary sources most often represent the lives and viewpoints of educated white males and other elite members of society who were educated and able to write. These records convey a limited view of the past, as writers left details of what they wanted posterity to know or not know. Thus, archaeological studies are particularly important for learning more about the lives of underrepresented people who left no written records, and for uncovering a more complete historical past. As one author has written, “archaeology contains particularly strong data with which to address strategies of coping with powerlessness and to discover the subtle expressions of mutedness.”⁴

The archaeology of slavery in recent decades has underscored the implications of *subfloor pits*. As many as 250 of these have been excavated on eighteenth and nineteenth century slave sites in Virginia.⁵ The study of these features and the artifacts recovered suggest resistance strategies as the enslaved preserved cultural traditions and practices known to them from West Africa.⁶ The superficial appearance of the depression in the basement indicates the possibility of a subfloor pit, and because its location is in an urban setting beneath a basement floor, it provides a unique opportunity for study.

While the presence of a feature such as a subfloor pit would be instructive in learning more about urban slavery, other archaeological features that might account for the depression are not limited to enslaved lifeways and include trash pits, privies, wells, or root cellars.⁷ While only the former of these three important features was officially designated as a receptacle for unwanted items, privies and wells were just as frequently utilized as repositories for unwanted goods. Together, these features are major sources of artifacts for archeologists and help to tell much of the story of the past on excavated sites. These features have the potential to shed more

⁴ Barbara J. Little, *Historical Archaeology: Why the Past Matters*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007), 69.

⁵ Patricia Samford, *Subfloor Pits and the Archaeology of Slavery in Colonial Virginia*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007), 5. Ebook. EBSCOhost, accessed March 12th, 2017.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-11.

⁷ Ivor Noel Hume, *Historical Archaeology: A Comprehensive Guide for both Amateurs and Professionals to the Techniques and Methods of Excavating Historical Sites*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1975), 115-161.

light on the history of Savannah by revealing details of health, wealth, diet, consumption, as well as spatial patterning on the urban landscape. Artifacts recovered from these features can also contribute to the growing studies in urban archaeology and help better define southern urban history.

In summary, the presence of a depression in the floor and the shape and size of this anomaly point to several possibilities. Taking all of these considerations into account, this translates into the following research questions:

- What is causing the depression in the basement floor of the carriage house?
- If the depression is caused by human remains, who is this person? How did they die? Do these remains corroborate the oral tradition about the Sorrel Family?
- If the depression is not caused by human remains, what is it attributed to?
- Is the depression the result of a subfloor pit or some other subterranean feature?
- Did slaves live and work in the carriage house?
- What do the artifacts imply about how the carriage house basement was used?
- What do the results of the excavation imply about urban slavery and/or the lives of the slaves who lived and worked at the Sorrel-Weed home?
- Do the artifacts recovered provide any information about the Sorrel family and their lives?
- Do the artifacts provide any insight about life in the urban south

Previous Studies

No previous archaeological investigations have been undertaken at the Sorrel-Weed house, although unofficial digging led by the home's owner during the 1990s and early 2000s has occurred in the basement of the main home and in other scattered areas around the property.⁸ Unfortunately, none of this activity was documented or done according to archaeological method. Despite these disturbances to the property, the Sorrel-Weed staff has indicated that no digging has occurred in the basement of the carriage house.

Urban archaeological studies on other comparable sites have been conducted at other historic homes in Savannah and in Charleston, and these will lend in the research and

⁸ Sorrel-Weed House staff, personal communication, January 2017.

interpretation of the Sorrel-Weed house.⁹ In Savannah, the Owens-Thomas, Telfair, and Davenport Houses have spearheaded archaeological studies at their sites, although the Owens-Thomas house is at present the only home with an urban slavery exhibit.¹⁰ Moreover, reinterpreting historic homes to encompass the lives of the enslaved and an overall more inclusive range of experiences is part of a broad and important movement of historical recovery in the United States.¹¹ Like the Owens-Thomas House, the Sorrel-Weed home has the potential to be another frontrunner in this movement and to help increase urban archaeological studies in Savannah.

As for the documentary history on the Sorrel family and the history of the home, family members and other local historians have contributed to story of the Sorrel family. In recent decades, authors have focused on the home's 'haunted' history and the fateful story previously described.¹² The only comprehensive work available on the Sorrel family is by self-published author Carla Ramsey Weeks.¹³ Her 2009 book provides valuable information about the Sorrels and possible research leads, but unfortunately, Weeks's research methodology is impaired. For the most part, she does not cite her sources and includes no bibliography. While she does indicate being privy to family letters and relies on these extensively for her information, these sources are not cited or made accessible. As a result, her work must be approached with caution. Moreover, not only will this study be the first archaeological investigation on the Sorrel-Weed home, it will also be the first that provides sound research methodology.

Outcomes & Goals

The outcome of this study is to increase public knowledge and awareness about urban slavery, as well as the importance of archaeology and sound research methodology in uncovering

⁹ The Charleston Museum has done extensive archaeological studies in Charleston. The Joseph Manigault House, the Aiken-Rhett House, and the John Rutledge House have all been subject to archeological research. See note #88 below.

¹⁰ See Michael Trinkley, Natalie Adams, and Debi Hacker, *Archaeological Studies Associated with the Owens-Thomas Carriage House, Savannah, Georgia*, Research Series 38 (Columbia: The Chicora Foundation, 1993), 4, pdf, accessed March 26th, 2017, <http://chicora.org/pdfs/RS%2038.pdf>

¹¹ Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, "Introduction," in *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, eds. Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2014), xx.

¹² See Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); James Caskey, *Haunted Savannah: America's Most Spectral City*, (Savannah: Manta Ray Books, 2013).

¹³ Carla Ramsey Weeks, *The Sorrels of Savannah: Life on Madison Square and Beyond*, (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2009).

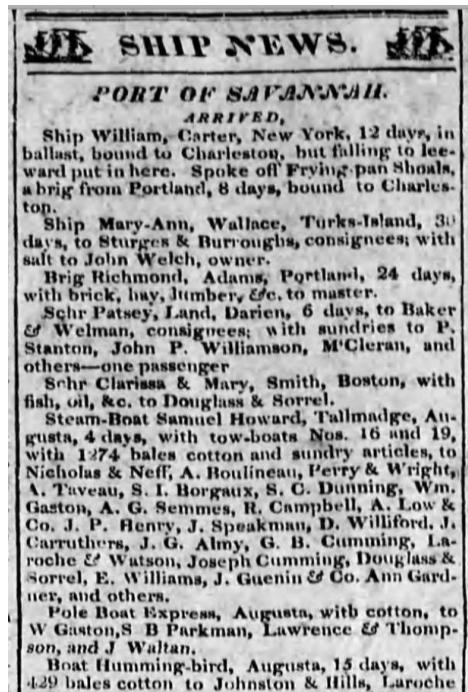
the past. This will be accomplished through the completion of an archaeological excavation and a comprehensive report. This report will be made accessible to the public through various venues, which include the following:

- 1) Completion of a Historical/Archaeological study that will be offered to the Minis Room at Armstrong State University, the Bull Street Public Library, and the Georgia State Archaeology File.
- 2) Incorporation of findings from the excavation onto Digging Savannah
- 3) Incorporation of findings into the Sorrel-Weed interpretation program

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Antebellum Savannah

The Sorrel-Weed home was completed for wealthy shipping merchant Francis Sorrel in c. 1841 by Charles B. Cluskey.¹⁴ The timing of the home's completion coincided with the end of a turbulent era in Savannah's history marked by natural disasters, yellow fever epidemics, and recessions. Improvements to the Savannah- Ogeechee Canal and completion of the Central of Georgia Railway eventually propelled Savannah into economic and financial prosperity and a commercial boom in the 1840s that lasted until the Civil War.¹⁵ Cotton, rice, lumber, and other commodities were responsible for stimulating Savannah's economic resurrection, but what most underpinned the city's new boom was an economy built on agriculture and slavery.¹⁶



¹⁴ John Linley, *The Georgia Catalog: Historic American Buildings Survey*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1982), 339; Roulac Toledo, *The National Trust Guide to Savannah*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 146. Linley and Toledo both give 1841 as the date when the home was built, but Lane Mills in *Architecture of the Old South: Greek Revival & Romantic*, 1996, p. 103, gives the date of 1839. A notice in the *Daily Georgian* from September 1839 indicates the home was in the process of being built. Tax Digests do not account for the value of the home until 1842, so it may be that it was completed in this year.

¹⁵ Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Savannah in the Old South*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 237-241.

¹⁶ Buddy Sullivan, "Savannah," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, October 25th, 2016. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/savannah>. Accessed February 15th, 2017.

SAVANNAH—IMPROVEMENTS.

No. II.

A few years ago, the houses of our fellow citizens, Col. FASSIS, and Capt. POULTON, opposite the New Barrack-, on the South Common, formed the extent of the city in that quarter. Indeed many considered their houses then out of town. Apropos, of the Barracks, however. When the four wings are completed, two of which are already finished, this building may be considered an ornament to that part of Savannah—and only for the Florida War, which has swallowed up so much of the public money, the Barracks would now be entirely finished, and fit for the reception of a garrison, if we needed such a force.

On yesterday morning while perambulating about this section, we were perfectly astonished to witness the vast improvements that are being made. A fine brick building is rearing its head on the West front of the Barracks, which from its present appearance will be a beautiful edifice. F. SORREL, Esq., is the owner of the property, and the house is to be his residence. Near this is another building in the state of erection for the owner F. W. HEINEMANN, Esq. On the South front of the Bar-

Left: An improvement notice from September 28, 1839 in the **Weekly Georgian** announcing the building of Francis Sorrel's home. Right: Announcement in the *Daily Georgian*, January 19, 1820 of 1,274 Bales of cotton arriving to Savannah for Francis Sorrel's firm and others. Images from GALILEO.

Cotton would be Savannah's primary export until the eve of the Civil War, accounting for 80 percent of the city's agricultural exports.¹⁷ This newfound prosperity was marked by the most expansive growth in Savannah's population between 1848 and 1852, with an

increase of 51 percent.¹⁸ Savannah was at its height as a premiere international shipping port.

But this less than a quarter century of affluence and prosperity was soon confronted with the realities of the system of bondage that made this success possible.

The Siege of Savannah and the Revolutionary War trampled Savannah's plantation economy and its commercial vitality, creating financial losses and hardship that were not repaired until the 1790s. In large part, this decimation stemmed from the loss of so much of the slave population during the War; one-third of the slaves in Georgia escaped with the British Army, and many others fled and established maroon communities outside the city.¹⁹ Both merchants and planters believed the solution to the social and economic chaos in the aftermath of the War rested in the resuscitation of slave labor.²⁰ This belief coincided with the advent of Eli Whitney's cotton gin, which was the catalyst for the diffusion of slavery and cotton throughout the Deep South.²¹ As early as the end of the 1790s, plantation production was once again thriving and cotton and rice were Savannah's primary exports, accumulating \$2 million annually. This recovery of slaved-produced agricultural products was reflected in the increased slave

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Fraser, *Savannah*, 254.

¹⁹ Ibid., 140.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 153.

population. The number of slaves in Tidewater Georgia in 1790 was 13,000, more than double that of the white population of 5,847.²² As one author has put it, by the end of the 1790s, Savannahians had become obsessed with their cotton economy.²³

But this obsession and the prosperity it brought also came with great anxieties. The first slave revolt of the Haitian Revolution occurred in 1791 creating hysteria over the possibility that this would lead to local insurrections. As revolts in the Caribbean continued, authorities attempted to prevent an influx of Black, Haitian refugees into Savannah. This was not successful on a large scale, but to quell anxieties Savannah authorities instead ordered a census of all “people of color” in 1798 and required all free “people of color” to register with the city in 1799.²⁴ In the midst of these tensions, Savannah experienced its first great fire in 1796. This conflagration took in its wake 229 homes and created a level of social chaos that required the placement of militia in the city.²⁵ In 1804, when Savannah had only just recovered from this fire, one of several nineteenth century hurricanes ripped through the city causing a level of devastation that would not be seen again until half a century later.²⁶

The law to prevent intercourse between the Free Negroes of other countries and the slaves of the State, and to lessen the means, and punish attempts to excite our slaves to insurrection, by circulating seditious writings among them, has been the subject of much misrepresentation and abuse. Neither the danger which threatens the existence of portions of our community, nor the alarm which renders miserable the tender and timid from apprehension of such danger, has seceded to us from our sister States the liberal construction of our public acts upon this subject. We are not surprised at the opposition which the law has met with in the Parliament of Great Britain. We had no right to expect that the traders of England would be willing to sacrifice any profit for our safety, or that the Government of Great Britain would not prefer our continuing exposed to the attacks which that law was intended to guard us against. Our experience has amply proven that we must govern our slave property as our own interest requires, not only without looking abroad for instruction, but with a firm determination to resist the slightest interference with that right, come from whatever quarter it may. Self preservation is the first law of States, as it is of nature. We would be recreant to our selves if we disregarded its injunctions. The attempt to excite our slaves to insurrection by the circulation of inflammatory writings has not been confined to Georgia. It has extended to Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Louisiana. The correspondence of the Executive Department, in re

Left: An excerpt from the *Savannah Republican* on October 23, 1830 discussing laws against sexual intercourse between slaves and “Free Negroes” as well as fears over anti-slavery literature. **Right:** Isaiah Davenport offers a \$100 reward for a runaway slave named “Dave” in the *Savannah Daily Republican* on January 16, 1822. Images From GALILEO.

One Hundred Dollars Reward.
RUNAWAY from the subscriber on the 2d January last. A Negro man, belonging to the estate of the late Samuel Davenport: named DAVE, about 5 feet 10 or 11 inches high well made, and about 32 years of age, he is well known in Savannah, for the last three years as a Waggoner, said negro was raised on Liberty Island, near Thunderbolt, and was bought at Executors Sales, from the estate of Readick, in 1817. The above reward will be paid for the negro and proof to convict any white person of harboring or attempting to carry him out of this State, and fifty dollars on his being in any Gaol in this State or South-Carolina, so I get him.
ISAIAH DAVENPORT.
march 6 55

²² Ibid., 144.

²³ Ibid., 153.

²⁴ Ibid., 148, 157, 161.

²⁵ Ibid., 158-9.

²⁶ Ibid., 170-171.

Concerns over slave rebellion did not dissipate in the nineteenth century. Abolitionist literature and regional rebellions such as the Denmark Vesey affair in Charleston in 1822, and Nat Turner in Virginia in 1831, deeply intensified the fears of Savannah slaveowners.²⁷ As one author has described it, these insurrections caused a shudder of terror not just in Savannah, but throughout the Nation.²⁸ These anxieties were compounded by others. In 1819, Savannah and the Nation experienced the onset of its first economic recession. Overspeculation, fueled by the availability of credit caused cotton prices of \$.33 a pound to be slashed to less than half, and slaves who sold for \$1000 soon were priced at \$600. This panic and economic downturn coincided with the most devastating fire in the city's history in 1820 and successive outbreaks of Yellow Fever. All in all, the first quarter of the nineteenth century was one of the hardest in the city's history.

The 1820 conflagration destroyed about half of the business district, and somewhere between 400 and 500 buildings.²⁹ The estimated pecuniary losses were estimated to be \$5,000,000.³⁰ Yellow Fever hampered the city in 1817, 1818, 1819, and most profoundly in 1820, when close to 900 people died, accounting for 12 percent of the city's population.³¹ All told, Yellow Fever would claim the lives of four thousand people in Savannah between 1807 and 1820.³² Efforts to revive the floundering economy seemed promising during the 1820s and 1830s. The opening of rice fields, advanced cultivation technology, and the high value of rice, at its highest in the 1820s more than any other time in the antebellum period, helped to ameliorate the recession.³³ By the start of the 1830s, steam-powered rice mills helped to further advance the benefits of rice agriculture.³⁴

²⁷ Fraser, *Savannah*, 203; Russell and Hines, *Savannah: A History*, 100.

²⁸ Russell and Hines, *Savannah: A History*, 98.

²⁹ Sullivan, "Savannah."; E. Merton Coulter, "The Great Savannah Fire of 1820," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1939): 2, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40576606>, accessed April 8th, 2017.

³⁰ Fraser, *Savannah*, 198.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 199; 201.

³² *Ibid.*, 201.

³³ *Ibid.*, 205.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 213.

State of Georgia	Chatham County	Savannah	May 16 th 1890
We the undersigned appointed by the Court of Ordinary to appraise the Estate of Francis Sorrel exhibited to us by G Worley Sonel and A Clayton Sonel Executors make the following			
Inventory and appraisement.			
45 Shares Ogeechee Canal Stock \$450.00			
300 " Park Gas Light Co 7500.00			
42 " Central R Road 4200.00			
54 " South Western R Road 5400.00			
8 " Savannah & Augusta " 800.00			
40 " Savannah Bank & Trust Co 2000.00			
1 " Savannah S. & S. B. Rail Rd 100.00			
4 City Savannah Bonds 2000.00			
Lot. No 1 and improvements Wilmington			
Tything, Derby Ward. 4,000.00			
Cash on Hand 2952.69			
2 Tee Simple pens in Drpt. P. Church 650.00			
Total \$5812.69			
-Over- #1303			

A List of Francis Sorrel's stockholdings at the time of his death, showing ownership in railroad and canal stock.
Chatham County Probate Court.

The Experience of Slavery in Savannah

The volatile Antebellum period in Savannah was punctuated with uncertainty of survival that included anxieties about slave insurrection.³⁶ As a result, city officials continuously imposed codes and sought methods to further circumscribe the freedoms of slaves. Despite this, research on urban slavery suggests that the actual practices of slaveholders in Savannah must be examined alongside these codes, as these are what actually defined the experiences of whites and blacks in the city. Moreover, to maintain the institution that underpinned the southern way of life, slaveholders often negotiated these codes and practices.³⁷ What resulted, as one author has

³⁶ Preston Russel and Barbara Hines, *Savannah: A History of Her People Since 1733*, (Savannah: Frederic C. Beil, 1992), 100; Fraser, *Savannah, 188-189; 221-223; 233-235*.

³⁷ Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, "Slave Life in Savannah," in *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, eds. Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2014), 94.

described it, was “a middle ground between slavery and freedom,” that allowed slaves in Savannah more autonomy in their everyday lives.³⁸ Overall, slaves in Savannah, while hemmed in by codes restricting their daily lives, had better diet, clothing, and housing than their counterparts in the country.³⁹

Codes were in place to restrict the freedom of slaves since the early colonial period, but the enforcement of these laws was not steadfast and could vary according to individual slaveholders or fears over insurrection. Nonetheless, mid-eighteenth century codes imposed several restrictions. Slaves were not allowed to assemble in large groups, own or rent property of any kind, sell or trade goods, or seek employment. It was permissible for a slave to be taught to read, as this could benefit slaveowners, but it was illegal to teach slaves to write.⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, slave artisans often disregarded laws that disallowed employment and hired themselves out, enabling them to enjoy better diets and some material luxuries.⁴¹

The Haitian Revolution that began in 1791 constituted one of the earliest events that would have pushed slaveowners to strictly enforce codes and create new ones. In 1792, amidst hysteria that the Haitian rebellion was stirring local insurrections, a curfew was enacted that made it illegal for slaves to be on the streets past 8:00 p.m. The curfew was signaled by the sound of the city exchange bell which tolled nightly, reminding slaves of the possibility of flogging or imprisonment should they violate the curfew.⁴² But as one author has written, the officials enforcing this curfew often were familiar with many slaves, and rather than stringently enforcing the code with punishment would instead encourage blacks on the street to head home.⁴³ While independent living was technically restricted by slave codes, large numbers of slaves lived in Oglethorpe Ward on the west side of the city or in separate quarters on a slaveowners property.

Fears over slave unrest prompted by the Haitian Revolution and in the influx of Black Haitian refugees into the city continued into the nineteenth century, particularly when small plots

³⁸ Whittington B. Johnson, *Black Savannah: 1788-1864*, (Fayetteville, The University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 86.

³⁹ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁰ Harris and Berry, “Slave Life,” 95.

⁴¹ Fraser, *Savannah*, 144.

⁴² Ibid., 148-9.

⁴³ Harris and Berry, “Slave Life”, 97.

of rebellion were uncovered in Savannah. These fears were reflected in the improvements made to the city jail and the official appointments of city watchmen in 1806.⁴⁴ Whenever rumors of plots abounded and reached the ears of city officials, the militia and watchmen would be placed on high alert, as was the case in 1795 and 1804. Petty ordinances enacted in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, such as those which made it illegal for slaves and blacks to own dogs, smoke in public, gamble, or drink, reflect the continued preoccupation with controlling slaves to mitigate possible rebellion. But these ordinances, like others, were probably only intermittently enforced.⁴⁵ As one author has described, “pragmatism was the guiding principle governing implementation of slave codes.”⁴⁶

Looking outside of the framework of codes and understanding the influences of an urban setting reveals that slave systems were adaptable to the different means that slave owners employed to protect their interests and continue to become more affluent through their ownership of slaves.⁴⁷ As one author has described it, slaves in Savannah “were persons more than they were property.”⁴⁸ In Savannah, the mechanisms of control were less stringent than on isolated plantations, and slaves “managed their lives instead of having others manage them.”⁴⁹ By living independently, largely in Oglethorpe Ward as many slaves did, their lives were “invigorated.” Many among the slave population who lived away from their masters were those considered “nominal slaves,” who hired out their own time and lived almost as free-men and women away from white supervision.⁵⁰

Many of the “nominally” enslaved were skilled workers such as carpenters, mechanics, and market women. Market women often rented rooms throughout the city and with the money they earned selling foodstuffs in Savannah’s marketplace, many of these women bought food for their loved ones, clothing, or even sometimes their own freedom or that of their kin.⁵¹ Various other occupations that allowed slaves more autonomy were born out of Savannah’s urban setting and her coastal proximity, such as boatmen, pilots, factory jobs, brickmasons, midwives,

⁴⁴ Fraser, *Savannah*, 144.

⁴⁵ Harris and Berry, “Slave Life,” 95.

⁴⁶ Johnson, *Black Savannah*, 90.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵¹ Alisha M. Cromwell, “Enslaved Women in the Savannah Marketplace,” in in *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, eds. Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2014), 55.

washerwomen, and many others.⁵² A first-hand account of Savannah in the 1840's describes the instruction of a slave who worked as a clerk in one of the city's largest firms "who could read, write, cipher, and transact business so correctly that his masters often committed important trusts to his care."⁵³ Although occupations involving the selling of goods did allow slaves varying degrees of autonomy, white Savannahians enacted laws to limit their success. In 1839, all blacks, free and enslaved, were required to purchase and wear badges for selling goods. This law imposed a convoluted range of fees that arbitrarily required payment for the right to sell according to occupation, gender, and residence.⁵⁴

Enslaved market women comprise just one element of Savannah's slave population that enjoyed a much higher degree of autonomy than their counterparts in the field. Generally speaking, as cotton agriculture continued to thrive and spread its impact nationally, more and more slaves traveled with their owners.⁵⁵ This movement provided slaves with numerous advantages for socialization and the chance to rebuild networks of friends and family that many of them lost as a result of being broken up and sold. As one author has described it, many of Savannah's enslaved people "found the means to restore what the cotton revolution had so badly disrupted."⁵⁶ This movement also afforded slaves with the ability to expand their geo-social

⁵² Johnson, *Black Savannah*, 93.

⁵³ Emily Burke, *Pleasure and Pain: Reminiscences of Georgia in the 1840's*, (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1978), 23.

⁵⁴ Janice L. Sumler-Edmond, "Free Black Life in Savannah," in in *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, eds. Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2014), 138-9.

⁵⁵ Susan Eva O'Donovan, "At the Intersection of Cotton and Commerce," in in *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah*, eds. Leslie M. Harris and Daina Ramey Berry, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2014), 56.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

Box 183, through the Post Office with real name,
&c. u.h. 9

BOY WANTED.

A LIBERAL price in cash will be paid for an active healthy Boy of about 15 years of age. Apply to P. B. Pendergast, at the "New Office" Whitaker street. feb 27

WANTED TO HIRE

B Y the year, two middle aged Negro Men liberal wages will be paid. Clothing and medical attendance will be furnished. Inquire this office. 225 nov 20

WANTED TO HIRE.

A FEMALE Servant, of middle age, to attend children. For one of good disposition and character, liberal wages will be paid. Apply at this office. feb 19

WANTED.

A NEGRO Man of steady habits; for whom liberal wages will be given. Apply at this Office. jan 30

WANTED TO HIRE,

A GOOD Cook, Washer and Ironer, and a Girl to do the work about a house; for which liberal wages will be given. Enquire at this office. jan 16

WANTED TO HIRE OR PURCHASE.

A COLORED BOY, from 15 to 20 years of age, one who can be warranted for his honesty and general character. Liberal wages will be paid, or an equal price for purchase. Enquire at this office. dec 27 256

NEGROES WANTED.

THREE prime Negro Fellows of good character and not over 25 years of age, for whom the cash will be paid, wanted for a kind master in St. Augustine, Florida. Apply at the Office of the Republican. dec 19

11

Lot. in Ex. Office.

Apprentices Wanted.

ONE or two colored boys are wanted as apprentices in the house carpenter business, apply to Michael Dillon & Co., or to d 7-21 NICHOLAS KESLEY.

Above: A notice in the Dec. 8, 1838 issue of the **Daily Georgian** advertised apprenticeships in carpentry for "colored boys."

All images from GALILEO.

For Sale,

A WOMAN, about 32 years of age, a first rate seamstress and house servant, with her family:— A Boy, about 14 years of age, A Daughter, 12 do do A Son 8 do do A colored Boy 6 do do

For terms, apply to
jan 6-1m

I. MINIS.

Top Left: The *Daily Savannah Republican* from March 10, 1838 lists several adds for employment for slaves. Top Right: I. Minis places an ad for the sale of slaves in the *Daily Georgian* on January 5, 1838. Bottom Right: The *Savannah Republican* printed these notices for runaway slaves on May 1, 1838.

25 DOLLARS REWARD.

Ranaway from the subscriber in Savannah about the 20th ulto., his negro man FLANDERS, aged about 28 years, stout built but low in stature, has lost one or two of his front teeth, has a slight lamish in one of his eyes which cannot be seen but by close examination. He is well acquainted in Savannah and with the neighboring plantations generally, having lived several years in that vicinity, and has worked out apart of the time in Savannah—he was hired the last year on the Central Rail Road. I will give twenty dollars for his apprehension and delivery in the Jail of Chatham County, or twenty-five dollars if delivered to me in Ethingham.

up 14 89¢

J. F. LINDER.

\$100 DOLLARS REWARD.

The above reward will be paid for the apprehension and delivery in the Jail of Chatham County or any jail in this State, two Negro men, one named GILL, commonly called JIM, the named JOHN. They are well known about Savannah, having worked here several years, formerly belonged to Miss Mann, of Bryan County. Gill is about twenty two years. One hundred dollars will be given for their apprehension, or fifty dollars for either of them.

WM. B. GAUDEEN

66

literacy as well as share and learn information with other slaves and people they encountered. This was especially true when slaves travelled alone to carry out their owner's tasks.⁵⁷

No other source in Savannah's antebellum history better illustrates the relationship between autonomy and control than black churches. The use of Christian principles by slaveowners to further their interests and reinforce the righteousness of their dominance and the system of slavery was accomplished through worship, and in turn, the black church became the foundation for the development of the black community.⁵⁸ The ideology of paternalism, which underpinned the system of slavery, was embedded in Christianity, and the black churches exercised meticulous social control over its members and reinforced the bedrock principles that evil was punished and good rewarded.⁵⁹ Although the black churches were the lifeblood of the enslaved and black community and started by members of the black community, their existence was only made possible by slaveowners and the white community, who viewed them as serving their interests. The message in these churches was one of peace and conciliation between the races.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the church was a place that allowed free and enslaved blacks to preserve their identities and cultural practices and served as not only places of worship, but also of education, government, and recreation.⁶¹ The degree to which white Savannahians and slaveowners were willing to utilize Christian principles to further their interests is perhaps best illustrated by biracial congregations found among the city's Episcopal and Lutheran groups. The Independent Presbyterian Church spearheaded biracial worship, allowing both races to attend services throughout the antebellum period.⁶² The Independent Presbyterian also operated Sunday Schools beginning around 1826.⁶³

The study of slavery in Savannah and in other urban locations suggests that slaves did find more autonomy in city locations and in many other ways lived better and less isolated existences than slaves laboring on plantations or in rural areas. Overall, work was far less taxing in urban locales, employment of slaves more commonplace, and instances of sexual relationships between slaves and their owners seemed to be much less pervasive.⁶⁴ Slaves in Savannah had

⁵⁷ O'Donovan, "Cotton and Commerce," 64, 58.

⁵⁸ Johnson, *Black Savannah*, 6.

⁵⁹ Fraser, *Savannah*, 150.

⁶⁰ Sumler-Edmond, "Free Black Life," 130.

⁶¹ Fraser, *Savannah*, 150.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Johnson, *Black Savannah*, 25.

⁶⁴ Johnson, *Black Savannah*, 90.

better diets and housing, and oftentimes dressed as well as their owners.⁶⁵ Slave codes seemed to be minimally enforced, and despite limitations on employment, slaves had numerous occupational opportunities not available in plantation and rural settings. But in spite of the fact that many enslaved people in Savannah seemed to have lead relatively happy lives that were subject to less oppression, experiences of brutality, exploitation, and violence were legion.

**An Ordinance,
For protecting the Public Walk in South-Broad-
street.**

Be it ordained, by the mayor and aldermen of the city of Savannah, in council assembled, and it is hereby ordained, by the authority aforesaid, That, if any person or persons shall ride, lead or drive any horse, mule, or other animal usually ridden, or used for draught in any sort of carriage whatever, within or between the double row of trees in the centre of South-Broad-street, every such person shall, on conviction thereof before the city council be fined in a sum not exceeding five dollars for every such offence; and, if a slave, such slave shall be punished by order of the city council, by whipping not exceeding thirty-nine lashes, unless his or her owner or employer shall pay the fine aforesaid: Provided, nevertheless, that nothing herein contained shall prevent any person from riding, leading, or driving any horse, mule or other animal through or across the said trees, where they are intersected by the streets.

In Council, August 24, 1818.

Passed, JAMES M. WAYNE, mayor.

[L. S.] Attest, R. R. CUTLER, c. c.

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goods.

Sec. 4. Be it further ordained, that if any person shall appear in any of the public streets squares, lanes, or docks in this city in a state of nakedness, or who shall in any manner whatsoever, wilfully make any indecent and public exposure of his or her person, or of any other person, he or she may be arrested by the city marshal or city constables, or any white person, and shall be fined for each and every such offence in the sum not exceeding fifty dollars, if a white person and whipping not exceeding fifty lashes, if a slave or free person of color.

Sec. 5. Be it further ordained, that it shall not be lawful for any person to swim or bathe in the river opposite to the city—that is to say, from the western side of West Broad st. to the western side of the Eastern Wharf company, at any hour after seven o'clock in the morning until sun set, under the penalty of not exceeding fifty dollars, if a white person, and whipping not exceeding fifty lashes, if the offender be a slave or free person of color.

Left: A Notice in the *Savannah Daily Republican* announced a city ordinance. If violated, slaves received “no more than thirty-nine lashes,” whereas all others would be fined \$5. Right: Indecent exposure in public was, according to an ordinance posted in the *Savannah Republican* on October 9, 1839 punishable for whites by arrest and paying a fine of \$50. For slaves and free persons of color, the punishment was fifty lashes. Images from GALILEO.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 93.

Despite occasional instances where meaningful friendships and affection developed over the years between owners and slaves, physical force was the bedrock in Savannah for maintaining the slave system and a compliant labor force.⁶⁶ The administration of corporal punishment varied according to individual slaveowners. Emily Burke, a visiting New England school teacher who lived and taught at the Female Orphan Asylum in Savannah during the 1840s, the exact time when Francis Sorrel's home was completed, witnessed and described in her memoirs several instances of the brutal side of slavery. In one of her accounts, she describes the plight of a female slave physically punished and jailed at the hands of a seemingly cruel female owner:

I knew of one female slave while I was in Savannah, who was sent here [the city jail] and beat daily during one whole week, not for any particular crime, but because she did not happen to please her mistress. But this course of treatment so disheartened the woman, she was never afterwards of any service to her owners...her [health] had so far declined that her mistress, beginning to have some apprehensions that she was in danger of losing a valuable article of property, undertook to force medicine in her stomach...but all was to no purpose...she was determined to die.⁶⁷

Just before the unfortunate slave's death, Burke recalls the slave's admission to one of her friends that "her mistress was very cruel to all her slaves."⁶⁸ In her description of the City Jail, Burke describes a similarly cruel situation, the plight of a runaway slave:

I have seen the runaway slaves dragged to this place of cruelty with their hands tied behind them, attended by two or three white men, who made free use of the lash over his head and shoulders.⁶⁹

In the case of the female mistress that Burke describes, it seems clear that she represents a particularly callous case in the treatment of slaves where the use of punishment was exploited.

⁶⁶ Fraser, *Savannah*, 219; 151.

⁶⁷ Burke, *Reminisces*, 13.

⁶⁸ Burke, *Reminisces*, 14.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

Though Burke also provides other glimpses into the lives of slaves that give a positive impression, she ultimately concludes the following:

Those who have never lived in the Southern states can have but a faint conception of the evils that accrue to the master as well as slave from their peculiar institutions.⁷⁰

Burke's recollections constitute only one of many first-hand accounts of the oftentimes exceedingly brutish and inhumane treatment of slaves that seem to belie notions of the slave experience in Savannah as one of a more pleasant "middle ground between slavery and freedom." No matter the purposes for which punishment was used, whippings and hangings seemed for the large part to be conducted publicly. Burke recalls seeing two slaves hung in the jail yard for their crimes and others receiving lashings in the public market place prior to their imprisonment in the City Jail.⁷¹

The diary and memoirs of Mary Boykin Chesnut, the wife of a prominent plantation owner in South Carolina, confirms many of Burke's descriptions. It also describes another unfortunate reality of slave life that Burke does not discuss in her book: sexual relations between female slaves and their owners. As she writes:

I wonder if it be a sin to think slavery a curse to any land. Men and women are punished when their masters and mistresses are brutes, not when they do wrong. Under slavery, we live surrounded by prostitutes...God forgive us, but ours is a monstrous system, a wrong and an iniquity! Like the patriarchs of old, our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines; and the mulattoes one sees in every family partly resemble the white children. Any lady is ready to tell you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household but her own. Those, she seems to think, drop from the clouds. My disgust is sometimes boiling over.⁷²

Chesnut further laments the southern slaveowner's infidelities and its hypocrisies:

⁷⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁷¹ Ibid., 14-15.

⁷² Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary from Dixie*, Centry edition C., ed. Ben Ames Williams, (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, n.d.), 21-22.

I hate slavery...What do you say to this? A magnate who runs a hideous black harem and its consequences under the same roof with his lovely white wife and his beautiful and accomplished daughters? He holds his head as high and poses as the model of all human virtues to these poor women whom God and the laws have given. From the height of his awful majesty he scolds and thunders at them, as if he never did wrong in his life.⁷³

The prevalence of sexual encounters between female slaves and slaveowners in the Antebellum South are legion. As one former slave describes, “It was a hard job to find a merstar dat didn’t have women ‘mong his slaves...’ Dat was a gineral thing ‘mong de slave owners.”⁷⁴ These relationships and encounters, “ran the gamut from rape and sodomy to romance, from chance encounters to obsession, concubinage, and even “marriage”... They included, but were not limited to pedophilia, incest, sado-masochism, and voyeurism” and interracial sexual relations may have been more prevalent in the cities of the lower south than on plantations or in rural locales.⁷⁵ In Savannah, minister John Martin decried the prevalence of these sexual encounters, lamenting that “white men live in sin with Negresses and father half-black children.”⁷⁶ As one author has pointed out, slave schedules reveal that in 1860, the number of mulattoes in the city had reached two-thousand, testifying to the high occurrence of master-slave sexual intercourse.⁷⁷ Despite that the oral tradition of Francis Sorrel and his supposed affair with one of his slaves may not be verified, it is undoubtedly at the very least an example of a common occurrence in the lives of female slaves. The same system of male dominance and patriarchy that upheld the slave system and underpinned southern society accepted these affairs as expressions of male dominance.⁷⁸ Thousands of women in the Antebellum South and hundreds of thousands in the Atlantic World were subject to these either forced or consensual sexual relations with their owners.⁷⁹

⁷³ Mary Chesnut’s *Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 168.

⁷⁴ Brenda E. Stevenson, “What’s Love Got to Do with It? Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South,” *The Journal of African American History* 98, no. 1 (2013): 101. JSTOR. Accessed March 1st, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.1.0099>.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 100.

⁷⁶ Fraser, *Savannah*, 164.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 288; The slave schedule from 1860 indicates that 11 percent of the population in the Antebellum South was Mulatto, also indicating the high occurrence of master-slave sexual intercourse; Stevenson, “What’s Love,” 101.

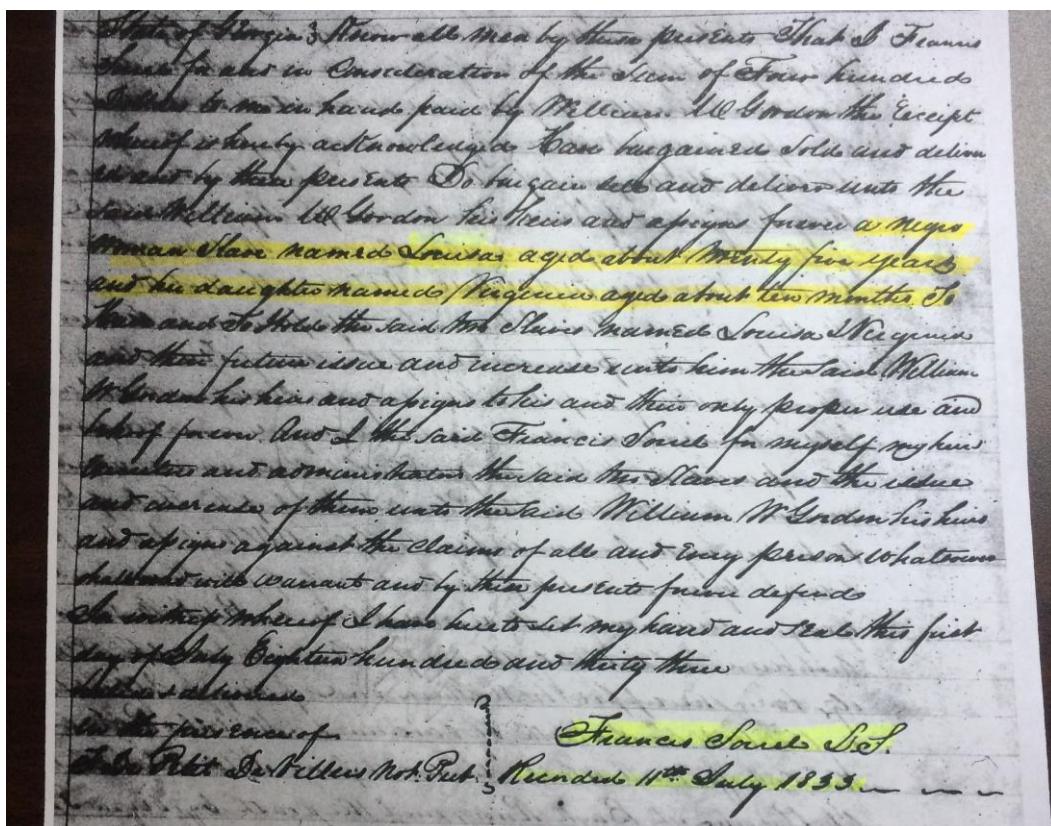
⁷⁸ Ibid., 289.

⁷⁹ Stevenson, “What’s Love,” 99.

28	28		13	2	13
29	29		118	2	12
30	30	✓	147	2	13
31	31	Francis Sorrel Trustee	122	2	m
32	32		125	2	m
33	33		135	2	m
34	34		110	2	m
35	35		19	2	m
36	36		18	m	m
37	37		13	m	m
38	38		19	m	m

Above Right: A curious entry in the 1850 Slave Schedule digitized on ancestry.com lists Francis Sorrel as a Trustee of 8 "Mulatto" Slaves. He is also listed separately as an owner. **Below:** One of only two deed records found which contained transactions in the sale of slaves by Francis Sorrel. Virginia, a twenty-five-year-old "negro woman slave" and her daughter, ten-month-old Louisa,

were sold to William W. Gordon on July 11, 1833 for \$400. Deed Record from Chatham County Superior Court, 2S-22. Full citations for both photos are cited in references and notes.



While one author underscores that many of these relationships between female slaves and their owners were affectionate and caring and served to lessen racial tensions,⁸⁰ it is clear from the memoirs of former enslaved women that many of these sexual encounters were coerced, and enslaved women feared they had no other choice but to comply. Even in cases where slaves occupied positions as official mistresses or “concubines” and gave birth to many children from these unions, many of these relationships were not the choice of the slaves and likely often involved coercion at their start.⁸¹ The experience of Louisa Picquet provides an example of this:

Mr. Williams told me what he bought me for. He said he was getting old, and when he saw me he thought he'd buy me and end his days with me. He said if I behave myself, he'd treat me well; but if not, he'd whip me almost to death.⁸²

Louisa, herself a “quadroon,” or an enslaved person of one quarter African blood and three-quarters European, was born from the union of her mother, also a quadroon, as a result of a sexual relationship with her white master, a South Carolinian plantation owner. Mr. Williams was at least thirty years Louisa's senior; she would have four children by him.⁸³

⁸⁰ Fraser, *Savannah*, 157.

⁸¹ See Brenda E. Stevenson, “What’s Love Got to Do with It? Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South,” *The Journal of African American History* 98, no. 1 (2013): 99-125. JSTOR. Accessed March 1st, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5323/jafriamerhist.98.1.0099>; Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*, ed. Lydia Maria Francis Child, [electronic version] 2nd. ed., 2003, *Documenting the American South*, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Accessed March 1st, 2017, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html#jac49>.

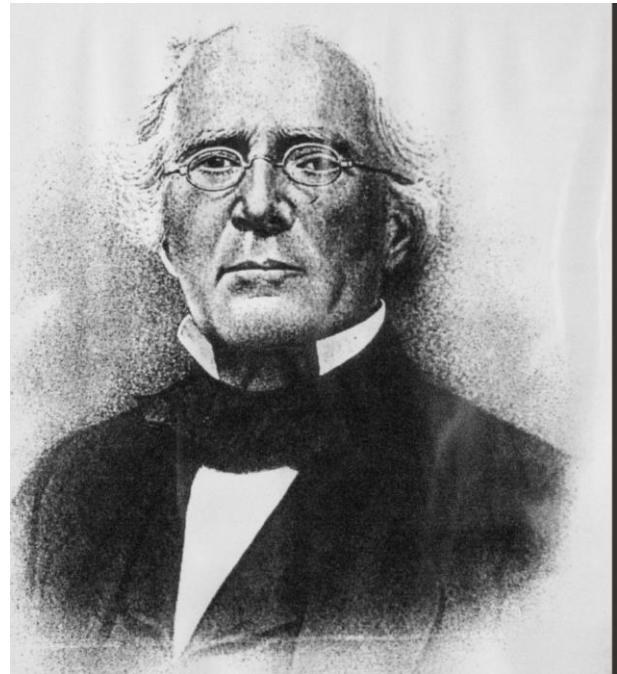
⁸² Stevenson, “What’s Love,” 100.

⁸³ Ibid., 99-100.

Francis Sorrel

Francis Sorrel was born in Santo Domingo, Haiti, on May 4, 1793 to Colonel Antoine Francois Sorrel des Rivieres and his second wife, Eugenie de Sutre.⁸⁴ Of French descent, Francis's father attended France's Royal Naval Academy and became an infantry lieutenant and engineer. He was sent to Santo Domingo in the 1760s to map the colony.⁸⁵ Little is known about Francis's mother; she died only a month after his birth and records make no mention of her.⁸⁶ But family members theorize that she may have been a free person of color and that she and Colonel Sorrel may not have married until after Francis's birth.⁸⁷ This may account for why Colonel Sorrel would leave Haiti in 1803 without his son and would never return for him or see him again.⁸⁸

Francis was born during a volatile and bloody period in Haiti's history; the year 1793 marked the early stages of the Haitian Revolution, and Francis's father is described as often being away on duty during this precarious time. While across the Atlantic Savannah slaveholders were feeling anxious about the effects of the rebellion in their community, the infant Francis was



Francis Sorrel, probably in his 40s or 50s. Photo Credit: Ancestry.com. This picture is also displayed in the Sorrel-Weed House.

⁸⁴ *Alexander Claxton Sorrel Papers, 1860-1908*, MS-01795-Z, Folder 1, "A Short Sketch of the Life of Francis Sorrel of Savannah, Georgia, and His Family Tree, Down to the Year 1892" by Aminta Sorrel Mackall, pg. 2, *The Southern Historical Collection*, UNC Chapel Hill, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, [Scan 27 of digitized collection], http://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/01795/#folder_1#1, accessed April 8th, 2017; For Francis Sorrel's birthdate, see also *Walter C. Hartridge, Jr. Collection*. Series 6: Architectural History 1700s-1900s. MS 1349. Box 62. Folder 1092. [Introduction to the Society for the Preservation of Savannah Landmarks Pamphlet on the Sorrel-Weed House]. p. 3. Georgia Historical Society. Savannah, GA; *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, "The Kollock Letters, 1799-1850, Part VII, ed. Edith Duncan Johnston, in vol. 32, no. 1 (1948): 39; Laurel Grove Cemetery Interment Report, City of Savannah Research and Municipal Archives, Collection # 5600CL-90, vol. 3.; John Gordon Freymann, *The Sorrel Family in Saint-Domingue (Haiti), 1763-1813, Revised Edition*, Kay Kole Genealogy Room, Bull Street Public Library, Savannah, Georgia.

⁸⁵ John Gordon Freymann, *The Sorrel Family in Saint-Domingue (Haiti), 1763-1813, Revised Edition*, p. 4, Kay Kole Genealogy Room, Bull Street Public Library, Savannah, Georgia.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸⁷ Freymann, 40-50; Francis was separated from his father as a child during the Haitian Revolution and would never see him again. His father left Haiti in 1803 never to return, not even for his son. Family members recall Francis's unwillingness to speak about his father and the unwillingness of Francis's father to acknowledge his son and former wife once he escaped to and was living in Louisiana.

⁸⁸ *Sorrel Papers*, "A Short Sketch," pg. 2, scan 27.

often without both of his parents, and his life in danger. As the owner of a sugar cane plantation called Miragoane, the French Colonel Sorrel and his young son would have been targets of the natives' hostilities. As his daughter Aminta would describe of her father's recollections, Francis witnessed "little children torn asunder and cut into pieces."⁸⁹ Sometime in 1798, while the Colonel was away, the five-year-old Francis himself was nearly murdered. He would later credit one of his nurses with saving his life, by hiding him and later taking him to Port au Prince and placing him in the care of relatives.⁹⁰ As a young teenager, Francis would return to Miragoane and find his former home burned to the ground.⁹¹

His father having left Haiti in 1803 never to return and finding himself "absolutely without means," Francis Sorrel began working as a clerk in the counting house of a merchant firm in Port au Prince perhaps as early as 1807 or sooner.⁹² Records of the firm indicate Francis as the "chief clerk" as early in 1811, and by 1812, nineteen-year-old Francis was transferred to a branch of the business in Baltimore.⁹³ Immigration records place him in Baltimore in October of 1818, where he declares his initial arrival through Newport, Rhode Island in 1812 and his intent to reside in Georgia.⁹⁴ Between 1812 and 1818, Francis proved to be a successful clerk at his new position in Maryland, and his aptitude seems to have paid off. About a year before the Great Panic of 1819, Francis would partner with Henry Douglass, his supervisor in the Baltimore office, and bring their business to Savannah.⁹⁵ The firm Douglass and Sorrel advertised the sale of whiskey, butter, corn, and flour in the *Savannah Daily Republican* as early as December of 1818.⁹⁶ In 1819, Douglas and Sorrel are listed as shippers in the outward bound slave manifests;

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Freymann, 34.

⁹⁴ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; *Naturalization records*; NAI Number: 654310; Record Group Title: *Petitions for Naturalization, 1903 - 1972*; Record Group Number: RG 21, ancestry.com, *Maryland, Federal Naturalization Records, 1795-1931*, [online database]. Accessed April 9, 2017.

⁹⁵ Freymann, 37.

⁹⁶ *Sorrel Papers*, "A Short Sketch," pg. 2, scan 28; In her "Short Sketch," Francis's daughter Aminta indicates that her father was the head of the Savannah branch, although newspaper advertisements indicate a co-partnership of "Douglas & Sorrel." It may have been the case that Francis was more of the figurehead for the company, and that Henry Douglass exercised remote control and partnership from Baltimore. The advertisement of these foodstuffs are from the *Savannah Daily Republican*, December 14th, 1818, pg. 1, col. 2, "Whiskey & Butter," and "White Flint Corn---Afloat," *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, *GALILEO*, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:svr1818-0405>, accessed April 8th, 2017.

Baltimore 12th October 1818

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Henry Thrifall a free white alien aged 22 years that
he was born in the Liverpool in England that he
arrived at the port of Charleston South Carolina in
the month of July 1811 owing allegiance to the King
of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland
that he migrates from England and that he
intend residing in the City of Baltimore -

Francis Sorrel's Immigration record, from Baltimore, Maryland, 1818. Photo from ancestry.com Immigration Records. Full citation provided in references and notes.

the vessel *Morris* contained slaves bound for Baltimore.⁹⁷ This is the only record of the shipment of slaves while Francis and Henry were partners, but Francis would independently transport slaves by sea on several subsequent occasions.

Just two years after moving to Savannah and establishing himself as a merchant, twenty-seven-year-old Francis witnessed the most devastating fire in the city's history in January of 1820. While merchants such as Andrew Low and Joseph Habersham sustained damages to their stores and had to temporarily sell their goods in other buildings, Francis and his business partner seemed to escape the devastation, despite that it destroyed nearly half of Savannah's business district.⁹⁸ Less than a month after the fire in February 1820, Douglass and Sorrel advertised the sale of Turks Island salt, Muscavado Sugar, molasses, and rum while others posted notices about lost goods and burned buildings.⁹⁹ Seemingly undeterred by the fire's destruction, Francis and his partner's business seemed to only flourish.

Like so many of their contemporaries and fellow merchants, the firm profited from the sale of cotton and other agricultural staples. On January 19, the steamboat *Samuel Howard*

⁹⁷ *Papers of the American Slave Trade*, Part I: Port of Savannah Slave Manifests, 1790-1860, Series D: Records of the U.S. Customhouses, ed. Robert E. Lester, Bethesda: LexisNexis, 2005), 91, pdf, http://cisupa.proquest.com/ksc_assets/catalog/100539.pdf.

⁹⁸ *Daily Georgian* on February 5, 1820 contains advertisements by Andrew Lo & Co. Joseph C. Habersham, and other merchants informing readers of the damage done to their stores by the fire and their relocation of merchandise to new locations. *Daily Georgian*, February 5, 1820, vol. II., pg. 1, *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1820-0041>. The destruction caused by the fire is discussed by Sullivan, "Savannah," and Coulter, "Savannah Fire," 2.

⁹⁹ *Daily Georgian*, February 7, 1820, pg. 3, col. 4, "Turks Island Salt---Afloat," *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1820-0047>.

Whiskey and Butter.	
<i>Landing from the ship Woodrop-Sims,</i>	
35 barrels Whisky, and	
12 kegs fresh Butter	
For sale by	DOUGLASS & SORREL,
dec 14 p- 247	<i>Hunter's wharf.</i>
prime Flint Corn	upward.
3000 bushels prime white Flint Corn, on board	
the sloop Earl, at Bolton's wharf	
200 barrels sup. Baltimore Flour	
For sale by	DOUGLASS & SORREL,
dec 14-p-247	<i>Hunter's wharf.</i>

Turks Island Salt—afloat.	
3,300 bushels Turks Island SALT, just received	per brig Sarah, and will be sold low, if taken from on board.
<i>Also, per some vessel,</i>	
31 bbls. Muscovado Sugar	
21 puncheons W I Rum	
6 hds Molasses	Apply to
	Douglass & Sorrel,
Feb 5-p	<i>Anderson's Buildings.</i>

Above Left: One of the earliest advertisements of goods by Henry Douglass and Francis Sorrel, posted in the *Savannah Daily Republican* on December 15, 1818. **Above Right:** Only a month after the worst fire in Savannah's history, Francis and his business partner advertised the sale of goods in the *Savannah Daily Republican* on February 7, 1820. **Below:** The only record of a slave shipped by the firm Douglass and Sorrel: A man named Abner Gwenferla, aged twenty-four, described as Mulatto, sent on the ship *Morris* from Savannah to Baltimore. It seems that the slave's name was later changed to Allen Greenfield. Newspaper photo credit: GALILEO. Slave Manifest from ancestry.com. Full citations provided for both in references and note

Slave Manifest—Sold by W. T. Williams						
NAME.	SEX.	AGE.	HEIGHT.	CLASS.	OWNERS OR SHIPPERS.	RESIDENCE.
Abner Gwenferla	Male	24	5 feet 7 inches	Mulatto	Douglass & Sorrel	Baltimore

brought to port 1,274 bales of cotton and other goods from Augusta for Douglass and Sorrel and other merchants in the city.¹⁰⁰ On February 7, the men received another shipment of 1,185 bales of cotton and 40 hogsheads of tobacco.¹⁰¹ By 1821, Douglass and Sorrel appear to have diversified their commodities. On January 23, the firm advertised passage on board the cargo carrying vessels *Meridian*, *Major Croghan*, and *Intelligence*, bound for Liverpool, Port au Prince, and New Orleans, respectively.¹⁰² In June, the firm advertised the sale of 100 tierces of rice, 50 hogsheads of New Orleans sugar, 16 shares of U.S. Bank stock, and various other goods, including whiskey, gin, madeira wine, rum, tea, and glass.¹⁰³

While the 1820s in Savannah were for many characterized by financial ruin, for Francis it was marked by personal and financial gains. On September 5, 1822, twenty-nine-year-old Francis married seventeen-year-old Lucinda Ireland Moxley, the niece of his partner Henry Douglass. Lucinda came from a wealthy, slaveholding family in Virginia who owned vast tracts of land in Westmoreland and Prince William counties, no doubt making to Francis Sorrel's wealth more robust.¹⁰⁴ Two years later in 1824, Francis was naturalized in Savannah's Superior



A picture of Lucinda Ireland Moxley at an unknown date. This picture is displayed in the Sorrel-Weed House.

¹⁰⁰ *Daily Georgian*, January 19, 1820, pg. 3, col. 3, "Ship News, Port of Savannah," *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1820-0011>.

¹⁰¹ *Daily Georgian*, February 7, 1820, pg. 3, col. 2, "Ship News, Port of Savannah," *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1820-0047>.

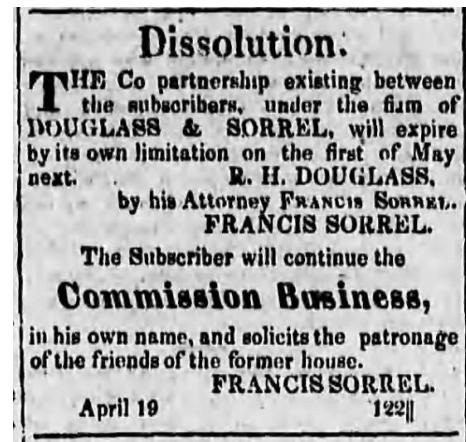
¹⁰² *Daily Georgian*, January 23, 1821, pg. 3, col. 1,3, *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1821-0055>.

¹⁰³ *Georgian*, June 11, 1821, pg. 3, col. 2, 3, *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1821-0411>.

¹⁰⁴ Freymann, 37; *Sorrel Papers*, "A Short Sketch," pg. 3, scan 29.

Court on July 24.¹⁰⁵ In 1825, he ended his partnership with his wife's uncle, apparently on good terms, and began operating independently. A notice of dissolution appeared in the April 21 issue of the *Savannah Georgian*, declaring that the firm Douglass and Sorrel "will expire by its own limitation," and even names Francis as Henry's attorney in the transaction.¹⁰⁶ In 1826, Francis appears for the first time as a slaveowner in tax records and makes his first lot purchase. The tax digest from 1826 indicates he was taxed on the ownership of 3 slaves and on July 3, 1826, Francis sent one of them, a woman named Nancy, 40 years old, described as "black", to New York City on board the ship *Statira*.¹⁰⁷ His first lot purchase, the eastern half of lot number 10 in Derby Ward, was located at the corner of Broughton and Drayton streets.¹⁰⁸ In the what would eventually become several lot purchases throughout the city, Francis paid John Gardner, a baker, and his wife Ann, \$1000 in 1826, another \$2500 in 1829, and \$4500 in 1835 for what appears to be the final payment for the eastern half of the lot and all of its improvements.¹⁰⁹

Now a citizen, married, and a business owner, Francis Sorrel acquired increasing wealth and landholdings in the decades leading up to the Civil War. Between 1826 and 1856, in addition to the lot in Derby, he purchased land in Jasper, Brown, and Pulaski Wards.¹¹⁰ On April 4, 1837,



Notice in the Savannah Georgian on April 21, 1825 indicating the end to Francis Sorrel's partnership in the firm Douglass and Sorrel. Photo: GALILEO

¹⁰⁵ Research Library & Municipal Archives City of Savannah, Georgia; Savannah, Georgia; Series Title: *Superior Court, Naturalization Indexes, 1792-1908*; Record Series Number: 5600CC-020; Film Number: 183847, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Naturalization Records, 1790-1910* [database on-line], accessed April 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ *Savannah Georgian*, April 21, 1825, pg. 3, col. 2, *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1825-0303>.

¹⁰⁷ *Papers of the Slave Trade*, 103; National Archives and Records Administration - Southeast Region (Atlanta) (NRCAA), Morrow, GA; *Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801 - 1860*; Record Group: 36, *Records of the U.S. Customs Service*; ARC Identifier: 1151775, Ancestry.com. *U.S., Southeast Coastwise Inward and Outward Slave Manifests, 1790-1860* [database on-line], accessed April 9, 2017. The records contained in the *Papers* do not contain the names of any slaves, but do provide owners names, ship names, and port names. These were used to search the records of slave manifests digitized on Ancestry.com. which contained the original manifest papers with names.

¹⁰⁸ Research Library and Municipal Archives; Savannah, Georgia; Film Number: 194059; Title: *Tax Digests, 1826-1832*, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Land Tax and Property Records, 1809-1938* [database on-line], accessed April 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ CCSC, Deed Book: 2N-555; CCSC, Deed Book: 2P-189; CCSC Deed Book: 2T-255.

¹¹⁰ For deed records relating to these lots and the buying and selling of other property by Francis Sorrel see the following deed book records for grantee/grantor "Francis Sorrel" at the Chatham County Superior Court House: 3B: 498, 2W: 80, 3C: 107, 2N: 555, 3B: 462, 3A: 547, 3H: 268, 3E-59, 3P: 355, 3B: 401, 2T-255, 2P: 189, 3D: 383, 3B: 441, 2S: 22, 2O: 398.

Francis purchased lots 6 and 7 from the city, and no later than 1839, Charles B. Cluskey was in the process of building his Greek Revival home at these lots, which fronted Madison Square, and was valued at \$8,000 upon its completion.¹¹¹ However, one of the most interesting purchases made by Francis was of the vessel the *William Gaston* in 1838 from John W. Long for \$10,000. He seems to have made an additional payment to Mr. Long of \$3,000 in 1844.¹¹² The *William Gaston* appears in the slave manifests extensively between 1839 and 1860, making no less than 90 trips to ports in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida.¹¹³ If this is indeed the same vessel owned by Francis Sorrel, he certainly would have profited extensively from its use in cargo and slave transport.

Records from 1844 show other interesting property ownership and are crucial for interpreting recovered artifacts. The 1844 tax digest shows Francis owning land and improvements in Effingham county totaling \$700, a Wharf on Hutchinson Island totaling \$2,000, and 320 acres of land obtained through the Cherokee Land Lottery.¹¹⁴ This property is again accounted for in the 1845 tax records, and in the same year, his holdings in Derby, Brown, and Jasper wards total \$12,000. By far Francis's most valuable purchase was lot 1 in Derby Ward, located on the corner of Bay and Broughton streets. Deed records indicate the official purchase of the lot and its improvements for \$30,100 in 1856.¹¹⁵ On June 25th, 1844, Francis put most of his estate into trust.¹¹⁶ At this time, his valuables included the following:

6 dozen silver forks and spoons	1 large felt dining table
1 silver ladle and fish knife	2 mahogany dining tables
1 silver teapot	3 mahogany toilets
4 dozen tea and dessert spoons	4 mahogany wardrobes
1 silver coffee pot	3 mahogany and marble washstands
I silver pitcher	3 mahogany bedsteads

¹¹¹ Research Library and Municipal Archives; Savannah, Georgia; Film Number: 194059; Title: *Tax Digests, 1826-1832*, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Land Tax and Property Records, 1809-1938* [database online], accessed April 10, 2017. An excerpt from the *Weekly Georgian* from September 28, 1839 indicates that Francis Sorrel's house was in the process of being built. See pg. 3, col. 2.

¹¹² CCSC, Deed Book 2W:80; CCSC Deed Book 3B: 496.

¹¹³ The *Papers of the Slave Trade* indicates the ship *William Gaston* making no less than 90 shipments to ports in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. See the 'Ship' column on pages 21-73.

¹¹⁴ Research Library and Municipal Archives; Savannah, Georgia; Film Number: 194059; Title: *Tax Digests, 1826-1832*, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Land Tax and Property Records, 1809-1938* [database online], accessed April 10, 2017.

¹¹⁵ CCSC, Deed Book 3P: 355.

¹¹⁶ CCSC, Deed Book 3B:441

8 beds	4 lamps
2 sofas	kitchen dishes and furniture
4 couches	
2 dozen mahogany chairs	
4 Brussels carpets	
3 arms chairs	
1 hearth table	

In 1837, the year Francis purchased his lots in Jasper Ward and likely began preparations for the building of his home, advertisements show he was selling a wide array of goods. On June 13 in the *Georgian*, Francis advertised the sale of 4000 bushels of corn, 106 bags of green Cuban coffee, 400 barrels of flour, 20,000 lbs of bacon and ham, and various other sundries, like rum, gin, brandy, tobacco, butter, and lard. In 1838, the same year Francis Sorrel joined with merchant John C. Ferrill to become Francis and Co., there are 11 separate ads for goods in the March 24 issue of the *Daily Georgian*.¹¹⁷ Francis and Co. advertised the sale of various liquors, corn, oats, molasses, figs, ham, corn, tobacco, flour, and other staples.¹¹⁸

After five years of marriage in 1827, Francis's wife Lucinda died after contracting yellow fever on November 12th, 1827.¹¹⁹ Two years later, Francis married his wife's sister, Matilda Aminta Douglass Moxley.¹²⁰ All told, Francis would have eleven children with his two wives, although three of them would die before reaching adulthood. Rodolphine, the second daughter of Francis and Matilda, was born in 1832 and died two years later. Their third child together, Anderson, born in 1834, would also die when still an infant. Matilda Ann, the fourth child of Francis and Matilda, born in 1844, died at age 6.¹²¹

Francis certainly profited from slave labor, through his sale and shipping of cotton and from his own ownership of slaves. His purchase of the ship *William Gaston* in 1838 and its extensive use in the transport of cargo and enslaved people may point to another lucrative means

¹¹⁷ The “copartnership” of Francis and Mr. Ferrill is announced in the January 12, 1838 issue of the *Daily Georgian*. See pg. 1 col. 6; <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1838-0021>; *Daily Georgian*, March 24, 1838, pg. 1, *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, *GALILEO*, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:sga1838-0139>.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Sorrel Papers*, “A Short Sketch,” pg. 5, scan 30.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

TE OF GEORGIA,
ITY OF SAVANNAH.

This Indenture, Made the Fourth day of April
in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirtyfour and in the sixtyfirst
year of the Independence of the United States of America, Between the MAYOR AND ALDERMEN of the City
of Savannah, in the State of Georgia, of the ONE PART, and Francis Sorrel of the City
of Savannah of the OTHER PART.

Whereas, under and by virtue of an Ordinance for that purpose, made and passed in the CITY COUNCIL of SAVANNAH, on the Third day of February one thousand eight hundred and thirty seven, a certain portion of the South Common was laid out into lots, and the said lots, after being duly valued, were exposed to public sale, on the terms and conditions mentioned and contained in the said Ordinance: AND WHEREAS, the lot herein after mentioned, being valued at Twelve Hundred Dollars was set up at that sum, and there was bid thereupon, as increase money, Six hundred & ten Dollars at which sums the said Francis Sorrel being the highest bidder, became the purchaser of the said lot; AND WHEREAS, the said Francis Sorrel having paid into the City Treasury the sum of Three hundred and sixty two Dollars being Twenty per cent on the valuation and increase money,

made his election, for the present, of retaining the valuation money in his own hands, and paying a ground-rent for the use and occupation of the said lot; which ground-rent, at and after the rate mentioned in the said Ordinance, will amount to Eighty six dollars Eighty eight cents per year: Now, THEREFORE, THIS INDENTURE WITNESSETH, That the said Mayor and Aldermen, for and in consideration of the said sum of Three hundred & sixty two Dollars being paid into the City Treasury, as by a receipt for the same, indorsed hereon, and signed by the City Treasurer, will appear; and also in consideration of the rent to be paid, and of the several covenants and agreements to be performed, HAVE BARGAINED AND SOLD, and, by these Presents, DO BARGAIN AND SELL, unto the said Francis Sorrel all that lot of land situate, lying and being, in that portion of ground lately in the South Common, now called Jasper Ward, known by the Number (6) Six and containing sixty feet in length, and ninety feet in depth, with the rights, members, and appurtenances thereof.

To Have and to Hold the said lot, with all and singular the advantages thereunto belonging, unto the said Francis Sorrel his executors, administrators and assigns forever—on this express condition, nevertheless, that he the said Francis Sorrel his executors, administrators and assigns, do and shall, yearly and every year, during such time as the said valuation money shall remain unpaid, by four equal and quarter-yearly payments, pay, or cause to be paid, into the City Treasury of Savannah aforesaid, the sum of Eighty six Dollars Eighty eight cents as ground-rent, for the use and occupation of the said lot and premises—the first quarterly payment to be made on the Fourth day of July next ensuing; and in case of failure herein, for the space of twenty days after any of the said quarterly payments shall become due, that then the said lot and premises shall revert to the Corporation of the said City, who shall immediately thereafter possess the power of re-entry; and having, by means of their proper officers, exercised such power, and given notice thereof in writing, posted on the premises, the said lot, with all improvements thereon,

Original Title to Lot 6, purchased by Francis Sorrel in February of 1837. Francis Sorrel won the lot in a public auction bidding \$1,810. Two years later, Charles B. Cluskey was building his house on this lot, positioned on Madison Square. Photo: Ancestry.com. this Original document is available at the Georgia Historical Society, in the A.J. Cohen Collection on the Sorrel-Weed House, MS 1197.

Slave Manifest—Sold by W. T. Williams.

LIST of Slaves, Passengers on board the *Ship Statira*
Ward Master, burthen 253 330 Tons, bound from *Savannah* for *New York*

NAMES.	SEX.	AGE.	HEIGHT.		CLASS.	OWNERS OR SHIPPERS.	RESIDENCE.
			FEET.	INCHES.			
<i>Nancy</i>	<i>Female</i>	44	5	40 5.	<i>Black</i>	<i>Sorrel, Francis</i>	<i>Savannah</i>

The earliest record of Francis Sorrel shipping a slave, from July 3, 1826. A woman named Nancy, forty-years-old described as “black” traveled from Savannah to New York City onboard the *Statira*. This is likely the same woman Francis remembered in his will and in a family letter, who was also referred to as “Old Mammy” or “Old Nanny.” Photo: Ancestry.com. A full citation is provided in notes and references.

by which Francis acquired wealth through slave labor, but it is not known for sure if this is the same ship and for how long Francis was the owner. While Francis does appear in the slave manifests, he never himself used the *William Gaston* to transport slaves. What is known is that during his lifetime, he owned as few as 3 and as many as 11 slaves within a given year. In the 18 years that he appears in the tax digests, the average number of slaves he owned per year was about 6.¹²² While this number pales in comparison to the extensive holdings of plantation owners, it was probably average for a city dweller of Francis’s socioeconomic standing.

Besides the tax records, deeds from the nineteenth century indicate that Francis sold slaves in Savannah on two occasions: in 1827 and in 1833. In 1827, Francis sold “a negro slave girl” named Minda to R.W. Stiles for \$300 on October 17, less than a month before the death of his first wife.¹²³ In the same year sometime between June and December, the slave manifests show a

¹²² Research Library and Municipal Archives; Savannah, Georgia; Film Number: 194059; Title: *Tax Digests, 1826-1832*, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Land Tax and Property Records, 1809-1938* [database online], accessed April 10, 2017.

¹²³ CCSC, Deed Book 2O: 398.

slave named Allen Greenfield was sent by Sorrel to Baltimore from Savannah, on board the ship *Hannah Bartlett*. The manifest described the slave as being “yellow” in complexion and 28 years old.¹²⁴ The second and seemingly last occasion when Francis sold slaves in Savannah was to William W. Gordon on July 11, 1833. A slave named Louisa, aged 25 years old, and her daughter, Virginia, aged 10 months old were sold to Gordon for \$400.¹²⁵ Although it does not indicate what race the mother and child were, it is curious that Francis would sell a young woman and her infant child when he owned other infants and enslaved women of Louisa’s age.

In the case of Allen Greenfield and many other slaves who appear in the manifests, it is not always clear when someone is a shipper or an owner; the case of Francis Sorrel is no exception. The column on the slave manifests does not differentiate between owners and shippers. The distinction is only sometimes made in writing next to a person’s name. In the case of Allen Greenfield, there is no record indicating that the slave ever returned to Savannah under Francis Sorrel’s ownership. However, there are several other manifests showing Allen Greenfield’s movement between Savannah and Baltimore under the ownership of Henry Douglass, Francis business partner.¹²⁶ The sole shipment made by Douglass and Sorrel in 1819 while the men were partners indicates a slave matching Allen’s description and age, sent from Savannah to Baltimore. But instead of the name Allen Greenfield, the name “Abner Guenferld” is given, although this is likely a gross misspelling.¹²⁷ It seems likely that Mr. Greenfield perhaps worked for Douglass and Sorrel when they were partners, but was perhaps owned by Henry Douglass.

Allen Greenfield’s name is much more easily identifiable in the records. It was an anomaly for a slave to have a last name, or to have it indicated in a manifest. As an example, the remainder of the 9 manifest records involving Francis Sorrel list only the first names of slaves. The slaves transported in his name between 1826 and 1857 include the following people: *Nancy, Judy, Diana, Lidia, Mary, Tom, and Molly*. Nancy is the first to travel, in 1826. Listed as 40 years-old and described as black, Nancy travels to New York City from Savannah on July 3.

¹²⁴ *Papers of the Slave Trade*, 104; *Savannah, Georgia: Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801-1860*. ARC ID: 1151775, U.S. Customs Service, Record Group Number 36. The National Archives at Atlanta. Atlanta, Georgia. U.S.A., Ancestry.com. *U.S., Southeast Coastwise Inward and Outward Slave Manifests, 1790-1860* [database online], accessed April 11, 2017.

¹²⁵ CCSC, Deed Book 2S: 22.

¹²⁶ *Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801-1860*, Ancestry.com. accessed April 11, 2017.

¹²⁷ *Papers of the Slave Trade*, 90; *Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801-1860*, Ancestry.com. accessed April 11, 2017.

Although no record can be found of her return, Nancy appears again traveling to Maryland about five years later on June 24, 1831 on board the ship *Maryland*. She returns on October 18 of that year, again on the *Maryland* and is accompanied by a 22 year-old woman named Judy.¹²⁸ When Francis Sorrel put his estate into a trust in 1844, he would include both Nancy and Judy, and indicated Judy as Nancy's daughter.¹²⁹ In 1839, Judy, now close to thirty years old, traveled from Savannah to Baltimore on May 24, on board the vessel *General Sumpter*. She returned about five months later on October 8, on board the ship *R.H. Douglass*.

SLAVE MANIFEST—Printed and Sold by John M. Cooper & Co.

MANIFEST OF SLAVES, Passengers on board the *Steamer Augusta*
J.W. Woodburn Master, burthen 1800 — **Tons, bound from Savannah for New York**

NAME.	SEX.	AGE.	HEIGHT. FEET. INCHES.	CLASS.	OWNERS OR SHIPPERS.	RESIDENCE.
Molly	Female	28	5' 6"	Black	Francis Sorrel Master Or Co. of Hopkins	Savannah
Susan	Female	48	5' 4"			

The last known record of Francis Sorrel transporting slaves, dated to 1857. A woman named Molly is sent from Savannah to New York City. She is described as "black" and twenty-eight years old. This is an extremely valuable document in tracing the connection of a slave named Molly to Francis Sorrel. Although this is far from proving the tragic oral tradition, it verifies that a slave named Molly did exist and was connected to Francis Sorrel. Photo: Ancestry.com. Full citations provided in notes and references.

¹²⁸ *Papers of the Slave Trade*, 112; 116; *Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801-1860*, Ancestry.com., accessed April 11,

2017.

¹²⁹ CCSC, Deed Book 3B: 441.

Lidia, 40 years old, and a slave named Diana, 20 years old, also appearing in the manifests, seemed to be owned by Francis Sorrel. Diana and Lidia, both described as “brown,” returned to Savannah from Charleston on October 28th, 1847, on the *William Seabrook*. In the manifest, their residence is listed as Savannah. In 1853, a slave named Mary traveled to Philadelphia on the vessel *State of Georgia*. Mary is described as “yellow” and as being 15 years-old and Savannah is indicated as her city of residence. She returns sometime between November and December 1853 on board the ship *Keystone State*.¹³⁰ In 1853, a ten-year-old slave named Tom traveled from Savannah to Baltimore on the vessel *Josephus*. Like Mary, he is also described as “yellow.” The last time Francis appears to have transported a slave was in 1857. A twenty-eight year old woman named Molly, described as “black,” traveled from Savannah to New York City on board the vessel *Augusta*.¹³¹ There are three listings in the slave manifests which cannot be identified. Francis moved a slave or slaves from Charleston to Savannah onboard the *Gordon* sometime between June and December of 1852.¹³² About two years later, the *Keystone State* carried slaves identified with Francis Sorrel and his cousin Charles Green to Philadelphia between May and December of 1854.¹³³ Finally, sometime between January and June 1858, the *Gordon* carried slaves to Charleston, again at the behest of Green and Sorrel.¹³⁴ Unfortunately, the names of the slaves transported during these trips cannot be identified.

Federal Slave Censuses were recorded in Savannah in 1850 and 1860. Although these do not include names, some of the slaves seen in the manifests match the description of the people given in the censuses. Francis Sorrel is identified in two entries for 1850: One as an owner of 5 slaves described as black, and another entry as a trustee for 8 slaves described as mulatto:¹³⁵

Owner**Trustee**

¹³⁰ *Papers of the Slave Trade*, 70; *Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801-1860*, Ancestry.com., accessed April 11, 2017.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 179; *Savannah, Georgia: Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801-1860*. ARC ID: 1151775, U.S. Customs Service, Record Group Number 36. The National Archives at Atlanta. Atlanta, Georgia. U.S.A., *Ancestry.com. U.S., Southeast Coastwise Inward and Outward Slave Manifests, 1790-1860* [database on-line], accessed April 11, 2017.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 163.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹³⁵ United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1850. M432, 1,009 rolls, *Ancestry.com. 1850 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules* [database on-line], accessed April 11, 2017.

One 70-year-old black female	One 35-year-old mulatto female
One 45-year-old black female	One 25-year-old mulatto female
One 40-year-old black female	One 22-year-old mulatto female
One 35-year-old black male	One 10-year-old mulatto female
One 19-year-old black male	One 9-year-old mulatto female
	One 9-year-old mulatto male
	One 8-year-old mulatto male
	One 3-year-old mulatto male

Another census was taken a decade later in 1860, showing that 8 slaves were living at the Sorrel home. In the 1860 census, Francis is no longer a trustee of any slaves. He is listed as an owner only:¹³⁶

One 80-year-old black female
One 50-year-old black female
Two 30-year old black males
One 27-year-old black female
One 20-year-old mulatto female
One 19-year-old mulatto male
One 12-year-old black male

There is also a census record from Prince William County, Virginia, the former home of Francis Sorrel's wives, that indicates a 55-year-old black female and a 40-year-old black female were also owned by Francis Sorrel, but residing at the time here under the "charge" of an Alexander Gough.¹³⁷ Francis Sorrel was also a guardian to several young women listed in the Registers of Free Persons of Color between 1843 and 1848. The 1843 Register indicates a Leah Stevens or

¹³⁶ United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1860. M653, 1,438 rolls, *Ancestry.com. 1860 U.S. Federal Census - Slave Schedules* [database on-line], accessed April 11, 2017.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Stephens, born and living in Savannah, whose occupation is listed as “Washer and Iron.”¹³⁸ Leah also appears in a Register in 1844 as a nurse. She is listed in this record as being 22-years-old, and she is accompanied here by a Betsey Stephens, 12-years-old, also listed as a nurse.¹³⁹ Betsey and Leah appear together again in the 1846 and 1847 Registers as “washerwomen.”¹⁴⁰ Finally, on what appears to be a date of March 9, 1848, a 20-year-old Leah Williams, indicated as a “washerwoman,” and a 16-year-old Elizabeth Williams, a “house servant,” appear in the Register.¹⁴¹ In 1844, the same year that he put his estate in trust and made another payment of \$3,000 towards the *William Gaston*, Francis ended his partnership with Mr. Ferrill and began operating again as an independent merchant.¹⁴²

Washerwoman	42 Savannah	Savannah		Labourer	W.C. Barton	Edney 21
Rich Hall	57	"	"	Waterman	Mr. W. Clark	" "
Williams Leah	20	"	"	Washerwoman	Francis Sorrel	Maid 9 "
Williams Elizabeth	16	"	"	House Servt	"	" "

Above: The Register of Free Persons of Color from 1848 lists two young women under the guardianship of Francis Sorrel. A twenty-year-old Leah Williams and a sixteen-year-old Elizabeth Williams are listed in occupations as “washerwoman” and “house servant” respectively.

The Sorrel Home

In April of 1837, Francis Sorrel purchased lots 6 and 7 in Savannah located in the city’s South Commons.¹⁴³ In the same year, Jasper Ward and Madison Square were created, and no later than 1839, the Sorrel’s Greek Revival home was being built on lot 6 at Harris and Bull Streets.¹⁴⁴ An improvement notice in the *Weekly Georgian* indicated the erection of a house for Francis Sorrel across from the Barracks, describing it as “a fine brick building...which from its

¹³⁸ Savannah, Georgia, Registers of Free Persons of Color. 5600CL-130 (mf). Microfilm, 3 rolls. City of Savannah, Research Library & Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Registers of Free Persons of Color, 1817-1864* [database on-line], accessed April 11, 2017.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² *Savannah Daily Republican*, January 1, 1844, pg. 3, col. 2, *Digital Library of Georgia*, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:svr1844-0003>.

¹⁴³ *Records of Titles*. Savannah, Georgia: Research Library & Municipal Archives City of Savannah, Georgia, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Records of Titles, 1791-1971* [database on-line], accessed April 10, 2017.

¹⁴⁴ Laura Beth Simo, *Constructing Savannah’s Cityscape, 1837-1854*, (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 2012), Google Books, accessed April 15, 2017; *Weekly Georgian*, September 28, 1839 pg. 3, col. 2.

present appearance will be a beautiful edifice.”¹⁴⁵ An improvement does not appear in the tax digests until 1842, in the amount of \$8,000. Two years later in 1844, lot 6 shows an additional \$4,000 improvement, totaling \$12,000.¹⁴⁶ The early land planning of Savannah including its division into wards, squares, and lots has been covered extensively.¹⁴⁷ Another review of this history will not be repeated here, but what is necessary is a focus on the previous use of lot 6 and the surrounding area prior to the Sorrels building their home.

As early as the end of the eighteenth century, the population of Savannah and its need to generate additional income led to the process of dividing up the Commons into new wards and lots.¹⁴⁸ Originally laid out by Oglethorpe in 1733 with just four wards bordering the Savannah River, the city slowly expanded to incorporate additional lots and wards.¹⁴⁹ Bull Street, at the edge of where Sorrel’s lot 6 would later be, was also established by Oglethorpe in 1733.¹⁵⁰ As a main thoroughfare through the city from its earliest days that ran through the south commons, the periphery of Bull would have been ideal for discarding trash. Houston’s 1812 map of the city includes the location of buildings in the commons near the periphery of Bull Street and in close proximity to where the Sorrels would later build their home. In what would become the lots to border Bull Street on its east in Jasper Ward, directly across from Sorrel’s lot 6 was formerly the tobacco inspection building.¹⁵¹ West of Bull Street, in what would become Pulaski Square, was “Ground allotted for a hospital and poor house.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ *Weekly Georgian*, September 28, 1839, pg. 3, col. 2.

¹⁴⁶ Morrison, “Charles B. Cluskey,” 4-5. Digitized tax digests were not available for Francis Sorrel from 1841-1843; but Morrison provided these crucial records in her collection.

¹⁴⁷ See *Deep, Dirty Secrets: 2014 Archaeological Investigations at the Isaiah Davenport House, Vol. 1. Savannah, Georgia*, by Rita Folse Elliott, The Lamar Institute, Savannah, GA., 2014, pdf; http://www.thelamarinstitute.org/images/PDFs/publication_195.pdf Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Savannah in the Old South*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2003).

[www.thelamarinstitute.org.](http://www.thelamarinstitute.org/), Report # 195;

¹⁴⁸ Elliott, *Deep, Dirty Secrets*, 4.

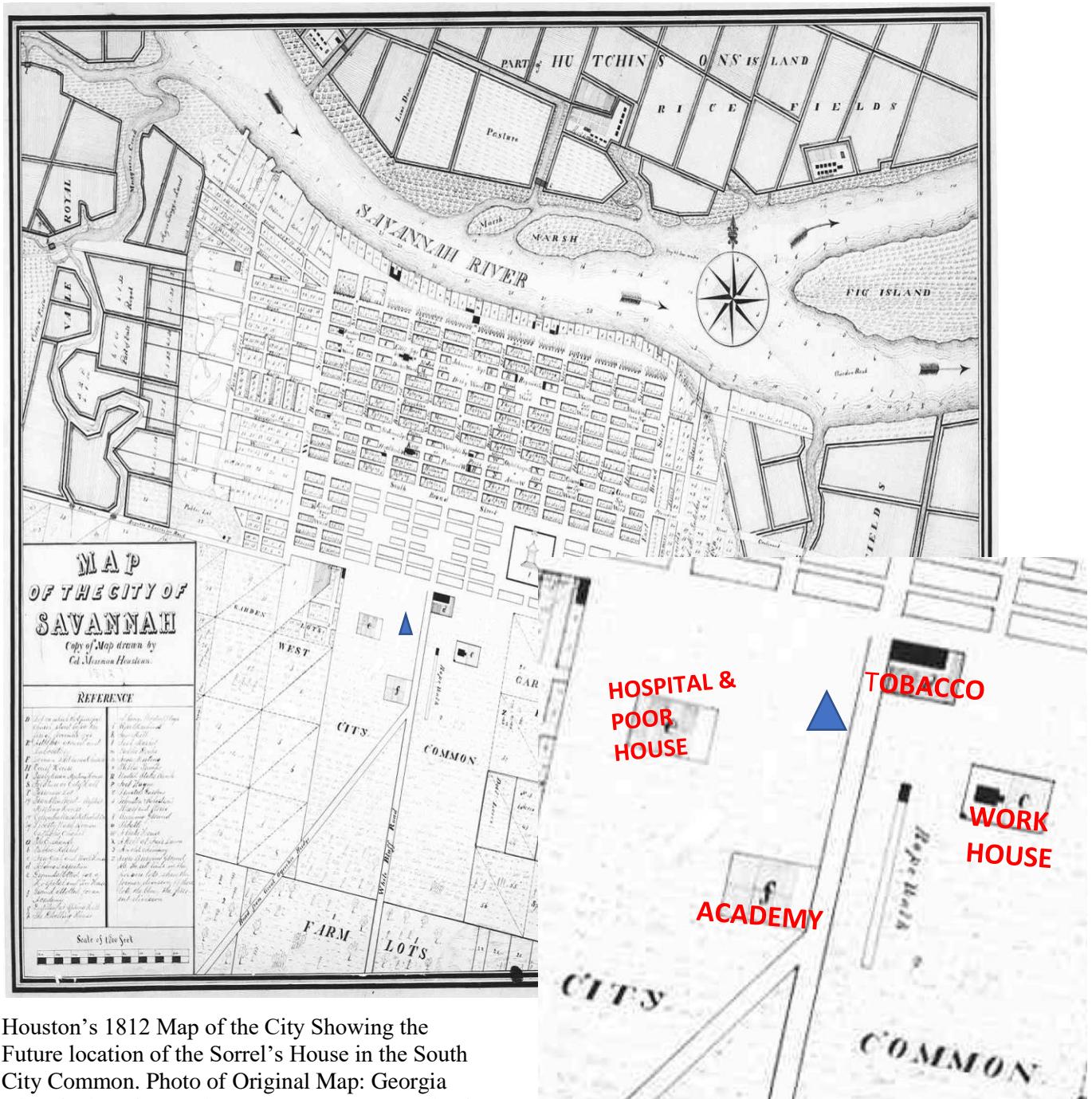
¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Fraser, 12.

¹⁵¹ Map of the City of Savannah, Copy of Map Drawn by Col. Mossman Houstoun, Georgia Historical Society collection of maps, MS 1361-MP, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia. A digital version of this map was also consulted in *Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library*, [online collection], hmap1812h6, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/hmap/id:hmap1812h6>.

¹⁵² GHS map collection; *Hargrett*, hmap1812h6.

Houston's 1812 Map, showing the future site of the Sorrel Home, Madison Square, and locations in City Common. Unedited map image from Hargrett Rare Map Collection. Cited in notes below and references.



Houston's 1812 Map of the City Showing the Future location of the Sorrel's House in the South City Common. Photo of Original Map: Georgia Historical Society and Hargrett Rare Map Collection.

To the southeast of the tobacco inspection site was a work house, and the site farthest removed from the future Sorrel home on Bull Street's edge in what would be Monterrey Square was "land allotted for an academy."¹⁵³

By 1818, the year Francis Sorrel moved to Savannah, expansion had created new lots and wards bordering as far south as present day Liberty Street. Chippewa Square had been erected and Madison Square and Jasper Ward would be among the next to be laid out. Cutting through the future site of the Sorrel's home and Madison Square was a "line of defence", erected in 1814, which can be seen in Stouf's 1818 map.¹⁵⁴ Madison Square and its surrounding lots would later be built approximately halfway within the wall and the other half just outside its border. As with dumping trash just off the periphery of Bull Street, the areas just outside this apparent defensive wall would have been a likely zone of trash deposits. These patterns have been illustrated by the LAMAR institute during their 2014 archaeological investigations at the Davenport House.¹⁵⁵

By 1837, more of the south commons was being divided up into lots and sold by the city. On February 3, Francis purchased lots 6 and 7 in the newly established Jasper Ward from the city, bidding \$1,810 and \$1,500 respectively.¹⁵⁶ Lot 6 fronted Madison Square on its northwest periphery, and spanned 60 feet wide along Harris Street and 100 feet deep. Francis also purchased the adjacent lot 7 which measured 60 feet by 90 feet, and used a portion of this lot as a garden.¹⁵⁷ Madison Square was also cut out of the common, was once acre in size, and contained a cistern for use by the Fire Department.¹⁵⁸ By 1848, The Savannah Female Asylum and the United States' Army Barracks surrounded Madison Square, with the latter built directly across from the Sorrel's house on Bull Street. The population in Jasper Ward was "213 Whites" and "131" colored and contained 33 houses and 22 private wells.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

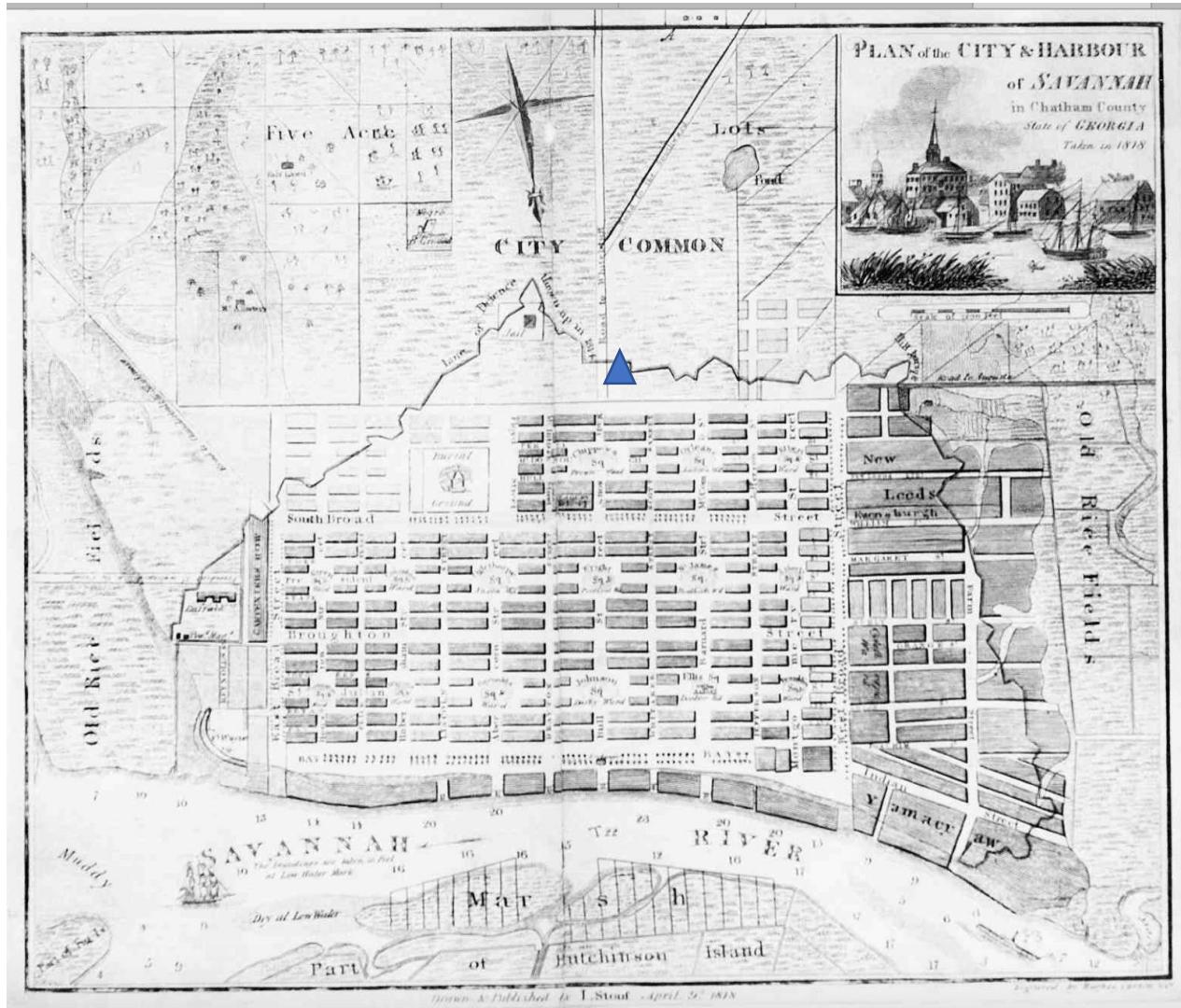
¹⁵⁴ Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, [online collection], Plan of the city & harbour of Savannah in Chatham County, state of Georgia: taken in 1818, by I. Stouf, hmap1818s7copy2, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/hmap/id:hmap1818s7copy2>.

¹⁵⁵ Elliott, *Deep, Dirty Secrets*, 127-130.

¹⁵⁶ *Records of Titles*. Savannah, Georgia: Research Library & Municipal Archives City of Savannah, Georgia, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Records of Titles, 1791-1971* [database on-line], accessed April 10, 2017.

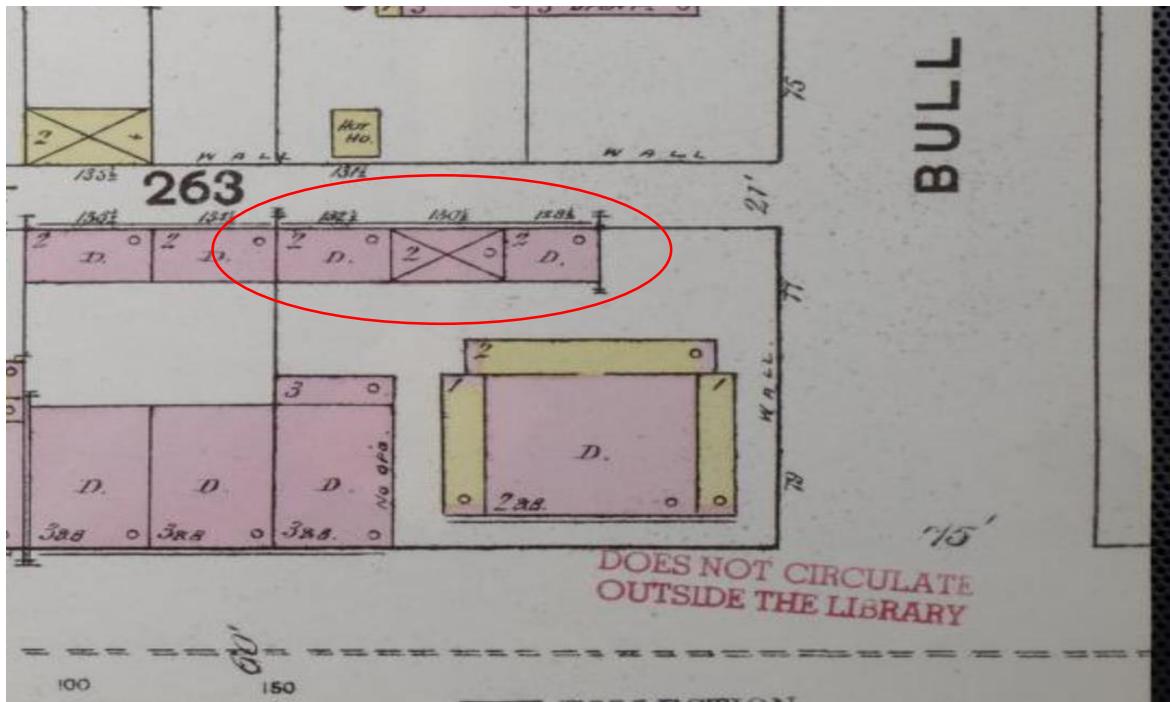
¹⁵⁷ Ibid; Hartridge notes the use of lot 7 as the family's garden. See "12 West Harris Street, Legal Description," *Walter C. Hartridge, Jr. Collection*. Series 6: Architectural History 1700s-1900s. MS 1349. Box 62. Folder 1092, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

¹⁵⁸ Bancroft, *Census*, 18.



Stouf's 1818 Map of Savannah Showing the "Line of Defence" erected around the city in 1814. This fortification appears to have cut through Lot 6 and Lot 7 later purchase by Francis Sorrel. The triangle represents the approximate location of the Sorrel-Weed House. Hargrett Rare Map Collection. Full citation provided in notes and references.

The Sorrels home on lot 6 is Greek Revival style, with a rectangular floorplan containing a large central passage that bisects large rooms on each side. It contains two floors, a raised basement, and an attic. The house was also built with three piazzas: two identical piazzas on its sides and a two-story rear piazza. Although the home presently contains a two-story detached outbuilding, likely once used as a carriage house and quarters for slaves, it is not known for certain when this building was constructed. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps place it at a



Sanborn Insurance Map from 1888 showing Sorrel-Weed House and detached buildings at the back of the lot (circled in red). Photo Credit: GALILEO. Full citation provided in notes and references.

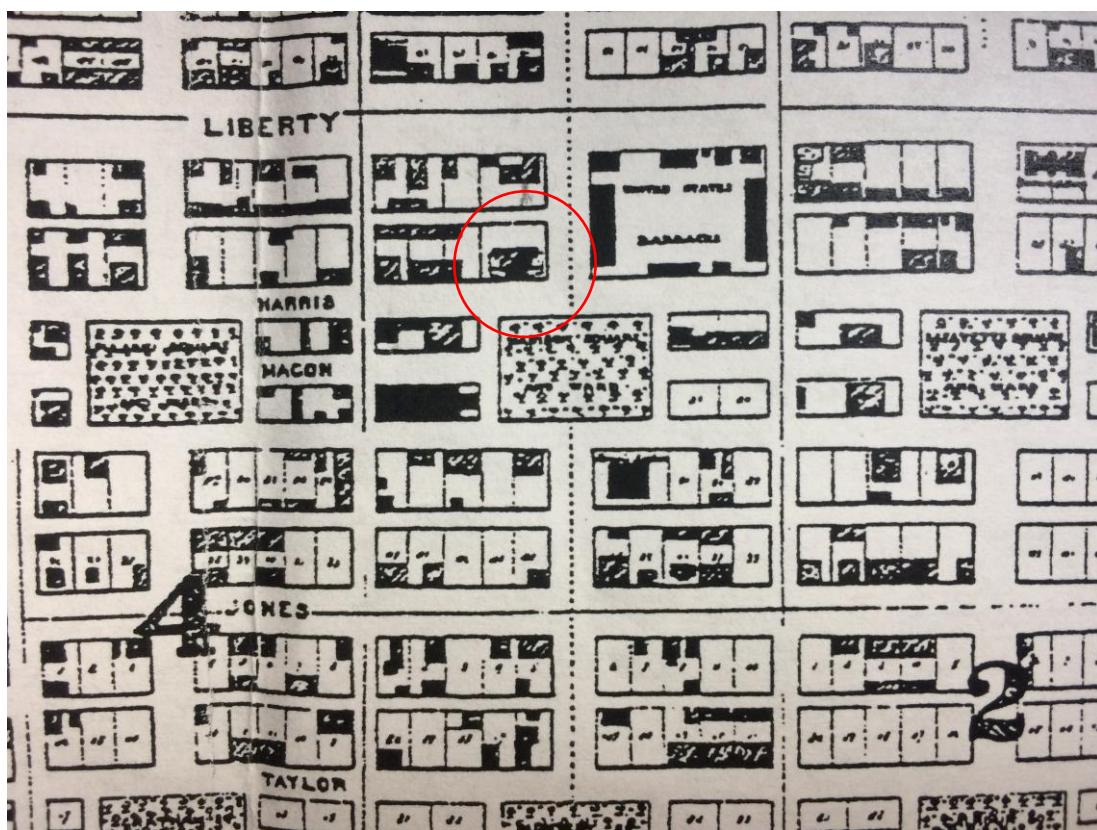
date of no later than 1888, some 45 years after the completion of the Sorrel home.¹⁵⁹ It would not have been uncommon for the slaves owned by the Sorrels to reside within their home, especially given its large size and available space in the attic and basement. In 1835, Francis was taxed for the first time on a four-wheel carriage, which seems to imply that he would have wanted a carriage house built on his lot.¹⁶⁰ But some nineteenth century maps of Savannah defy the notion that a carriage house or any detached building was erected in conjunction with the home. Of particular importance is Vincent's Subdivision Map of 1853, which shows only one large building on lot 6, the Sorrel House.¹⁶¹ While early maps have to be approached with scrutiny, countless lots in Vincent's survey appear with secondary structures and this map has been utilized as a credible source in other archaeological studies for identifying the existence of

¹⁵⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Savannah, GA, 1888, Sheet 13, Digital Library of Georgia, *GALILEO*, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/CityCounty/Savannah1888/Sheet13.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Research Library and Municipal Archives; Savannah, Georgia; Film Number: 194059; Title: *Tax Digests, 1826-1832*, Ancestry.com. *Savannah, Georgia, Land Tax and Property Records, 1809-1938* [database online], accessed April 10, 2017.

¹⁶¹ *Vincent's Subdivision Map of the City of Savannah*, by Vincent A. Edward, 1853, Georgia Historical Society Map Collection, MS 1361-MP 010, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

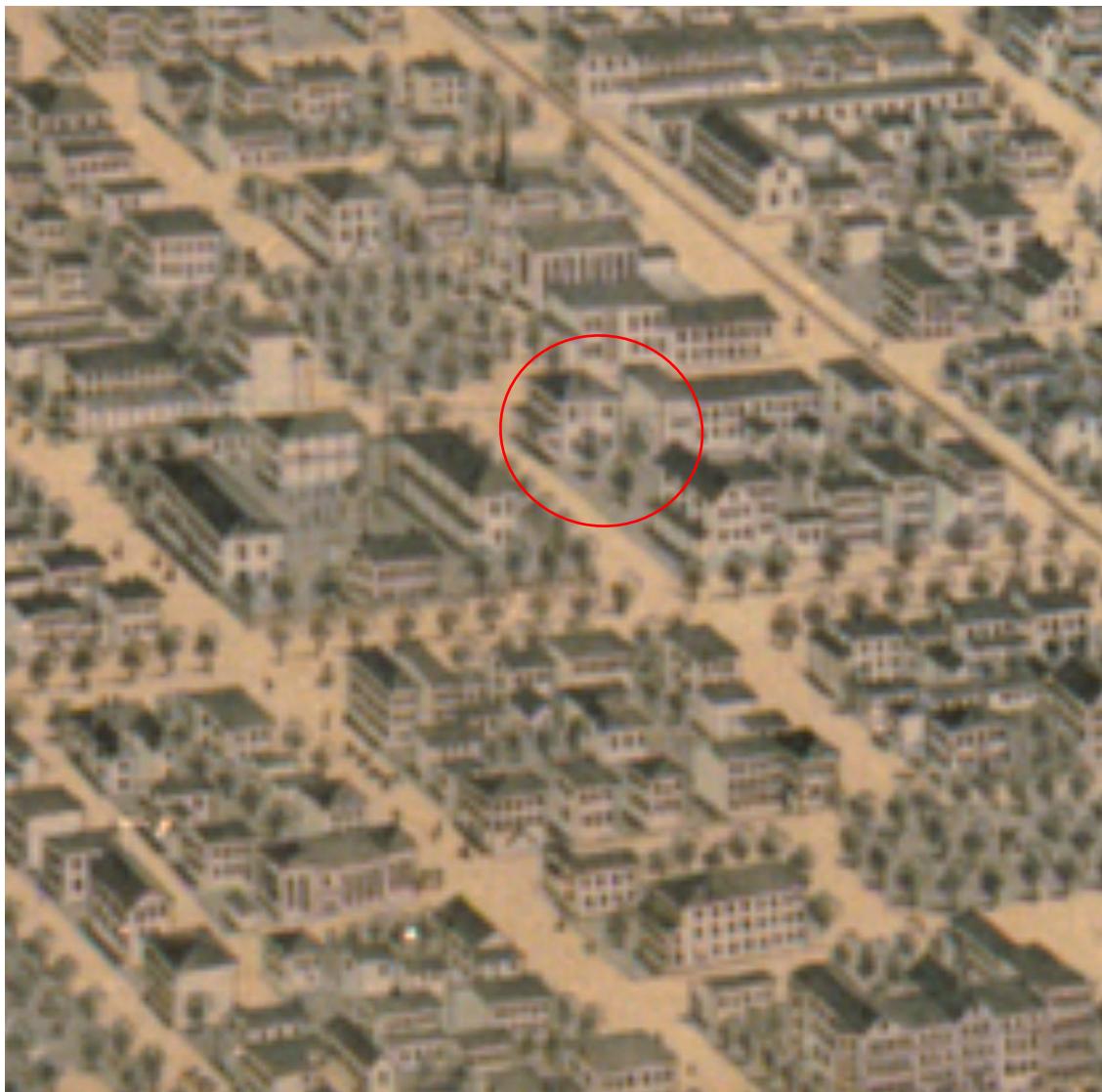
buildings.¹⁶² Vincent's attempt at portraying Savannah was also not intended to be idealistic or artistic in the least; he was hired by the city to produce an aerial map of the city showing in grid fashion all of its lots with their improvements. While it's not outside the realm of possibilities that Vincent made a mistake, the chances of this are rendered improbable when the Sorrel home again appears without any detached buildings in 1871. In a Bird's Eye View of the City, another map perceived as credible in the identification of buildings, lot 6 contains no other buildings but the home.¹⁶³



Portion of Vincent's 1853 Subdivision Map of the City of Savannah, showing only one Building, the Sorrel-Weed House, on Lot 6 (circled in red). Map Photo: Georgia Historical Society. Cited in full in notes and references.

¹⁶² The Chicora Foundation utilized Vincent's map in their archaeological studies at the Owens-Thomas House. See Michael Trinkley, Natalie Adams, and Debi Hacker, *Archaeological Studies Associated with the Owens-Thomas Carriage House, Savannah, Georgia*, Research Series 38 (Columbia: The Chicora Foundation, 1993), 17, pdf, accessed March 26th, 2017, <http://chicora.org/pdfs/RS%2038.pdf> ;

¹⁶³ The Chicora Foundation also utilized the 1871 Bird's Eye View Map of Savannah. See Bird's Eye View of Savannah, 1871. Georgia Historical Society Map Collection, MS 1361MP, [digitized], *Georgia Historical Society*, <http://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/online-exhibits/featured-historical-figures/james-edward-oglethorpe/savannahs-city-plan/>.



In this section from an 1871 Bird's Eye View of the City, only the Sorrel-Weed Home is included (circled in red). There are only trees at the back of Lot 6; no detached buildings. Photo: Original map image from Georgia Historical Society. Full citation provided in notes and references.

If the building now present on the Sorrel-Weed House lot was erected sometime between 1871 and 1888, this would seemingly date the artifacts recovered and the use of the building to a much later time frame.

The Tragic Oral Tradition

In 1859, the Sorrels sold their home to Henry D. Weed and moved into the three-story townhouse they built on the adjacent lot 7.¹⁶⁴ Soon after moving to their new home, Matilda Sorrel died from a concussion.¹⁶⁵ In what now forms the basis of the Sorrel-Weed House's interpretation program, Matilda caused her own death by jumping from the upper level of the home. There is one source to corroborate this incident, found in the correspondences of Charles C. Jones, Jr., a friend and business associate of Mr. Sorrel.¹⁶⁶ In a letter written on the day of Matilda Sorrel's death, Charles C. Jones writes to his mother that

...the sad news has reached the office that Mrs. Sorrel, probably in a fit of lunacy, sprang from the second- or third- story window of her residence on Harris Street, next door to the house which was the family mansion for so many years, falling upon the pavement of the yard, and by the concussion terminating her life...¹⁶⁷

Two days later, Charles's mother seems to indicate the reason for the tragedy, writing that

....The death of Mrs. Sorrel was very distressing. I heard some time since that she was subject to great mental depressions. We are not sufficiently grateful for our preserved reason. Our commonest blessings are our greatest; we need only to be deprived of them to feel it so...¹⁶⁸

This correspondence is strong evidence to indicate that Matilda was either suffering from depression or was perceived as depressed at some time close to her death. Charles Jones is also clear in his indication that she jumped from the upper balcony of the townhouse next door, *not* from the family's former adjacent house. While previous inquiries into this oral tradition have

¹⁶⁴ *Hartridge Collection*, Pamphlet on the Sorrel-Weed House, 3.

¹⁶⁵ *Laurel Grove Cemetery Interment Report*, 5600CL-90, Vol. 1, City of Savannah Research and Municipal Archives, Savannah, Georgia.

¹⁶⁶ The Sorrels and the Jones traveled in the same social circles, and the letters of Charles C. Jones, Jr. indicate that he rented an office from Mr. Sorrel and was invited by him to preach at the Presbyterian Church. See *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War*, ed. Robert Manson Myers, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 215, 173.

¹⁶⁷ See letter from Charles C. Jones, Jr., to Mrs. Mary Jones, March 27th, 1860, pg. 570-571, in *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War*, ed. Robert Manson Myers, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

¹⁶⁸ See letter from Mrs. Mary C. Jones to Charles C. Jones, March 29, 1860, pg. 572, in *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War*, ed. Robert Manson Myers, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

not been able to identify a slave named Molly associated with the Sorrel family, Slave Manifests show that a twenty-eight year old woman named Molly, a resident of Savannah, owned by Francis Sorel, and described as “black,” traveled from Savannah to New York City on board the vessel *Augusta*.¹⁶⁹ There is no record of her returning. There is also a record of a twenty-two-year-old Molly traveling from Charleston to Savannah on the *Gordon*.¹⁷⁰ Charles Green, the Sorrel’s neighbor on Madison Square, close friend of Francis, and their relation through marriage is listed as the owner.

Is it possible that Matilda Sorrel suffered from depression, that her husband was sexually involved with one of his slaves, and that this transpired in the grisly death of both of these women? Absolutely. As far as it concerns master-slave sexual relations, this was not just possible, it was likely. In the year that Matilda Sorrel died, there were two-thousand Mulattos living in Savannah, a testament to, as one author has indicated, the prevalence of sexual intercourse between white males and their female slaves.¹⁷¹ Another compelling figure surrounds the occurrence of female suicide in the South. Between 1860 and 1870, forty-percent of female suicides reported in newspapers were described as stemming from “disappointed love” or “domestic trouble.”¹⁷² The only mention in the newspaper surrounding Matilda’s death was a funeral notice, with no indication of suicide or even how she died.¹⁷³ If Matilda was suffering from depression, it seems that it was not well known in the community, despite the words of Mrs. Jones. Matilda was for many years on the Board of the Female Asylum and as late as January of 1860, just two months before her death, she was still an active board member.¹⁷⁴ If knowledge of her depression was widespread, it seems that she would have been shunned from being an ambassador of a charity organization such as the asylum.

¹⁶⁹ *Papers of the American Slave Trade*, Part I: Port of Savannah Slave Manifests, 1790-1860, Series D: Records of the U.S. Customhouses, ed. Robert E. Lester, Bethesda: LexisNexis, 2005), 179, pdf, http://cisupa.proquest.com/ksc_assets/catalog/100539.pdf; *Savannah, Georgia: Coastwise Slave Manifests, 1801-1860*. ARC ID: 1151775, U.S. Customs Service, Record Group Number 36. The National Archives at Atlanta. Atlanta, Georgia. U.S.A., *Ancestry.com. U.S., Southeast Coastwise Inward and Outward Slave Manifests, 1790-1860* [database on-line], accessed April 11, 2017.

¹⁷⁰ *Coastwise Slave Manifests*, Ancestry.com.

¹⁷¹ Fraser, 288.

¹⁷² India Miller, *In the midst of life we are in death: suicide coverage in the South during the Civil War Era*, Honors Thesis, University of Richmond, 2015, pg. 39-40, UR Scholarship Repository, pdf, <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses/934>.

¹⁷³ *Daily Morning News*, March 28, 1860, pg. 2, col. 2, [Funeral Invitation for Mrs. Sorrel], Digital Library of Georgia, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:smn1860-0284>.

¹⁷⁴ *Daily Morning News*, January 17, 1860, pg. 1, col. 1, Digital Library of Georgia, Georgia Historic Newspapers, GALILEO, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/savnewspapers/id:smn1860-0043>.

There is one other telling source that seems to support the notion that Francis Sorrel played a role in his wife's death. From the family papers held in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of Chapel Hill, a single letter from Francis Sorrel was preserved. This letter happened to date to October 8, 1860, just shy of seven months after the death of his wife Matilda. In a letter to his son Alexander Claxton, Francis Sorrel is praising the sermon of his pastor, while staying at his home named "Ireland" in Virginia. In the course of his praise, he laments,

How my dear and beloved wife would have enjoyed this visit of our friends, if her life have been preserved!!...and how much more comfortable she would have made them, than I have been enabled to do!!.. But I must not enlarge on this sorrowful subject. The Lord has bereaved me and laid his chastening rod heavily upon me, and I must submit.¹⁷⁵

This seems to be an admission of culpability in his wife's death, or his belief that he was deserving in some way of losing her, although we cannot not know in what way. In other Christian accounts, "laying his chastening rod upon me" is used to describe what people believe are justified ills visited upon them by God. In an account from 1847, a man uses this metaphor to describe the illness of himself and his family, believing it was God's attempt to purify the health of the soul.¹⁷⁶ In a memoir from 1854, a reverend justifies the visit upon him of the chastening rod, writing "O Lord, thy judgements are right, and thou in faithfulness has afflicted me."¹⁷⁷ In an account from 1866, an author in a religious and literary journal describes her experience of misfortune as a result of her own sin, and what she believes is God's reaction to this:

...I feel again to record some of the Lord's merciful dealings with me, an unworthy creature; poor and miserable as I am, yet He careth for me. I have been dipped into some deep conflicts, and I fear some of them have been caused by my own unwatchfulness and

¹⁷⁵ *Sorrel Papers*, [letter from Francis Sorrel to Alexander Claxton, October 8, 1860,] pg. 1 of 2, Scan 19.

¹⁷⁶ The Executive Committee of the American Home Missionary Society, *The Home Missionary*, vol. xix, (New York: William Osborn, 1847), 227, *Google Books*.

¹⁷⁷ *Memoir of the Late Rev. R. H. Krause, A.M.*, ed. By Charles Stuart Stanford, (Dublin: George Herbert, 1854), 23, *Google Books*.

unfaithfulness, and the Lord in tender mercy has been pleased to lay his chastening rod upon me..¹⁷⁸

Francis Sorrel thus included in his letter a commonly used metaphor to describe the Christian experience with misfortune. It is not clear however if Francis was truly culpable in some way in the death of his wife (as in, was he referencing his affair or perhaps ignorance of her depression) or if he merely was coping with the loss by believing God to be “chastening” him for other unspecific, yet justified reasons.



Photo Attributed to Matilda Sorrel, unknown date. Photo Credit: Ancestry.com.
This Picture is also displayed in the Sorrel-Weed House.

¹⁷⁸ *The Friend: A Religious and Literary Journal*, vol. LXVII, (Philadelphia: WM. H. Pile's Sons, 1894), 364, Google Books.

Aftermath

Francis Sorrel lived another decade before dying from a stroke in 1870. In the same letter in which he lamented his wife's death, he asked his son Alexander Claxton "to remember us unto Savannah, especially to old Mammy."¹⁷⁹ This is a telling reference. Despite the tragic oral tradition surrounding the slave Molly and the callousness on the part of Francis Sorrel it suggests, he shows endearment here towards one of his slaves. This is made even more meaningful by the fact that of all of the people he could have asked his son to say hello to, he chose "old Mammy," who is likely the elderly slave owned by the Sorrels for many years who appears in the Slave Schedules of 1850 and 1860. Mammy, who was 80-years-old in 1860, is likely the "Old Nanny" referred to in Francis Sorrel's will. In the monetary divisions of Francis's estate after his death, "Old Nanny" receives small payments through at least 1875 "for her support at sundry times."¹⁸⁰

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE URBAN SOUTH and SLAVERY

Background

Until recent decades, the focus of African-American Slavery and archaeological studies has centered around plantations and rural locations.¹⁸¹ Although the Georgia lowcountry and coastal areas comprise the starting point of archaeological studies in African-American life, these were limited to plantations such as Silk Hope, Butler Island, Cannons Point, Hofwyl-Broadfield, and other non-urban locations.¹⁸² More recently, moving inward from the plantations into the cities has become more of a priority for studies of enslaved people, especially as it pertains to developing more inclusive interpretation programs at historic sites. Stately Antebellum homes in Savannah and other southern cities traditionally focused on the wealth and success of the home's

¹⁷⁹ *Sorrel Papers*, [letter from Francis Sorrel to Alexander Claxton, October 8, 1860,] pg. 2 of 2, Scan 20.

¹⁸⁰ Chatham County Probate Court, [Will and Estate Dispersments of Francis Sorrel] [need #], Savannah, Georgia.

¹⁸¹ O'Donovan, "Cotton and Commerce," 42; Michael Trinkley, Natalie Adams, and Debi Hacker, *Archaeological Studies Associated with the Owens-Thomas Carriage House, Savannah, Georgia*, Research Series 38 (Columbia: The Chicora Foundation, 1993), 4, pdf, accessed March 26th, 2017, <http://chicora.org/pdfs/RS%2038.pdf> ; J.W. Joseph, "Archaeology and the African-American Experience in the Urban South," in *Archaeology of Southern Urban Landscapes*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 109, EBSCO, ebook, accessed March 26th, 2017.

¹⁸² Theresa Singleton, "Reclaiming the Gullah-Geechee Past: Archaeology of Slavery in Coastal Georgia," in *African-American Life in the Georgia Lowcountry: The Atlantic World and the Gullah-Geechee*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 151-153.

former owners, and either obscured or wholly omitted the lives of the enslaved people who once lived and worked here. As one author has said, “Perhaps the greatest problem in the interpretation of urban slavery is that it is trivialized - - the slaves and their lives are lost in comparison with the grand house, the fine furnishings, and the political and commercial importance of the owners.”

However slowly, progress is being made in both Savannah and regionally. In the 1980s, the Charleston Museum undertook several archaeological studies on former urban compounds that enslaved people and elites once shared.¹⁸³ Also in the 1980s, archaeological studies were conducted at the Telfair Home. Although these were not aimed at a better understanding of urban slavery, they stand as a frontrunner to urban archaeology studies in Savannah.¹⁸⁴ In 1993, the carriage house and former slave quarters at the Owens-Thomas House in Savannah was the subject of archaeological studies, the results of which were used to develop an interpretation program that focused on urban slavery at the home.¹⁸⁵ The Davenport House in Savannah was also the focus of archaeological studies in 2014. Currently, the Davenport House is also planning to incorporate a new urban slavery exhibit.¹⁸⁶

Like the archaeology of slavery at plantation sites, artifacts, housing, and features can be used in urban archaeology projects to uncover more about the lifeways of slaves. While some elements of rural studies may share with their counterparts in the city, the housing of slaves in urban locales such as Savannah, Charleston, and New Orleans was disparate from housing found on plantations. Housing for slaves in Savannah was dynamic, and it is known that many slaves lived apart from their owners, especially in Oglethorpe Ward. Since this study will excavate a

¹⁸³ See Martha Zierden and Debi Hacker, *Exploration of the North Entrance of the Joseph Manigault House*, Archaeological Contributions 15, (Charleston: Charleston Museum, 1986), pdf, <https://www.charlestonmuseum.org/assets/pdf/ArchaeologyReports/Joseph%20Manigault%20House%201986%20-%20AC%2015.pdf>; Martha Zierden and Kimberly Grimes, *Investigating Elite Lifeways Through Archaeology: The John Rutledge House*, Archeological Contributions 21, (Charleston: The Charleston Museum, 1989, pdf, <https://www.charlestonmuseum.org/assets/pdf/ArchaeologyReports/John%20Rutledge%20House%201989%20-%20AC%2021.pdf>; Martha A. Zierden, *Aiken-Rhett House, Archaeological Research*, Archaeological Contributions 31 (Charleston: Charleston Museum, 2003) pdf, <https://www.charlestonmuseum.org/assets/pdf/ArchaeologyReports/Aiken-Rhett%202003%20%20AC%2031.pdf>; <https://www.charlestonmuseum.org/assets/pdf/ArchaeologyReports/Joseph%20Manigault%20House%201986%20-%20AC%2015.pdf>.

¹⁸⁴ Nicholas Honerkamp, R. Bruce Council, Charles H. Fairbanks, *The Reality of the City, Urban Archaeology at the Telfair Site*, Savannah, Georgia, (Chattanooga: The Jeffery L. Brown Institute of Archeology, 1983).

¹⁸⁵ See Trinkley, Adams, and Hacker, *Archaeological Studies*.

¹⁸⁶ Elliott, *Deep, Dirty Secrets*, 2014.

portion of a detached building believed to be the former living quarters for the enslaved people, this will be the type of urban housing discussed here.

Housing

Dense populations, narrow lots, and exorbitant land values meant that enslaved people typically resided in detached buildings on the lots of their owners. Urban lots in cities such as Savannah, Charleston, and New Orleans were often no more than 50 feet by 150 feet or smaller.¹⁸⁷ While slave quarters and other outbuildings in a plantation setting could be scattered far from the main house, affording slaves and their owners space and relative isolation from one another, the opposite was true for Savannah and other cities.

Slave quarters were often placed at the back of the lot or on the side, only a short distance away from the main residence, often just across a small garden area. These were often two story dwellings, although typically one room deep. The second floor typically contained rooms for sleeping, and the first, a kitchen, store rooms, and often a stable and/or a carriage house. Haylofts were also often contained on the second floor above the stable or carriage house. One author has pointed to several examples throughout the south. In New Orleans, the Galley House Slave Quarters featured three privies on the ground floor, kitchens on the second, and bedrooms at the top. In Charleston, the former slave quarters of William Aiken, Jr. consisted of rooms above a detached kitchen building and stable.¹⁸⁸ These constitute common, but only a few of the variations on slave housing. More variations will be discussed in a later section.

As the potential complexity of these dwellings suggests, they were typically built of brick. Because they were located only earshot from the main residence, these slave quarters were generally much better than those on plantations, where housing was typically much smaller and cruder.¹⁸⁹ Although reforms in slave housing in the mid-eighteenth century led to improved dwellings in urban and rural locales, wattle-and-daub, thatched houses, and earthfast construction were common among plantation sites, as were log cabins and dwellings raised on brick piers.¹⁹⁰ However common it was for slaves to live in detached buildings on their owner's lot, this was

¹⁸⁷ Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 55.

¹⁸⁸ Vlach, "Vernacular Architecture", 153-155.

¹⁸⁹ Wade, 57.

¹⁹⁰ Singleton, Gullah-Geechee, 162-165.

not always the rule. Within the vast spaces of Antebellum mansions, slaves more commonly lived in the cellars or attics of their owner's homes.¹⁹¹

Relevant Features

The presence of a depression may indicate the possibility of distinct underground features, such as a subfloor pit, privy, trash pit, well, a building trench, or a root cellar. *Subfloor pits* have been discovered under numerous slave dwellings in the Upper South, particularly in the Chesapeake region of Virginia. These features have been interpreted as root cellars, storage spaces for food, personal items, and stolen goods, and as religious shrines. Some archaeologists believe they are a source of resistance to oppression and an attempt to modify European housing, while others believe the use of storage pits was a practice with African origins. These pits were dug beneath earthen floors or below floors covered with wooden boards.¹⁹²

Subfloor pits may have originally been dug as sources of clay for construction, and some of these discovered in Virginia show burn marks, indicating that coals may have been placed in these pits to dry them out.¹⁹³ Though hundreds of subfloor pits have been excavated, it is difficult to determine the original use of these pits, as many became backfilled with soil and refuse.¹⁹⁴ In some pits, the fill consisted of organic soil replete with animal bones, whole oyster shells, and large fragments of ceramic and glass, indicating that daily garbage was deposited once the pit surpassed its original function.¹⁹⁵ Animal bone would sometimes be mixed with more telling artifacts, such as coins, tools, and ceramics.¹⁹⁶ Only few of these pits have been found in the lowcountry of Georgia and South Carolina and none have been found in urban locations. These pits are also associated with the colonial period, rather than Antebellum. However, because of the sizeable depression in the carriage house basement floor and the belief that slaves once lived here, this feature cannot be ruled out as a possible explanation.

¹⁹¹ Vlach, "Vernacular Architecture," 151.

¹⁹² Singleton, "Gullah-Geechee", 165-6; Singleton, Theresa A., "The Archaeology of Slavery in North America", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 119-140. JSTOR. Accessed February 17th, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2155932>.

¹⁹³ Patricia Samford, *Subfloor Pits and the Archaeology of Slavery in Colonial Virginia*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007), 108-110.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 174.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 175.

¹⁹⁶ Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African American, 1650-1800*, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1992), 58.

Unlike the absence of subfloor pits from the landscape in Georgia, *Privies*, also known as necessary houses or jakes, are omnipresent during archaeological investigations and are a prominent part of urban waste disposal systems.¹⁹⁷ As early as 1839, a city ordinance in Savannah required at least one privy per residence.¹⁹⁸ The presence of brick or stone in excavations can indicate the presence of a privy, especially when found six or more feet below ground, which was the required minimum depth established per the 1839 ordinance.¹⁹⁹ Regionally, these have been found during archaeological studies on the urban lots of the elite in Charleston.²⁰⁰ In the late 1980s and early 90s, excavations of urban lots in Covington, Kentucky unearthed privies on nearly every lot.²⁰¹ In Savannah, they have also been uncovered on the lots of the Owens-Thomas House, Telfair Academy, and Davenport House.²⁰² These makeshift bathrooms were enclosed by small buildings and may have had modest brick foundations, or none at all. Urban compounds built by the wealthy often contained all brick structures for both the main home and outbuildings, including the privy.²⁰³ Moreover, privies can preserve materials that are deposited into them because of the rich, organic soil that they contain, but many times, the sanitation practices of these privies disturbs this process to the extent that after 1820 these features can be difficult to identify.²⁰⁴

Once the conditions of a privy were no longer tolerable, they were abandoned and filled with clay or lime and covered with loam, and new ones created on the home's lot.²⁰⁵ Perhaps

¹⁹⁷ Joan H. Geismar, "Where is the Night Soil? Thoughts on an Urban Privy, *Historical Archaeology* 27, no. 2, [Health, Sanitation, and Foodways in Historical Archaeology], (1993): 57. JSTOR, accessed March 29th, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616239>

¹⁹⁸ Trinkley, Adams, and Hacker, *Owens-Thomas*, 9.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Zierden and Hacker, *Joseph Manigault*; Zierden and Grimes, *John Rutledge House*; Zierden, *Aiken-Rhett House*;

²⁰¹ Robert A. Genheimer, "Archaeology at Covington Kentucky: A Particularly "Northern" Looking Southern City," in *Archaeology of Southern Urban Landscapes*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 105, EBSCO, ebook, accessed March 26th, 2017.

²⁰² See Michael Trinkley, Natalie Adams, and Debi Hacker, *Archaeological Studies Associated with the Owens-Thomas Carriage House, Savannah, Georgia*, Research Series 38 (Columbia: The Chicora Foundation, 1993), pdf, accessed March 26th, 2017, <http://chicora.org/pdfs/RS%2038.pdf>; Rita Folse Elliott, *Deep, Dirty Secrets: 2014 Archaeological Investigations at the Isaiah Davenport House*, vol. 1. Savannah, Georgia. The Lamar Institute. Savannah, GA., 2015. Pdf. www.thelamarinstitute.org. Report # 195; Nicholas Honerkamp, R. Bruce Council, Charles H. Fairbanks, *The Reality of the City, Urban Archaeology at the Telfair Site*, Savannah, Georgia, (Chatanooga: The Jeffery L. Brown Institute of Archeology, 1983).

²⁰³ Zierden and Grimes, *John Rutledge House*, 89.

²⁰⁴ Geismar, "Nightsoil," 57.

²⁰⁵ Ivor Noel Hume, *Historical Archaeology: A Comparative Guide for Both Amateurs and Professionals to the Techniques and Methods of Excavating Historical Sites*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1975), 139.

more than any other outbuildings, privies were typically placed at the back of the lot, oftentimes as far removed from the main house as possible.²⁰⁶ One author's description is instructive for understanding the placement of privies and other archaeological features and their relationship to the constricted urban lot:

A common pattern of spatial organization and use seen at contemporaneous sites in Charleston, Savannah, Fort Frederica, and St. Augustine consists of front-lot dwellings, mid-lot wells and cisterns, and rear-lot privies.²⁰⁷

The crowded conditions of urban locales such as Savannah meant that disposal of garbage often entailed the scattering of refuse onto the ground at urban sites and in features such as wells and privies.²⁰⁸ Deposits into privies outside of their primary function can also reflect abandonment and loss due to natural disasters, property sales, and clean-up efforts of other sorts. Often, privies show evidence of a single dumping incident, although periodic reuse of privies for trash and other deposits is also common.²⁰⁹

Items deposited into privies have the potential to reveal numerous details about the lives of both enslaved people and their owners. As one author has described them, they are a “treasure trove,” or a “time capsule of sorts.”²¹⁰ Diets, wealth, health, as well as consumer access and behavior can commonly be gleaned from the remains of privies as well as social organization, urban spatial patterns, and chronologies.²¹¹ Unfortunately, privies are not considered unique indicators of African-American lifeways. The spatial limitations of urban locales made it commonplace for privies to receive deposits from both slaves and their owners, making it nearly impossible to distinguish between the two.²¹² Three urban examples of privies built for wealthy Antebellum homeowners are instructive for the way they are built and incorporated into the owner's lot. These include the privies of the Gally House in New Orleans, those of the Aiken-Rhett House in Charleston, and the Waring House privy in Mobile.

²⁰⁶ Zierden and Grimes, *John Rutledge House*, 89.

²⁰⁷ Honerkamp, Council, and Fairbanks, *Telfair Site*, 169.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

²¹⁰ Geismar, “Nightsoil,” 57.

²¹¹ Elliott, *Deep, Dirty Secrets*, 123; Robert E. Genheimer, “Archaeology at Convington,” in *Archaeology of Southern Urban Landscapes*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 105, EBSCO, ebook, accessed March 26th, 2017.

²¹² Trinkley, Adams, Hacker, *Owens-Thomas*, 4.

The Gally House was built in the 1830's, and the enslaved lived here in a three-story brick dwelling that was built behind the main house on the opposite side of the lot. The building mimicked in materials that of the main home, and contained three floors: a lower floor with privies for the residence, a second floor containing the kitchen, and a third floor with rooms for the enslaved.²¹³ The Aiken-Rhett House in Charleston contained six outbuildings within the confines of the lot, all added in the 1830s. The privies were placed in the two back corners of the lot, as far away from the main house as they could possibly be. The privies and all of the outbuildings were constructed with brick, following the fashion of the main house, and also contained similar gothic stylings. This included the privies, which were built with lancet windows.²¹⁴ The Waring House privy in Mobile contained three private closets for the slaves, men, and for women and children, all within one small building constructed with a stucco exterior. It was also built behind the main residence.²¹⁵

Trash Pits, oftentimes no more than a repurposed privy, are another common feature of the archaeological landscape. According to one author's description, in Savannah, Charleston, Fort Frederica, and St. Augustine, "trash pits dot the tything-lot landscape across the middle and rear areas."²¹⁶ Unlike privies, the soil in trash pits was typically not nutrient-rich and did not work to preserve deposited items,²¹⁷ unless of course a privy was also used as a trash receptacle, which was also oftentimes the case. But trash pits preserved deposited items in another way; through time, they often remain unmolested by activity due to being dug well below the surface. Because trash pits were typically only open and utilized for a short period of time, the items they contain can illustrate an assemblage from a particular time slot.²¹⁸ Oftentimes, all the pieces of a broken object can be found in trash pits, whereas the random scattering of garbage across a backyard area is not conducive to preserving the whole of an item. Moreover, trash pits are one of the most informative archaeological features. In addition to often preserving whole items such as broken ceramics, they can also indicate the location from which deposits were made, pointing to the former presence of another dwelling.²¹⁹

²¹³ Vlach, "Vernacular Architecture," 153-154.

²¹⁴ Vlach, "Vernacular Architecture," 153-154.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 154.

²¹⁶ Honerkamp, Council, and Fairbanks, *Telfair Site*, 169.

²¹⁷ Hume, *Historical Archaeology*, 141.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 142.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

Like the excavation of urban privies, trash pits have been discovered on sites in Savannah and Charleston, as well as other cities such as New Orleans and Mobile.²²⁰ Typically, trash pits and refuse was concentrated in close proximity to outbuildings.²²¹ Both the Aiken-Rhett and John Rutledge House excavations in Charleston uncovered trash pits, and in the archaeological studies of the Charleston Powder Magazine, the artifacts recovered from trash pits were the most illustrative of how the magazine was used during the late colonial period.²²² More recently in 2014, a trash pit, as well as a former privy repurposed as a trash pit, were discovered during archaeological investigations at the Davenport House. These features allowed archaeologists to uncover new details about the health, diet, and local environment of Savannah in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as how these categories specifically applied to the Davenports.²²³

Like privies, *wells* were repurposed nearly as much both during and after their initial period of use and often became trash receptacles.²²⁴ Correspondingly, they have the potential to hold some of the most valuable deposits of artifacts. Although wells did not have the nutrient rich soil like privies, there preservation potential is twofold and combines the value the previously discussed features. As one author describes:

To the archaeologist, wells hold all the promise of both privies and rubbish pits; the moisture preserves organic materials and metals, as well as cushioning the fall of large objects and enabling them to be recovered intact.²²⁵

Also like privies and trash pits, wells were a common if not required element of the urban plot and are common features found during archaeological studies in the urban south. As one author

²²⁰ Shannon Lee Dawdy, “Ethnicity in the Urban Landscape: The Archaeology of Creole New Orleans, in *Archaeology of Southern Urban Landscapes*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), EBSCO, ebook, accessed March 26th, 2017; Bonnie L. Gums and George W. Shorter, “Mobile’s Waterfront: The Development of a Port City,” in *Archaeology of Southern Urban Landscapes*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), EBSCO, ebook, accessed March 26th, 2017.

²²¹ Martha A. Zierden and Bernard L. Herman, “Charleston Townhouses: Archaeology, Architecture, and the Urban Landscape, 1750-1850,” in *Landscape Archaeology*, eds. Rebecca Yamin and Karen Bescherer Metheny, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 212.

²²² Zierden and Grimes, *John Rutledge House*; Zierden, *Aiken-Rhett House*; Martha A. Zierden, “Charleston’s Powder Magazine and the Development of a Southern City,” in *Archaeology of Southern Urban Landscapes*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 101, EBSCO, ebook, accessed March 26th, 2017.

²²³ Elliott, *Deep, Dirty Secrets*, V.

²²⁴ Zierden and Grimes, *John Rutledge*, 83; Honerkamp, Council, and Fairbanks, *Telfair Site*, 16; Hume, *Historical Archaeology*, 144.

²²⁵ Hume, *Historical Archaeology*, 144.

describes of Savannah during the colonial and antebellum periods, “in almost all private houses of any importance, there was a well.”²²⁶ A census of Savannah taken in 1847 indicated twenty-two brick houses and a corresponding twenty-two private wells in Jasper Ward, the location of the Sorrel-Weed House.²²⁷ Francis Sorrel’s house was completed around 1841 and it was constructed of brick. This census surely includes his home and his well in its calculation.

Ideally, wells would be placed on the middle portion of a lot, between the house and its associated outbuildings, and as far removed from privies as possible to avoid contamination.²²⁸ They were usually built no deeper than sixteen feet at their end, with more shallow variations ranging from between ten to twelve feet.²²⁹ Like privies, they can be identified during excavations by the presence of brick or stone courses below the surface, as well as by small projections above surface of about two feet.²³⁰ Over time, the spatial limitations of the urban lot and the creation of new privies created a pattern where wells and privies would invariably creep closer together, often resulting in sewage seeping into well water.²³¹

Root cellars like their counterparts were also subfloor features, oftentimes dug haphazardly into the earth underneath kitchen floors, and could be accessed by a ladder through a trap door.²³² These cellars often took the shape of a rectangle and could be of any size. Some of these were mere holes, but others could have wood reinforcement on the sides and bottom.²³³ As the name suggests, root cellars were used to preserve root vegetables, such as turnips, potatoes, and carrots.²³⁴ These storage spaces were meant to counteract the effects of humidity and temperature upon foods, especially fruits and vegetables, and it was recommended that root cellars be dug to a depth of 10 feet for maximum benefit.²³⁵ Although the practice of “root cellaring,” especially pits and small rooms in basements or attics, is now believed to have incorporated a more diverse array of food storage.²³⁶ Manuals written in England and the

²²⁶ Charles Seton Henry Hardee, *Reminiscences and Recollections of Old Savannah*, 127, quoted in Trinkley, Adams, and Hacker, *Owens-Thomas*, 9.

²²⁷ Joseph Bancroft, *Census of the city of Savannah*, 2nd ed., (Savannah, E.J. Purse, 1848), 18, *Haiti Trust Digital Library*, accessed April 2, 2017.

²²⁸ Honerkamp, Council, and Fairbanks, *Telfair Site*, 169.

²²⁹ Trinkley, Adams, and Hacker, *Owens-Thomas*, 9; Hume, *Historical Archaeology*, 145.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Hume, 132.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Samford, *Subfloor Pits*, 124.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

colonies encouraged the storage of vegetables in subfloor spaces.²³⁷ There are three accounts about subfloor pits used as root cellars written by African-Americans in South. One of these described slave quarters in 1860s Virginia, in which a pit was dug into an earthen floor and was used to store sweet potatoes in the winter. The pit was sealed by being covered with boards.²³⁸ Another of these describes a root cellar from 1850s New Bern, North Carolina, which consisted of a hole underneath the floor which held potatoes and prevented the clutter of other items.²³⁹ The placement of root cellars in front of hearths in Virginia was also a common practice.²⁴⁰ Root cellars, a type of subfloor pit, have in many cases, been labeled as markers of African-American culture.²⁴¹ However, this analysis derives almost solely from Virginia, especially in the 18th century, in non-urban locales.

EXCAVATIONS

Methodology

Excavations in this study were unique in that they were limited to a linear depression in a confined portion of the brick basement floor of the Sorrel-Weed carriage house. This study was not only confined by location, but also by time: The entire project was limited by a window of one academic semester, precluding the ability to excavate more than one test unit as well as precluding the ability to excavate the entire depression. Methodology in this project was guided by the expertise of Instructor of Anthropology Laura Seifert, a trained archaeologist at Armstrong State University.

Research

Although research was conducted prior to the date of the first excavation, none of this research was intended to dictate where excavations would occur, as it was already predetermined where the site of the excavating and test unit would be. Nonetheless, research for this project encompassed a myriad of resources. Print sources have come extensively from Lane Library and interlibrary loan. Other print sources consulted came from the Kay Kole Genealogy and Local

²³⁷ Ibid., 125.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., 126.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ferguson, 58; James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 200.

History Room at the Bull Street Public Library and the City of Savannah Archives. Nonprint sources include microfilm collections at the Chatham County Superior Courthouse, and various electronic resources, including: slave schedules, tax digests, and other digitized records from ancestry.com, digitized archaeology reports from the LAMAR Institute, Chicora Foundation, Charleston Museum, and the Jeffrey L. Brown Institute of Archaeology, numerous primary and secondary sources accessed through the Haiti Trust Digital Library, electronic books available in *GALILEO*, journals in *JSTOR*, various digitized newspapers in the *Digital Library of Georgia*, and family papers in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's manuscript collection.

Fieldwork

Instructor Laura Seifert led students in excavations in the carriage house basement at the Sorrel-Weed site between February and March of 2017, over the course of four, full-day excavations. She was assisted by her research assistant Chase Freeman. Prior to the first dig, it was determined that one, 1 meter by 2 meter (3.3 feet by 6.5 feet) test unit would be sufficient for the project. The depression in the brick basement floor stretched east-west in a linear shape, and was approximately 3 feet by 9 feet. Student workers had to remove the portion of the brick floor within the test unit. Bricks were arranged in courses on their stretcher portion, or sideways, and were dry laid, but packed very tightly.

Test Units and Features

During the first excavation on February 3, it was decided that the test unit would be a cross-portion of the deepest part of the depression, running in a north-south direction. The unit was excavated with the generous aid of Armstrong State University students, most of whom were enrolled together in *Historical Archaeology*. Many of these students were also members of Armstrong State's Anthropology Club. While initially it was thought that one test unit could be completed in a relatively short amount of time, the project unexpectedly lasted much longer than was anticipated, due to anomalies in the soil and unusual features.

Test Unit one was oriented on a N/S axis. A total of 2 levels and 5 features were excavated, with the majority of recovered artifacts coming from level 1 and feature 2. Levels were removed in 10 cm increments, or until a change in soil was encountered. Features were all dug in natural levels. All soil was filtered through one-quarter inch dry screen. The test unit was

excavated to sterile soil. A Munsell Soil Color Chart was used throughout the excavations. Features and levels were drawn in plan and profile views and were photographed, and field notes and forms were completed for each level and feature.

After excavation of level 1, it was immediately noticed that a feature consisting of dark black soil and heavy coal deposits was located approximately in the middle of the test unit along the western edge. This was treated as feature 2 and was excavated to a depth of 80 cm before reaching sterile soil. Feature 2 was quickly identified as a pit and was determined to be the cause of the depression in the basement floor. The pit likely runs the length of the remaining unexcavated, depressed portion of the floor still overlain by bricks and not included in test unit 1. The exposed portion of feature 2 was bisected east/west, and each half was excavated separately starting with the north half. Feature 2 contained an abundance of animal bones, coal, slag, and heavily corroded metal artifacts. Unfortunately, none of the artifacts recovered seem to mark the feature as a subfloor pit utilized by slaves. Overall, the total assemblage of artifacts found in the test unit do not provide evidence with which to interpret the experience of urban slavery at the Sorrel-Weed House site.

The test unit contained an overwhelming amount of coal, particularly from feature 2. Samples of the coal were kept from each level or feature from which they were found, and the remainder was weighed and discarded. Excavations also uncovered a large amount of faunal remains. Many of these bones were rather large indicating pig or cow and had identifiable features still intact. Some of the bones were also very small, indicating the remains of smaller animals such as fowl or rodents. However, no official faunal analysis was conducted in this study. Soil analyses were also not conducted in this study. Other artifacts recovered included items in the categories of kitchen, clothing, and arms, as delineated by Stanley South's cataloging system. Some of these artifacts included bottle glass, the base of a wine goblet, ceramics, a curious, decorative clothing ornament reminiscent of a broach, and two bullet casings.

Artifact Analysis

All artifacts (n=1016) were processed by Instructor Laura Seifert and graduate student Kelly Westfield at the Anthropology Lab at Armstrong State University in Savannah, Georgia. All artifacts were cleaned, analyzed, and catalogued between March and April of 2017. The

artifacts were placed in archivally sound plastic bags and labeled. Items were catalogued in Microsoft Access according to Stanley South's cataloging system. A *terminus post quem* was of 1880 was established, based on the latest start date corresponding glass bottles with fine lipping tool finish. A TPQ of 1880 indicates more recent cultural activity than was predicted. This seems to align with the likely possibility that the carriage house was not built until sometime after 1871.

RESULTS

Test Unit 1

Level 1

Level 1 was excavated to a depth of 10 cm. Overlying Feature 2 and Level 3, this layer was immediately below the brick floor, which was removed prior to excavation. Soil in this level was 10 YR/2/1, black. This soil was very dark and organic and contained an abundance of coal; 18 kg (apx. 37 lbs.) of coal was weighed and discarded along with 2 kg (apx. 4.5 lbs.) of brick. Artifacts recovered in Level 1 (n=184) included items from various categories, including arms, kitchen, architecture, furniture, kitchen, and several miscellaneous artifacts. Some of the more notable artifacts included a Minie ball and an upholstery tack.

Coal constituted the largest number of artifacts recovered from this level (n=59) not including the approximately 37 lbs. that was discarded. An animal tooth was also uncovered and was the only one in the entire assemblage of Test Unit 1. Additional animal bones discovered (N=24) were largely small fragments. Level 1 contained 32 heavily corroded, largely unidentifiable metal artifacts. The oldest artifact recovered was a piece of aqua bottle glass with a start date of 1800, as well as light aqua window glass. The latest possible end date also pertained to the aqua bottle glass, dating to 1920. Level 1 contained the same dark, organic soil as Feature 2, and also mimicked its artifact assemblage in smaller amounts.

Level 1 is certainly the top layer of the pit fill, or the top layer of Feature 2. Unfortunately, a small piece of masking tape was found in this level, indicating a very recent disturbance. However, this may have come from recent repair or movement of the bricks, and may not have involved the disturbance of the entire Level 1. The soil was extremely compact.

Test Unit 1: Level 1 Artifacts

Level	Number	Code	Color	Size	Notes	Description	Start	End
1	9	AC0120	red/orange		tiny fragments; multiple types of brick	Brick, handmade		
1	2	AG0301	light aqua			Window glass, sized	1804	
1	15	AM1507			heavily corroded	Nail fragment, unidentified		
1	2	AR0108	tan		sand mortar	Mortar		
1	1	FM0106	green	partial		Tack, upholstery		
1	24	KF0101	brown			Bone, unidentified		
1	1	KF0102	white	partial		Animal teeth		
1	1	KG0304	aqua	body		Bottle, aqua bottle glass	1800	1920
1	3	MF0101	black			Coal		
1	23	MF0101	dark gray		dull	Coal		
1	3	MF0101	black		coal with iron concretion	Coal		
1	30	MF0101	black		hard; shiny	Coal		
1	34	MF0103				Cinder/clinker		
1	12	MF0104	brown			Wood, unidentified		
1	17	MM9901			heavily corroded and fragmented	Iron fragment, unidentified		
1	1	MZ0102			masking tape	Modern miscellaneous		
1	1	RM0104	gray	whole	Iron rusted onto base	Minie ball	1852	
1	1	ZG0904	colorless	body		Glass lamp body		
1	3	ZM1208			heavily corroded,	Iron flat strip		
1	1	ZM1247				Screw		

Feature 2

After completing Level 1, a piece of bone was identified on the surface, within a clearly defined rectangular area of dark soil. This area was treated as Feature 2. Outside of the dark soil feature was a very tan soil. Overall, the dark, organic soil in Feature 2 was extremely compact.

The soil of Feature 2 was 10 YR 2/1 black, loamy sand mottled with 10 YR 3/3 dark brown sand. Feature 2 was overlain by Level 1, and was excavated beginning at a NE depth of 8 cm below surface and a SE depth of 7 cm below surface. Closing elevations for Feature 2 were 60 cm NE,

68 cm SE and 48 cm SW (all elevations were measured below surface). After excavations began, it became clear that the difference in soil between Feature 2 and the surrounding tan soil was due to the fact that Feature 2 was a pit that had been filled. The pit's south wall was much more compact than the north wall. The south wall also had distinct gouges that appeared to be individual shovel marks from the pit's original excavation. The north wall was much looser and in between archaeological excavations, collapsed partially.

The pit was excavated until reaching subsoil to a depth of 80 cm. The sides of the pit were remarkably straight, whereas the bottom of the pit was deepest at its center (80 cm). The pit was replete with coal; a total of 76 kg (apx. 168 lbs.) was weighed and discarded. The pit was by far the deepest feature excavated, intruding on Level 3, Feature 5, and Feature 6. Plan and profile drawings were done and a south profile photograph taken.

Feature 2 contained by far the largest number of artifacts (N=591) constituting 58.2% of all artifacts recovered in Test Unit 1. It also contained the most diverse assemblage of items. The pit contained the largest amount of heavily corroded unidentified metal objects (N=201), faunal remains (N=78), slag (N=105) and was also the only feature to contain ceramics: small sherds of bone china, creamware, redware, whiteware, and coarse earthenware were all found in small amounts in (N=14) In addition to the ceramics, some of the other notable artifacts included personal items such as an unidentified piece of jewelry, a piece of woven ribbon, pencil lead, a .32 caliber cartridge, and a glass goblet base. Feature 2 contained the largest amount of bottle glass (N=15) in various colors including aqua, light aqua, colorless, amber/olive, and olive green. The pit also contained 111 pieces of various brick types, mostly droplet size, but some whole bricks and large chunks. The oldest artifact in Feature 2 was a small sherd of creamware (start date 1762) and a small piece of hand painted creamware (start date 1765). Unfortunately, none of the ceramics contained any identifiable maker's marks or designs. The latest start date pertained to the glass bottle pieces with fine lipping finish that set the TPQ for the Feature/Test Unit of 1880.

Feature 2 appears to be a refuse disposal pit, but its not known if this was what this pit was originally used for. Its depth seems to shallow to indicate a privy, as it is only 80 cm (apx. 2ft, 7in) and 86 cm wide. It also quite linear and long, although this does not obviate its use as a privy. Although only a portion of the pit was excavated, it's clear that the remainder of the depression running west-east is the additional length of the pit. This may have originally been a

cistern, root cellar, trash pit, or subfloor pit, although the artifacts recovered do not indicate a subfloor pit specifically tied to African-American cultural activity. The large amount of faunal remains and oyster shells, as well as the small amount of ceramics and bottle glass indicate activities of eating and drinking associated with this feature. But then there are also the preponderance of coal, slag, and corroded metal hardware, which link this feature to perhaps cooking and/or ironworking or simply the cellar's use as a storage space for coal. The architectural materials point to construction activities.



Above: From Left to right: Minie ball, animal tooth, and upholstery tack recovered from Level 1. **Below:** A few of the numerous heavily corroded, unidentifiable metal artifacts recovered from the test unit. Many of these are likely hardware





Top left: Clean troweling after completing Level 1, showing the distinct dark soil, the rectangular shape of Feature 2, and iron staining. **Top right:** Test unit area after removing bricks, prior to excavation of Level 1. **Middle right:** piece of bone found on surface after completing level 1. **Bottom right:** sifting through dark soil and large amounts of coal, found in Level 1 and Feature 2. **Bottom left:** profile of Feature 2, excavated to subsoil.

Top left and below: Numerous, heavily corroded artifacts were found in Feature 2. Many of these are likely nails and other hardware. **Top right:** Two distinct types of brick were also recovered in Feature 2, including handmade, and much wider brick, and narrower, dark red brick.





Top: assemblage of all test unit ceramics, recovered from Feature 2, including once small sherd of hand painted creamware, bone china, and one small sherd of redware, among others. **Bottom:** From left to right, unidentified jewelry, elastic ribbon, small glass bottle lip and neck, likely a pharmacy bottle, .32 caliber casing, and glass wine goblet base.





Feature 2
faunal
remains. **Top:**
clear butcher
marks are
present.
Bottom left:
small bones
from fowl or
rodents.
Bottom right:
larger sized
bones with
some joint
cavities
visible



Test Unit 1: Feature 2 Artifacts

Level	Number	Code	Color	Size	Notes	Description	Start	End
ft. 2	9	AC0120	Grey, red	small	small pieces only	Brick, handmade		
ft 2	6	AC0120	grey	large	Likely Savannah grey	Brick, handmade		
ft 2	4	AC0121	red	various	One whole brick, 2 sections, 1 chunk, 3 BAT	Brick, machine made		
ft 2	1	AC0199	orange	water drop size		Brick, unspecified		
ft 2	91	AC0199	various	small, tiny	dark red, red, orange, grey colored brick pieces	Brick, unspecified		
ft 2	5	AG0301	light aqua			Window glass, sized	1804	
ft 2	1	AR0108	white	large	large chunk	Mortar		
ft 2	1	CF0600	green		woven ribbon	Ribbon		
ft 2	1	ZM1299	unknown	round	heavily rusted			
ft 2	29	FM0105	ferrous	small	small metal straps, corroded	Strap		
ft 2	1	KC0110	white	base		Porcelain, bone china	1794	2009
ft 2	1	KC0110	white	rim		Porcelain, bone china	1794	2009
ft 2	6	KC0110	white	body	one sherd has a molded design	Porcelain, bone china	1794	2009
ft 2	1	KC0604	cream	body	flatwear	Creamware, plain	1762	1820
ft 2	1	KC0606	cream, blue	body	flatwear	Creamware, hand painted	1765	1810

ft 2	2	KC0700	white	body	flatwear	Whiteware, plain	1820	2009
ft 2	1	KC1296	tan	flake	high sheen; ridges	Coarse earthenware, lead glazed		
ft 2	1	KC1302	red	body		Redware, clear glazed, plain		
ft 2	5	KF0101	brown		sections of long bones; some cavities visible	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	2	KF0101	brown	flat	Some BM	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	1	KF0101	brown	T-shaped	spinal cord covering?	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	39	KF0101	brown	flakes/small chunks		Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	5	KF0101	brown	lobule	some long bone heads	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	5	KF0101	brown	small, elongated cylindrical	small animal bones	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	16	KF0101	brown	various	various sized pieces; some BM	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	5	KF0101	brown	small and flakes		Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	7	KF0104	white	normal	white, powdery, fragile; 4 shells, 3 pieces	Shell, oyster		
ft 2	1	KG0227	colorless	body	thin-walled	Bottle, paneled	1867	

ft 2	1	KG0232	colorless	finish and neck	pharma bottle; patent (hand) finished	Bottle, fine lipping tool finish	1880	1920
ft 2	1	KG0232	colorless	base sherd	no mold marks; handmade	Bottle, fine lipping tool finish	1880	1920
ft 2	1	KG0232	light aqua	body lip	flat front	Bottle, fine lipping tool finish	1880	1920
ft 2	2	KG0299	olive green	body		Bottle, amber/olive green glass		1900
ft 2	1	KG0299	Amber-olive	body	some base; bubbles present	Bottle, amber/olive green glass		1900
ft 2	4	KG0300	light aqua	body		Bottle, light aqua bottle glass	1800	1920
ft 2	1	KG0301	colorless	body		Bottle, colorless bottle glass	1870	
ft 2	3	KG0304	aqua	body		Bottle, aqua bottle glass	1800	1920
ft 2	1	KG0503	colorless	base	mold marks and some stem	Tableware, goblet base		
ft 2	1	MF0101	black and grey	small to tiny	some very black with high sheen; some grey	Coal		
ft 2	1	MF0104	dark brown	tiny	burned	Wood, unidentified		
ft 2	5	MF0104	brown	small	some pieces burned	Wood, unidentified		

ft 2	1	MM9901			possible nail; carbonized; heavily burned?	Iron fragment, unidentified		
ft 2	2	MM9903	brown		possible burn marks	Slag		
ft 2	12	MM9903		small	some burning	Slag		
ft 2	91	MM9903	multi	various		Slag		
ft 2	1	MP9901	off-white		corner piece w/ intact edges; 3D; only plastic in test unit found	Plastic, unidentified		
ft 2	1	MR0122	colorless		probable quartzite; multiple facets; not flake	Unmodified stone		
ft 2	1	PF0201		linear	pencil lead?	Pencil, part		
ft 2	1	PZ0104			plastic and metal pendant	Jewelry parts		
ft 2	1	RM0102	green	partial	possible .33; corroded w/ petina	Brass/copper cartridge	1814	
ft 2	2	ZC0201	terra cotta	base, body	terra cotta flower pot	Flower pot, ceramic		
ft 2	3	ZG0904	colorless	body		Glass lamp body		
ft 2	1	ZM1208		square		Iron flat strip		
ft 2	1	ZM1247	ferrous	small		Screw		
ft 2	2	ZM1299	ferrous	large, curved		Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	105	ZM1299	ferrous	small		Metal object, unidentified		

ft 2	1	ZM1299	ferrous	small		Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	35	ZM1299	ferrous	small		Metal object, unidentified		
Ft. 2	13	ZM1299	ferrous	small		Metal object, unidentified		
Ft. 2	4	ZM1299	ferrous	large		Metal object, unidentified		
Ft. 2	32	ZM1299	Ferrous	small		Metal object, unidentified		
Ft. 2	1	ZM1299				Metal object, unidentified		
Ft. 2	6	ZM1299	ferrous	small		Metal object, unidentified		
Ft. 2	4	ZR0302	Grey	Large,small		Slate, unidentified		

Level 3

Level 3 was overlain by Level 1 and intruded by Feature 2. It also overlies Levels 4, 5, & 6. This soil was excavated throughout the test pit, excepting the previously excavated Feature 2 area. Level 3 depths ranged from 2 to 7 cm. Level 3 soil was very compact and mottled, consisting of 10 YR 2/2, very dark brown sand and 2.5 Y 4/4, olive brown sand. There were also patches of Level 1 soil, 10 YR 2/1, black. Level 3 contained very few artifacts of a limited assemblage: only small brick pieces, unidentified heavily corroded metal objects, and coal were recovered (N=62). One kg (apx. 2.2 lbs.) of coal was weighed and discarded.

Feature 4

After completing the excavation of Level 3, very unusual soil patterns were uncovered, particularly in the southwest corner of the test unit. This area was treated as Feature 4. Feature 4 was overlain by Level 3 and excavated beginning at a NE depth of 18 cm and was excavated to a depth of 30 cm. Feature 4 soil was 10 YR 3/2, very dark grayish brown sand mottled with 10 YR

2/2, very dark brown, and 10 YR 5/2, grayish brown sand. This feature was almost completely sterile, containing only 1 heavily corroded, unidentifiable metal artifact. A plan drawing and photographs were taken of Feature 4.

Feature 5

Unusual stratigraphy also emerged in the remaining portion of the test unit, after the excavation of Level 3. Feature 5 was excavated beginning at a SW depth of 18 cm and a NW depth of 10 cm. Closing elevations were 35 cm SW and 30 cm NW. Feature 5 was overlain by Level 3, overlies subsoil, and was intruded by Feature 2. Although the stratigraphy in this Feature was incredibly complex, it was nearly sterile. Only a small amount of coal, brick, and slate were found (N=39) in very minute pieces. Feature 5 soil was extremely mottled, containing 10 YR 6/2, light brownish gray, 10 YR 4/6, dark yellowish brown, and 10 YR 6/3, pale brown sand. This feature's soil was along the surface of the test unit as well as the walls of Feature 2. One explanation for this is that Feature 2 was open for some length of time, and the exposed, sandy subsoil collapsed. This would explain the lack of artifacts as well as the strange mottling observed. A plan drawing was done, and plan photographs taken.

Features 6 & 7

Feature 6 was a small portion of the northeast corner of the test unit, overlain by Level 3, overlying subsoil, and intruded by Feature 2. The soil in this feature was 10 YR 7/3, very pale brown sand. Opening elevations for Feature 6 were 13 cm, and the feature was excavated to a depth of 26 cm below surface. Feature 6 was also nearly sterile, containing only small pieces of coal (N=27). A plan drawing and photographs were taken of Feature 6. Feature 7 was located opposite Feature 6, in the southeast corner of the test unit. Opening elevations were 10 cm NE and closing elevations were 60 cm NE and 72 cm SE. Feature 7 was overlain by Level 3. Although Feature 7 was another area containing unusual soil patterns, this feature was completely sterile.

As excavations continued and layers of soil were removed through Level 3 to Feature 7, the stratigraphy of Test Unit 1 became more and more puzzling. Soil mottling was reminiscent of animal print or giraffe-like patterns, which continued to emerge throughout the test unit. Excavation found these deeper soil levels to be sterile or nearly so. According to Laura Seifert via personal communication, these unusual patterns in the subsoil were also observed in the

subsoil of Madison Square at a similar depth of more than 6 feet below surface. Archaeologists made these observations during the 2008-2009 Savannah Under Fire project, and Seifert confirmed this by reviewing field photographs, which were not contained in the final report.



Above: Profile view of Test Unit 1, complete, showing the black soil of Feature 2 (pit) and the surrounding incredibly complex stratigraphy. **Below:** Angled view of Test Unit 1.





Plan View of Test Unit 1, complete, showing complex stratigraphy and odd soil patterns.

Artifacts Classification

Although the excavations at the Sorrel-Weed House were limited to a single test unit, the artifacts recovered spanned several categories in South's classification system (N=1016). Unfortunately, artifacts were not great in number, only as it pertained to the unidentified metal objects (N=217) coal (N=229 + 95 kg or apx. 209 lbs. weighed and discarded) and faunal remains (N=??). While this is the case, the copious amounts of coal and corroded metal, much of which is hardware such as straps and nails, may point to the use of the basement space for particular activities. However, further research will be needed in this area. As a merchant, Francis Sorrel would have had even greater access to a wide array of goods than the typical citizen living in a booming port city. However, the use of the basement by him or those who resided within his lot is called into question due to the absence of this building as late as 1871.²⁴² Further, a TPQ of 1880 lends support to the notion that the carriage house basement was not built until much later than the Sorrel's occupation. However, attempting to link any of the artifacts discovered to the goods Francis Sorrel sold may be a futile venture. Studies of urban archeological sites in comparison to goods sold by merchants shows little connection, as archaeological assemblages contain only a small amount of these goods.²⁴³

Kitchen Classification

Kitchen artifacts (N=141) accounted for 13.9% of the total assemblage of Test Unit 1. Nearly all of the artifacts from this category came from Feature 2. Items in this category included ceramics, faunal remains, bottle glass, and a single piece of tableware. Faunal remains constituted the largest subcategory (N=110) of kitchen artifacts, which largely consisted of bones. This category set the TPQ for the test unit (=1880).

Kitchen Glass

Glass constituted the next most numerous subcategory (N=17), and with the exception of one piece of tableware (a base to a goblet) all of the artifacts were pieces of bottle glass (N=16). The glass recovered accounted for 12% of all kitchen artifacts, and a mere 1.7% of the entire

²⁴² See footnotes 163-165.

²⁴³ Martha Zierden, "A Trans-Atlantic Merchant's House in Charleston: Archaeological Exploration of Refinement and Subsistence in an Urban Setting," *Historical Archaeology* 33, no. 3 (1999): 76, JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616726>.

assemblage of Test Unit 1. This subcategory was used to establish a TPQ for the test unit of 1880, based on the start date for bottles with a fine lipping tool finish. No completely intact bottles were discovered. The largest intact piece consisted of the partial neck and lip with a fine lipping tool finish, possibly a pharmacy bottle of some sort. Another very small piece contained panels. No manufacturer's marks were present on any of the glass found. Although the bottle glass discovered set a later TPQ for the test unit (=1880), aqua and light aqua pieces of bottle glass (N=8) with a start date of 1800 were also recovered. Olive and amber olive glass sherds were also recovered (N=3). Although there is not a designated start date for this color glass, these colors were in heavy use in the 19th century and basically disappear in the 20th, except in the case of wine, liquor, and champagne bottles.²⁴⁴

A single piece of tableware glass was found; the base of a goblet. The base contained mold marks, dating it to the late 19th to early 20th century. This was the most whole piece of glass recovered in this category and the only piece that may be able to be identified with a particular manufacturer. Further research will be required.



Close-up of the base of the wine goblet uncovered from Feature 2. mold marks and the bottom of the stem are present.

²⁴⁴ Society for Historical Archaeology, "Bottle/Glass Colors," Bill Lindsey, 2016, accessed April 22, 2017, <https://sha.org/bottle/colors.htm#Olive%20Greens/Ambers>.

Ceramics

Ceramics (N=14) constituted the third largest subcategory in kitchen artifacts and the oldest date in the test unit assemblage. Ceramics constituted a mere 1.4% of all artifacts recovered from Test Unit 1, and 10% of all kitchen artifacts. Unfortunately, the ceramics recovered were very small sherds, and contained no manufacturer or other identifying marks. Ceramic types recovered include bone china porcelain (N=8), creamware (N=2), whiteware (N=2), lead-glazed coarse earthenware (N=1) and clear-glazed redware (N=1). The Mean Ceramic Date (MCD) for the ceramic assemblage could not be calculated as several types do not have a known median manufacture date. Such a calculation is also necessarily limited by the small sample size recovered. The oldest type of ceramic recovered (start date=1762) according to South's classification consisted of a single sherd of plain creamware, containing a small blue paint mark. While South does not provide dates for earthenware or redware, Kathleen Deagan estimates the period of manufacture for lead-glazed coarse earthenware to be 1490-1900, and 1500-1750 for clear-glazed redware, although redware is usually identified with the 18th century.²⁴⁵

Faunal Remains

Faunal remains were by far the largest subcategory of kitchen artifacts (N=110), constituting 78% of the entire category and 10.8 % of all artifacts recovered in Test Unit 1. Faunal remains consisted almost entirely of bones, but also included a single animal tooth and oyster shells (N=7). The bones recovered consisted of large and small bones, indicating the consumption of domestic animals such as pig and cow, as well as fowl. Some of the bones contained clear butcher marks. The articulation points or cavities on some of these bones were very well preserved, but the assemblage did not appear to contain any whole bones. A formal faunal analysis, including calculations such as the Minimum Number of Individual Animals (MNI) or the Number of Individual Specimens (NISP) was not conducted. Although the total of this category is a substantial number, many of the pieces of bone were very small or very fragmented pieces.

²⁴⁵ Digital Type Collections: Ceramics, *Historical Archaeology at the Florida Museum of Natural History* Deagan, 2002, accessed April 22, 2017, https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/histarch/gallery_types/type_list.asp; Elliott, *Deep, Dirty Secrets*, 102.

Architecture Classification

Architectural artifacts (N=191) accounted for 18.8% of all artifacts recovered from Test Unit 1. However, it should be noted that of the large amount of heavily corroded, unidentified metal artifacts (N=201) many of these are likely pieces of hardware, and should at a later date be subjected to X-Ray analysis to determine their exact identity. Architectural items (not including unidentified hardware) consisted of brick, window glass, and unidentifiable nail fragments, and mortar. Brick (N=166) was by far the largest subcategory of architectural artifacts; it accounts for 87% of the entire assemblage. An additional 2 kg (4.4 lbs) was weighed and discarded. Brick types consisted of handmade, machine made, and unspecified. Brick colors included gray, red, and orange. Only one whole brick was kept, likely a Savannah Grey. Another half portion of a much different brick was also kept, a red and much narrower type of brick than the Savannah Grey. Other brick bats were recovered and kept of both types. While brick constitutes almost the entire architecture assemblage, a majority of the brick pieces (n=133) were a centimeter or smaller.

Light aqua window glass also formed a part of the architectural assemblage, though in a very small amount (N=7). Window glass constituted only 3.7 % of the Architecture category and consisted of very small pieces. Equally small was the amount of mortar recovered (N=3) also in very small pieces. Unidentifiable nail fragments (N=17) were also recovered.

Clothing and Personal Items Classification

Test Unit 1 was almost completely sterile of clothing and personal items (N=3). A piece of pencil lead, woven ribbon, and a broach or pendant-like object constituted the entire collection in this category. Although this is a small collection, the latter two of these items are among the most notable artifacts collected from the Test Unit. No dates could be associated with these artifacts, but the pendant or broach-like object is telling: it contains either a fiber glass or plastic overlay in its center, thereby placing it somewhere in the 20th century. More research on this object is critical, as it could make the TPQ of Feature 2 several decades younger. The object is also composed of metal and what appears to be cloth. Two ovals of metal are placed one over the other perpendicularly, with the one on top containing the overlay oriented vertically. Underneath the fiberglass or plastic covering appears to be a cloth material. On the back of the object, located on the metal oval placed horizontally, there are two small eye hooks on each side. The

object has an overall greenish color, caused by the patina formed on its surface. This signals that the ovals are made primarily of copper or brass.



Top Left: overhead view of the pendant or broach, face up, showing fiber glass or plastic overlay and fabric contained underneath. **Bottom left:** overhead view, showing the back of the object with heavy patina and eye hook. **Top Right:** angled view, showing the heavy patina and crossways alignment of the two copper ovals. **Bottom Right:** the small piece of woven ribbon recovered, showing green, patina like staining similar to pendant.

A Photograph of Aminta Sorrel Mackall (1823-1904) the daughter of Francis Sorrel, shows her wearing a broach very similar to the shape of the one recovered. Aminta lived at both 6 West Harris Street and later as an adult at 12 West Harris street next door, also built by Francis Sorrel. Despite the resemblance, broaches were extremely common and it would be incredible if this were the same one worn by Aminta in the photo.



AMINTA SORREL MACKALL

Photo of Aminta Sorrel Mackall from *A Son's Recollections of his Father*, wrote by Aminta's son William W. Mackall, Jr. The brooch in the photo is of the same shape as the broach-like object recovered from Feature 2. Although the one recovered is likely not the one in this photo, it helps to perhaps identify artifact and how it was worn. Photo: William W. Mackall, *A Son's Recollections of his Father*, (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1930), 82.

Arms Classification

Two artifacts were recovered in the category of arms: a .32 caliber casing and a Minie ball. The former of these was determined to be brass or copper by the appearance of patina, giving it a start date of 1814. The mini ball has a start date of 1852. It's not unusual that such a

small amount of arms artifacts were recovered. The shooting of guns in the Savannah was discouraged by a city ordinance imposed in 1817, which levied fines for free whites and lashings for persons of color for shooting a gun.²⁴⁶ What is curious is that these artifacts were found in the basement of the carriage house. Perhaps in order to conceal the sound of a gunshot, a weapon or weapons was purposefully discharged below ground.

Activities Classification

Activities constituted 23% of the assemblage of Test Unit 1 and contained the second largest collection of artifacts (N=239), and nearly the entire assemblage consisted of metal hardware and unidentifiable, heavily corroded metal objects. Other artifacts recovered included slate (N=5), lamp glass (N=5), a flower pot sherd (N=2), and a large collection of metal objects (N=231), largely consisting of heavily corroded unidentifiable items that are likely hardware. Although a few screws and iron straps were identified, many of these are likely among the unidentified metal objects along with other hardware. The small amount of slate recovered may indicate that the floor of the basement once consisted of this material. Alternatively, these fragments may be from the main house's basement floor, which was originally slate, according the Sorrel-Weed House staff.

Miscellaneous Classification

Miscellaneous artifacts accounted for the largest category of artifacts (N=414) largely because of the Test Unit being so replete with coal. In addition to the 94 kg (207 lbs.) of coal that was weighed and discarded, an additional 229 large and small pieces of coal were found. The coal that was kept (N=229) constituted 55% of all miscellaneous artifacts. Slag was also found in large amounts in the Test Unit (N=108). Some very small pieces of wood, some of which were singed (N=18) were also among artifacts in this category. Miscellaneous items also included a single piece of masking tape and a single small piece of plastic. More than any other artifacts recovered, this points to the very recent disturbance of the area included in Test Unit 1. The masking tape was discovered in Level 1, on the surface of Feature 2 just underneath the brick floor, indicating that Feature 2 was not recently impacted by activity. The small piece of plastic found in Feature 2 places this feature at a later date, in line with a TPQ of 1880. Unfortunately

²⁴⁶ Elliott, *Deep, Dirty Secrets*, 110.

the piece of plastic is extremely small with no identifying features, making a more exact date very difficult.

Kitchen Classification

Level	Number	Code	Color	Size	Notes	Description	Start	End
ft 2	1	KC0110	white	base		Porcelain, bone china	1794	2009
ft 2	1	KC0110	white	rim		Porcelain, bone china	1794	2009
ft 2	6	KC0110	white	body	one sherd has a molded design	Porcelain, bone china	1794	2009
ft 2	1	KC0604	cream	body	flatwear	Creamware, plain	1762	1820
ft 2	1	KC0606	cream, blue	body	flatwear	Creamware, hand painted	1765	1810
ft 2	2	KC0700	white	body	flatwear	Whiteware, plain	1820	2009
ft 2	1	KC1296	tan	flake	high sheen; ridges	Coarse earthenware, lead glazed		
ft 2	1	KC1302	red	body		Redware, clear glazed, plain		
ft 2	5	KF0101	brown		sections of longbones;	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	2	KF0101	brown	flat	ribs? Some BM	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	1	KF0101	brown	T-shaped	spinal cord covering?	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	39	KF0101	brown	flakes/small chunks		Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	5	KF0101	brown	lobule	some long bone heads	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	5	KF0101	brown	small, elongated cylindrical	small animal bones; fowl? Rodent?	Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	16	KF0101	brown	various	various sized pieces; some BM	Bone, unidentified		
1	24	KF0101	brown			Bone, unidentified		
ft 2	5	KF0101	brown	small and flakes		Bone, unidentified		
1	1	KF0102	white	partial		Animal teeth		

ft 2	7	KF0104	white	normal	white, powdery, fragile; 4 shells, 3 pieces	Shell, oyster		
ft 2	1	KG0227	colorless	body	thin-walled	Bottle, paneled	1867	
ft 2	1	KG0232	colorless	finish and neck	pharma bottle; patent (hand) finished	Bottle, fine lipping tool finish	1880	1920
ft 2	1	KG0232	colorless	base sherd	no mold marks; handmade?	Bottle, fine lipping tool finish	1880	1920
ft 2	1	KG0232	light aqua	body lip	flat front	Bottle, fine lipping tool finish	1880	1920
ft 2	2	KG0299	olive green	body		Bottle, amber/olive green glass		1900
ft 2	1	KG0299	amber olive	body	some base; bubbles present	Bottle, amber/olive green glass		1900
ft 2	4	KG0300	light aqua	body		Bottle, light aqua bottle glass	1800	1920
ft 2	1	KG0301	colorless	body		Bottle, colorless bottle glass	1870	
1	1	KG0304	aqua	body		Bottle, aqua bottle glass	1800	1920
ft 2	3	KG0304	aqua	body		Bottle, aqua bottle glass	1800	1920
ft 2	1	KG0503	colorless	base	mold marks and some stem	Tableware, goblet base		

Architecture Classification

Level	Number	Code	Color	Size	Notes	Description	Start	End
1	9	AC0120	Red, orange		tiny fragments	Brick, handmade		
ft 2	9	AC0120	Grey, red, orange	small	small pieces only	Brick, handmade		
ft 2	6	AC0120	grey	large	Likely Savannah	Brick, handmade		

					grey; large BAT portions			
ft 2	4	AC0121	red	various	One whole brick, BAT	Brick, machine made		
3	42	AC0199	various	various	small pieces	Brick, unspecified		
ft 2	1	AC0199	red-orange	water drop size		Brick, unspecified		
wall fall ft 2	2	AC0199	Grey, red			Brick, unspecified		
ft 5	2	AC0199	Red, grey	tiny		Brick, unspecified		
ft 2	91	AC0199	various	tiny to small pieces		Brick, unspecified		
ft 2	5	AG0301	light aqua			Window glass, sized	1804	
1	2	AG0301	light aqua		one very thick, one thin	Window glass, sized	1804	
1	15	AM1507			heavily corroded,	Nail fragment, unidentified		
1	2	AR0108	tan		sand mortar	Mortar		
ft 2	1	AR0108	dirty white	large	large chunck	Mortar		

Clothing and Personal Items Classification

Level	Number	Code	Color	Size	Notes	Description	Start	End
Ft 2	1	CF0600	patina		woven ribbon	woven ribbon		
Ft 2	1	PF0201			pencil lead?	pencil lead		
Ft 2	1	PZ0104	Patina, fabric is beige		Copper or brass	plastic and metal pendant		

Arms Classification

Level	Number	Code	Color	Size	Notes	Description	Start	End
Ft. 2	1	RM0102	Patina, gray	partial	.33;	Brass/copper cartridge	1814	
1	1	RM0104	gray	whole		Mini ball	1852	

Activities Classification

Level	Number	Code	Color	Size	Notes	Description	Start	End
3	3	ZM1299	ferrous	rounded	heavily rusted	metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	1	ZM1299	unknown	round	heavily rusted;	metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	2	ZC0201	terra cotta	base, body	terra cotta flower pot	Flower pot, ceramic		
ft 2	3	ZG0904	colorless	body		Glass lamp body		
wall clean-up pit	1	ZG0904	colorless	tiny	curved, thin, rectangular strip	Glass lamp body		
1	1	ZG0904	colorless	body		Glass lamp body		
ft 2	1	ZM1208		square	heavily rusted; concentric puncture	Iron flat strip		
1	3	ZM1208			heavily corroded,	Iron flat strip		
1	1	ZM1247				Screw		
ft 2	1	ZM1247	ferrous	small	threads visible; heavily corroded	Screw		
ft 4	1	ZM1299	ferrous		heavily corroded with coal	Metal object, unidentified		
3	17	ZM1299	ferrous			Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	2	ZM1299	ferrous	large, curved	curved, handle pieces; heavily corroded	Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	105	ZM1299	ferrous	small	heavily corroded with coal	Metal object, unidentified		

ft 2	1	ZM1299	ferrous	small	probably staple; heavily corroded	Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	35	ZM1299	ferrous	small	small nails/screws/other heavily corroded	Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	13	ZM1299	ferrous	small	medium sized nails or screws? heavily corroded	Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	4	ZM1299	ferrous	large	large metal bolts or screws? Heavily corroded	Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	32	ZM1299	ferrous	small	metal flakes; heavily corroded	Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	1	ZM1299			heavily corroded; possible edge portion	Metal object, unidentified		
ft 2	6	ZM1299	ferrous	small	sqaure nails? Heavily corroded	Metal object, unidentified		
ft 5	1	ZR0302	grey	tiny	tiny flake	Slate, unidentified		
ft 2	4	ZR0302	grey	large and small	one large, thin, linear piece and small pieces	Slate, unidentified		

Miscellaneous Classification

Level	Number	Code	Color	Size	Notes	Description	Start	End
ft 5	36	MF0101	black	tiny		Coal		
1	3	MF0101	black			Coal		
wall clean-up pit	2	MF0101	black	small		Coal		
wall fall								
ft 2	104	MF0101	black	tiny		Coal		
ft 6	27	MF0101	black			Coal		
1	23	MF0101	dark gray		hard, dull	Coal		
1	3	MF0101	black		coal with iron concretion	Coal		
1	30	MF0101	black		hard, shiny	Coal		
ft 2	1	MF0101	black and grey	small to tiny	some very black with	Coal		

					high sheen; some grey			
1	34	MF0103				Cinder/clinker		
ft 2	1	MF0104	dark brown	tiny	burned	Wood, unidentified		
ft 2	5	MF0104	brown		some pieces burned	Wood, unidentified		
1	12	MF0104	brown		some has bark	Wood, unidentified		
ft 2	1	MM9901			possible nail; carbonized;	Iron fragment, unidentified		
1	17	MM9901			heavily corroded and fragmented	Iron fragment, unidentified		
ft 2	2	MM9903	multi		burn marks	Slag		
wall clean- up pit	3	MM9903	multi			Slag		
ft 2	12	MM9903			some burning	Slag		
ft 2	91	MM9903	multi			Slag		
ft 2	1	MP9901	off- white		corner piece	Plastic, unidentified		
ft 2	1	MR0122	colorless		probable quartzite	Unmodified stone		
1	1	MZ0102			masking tape	Modern miscellaneous		

Interpretation

The results of Test Unit 1, the first phase in archaeological studies at the Sorrel-Weed House, uncovered a diverse assemblage of artifacts from numerous categories within South's cataloging system. Although some of these artifacts were not great in number, they still provide insight into what may have been happening in the basement of the carriage house. Most importantly, the excavations revealed the cause of the depression in the basement floor to be a linear, narrow, and long pit, utilized for trash disposal, identified as Feature 2. A TPQ of 1880 was established, although some artifacts dated to the mid-eighteenth century, potentially indicating earlier occupation of the site or curation effect. There were no human remains found

or any artifacts to interpret this feature as a subfloor pit indicative of African-American culture. Feature 2 may have originally been created for other means besides trash disposal, particularly since it is of a distinctive shape. Two possibilities include its use as a root cellar or as privies. The pit's location beneath the floor of a basement would have made it ideal for preserving foods against Savannah's hot and humid climate. In the same light, the placement of privies in a basement would have also been ideal in helping to deter the sanitation issues rampant in Savannah until plumbing and organized sanitation became available. The soil in the pit, dark, and organic, points to the nightsoil often found in privies. However, the large amount of coal it also contained would have obviated the full consistency of the nightsoil, as it appears to have done. Coal and ash were used in the cleaning of privies, making the combination of these factors particularly telling. But Feature 2 is very shallow for a privy. However, it is possible that the privy predates the basement. The excavation of the basement removed the vast majority of a very deep (approximately 7 feet) privy feature, leaving the bottom 80 cm intact. This could account for the dates of the artifacts within the privy, as the last use and filling of the privy would occur contemporaneously with the building construction ca. 1880.

The excavations in Test Unit 1 revealed that the soil beneath the basement floor was replete with coal, heavily corroded metal objects and hardware, slag, and faunal remains. By far, coal outnumbered all other artifacts. So the question is, why was there so much coal buried underneath the floor? The oral tradition of the home indicates that the basement was used for coal storage, a common occurrence that still takes place today. If this is the case, one answer to the question of how much coal ended up underground may be that at some point when the floor was bricked over, rather than bringing all of the coal out of the basement, it was simply buried underneath the floor. Another possible explanation is that cooking was taking place in the basement. This helps to explain the high number of faunal remains, which indicate that eating was taking place here. But then there is also the abundance of heavily corroded metal objects, many of which are straps, nails, and other hardware, but will need further testing to be identified. This seems to signal that perhaps iron working was taking place in the basement, a process which could also involve coal and slag. Coal is used in the smelting process and slag is the byproduct. However, the slag could also simply have come from the burning of coal for other purposes, such as cooking and heating. The smaller amount of architectural artifacts points to the pits use in the discarding of materials during construction and/or demolition.

While it has long been assumed that the carriage house on the Sorrel-Weed House lot was erected around the time of the home's completion in the 1840s, research belies this idea. The carriage house does not appear on maps considered credible drawn in 1853 and 1871. By 1888, the carriage house or other detached buildings were present at the back of the Sorrel-Weed lot, though an earlier date than this cannot be verified. The TPQ for the test unit seems to comply with this later date of erection, although the artifact assemblage did contain items from the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth. Among these, small pieces of creamware, earthenware, and redware were particularly telling. The mix of older and newer artifacts may point to another possibility. Francis Sorrel may have originally built a cellar at the back of his lot, in the location of the current basement, and the carriage house now sitting above it may have been erected much later. Cellars for the storage of coal and to preserve food were common.

The limited number of personal items, ceramics, and artifacts associated with activities do not provide much in the way to interpret any new details about the Sorrels or their bondpeople. Formal analysis of the faunal remains and hardware have the potential to provide insight into the diet of the Sorrels and their slaves, as well as the activities that may have been taking place in the cellar or carriage house basement. Although only a few small sherds of ceramics were found, these span utilitarian to finer types of ceramic such as bone china and whiteware. This may indicate ceramics used by the Sorrels and their slaves, though such a small sample size prevents a sound analysis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion of Phase I of archaeological studies at the Sorrel-Weed House provides answers to the projects original research questions as follows:

What is causing the depression in the basement floor of the carriage house?

The depression is caused by a long, narrow, linear pit, used for trash disposal at different times during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

If the depression is caused by human remains, who is this person? How did they die? Do these remains corroborate the oral tradition about the Sorrel Family?

The Depression was not caused by human remains. The oral tradition about the Sorrel family as it concerns the burial of a slave in the carriage house basement cannot be corroborated thus far.

Does archaeological evidence or research provide support for the murder-suicide story surrounding the Sorrel family?

Research uncovered that a slave named Molly owned by Francis Sorrel did exist. She traveled to New York City in 1857 and there is no record of her returning. Proof that a carriage house existed at the time of this slave's death and the death of Matilda Sorrel could not be found at this time.

Is the depression the result of a subfloor pit or some other subterranean feature?

The pit was clearly used for trash disposal, but may have originally been created for use as a root cellar or privy.

Did slaves live and work in the carriage house?

This was a common occurrence, but without being able to verify the building's existence until 1888 makes this an impossibility.

What do the artifacts imply about how the carriage house basement was used?

The large amount of faunal remains indicates that eating was taking place here, and in conjunction with the coal, perhaps cooking as well. The large amount of metal artifacts may point to blacksmithing or other activities requiring hardware.

What do the results of the excavation imply about urban slavery and/or the lives of the slaves who lived and worked at the Sorrel-Weed home?

This question remains inconclusive. Future analysis of the faunal remains recovered may shed light on diet.

Do the artifacts recovered provide any information about the Sorrel family and their lives?

This question remains relatively inconclusive. The large amount of coal, slag, and metal may point to the possibility that Francis Sorrel was running a blacksmithing operation in the basement. Analysis of faunal remains may indicate facts about the Sorrel's diet.

Do the artifacts provide any insight about life in the urban south?

Analysis of the Faunal remains may provide additional information about diet, and analysis of the metal objects may uncover activities that took place in basements. These are future areas of research.

Recommendations

- 1) Complete excavation of the remaining portion of the pit in the carriage house basement.
- 2) Formal analysis of the faunal remains and metal artifacts recovered from Test Unit 1.
- 3) Future phases of archaeological studies at the Sorrel-Weed House to uncover original locations of buildings and other artifacts/features.
- 4) Locating the descendants of the slaves owned by Francis Sorrel.
- 5) A close reading of the deed record located at the Chatham County Superior Court regarding Francis Sorrel's estate which he put into trust in 1844.
- 6) Further research into the diaries, letters, memoirs, etc. of the friends of the Sorrels.

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