Spatial Variation and Activity Areas at Monticello's Site 8

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1. African-American Yards

2. Context

Thomas Jefferson's Monticello Plantation was located in the Virginia Piedmont. Originally a tobacco plantation, Jefferson switched to a grainfield on wheat farming in the 1770s. Site 8 is located near the headquarters of enslaved rice plantaion houses and involved many African American families and communities.

3. Slaves' Houses

Slaves' dwellings often had sub-terranean pits that were used for trash disposal. These sub-terranean pits were likely the locations of trash pits that were just below the current ground level. Sub-terranean pits were part of the process of trash disposal on Site 8.

4. Activity Areas Cross-Culturally

Trash disposal across activity areas is well-documented across cultures. Primary and secondary refuse often surround activity areas (Blindfold, top left). Areas of high artifact density can indicate occupation zones (O'Connell, at right), but specific classes of artifacts, including larger stones and particularly money or elongated items (O'Connell, top right), can define areas outside the outer refuse zone.

5. Quantifying Site Maintenance

Artifact size can be used as an indicator of site maintenance. Wardleware, as shown in the site's artifacts, are often found in household areas and can be indicative of household activities. The size of the artifact can be used as a way to measure the frequency of trash disposal in a particular area.

6. Site 8 Activity Areas

The ASI formula can be applied to individual artifact classes such as wine bottle glass, or to aggregated categories such as refined earthenware, or all historic ceramics. The resulting ASI values from across the site can be used to produce a distribution map identifying maintained spaces and secondary refuse aggregates. The contour maps made from ASI values are compared with distribution maps of the same artifact classes by count and weight.

7. Households Defined

The ASI supports an interpretation of a yard or general activity area on Site 8. General activity areas include courtyard spaces used for small gardens, the production and maintenance of tools, raising poultry, and for social activities. The area on Site 8 also allows us to examine the movement of the space over time. The site's broad field area existed until the late 18th century, when the land was used for small gardens and for raising poultry. The site's broad field area was used for large garden plots, poultry raising, and for social activities. The area was also used for the production of tools and for small gardens.