Whose Trash is This? Unraveling Ethnostratigraphy on Monticello Mountain

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Introduction

From 1768 to 1836, the Monticello Mountain site was the center of a bustling plantation where members of Thomas Jefferson’s household, farm-workers, and slaves interacted. In the eastern kitchen yard, a long Jefferson-period occupation, combined with the presence of several distinct social groups and continuous landscape manipulation for over 238 years, results in a stratigraphically complex assembly.

The Features

Dry Wall
- 158 ft x 43 ft
- Close dry head storage
- Construction of lowest, 14 in. thick limestone wall
- Ditch, c. 1770
- Vertical line from basement
- Base of kitchen yard under gravel

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Harris Matrix

A Harris Matrix is a diagram that illustrates stratigraphic relationships between deposits. Excavation records, diaries, and photographs were used to establish features, stratigraphic groups, and stratigraphic relationships, which were then interpreted into six strata. These features groups, the assemblage, and CA, are identified on the Harris Matrix.

Correspondence Analysis

Harris Matrix: Correspondence Analysis is a statistical method that visualizes patterns that are otherwise difficult to discern. Analysing numerous variables, CA graphs identify similar patterns that are not visible.

Potential Deposit Sources

Household
- Clay tile and native assemblages are found in the kitchen yard
- The dry well contains 9,000 items, including
  - Pottery
  - Rare Jeffersonian documents
  - Baskets, buttons, brushes, tobacco pipes

Construction
- These deposits likely originate from
  - The dry well
  - Pottery
  - Stacks of electric wires and conduits

Conclusions

Relationship to Mulberry Row
- A more detailed analysis of deposition patterns from the Dry Wall
- The presence of these kitchen yard items exemplifies a long period of landscape rearrangement and monumental activity

Final Thoughts
- The study of these kitchen yard items points to a possible architectural plan and landscape configuration that were later adopted by the landscape improvements made by Jefferson.

References

Accesses

Dating the Harris Matrix: Robert H. Smith
- Special thanks to: Kevin Doherty, Phoebe Noonan, Chris Garlock, Char Mooney, Erin Mooney, Jane Sauer, and Derek Williams.