

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS AT THE CASTALIAN SPRINGS, TENNESSEE,  
HISTORIC SITE

by

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Including a report on:

TREE RING RESEARCH AT CASTALIAN SPRINGS NATIONAL  
HISTORIC LANDMARK

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June 1975

The Castalian Springs archaeology project, including the preparation of this report, has been funded with the assistance of a matching grant-in-aid from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Federal Grant No. 47-73-00022.

## INTRODUCTION

In planning for the development of the Castalian Springs site it was recognized that archaeological investigations should be made prior to any modification of the existing features (James Franklin 1974: 21). A thorough historical study of the site was also needed, and this was undertaken by Walter T. Durham. His report and historical base map (Durham 1975) were submitted to the Tennessee Historical Commission in March of this year. This document became the primary historical source used during all phases of the Castalian Springs archaeology project. Because of its existence, no lengthy historical section has been included in this archaeological assessment.

The Castalian Springs historic site, located in eastern Summer County, Tennessee (Fig. 1), centers around the early nineteenth-century structure known as Wynnewood (Fig. 2), now a Registered National Historic Landmark. It is part of what was once a 640-acre North Carolina land grant made to Isaac Bledsoe shortly after 1789. In 1797 (one year after Tennessee became a state), 320 acres of this land were purchased by James Winchester, builder of the nearby mansion known as Cragfont. After Winchester's death, the property was obtained, in 1829, by his son-in-law, Colonel Alfred Royal Wynne. A. R. Wynne lived until 1893 and until recent years over 300 acres of this property remained in the Wynne family (Fig. 1). In 1971, A. R. Wynne's grandson, George Winchester Wynne, conveyed the Wynnewood house and grounds to the state of Tennessee for preservation as an historic site.

The present state-owned property consists of 21.7 acres, including two recently acquired tracts to the east and north. This includes at least a portion of the late prehistoric Castalian Springs Indian site (state site survey # 40-SU-3). This seems to be a pure Mississippian Stage site, dating to what Willey (1966: 251)

### Slave Cabin # 1

This cabin site was mapped on the basis of surface contours, and the wall lines shown in Figure 3 are purely conjectural. The top of a chimney base on the west side is fairly distinct on the surface, and a small mound in a low spot on the east seems to be another chimney fall belonging to the same structure. Its position at a right angle to what seems to have been a row of smaller cabins extending up the hill (south) is suggestive of some special function. It is certainly worthy of much archaeological work and was not tested in 1975 simply because cabin sites 2 and 3 appeared to be in somewhat greater danger of being destroyed.

### Slave Cabin # 2

This cabin site produced some of the most interesting archaeological remains found during the 1975 project. Before excavation, the top of a chimney base (labeled Feature 7) was slightly protruding above ground. This was examined with an excavation trench 1 m wide by 4 m long ( $E\frac{1}{2}$  of square 250N298E and  $E\frac{1}{2}$  of square 248N298E) and by clearing the humic layer from the east top of this feature (Fig. 29).

The limestone chimney base is two courses thick and measures 2.30 m (7.5 feet) east-west by 1.20 m (3.9 feet) north-south. It is u-shaped and contained the remnants of a much disturbed hearth in its center. On its south side it abuts a limestone foundation (Fig. 31). Several chunks of sandy-lime mortar were found which seem to be chinking, and one of them has a clear log impression. We are reasonably certain this was a log cabin. It evidently had a wooden floor, and a majority of the artifacts found were part of a deposit of soil and debris which had accumulated under the floor (southern H in Fig. 31). Also in this fill were 52 cut nails which still have wood fibers (cedar ?) adhering to them. We suspect these were

## Slave cabin #2

and kaolin. The Rockingham-glazed specimen (Fig. 34a) and one kaolin example (Fig. 34b) are human figurehead pipes. The latter is especially interesting in that it bears the inscriptions "F M PIERCE" and "PRESIDENT" on opposite sides of the shank. Short-stem clay pipes were very common throughout the nineteenth century (Smith 1974a: 50) and are often difficult to specifically date. This one, however, must have been made during the years 1852 to 1857 and was probably made in 1852. According to Freidel (1966: 89), Franklin Pierce, as the "dark horse" nominee of 1852, used a number of campaign gimmicks such as brass medals, handkerchiefs, and posters to answer the question, "Who is Frank Pierce?" Inexpensive clay pipes can probably be added to Freidel's list.

As compared to other areas of the main site, fragments of glass associated with slave cabin # 2 (Table 11) were rather scarce below zone I. This probably relates, at least in part, to the fact that slaves were not often permitted the use of alcoholic beverages, the containers for which contributed to the abundance of glass elsewhere on the site.

Not included in Table 11 are three glass beads found in zone III south of Feature 7. The largest (Fig. 34h) is a translucent royal blue faceted bead with a maximum diameter of 9 mm. A smaller faceted bead (Fig. 34i) is 6.5 mm in diameter. It has an outer layer of translucent blue glass and an inner layer that is sky blue. One other translucent royal blue bead (Fig. 34j) was made by the mandrel-wound process and measures 7.5 mm in maximum diameter. These are very similar to specimens 11, 12, and 46 in Good (1972: 105-112). A blue hexagonal bead was associated with the Georgia slave cabin described by Ascher and Fairbanks (1971: 8). In addition, several similar specimens were recently found at

hept.

the Hermitage site (Smith 1974: 23-24) in the ruins of a structure which we now believe was in one of the areas used as slave quarters from the 1820's to the 1850's.

A rather large number of buttons came from slave cabin # 2 (Table 9). Most common are five-hole bone buttons averaging 15.2 mm in diameter (Fig. 34e). Four-hole bone, averaging 14 mm, and four-hole milk glass buttons (Fig. 34c), averaging 9.4 mm, are also common. One-hole bone discs (Fig. 34f), two-hole milk glass, two-hole shell, four-hole stamped brass (Fig. 34d), faceted opaque glass, and four-hole fiber filled metal buttons are represented by only one or two specimens each. Measurements for these are 17, 9.6, 16.4, 14.6, 12, and 14 mm respectively. The brass button (Fig. 34d) from zone II is stamped "S. J. HOLMES & CO." "EXTRA." The others are early to mid nineteenth-century types which have been described by South (1964 and 1974b).

Still other items from this cabin site should be mentioned. They are by zones:

Zone I. An assortment of early twentieth-century tool-shed-like debris. We learned from G. William Wynne that a no longer extant shed had inclosed the Feature 7 chimney fall during the first half of the present century.

Zone II. Other items found include part of a bone handle. Other metal items include numerous pieces of tinware, a .22 calibre cartridge, 2 small iron buckles, and a brass tube stamped "S L S Co. LONDON."

Zone III North of Feature 7. No "other items" found except for about 400 gm of burned clay.

Zone III South of Feature 7. Other items include a small clay marble, a piece of polished bone handle, a piece of charred corn cob, a charred peach

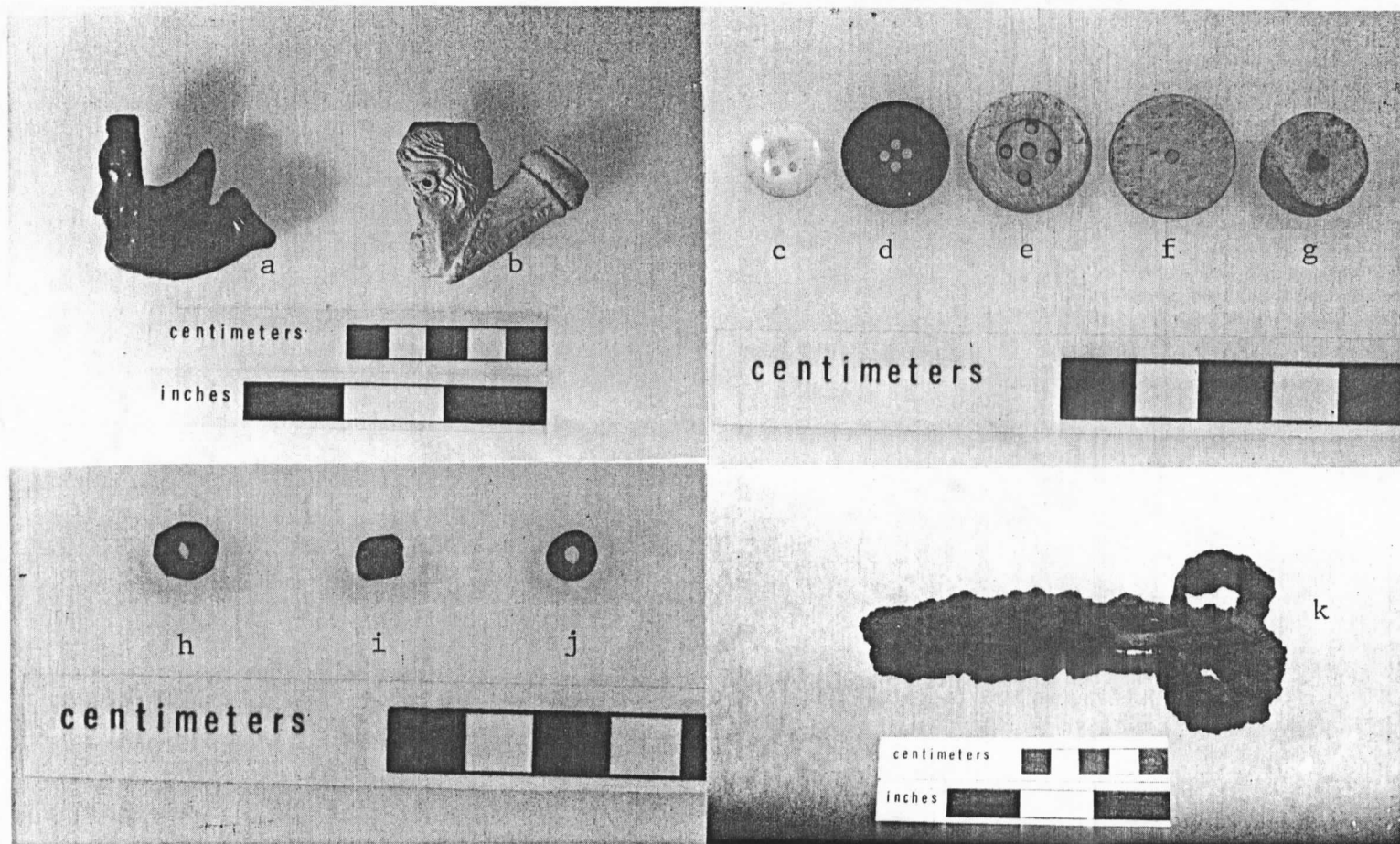


Figure 34. Slave cabin number 2 artifacts: a-b. figurehead tobacco pipes; c-g. button types; h-j. glass beads; k. scissors. All items are from slave cabin number 2 except "g" from the school site.



base is probably its back side. The conjectural lines shown in Figure 3 are based on this assumption.

The total collection of artifacts from this cabin site is presented in Table 12. Though too small a sample to permit generalizations, it does seem to parallel the things found in the slave cabin # 2 test. Almost all of the same types of ceramics are present, including the sherd of "finger-painted" annular ware shown in Figure 6 (b). Fragments of glass (Table 12) are again rather sparse below zone I. Four of the buttons found (3 partial) are made of bone; one is metal. There were several fragments of tinware found in all of the zones, and zone III produced half of a glass marble and a partial slate pencil.

#### Probable Date of the Slave Cabins

As previously noted, there are no documentary sources available at this time which suggest when these cabins were in use. In view of this it was hoped that the South (1972) ceramic dating formula would provide an indication of the most likely occupation period. The more recent version of this formula (South 1974b: Fig. 51) was used with the following ceramic types (including their date ranges and median dates): whiteware, ca. 1820-1900+ (1860); undecorated pearlware, ca. 1780-1830 (1805); transfer-printed pearlware, ca. 1795-1840 (1818); polychrome pearlware, ca. 1820-1840 (1830); shelledged pearlware, ca. 1780-1830 (1805); annular wares (mocha design), ca. 1795-1890 (1843); luster decorated wares, ca. 1790-1840 (1815).

The ceramic sample from slave cabin # 2 (excluding Zone I) was computed and yielded a mean ceramic date of 1829.5. Interestingly enough, this is the same year that A. R. Wynne first acquired the property. While the writer is aware that this sample is too small to be statistically sound, it must have some meaning. There are two possible interpretations.

If we follow South's (1974b: 150) instructions for deriving an interpreted occupation period, the Pierce figurehead pipe from zone III could be used to provide a terminus post quem of 1852. The interpreted occupation period would thus be from about 1807 to 1852. If this is correct, then it must mean that the cabin was already in use when Wynne acquired the property. We find this difficult to believe, and it is contradicted by almost all of the nails which have been examined. Most of these were made by the post-1820's method.

A more likely explanation is probably to be found in Fairbanks (1974: 82) suggestion that "the table wares of the slave cabins represent a gradual discard from the big house of the plantation." The mean ceramic date for the Kingsley slave cabins seemed to be about 10.2 years too early. The Castalian Springs slave cabin # 2 date is probably also at least this much too early. What we may have dated (and quite accurately) is the mean age of ceramics which the Wynnes brought with them to the site, and which they later passed on to their slaves. This is not, however, useless information. Quite the contrary, it may be the most substantial piece of evidence which we have that this was in fact a slave cabin.

No attempt was made to date the ceramic sample from slave cabin # 3. Only 39 sherds were found below zone I, and this small a sample could have little meaning. For the present, we can assume that slave cabins 2 and 3 are probably contemporary, and there seems little reason to suspect that they were used after the Civil War.