



# Kippax Plantation: A Glimpse into Colonial Life and Trade



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## Introduction

For my capstone project I worked as an undergraduate research assistant at UMD's Historic Preservation Program where I helped develop a digital catalog of artifacts that have been collected over the last 30+ years at Kippax Plantation. The goal of the research is to learn more about colonial life and the trade between European settlers, Native Americans, and slaves.

My individual goal was to gain an insight into what it would be like to work in a field such as archaeology. Being interesting in archaeology, this project gave me valuable experience in the data collection and research process.

## Findings of the Research

Kippax Plantation is a unique site because Bolling capitalized on Native American trade by building near trade paths. Thus, it can demonstrate the tripartite cultural mix between the Europeans, Native Americans, and slave populations. There are two types of artifacts that exemplify this: trade beads and colonoware. With the booming fur trade, glass beads were often given to Native Americans in exchange for beaver pelts. More than 10,000 of these beads have been found at the Kippax Plantation – showing the extent of this trade.

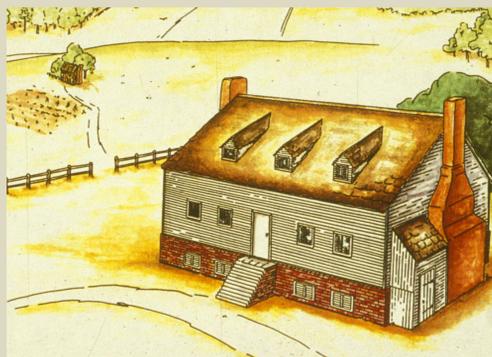
Colonoware, a type of pottery, is also found at the site. While having African and Native American origins, some is in European forms, suggesting European influence as well. It is also believed that colonoware was sold by Native Americans to enslaved workers, thus showing the cultural collisions between these three groups. Looking at

the number of each type of artifact and where they were found on the plantation have helped to clarify social and economic behavior during this time period.



Source: <https://today.umd.edu/articles/grant-help-finish-professors-30-year-research-historic-plantation-a3071000-21e7-4605-979a-b4d9f7912b3a>

## The Site



Source: <https://terpconnect.umd.edu/~dwilne/Kippax%20Plantation.htm>

Kippax Plantation is a 10-acre 17<sup>th</sup> century site in Hopewell, VA. It was first established by Robert Bolling and his wife Jane, the granddaughter of Pocahontas. Through archaeological digs starting in the 1980's under Dr. Donald Linebaugh, thousands of individual artifacts have been uncovered.

The primary area of study for this project is the 17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in which the interdependence between European, Native American and African residents can best be studied.

## Impacts

The excavation of Kippax Plantation has, and will continue to, shed light upon the past and help us to better understand colonial life and the connections between different groups of people.

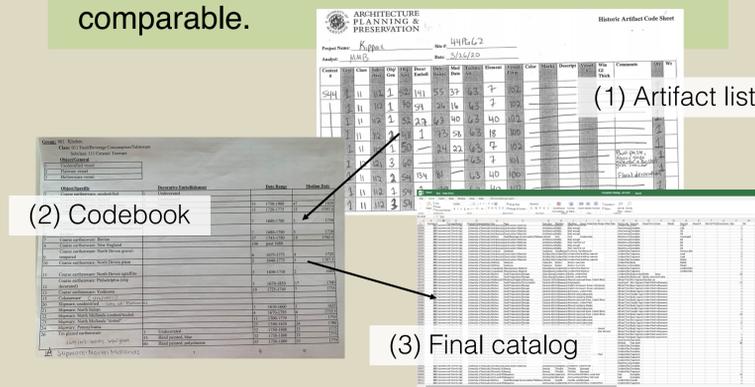
Personally, this project has had numerous impacts. I am not exactly sure what I want to do in the future, but I am interested in archeology. Being involved in this project gave me real-life experience about what it may be like to go into this field. I found I quite enjoyed the job of entering and decoding data as it was as though I was uncovering a puzzle piece by piece. As I progressed, I was able to begin to see more of the big picture and it was as though I could glimpse into the people's lives. I believe it is important for us all to continue to learn about the past, and this project helps to do just that.

For these reasons, I believe this project has pushed me to further pursue this type of work as it showed me I enjoy it.



## Tasks I Performed

I was tasked with compiling a complete catalog of all the artifacts from the site. Each artifact is classified by a series of up to 12 codes, written down in artifact lists (1). In an Excel file, I would enter this coded information, then decode it using a codebook (2), producing the final catalog (3). All information had to be standardized into the 12 classifications, which was at times difficult as some artifacts were classified under a different codebook. After compiling all the artifacts (totaling to more than 11,000), I again worked to standardize the data by converting all measurements to millimeters and grams. I also had to fill in the context numbers of all artifacts, which tells an archaeologist the location within the site (NSWE), the block it was found in, and the level it was found in. This can help to better understand distribution of goods both temporally and spatially. All of this work was done primarily to digitize and standardize all of the data regarding artifacts from Kippax Plantation, since analyzation of data is facilitated when data is online and comparable.



## Future Work

Although my capstone is ending, the work at Kippax Plantation is not. First, the final catalog must be finished, which will then allow for more analysis including determining minimum vessel count through vessilization. From here, the final report must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. After, the artifacts themselves may be disseminated in numerous ways.

For me, I would like to continue working with this project, and in this field going into the future.

I would like to thank Dr. Alan Peel, Erin Thomson, Dr. Megan Bailey and Dr. Donald Linebaugh with all the help during my capstone project.