

Abstract

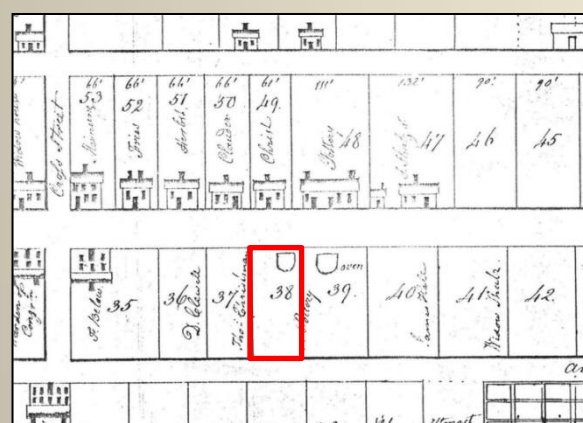
Funding from a Summer Research Grant provided by the Center for the Study of the American South, UNC-Chapel Hill, was used to support ongoing dissertation research on Lot 38, located in the Old Salem National Historic Landmark District, Winston-Salem, NC. This research combines archaeological and historical data to explore how the introduction of new pottery technologies affected the social relations and identities of Moravian potters working on Lot 38 from 1784 until 1829. With a field crew of seven archaeology interns, this summer's work focused on locating and assessing the condition of Lot 38's pottery kiln, built under the direction of Salem's master potter Rudolf Christ—pronounced Krist—and used from 1811 until 1829. Results from this summer's investigation will guide future research on the site.

Introduction

From the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, Salem's Moravian potters were exposed to several new wares and technologies representing a departure from their stock-in-trade of Germanic coarse earthenware. These included refined English "fine-ware," tin-enameled "fayance," and stoneware, all of which were popular among Salem's non-Moravian neighbors.

By 1811 a kiln was built on Lot 38, presumably to handle the production of these new wares. Although church records hint at the changes this brought to the congregation-owned pottery, the extent to which these wares were embraced remains unclear. Because no kiln built in Salem prior to 1830 has been excavated we are left with only a partial understanding of the resulting technological impact.

Figure 1: Enlarged section of 1822 map depicting Lot 38 and the 1811 kiln. From *Map of Salem North Carolina Stokes County* drawn by Friedrich Christian Meinung, 1822. Copy held by Old Salem Department of Archaeology.



Previous archaeological work (1956-1975) focused on the master potter's residence on Lot 49 (South 1999) and locating the kiln on Lot 39 without success (Albright 1956; Clauser 1975). During the reconstruction of a house on Lot 39, workmen inadvertently exposed the opening of the kiln on Lot 38. This opening was recently relocated by Old Salem archaeologists in 2007 (Hartley & Hartley, 2007).



Figure 2: Opening of the 1811 pottery kiln on Lot 38 as photographed in 1976, later relocated in 2007. Copy held by Old Salem Department of Archaeology.

In the spring of 2016, the southwest corner of Lot 38 was archaeologically tested. This uncovered a jumbled pile of kiln bricks located approximately 25 feet south of the kiln opening.

Objectives

This summer's excavation focused on opening a 10 x 20 ft. block of contiguous units between the pile of kiln bricks and the kiln opening to the north in the hopes of uncovering the top of the kiln, determining its likely shape, producing an accurate estimate of its total length, and documenting the degree to which it remains intact. The results from this summer's excavation will guide future work on the kiln.

Methods

A field crew of seven archaeology interns, working from June 1 until July 1, excavated a block of eight 5 x 5 ft. units, exposing a total area of 10 x 20 ft. over top of the 1811 pottery kiln on Lot 38. The first two layers of soil were removed by hand using shovels and trowels and the soil was screened through .25 in. hardware cloth to collect artifacts. Excavation in each unit stopped when interns exposed the tops of articulated kiln bricks or brick rubble.



Figure 3: Interns excavating around foundation stones and removing a layer of fill, exposing kiln bricks.

In addition to drawing and recording excavation units, features, and significant finds by hand, interns were also taught how to digitally record units and artifacts using 3D photogrammetry. They were then able to create 3D models of the units they excavated and artifacts they discovered. This enabled the project to collect data and create a record of the archaeological process in both analog and digital formats.



Figure 4: 3D model of an excavation unit.



Figure 5: Interpreting the kiln.

The project's location within Old Salem Museums & Gardens meant that making the excavation open and visible to the public became an important part of the research methodology. Public interaction provided an opportunity for greater self-reflexivity as interns regularly answered questions from visitors, explained the archaeological process, shared the latest findings, and interpreted the site as the research unfolded.

Results: Recovered Pottery

Based on the abundance and diversity of kiln furniture and pottery found in a layer of clay fill immediately above the kiln bricks in the northern half of the excavation block, this may represent the redeposited contents of a waster dump located nearby, perhaps somewhere on Lot 38. Although it is difficult to directly tie this material to the 1811 kiln since its original deposition is questionable and includes a mixture of older and newer wares, it does provide a valuable sample of the range of pottery produced in Salem over time.



Figure 6: Recovered pottery and kiln furniture. Including: trailed slipware; stoneware; fayence; and feather-edged earthenware.

Results: Revealing the 1811 Kiln

Removing the top two layers of soil within the excavation block exposed a sheet of kiln bricks in the northern half and portions of a loosely articulated brick foundation wall in the southern half. These two distinct sections are roughly bisected east-west by a line of three, large and evenly-spaced foundation stones with a line of articulated bricks between each stone (see Figures 3 and 7). One possible explanation for the difference between these two sections is that the stones represent the southern end of the kiln oven with passages between each stone that potters used for loading the kiln and bricked up before firing. The loosely-articulated line of bricks in the southern portion may represent part of a foundation wall for an addition onto the back of the kiln, perhaps to aid in loading or monitoring the kiln during firing.



Figure 7: Interns uncovering brick rubble in the northern half of the block (L) and a line of loosely articulated bricks in the southern half (R).

Conclusion

This summer's work revealed that the 1811 pottery kiln on Lot 38 is rectangular in shape and is oriented north-south. Much of the kiln's floor likely remains intact under the brick rubble from its collapsed walls and roof. Moreover, it appears that the kiln may have included a structure attached to the southern end of its oven. If this is the case, then the kiln's total length is close to 25 feet. This information will be used to guide future work that will include: expanding the block excavation to the kiln's opening; carefully removing the jumble of fallen bricks within the kiln; documenting and recovering any pottery lying below these bricks; and uncovering the kiln floor, documenting its design and any alterations to it over time.

Acknowledgements & References

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Field Crew

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