

Surrounded by a complex web of transportation corridors, the Magruder House still stands as a testament to the colonial roots of Bladensburg. Archaeologists attempted to gain a better understanding about the historic property by excavating within the yard spaces. They dug over 20 small exploratory holes and seven 5 ft x 5 ft excavation units on the site. Continual occupation of the area and historic-period flooding resulted in the recovery of mostly churned artifacts and only a few intact features (e.g. post holes and refuse pits). It is likely the urban development obliterated the associated outbuildings and slave quarters. Despite the compromised integrity of the deposits, archaeologists learned what the occupants ate and which ceramics the residents used in their house. Archaeologists were also able to track the way material culture changed through time. They did not, however, find evidence of the Magruder House being used as a field hospital after the Battle of Bladensburg.

The discovery of prehistoric artifacts revealed that Native Americans have lived in this area for almost 9,000 years. Archaeologists found two St. Albans metarhyolite projectile points and quartzite, quartz, and metarhyolite debitage indicating Native Americans lived and hunted at this location during the Archaic Period (6,900-6,500 BC). The recovery of pottery sherds support occupation by Native Americans in Bladensburg up through the late Woodland Period (AD 950-1600).

The Eighteenth Century

The historic documents are silent on who lived in the house during the mid-18th century since William Hilleary constructed the building as an investment property. Archaeologists recovered a relatively small number of artifacts suggesting the presence of a single occupant or series of short-term tenants. The reasons for this small artifact assemblage may be that these early residents possessed items that quickly decomposed in the soils, such as pewter and wood. The dish wares that the occupants used, and eventually broke, included expensive white salt-glazed stoneware and tin-glazed earthen wares from England.



Colonial ceramics from England (tin glaze; featheredge creamware; barley pattern white salt glazed stoneware; combed staffordshire slipware [top, l to r]. English Brown; rhenish; scratch blue; debassed scratch blue [bottom l to r])



19th century decorated plates (brown transferprint and blue shell edge [top, l to r]; green shell edge and blue willow [bottom l to r])

The period between 1763 and 1793 is very interesting since this is the time that the socially affluent Scottish merchant, Richard Henderson lived here. Henderson and David Ross, Sr. were business partners who worked for the Glassford Company in Glasgow. They kept numerous enslaved and indentured servants. Henderson is known to have entertained George Washington on at least one occasion.

Although Henderson did not have the wealth of Christopher Lowndes, the artifact assemblage he



and his family left behind suggests they possessed the means and the desire to purchase middle to upper class items. Creamware, some with featheredge, dominates their ceramic assemblage. Other artifacts related to the Henderson's occupation includes olive-green bottle glass, tobacco pipe fragments, brass straight pins, brass buttons, and a glass bead. Analysis of the animal bone discarded by the family suggests they consumed a healthy diet of oysters, fish, turkey, cow, sheep, and pig. When George Washington dined at the house in 1787, he may have been served dinner on creamware dishes or blue painted porcelain. Free-blown olive-green bottles likely held beverages for the meal, but wine would have been served to the guests from glass decanters. Meals consumed at the Magruder house included oysters, beef, pork and sheep/lamb. Specifically, leg of lamb and catfish remains were found in their refuse pile.

The Nineteenth Century

By the early 19th century, the port in Bladensburg closed and the merchant class was replaced by middle and working class families. During the mid-19th century, the Magruder family owned and occupied the house. Archaeologists found fewer ceramic sherds compared to the other residents who lived in the house, but the number of vessel and table glass increased in variety and number. This significant shift in material type suggests the Magruder family replaced ceramics for storage and serving with glassware. Archaeologists also recovered buttons, hardware, porcelain figurine fragments, medicine bottles, tobacco pipe fragments, and a glass vase



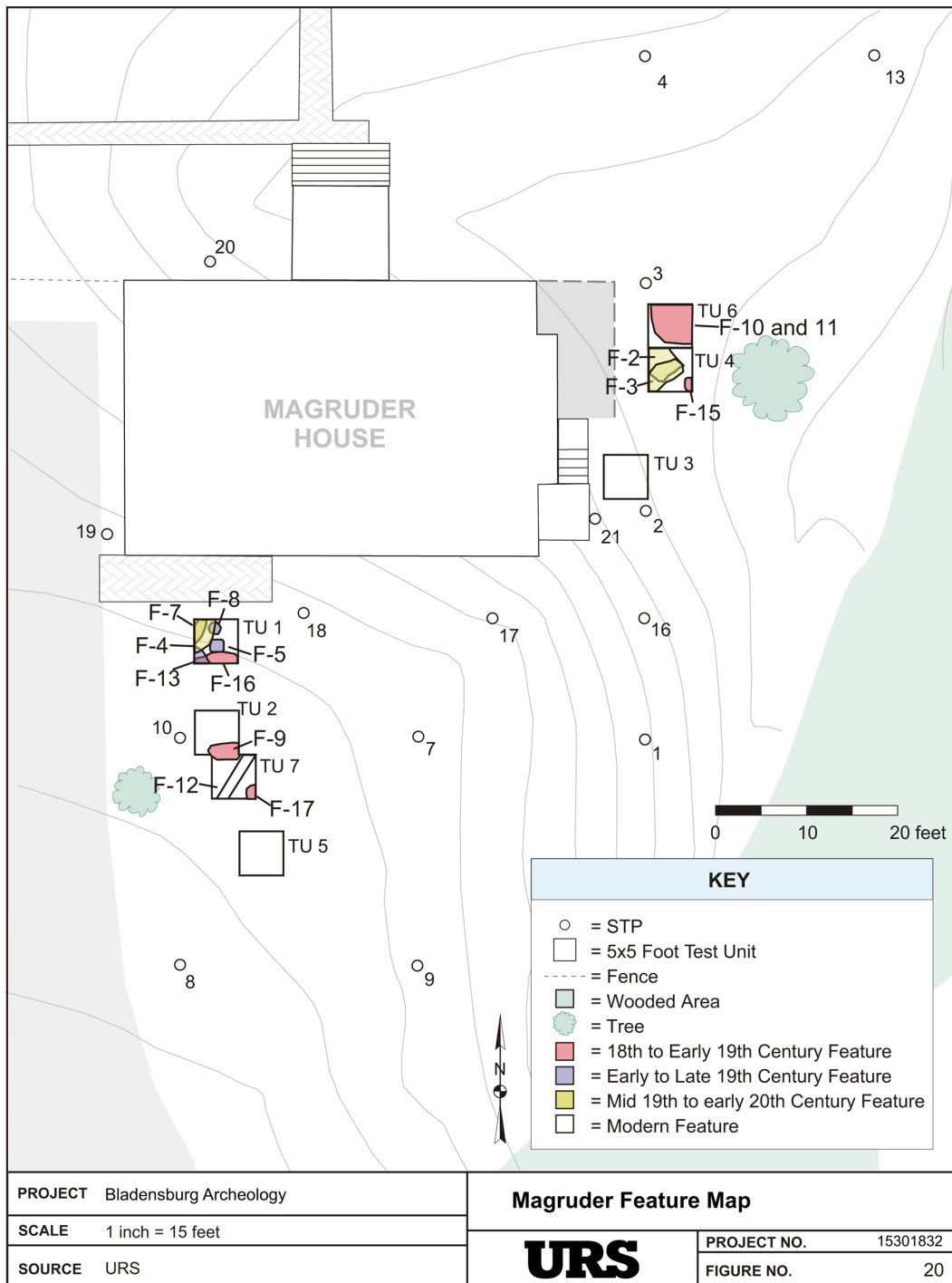
White kaolin clay tobacco pipe fragments.

fragment from mid to late 19th century contexts. Based on faunal remains, they learned the Magruder family ate oyster, fish, rabbit, cow, sheep, pig, and elderberry. Distinguishable cuts of meat include pork picnic or arm roast cuts, beef rump cuts, a beef hindshank cut, and a beef roast cut.



Mid 19th century white porcelain figurine.





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