

# Enslaved African conjure and ritual deposits on the Hume Plantation, South Carolina

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/naa](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/naa)**Sharon K Moses**

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**Abstract**

Twenty-one ritual deposits have been found in and around cabin sites along the slave street on the former Hume Plantation on Cat Island, South Carolina. Earliest deposits date back to the eighteenth century; however, evidence suggests ritual activity, known as *conjure* practices or *hoodoo*, continued after the Civil War among the emancipated Africans who chose to stay. The aim of this article is to present an alternative viewpoint that not all interpretations of enslaved African ritual activity or repurposed artifacts must be viewed through the lens of “resistance” but can be an expression of African agency to define new and multivariant spiritualities in light of changing identities, historical contexts, and value systems. These adaptations incorporated notions of social class and hierarchy as well as expanded spiritual symbolism from exposure to and interaction with Europeans and Native Americans. The result was a formation of religious syncretism.

**Keywords**

South Carolina, enslaved Africans, Native Americans, conjure, hoodoo, ritual deposits

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## Introduction

### *Resistance versus syncretism*

Enslaved Africans were restricted in freely expressing the fullness of their cultural and spiritual identities under the scrutiny of European planters, who subscribed to the notion that such things left unchecked, led to unified resistance and rebellion. Lived spaces, natural and built, were modeled upon European settlement design and the slave quarter itself in relationship to the main house—a display of power, hierarchy, and social control. Despite these imposed restrictions and forced observance of European value systems, the enslaved found ways to quietly and secretly defy their oppressors and to maintain their traditions and identities as indigenous African peoples. The literature of “slave resistance” is well established and covers many ways that the enslaved found through activities “hiding in plain sight” and others done in secret that risked punishment if discovered. Resistance included learning to read and write when it was illegal for enslaved people to be educated, wearing protective charms of African spirituality sewn into the underside of clothing when Christianity was encouraged as the only accepted form of worship, adopting Christian saints to worship openly, while revising saints’ identities to fit African deities known within their own community, using European material goods as symbols of African ideology and many more examples.

I do not argue the validity of these arguments for expressions of African resistance. However, this article is not intended to cover that topic or its broad spectrum already discussed by numerous other scholars (Armstrong, 1999; Chireau, 2006; Davidson, 2004; Ferguson, 1992; Harris, 2004; Jones, 2000; Joyner, 1984; Klingelhofer, 1987; Leone, 2008; McKee, 1995; Minges, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Muller, 1994; Orser and Funari, 2001; Russell, 1997; Samford, 1996; Scott, 1985; Singleton, 2001; Young, 2007).

Rather, this article focuses on the ways in which material culture, ritual practices, and deposits found at one South Carolina lowcountry rice plantation exhibit evidence of pragmatic adaptation over time and the alternative view that religious syncretism was in progress when resistance as an explanation is not fully satisfactory for all of the activities and choices. This article posits an evolution of spiritual and ideological beliefs initially as an outgrowth of resistance but ultimately creating a new belief system that incorporated changing needs for a changing community and its historical context. Choices made and personal agency among the enslaved at the Hume Plantation suggest the influence of mixed ethnic identities, new perspectives on social status, and ultimately, a new value system linked to the social hierarchy originally imposed but later embraced among the enslaved themselves, after emancipation.

I will present this argument by first providing a background to the archaeological site of the Yawkey Wildlife Center islands where the Hume Plantation is

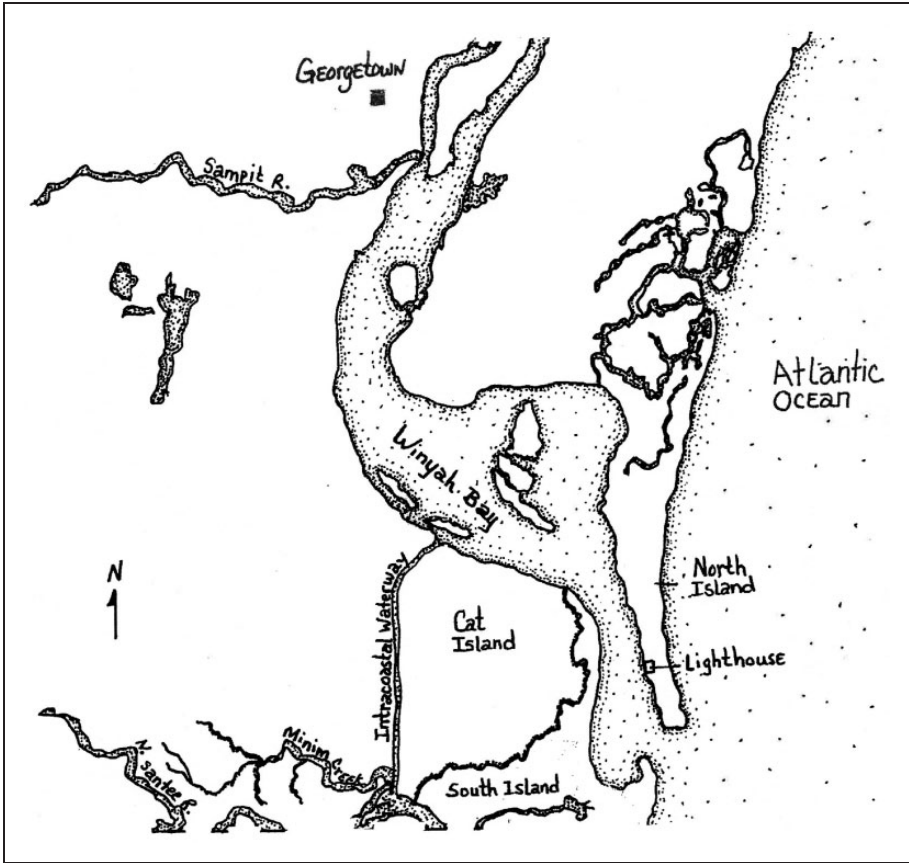
located, followed by the historical context of the slave street and the arrival of Hume family in South Carolina the eighteenth century. The narrative continues with an overview of ritual practices and belief systems among African groups represented in the lowcountry and Georgetown County specifically, including Christianization in the antebellum period. There will be a brief presentation of the archaeological methods utilized at the site and then a discussion of the ritual deposits found. I conclude by demonstrating how new identities and perspectives on social class and hierarchy influenced the evolution of African American ideology and beliefs in the post-Civil War era.

### *Property background—Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center*

The site of the Hume Plantation is located on Cat Island, one of the three islands that make up the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center, which also includes North and South Islands (Figure 1). The islands help define the Winyah Bay along the coast of Georgetown, SC. Today, they are a pristine sanctuary for many coastal wildlife and botanical species, made up of 31 square miles and 20,000 acres of marsh, wetlands, forests, and ocean front. It is a popular protected research area primarily as a wildlife habitat and a benefit for researchers wishing to study local flora and fauna. There is limited public access, which requires that arrangements be made in advance with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the manager of the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center to schedule guided tours. The three islands became a protected sanctuary in 1976 as the result of their being willed to the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department by owner, Thomas Yawkey. It was to be maintained by the Department of Natural Resources with the caveat that the Yawkey Foundation would oversee its funding (Dozier, 2015, personal communication; Lee, 2015, personal communication). The Yawkeys are probably best remembered as “baseball royalty” having owned the Detroit Tigers in 1903–1919 and the Boston Red Sox (1933–1976) (Figure 2).

Among the Yawkey Wildlife Center’s documented historical sites are other rice plantations including Chat/Cat Island Plantation (Smith family), White Marsh aka Maxwell Plantation (Maxwell family), and Belle Isle aka Black Out Plantation (Lowndes family); several Revolutionary War encampments and a Cat Island Civil War Confederate fort built in 1861 whose construction was reportedly overseen by Robert E. Lee; the fort served as an outpost overlooking the Winyah Bay during the peak of the Civil War (Lee, 2015, personal communication). Despite these archaeologically promising sites, environmental obstacles and funding limitations have pushed most archaeological endeavors in the South Carolina lowcountry toward more historically prominent sites.

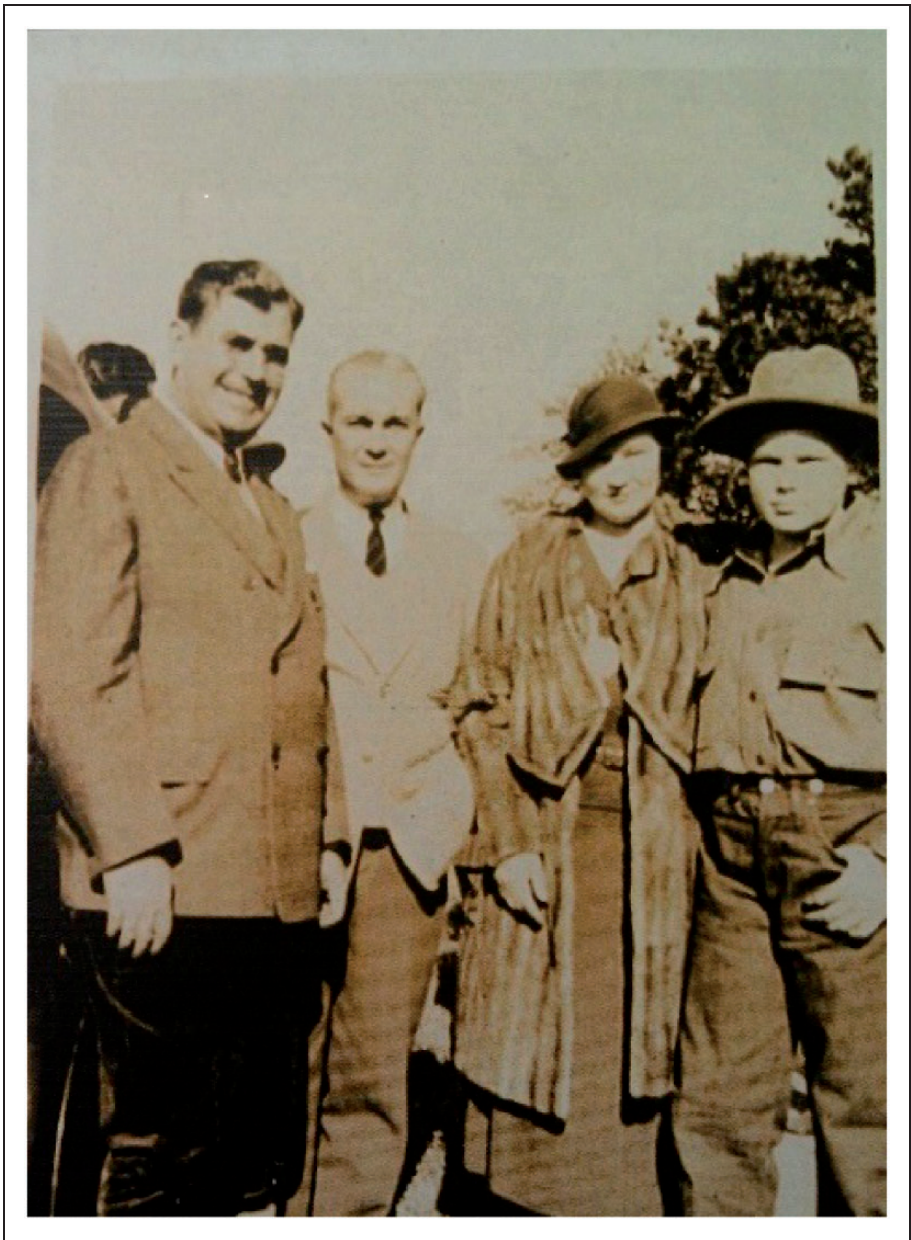
The historical archaeology efforts at this site produce a better understanding of the islands, its people, plants and animals and their interactions and



**Figure 1.** Illustrated map of Winyah Bay and North, South, and Cat Islands. Illustration by author.

interrelationships that contributed to daily life in historical Georgetown County from the British colonial period through post-Civil War era. Presently, archaeological findings are reported to the Tom Yawkey Center, which currently houses the artifacts and information is then incorporated into the narrative history provided to visitors and researchers.

The Hume Plantation site and its slave quarter were left largely undisturbed since it ceased to be inhabited in the 1930s, preserving it archaeologically for an uninterrupted window into the historical past from the eighteenth through early twentieth century. No plow zones disturbed the grounds in the slave quarter, and no additional structures were built since that time, although the buildings such as the cabins, main house, and livestock pens were dismantled and the lumber repurposed elsewhere. The natural environment has reclaimed much of



**Figure 2.** Photo of William H. Yawkey (far left) and adopted son, Tom (far right) as a teenager. Used by permission of the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center.

the Hume Plantation grounds, and today, the slave street itself is all that remains among the new growth bull pines, grasses, and shrubbery. The former grounds are maintained periodically with controlled burns to clear underbrush and promote forest health, keeping down parasitic insect infestation. Currently, the Hume Plantation Slave Street Project is the only archaeological research endeavor conducting subsurface excavation on Cat Island. An initial surface survey was done in 1993 as part of the state's Heritage and Historic Preservation Department (Judge and Judge, 1994).

### *History of the slave street and Cat Island*

In the seventeenth century, Britain had set up eight Lord's Proprietors in the interest of the British crown, King Charles II to oversee land grants in the Carolinas. By 1729, this region was formally split into North and South Carolina. Unlike English settlers who came to northeastern North America to establish new lives and distance themselves from Britain, the settlers who came to South Carolina were intent on expanding business ventures and to make a profit. Many were wealthy British aristocracy who, also unlike their contemporaries in the northeast, wished to maintain ties with their mother country. A number had land holdings in Jamaica or Barbados with thriving sugar cane plantations, while others were from Virginia, seeking to extend their investments beyond tobacco and cotton.

Archival records indicate that in 1711, Bartholomew Gaillard, a French-Huguenot, was the first owner of South Island, located adjacent to Cat Island (Giauque et al., 2010). Many early settlers in the early to mid-1700s were French-Huguenots or British. Gaillard's initial activities on South Island appear to have included raising cattle. Other early eighteenth-century residents settled on the mainland around Winyah Bay included the Hume and Ford families—both were later to reside on Cat and South Islands, respectively, and their families eventually became related through marriage. At this time, many enslaved Africans in the lowcountry originated from the Congo and had come in modest numbers with the aristocratic British planter class. These enslaved Africans played the role of “cowboys” who oversaw the cattle herds and were involved in everyday operations. At that time, cattle herds in South Carolina allegedly rivaled early nineteenth-century cattle herds in Texas (Lee, 2015, personal communication).

Little is known historically about this period on the Islands, but presumably during that time the enslaved were given more freedom to create their own living spaces without the direct and constant oversight of European planters who were absentee owners leaving the daily operation to hired white overseers. This was to become a common practice, as summer heat, humidity, and malaria were rampant in the marshes and coastal areas of the lowcountry. Cattle herding was eventually replaced by indigo for a profitable dye trade, and eventually, rice



became the cash crop with major exports overseas. Economic growth brought more settlers who in turn needed more slave labor to work the land.

South and Cat Islands harbored natural tidal swamps which were not viable for cotton or tobacco but well suited for rice cultivation. A number of surrounding plantations had begun the arduous task of clearing irrigation canals on the islands and acquired more slave labor in order to be competitive in rice production. Local Native American tribes who were allies to the British, such as the Westo, found it profitable to trade enemy captives to the Europeans in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century. The Native American slave trade created bonds between the British and their native allies; it was also means for natives to acquire much desired materials including weapons and metal cooking utensils. By 1708, one-half of all enslaved people on plantations in the South Carolina lowcountry were Native Americans (Gallay, 2002). "The trade in Indian slaves was the most important factor affecting the South in the period 1670-1715" (Gallay, 2002: 7).

Enslaved Native Americans were often shipped to Charleston and exported across the Atlantic to Europe. Some were sold farther north into North Carolina and Virginia, while others were sold locally in South Carolina, particularly along the coast (Winyah Bay was popularly used by slavers capturing native slaves). From the start, enslaved natives were difficult to maintain. They frequently weakened and died of European diseases and knew nothing of cultivating and harvesting rice. Escaped natives were familiar with the landscape and could survive and disappear into the backwaters and swamps, making recapture very difficult, costly, time consuming, and frequently unsuccessful. It is difficult to determine what percentage of Native Americans were enslaved according to plantation slave rosters because they are often referred to as "colored" in book-keeping accounts and census records. By default, anyone assessed as nonwhite was considered "colored" according to the nomenclature of the period. On occasion, private journals or plantation ledger entries designate between categories of the enslaved such as "Negro" or "Mulatto" to note mixed heritage individuals although even mixed heritage was still considered "colored," but this is inconsistent and unreliable as a sole reflection of the enslaved population. It is even more rare to find an entry that identifies enslaved natives by tribe or as "Indian." While it is impossible to provide definitive proof that there were natives enslaved on the Hume Plantation, it is within reason considering the general history of the Georgetown area and the material evidence that there were at least mixed heritage families among the enslaved population. Enslaved natives were likely present before the Hume family acquired the land. By the time the Hume Plantation was established, many planters had been replacing natives with imported Africans from the mid-eighteenth century on (Gallay, 2002). There is material evidence for interaction between Native Americans and enslaved Africans during the Hume period found in pottery, projectile points, and worked glass to make implements found in and around cabins;

Native American spirituality and symbolisms are suggested in some ritual contexts and could be the result of exposure to ideas or from mixed heritage traditions within the enslaved population.

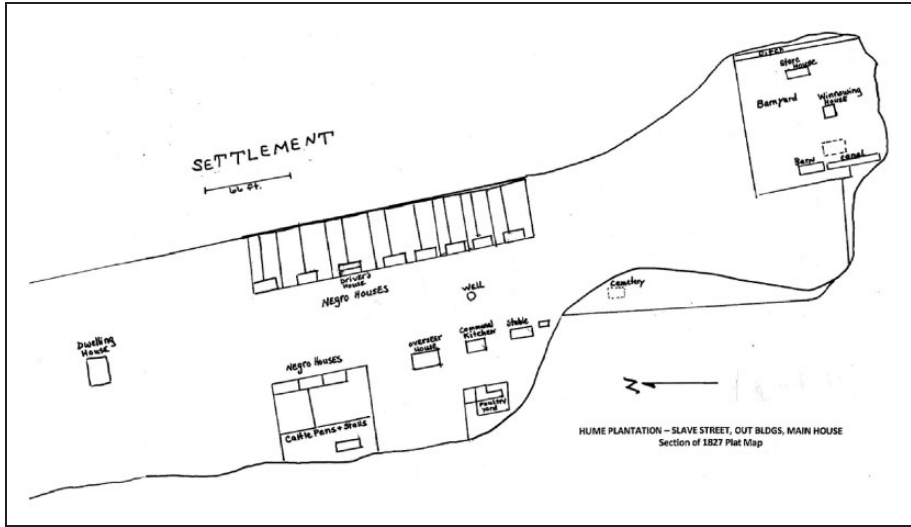
By the mid-eighteenth century, the most sought after slaves in South Carolina were those imported from the “Gold Coast” or western region of Africa that included: Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and Ghana based upon their knowledge of rice planting and harvesting, which was part of their cultural heritage. Many Europeans were unfamiliar with proper cultivation and maintenance of rice crops and needed their expertise (Gallay, 2002; Pollitzer, 2005: 51–68; Young, 2007). Enslaved Africans from the Gold Coast quickly became the most expensive to purchase. Because of their prohibitive cost, the Gullah and Congolese remained the most imported and populous enslaved group in the lowcountry.

According to genealogical and archival records on the history of Charleston, the first appearance of the Hume family coincides with the establishment of Georgetown. Peter Hume and his wife, Ann Curtis Hume, settled in Goose Creek Parish in 1729, which is approximately 20 miles northwest of Charleston and 65 miles southwest of Georgetown. Peter Hume was 39 years old at the time and although he was born in London, his aristocratic family originated in Berwickshire, Scotland. The Humes were related to Robert II, King of Scotland, through marriage.

The earliest levels of occupancy along what would eventually become the Hume slave street by the early nineteenth century, dates to the pre-Revolutionary War era based upon contextual materials and reveals small habitation structures. Approximation of size is based upon limited examples of three to date, discovered below nineteenth-century Hume slave cabin sites. These examples suggest earliest structures inhabited by the enslaved began much smaller than later incarnations, roughly 10 by 12 feet with dirt floors. Their poststains were relatively small also, 15 to 20 cm in diameter, or young tree poles, and placed approximately 1 m apart along walls, and these were in levels dating to approximately the mid-eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, cabins had increased in size, roughly 15 feet by 20 feet long. One cabin with the most excavation units to date appears to have a unique design, with a north–south wall dividing the cabin in a lengthwise fashion rather than the *saddlebag* style commonly found on other plantations that made one cabin into two, with two entrances for two separate families. This unique cabin is on an 1827 plat map and is identified as the Driver’s House (Figure 3).

Evidence in pre-Revolutionary levels suggests the constructions utilized local resources and building materials in the immediate environment; there is scant to no evidence of nails and other European materials from the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century. Below these are a scattering of encampment sites and suggest Cat Island was part of the seasonal hunting and gathering activities among natives who visited during optimal subsistence times. At the Hume Plantation, early log cabin constructions from the late eighteenth to early





**Figure 3.** Redrawn 1827 plat map of Hume Plantation. Used by permission of the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center. Illustration redrawn by author.

nineteenth centuries replaced random building structures and orientations and reveal the use of plaster or mortar to fill the gaps between logs. Lumps of crushed oyster shell mortar, known as *tabby*, have been found in these levels.

From the late eighteenth into early nineteenth century, cut and square nails and other building hardware found at the Hume slave street site reveal the evolution of the built space and layout of the slave street. Spaces occupied by the enslaved appear to have shifted over time from pole and thatch constructions to small log cabins with mortar over dirt floors and finally to larger clapboard cabins with simple raised wood slat floors by the early nineteenth century. The clapboard, whitewashed design is reflected in a 1937 painting by artist, Andrew Wyeth, when he spent time on Cat Island and at least one of the slave street cabins was still standing. There has been some discussion in the literature that European planters were interested in removing all reference to African origins among the enslaved from architecture to spiritual practices (Cuddy and Leone, 2008; Epperson, 1999; Singleton, 2009). The politics of power and domination became apparent, as more European construction materials were used (nails, metal hinges, brick hearths) and plantation settlement layouts became standardized along with communal kitchen and a public well, replacing random spatial relationships with formal ones in relationship to the main house (Davidson, 1971; Ferguson, 1992: 63–82; Land, 1969; Singleton, 2009; Vlach, 1993: 13–13; Wells, 1998).

Despite this, the enslaved were still tasked with building their cabins and managing their own spaces, albeit within defined parameters. They utilized

belowground storage pits, aboveground storage spaces, and sheds. They expressed their identities and traditional beliefs in everyday use items such as tableware, for example. Sometimes the enslaved made their own pottery, referred to as *colonoware*, from local clays. Bowls were a cultural tradition among Congolese groups and so we find more bowl remnants in the early plantation years rather than plates (Ferguson, 1992; Heath, 1999; Jacobs, 1987; Orser, 1988; Samford, 1996; Singleton, 2001, 2009; Vlach, 1993; Wilkie, 2000).

They also utilized individual agency in spiritual matters, such as placing protective deposits that called upon ancestors or water spirits in the dirt floors, under slat floors, below corner posts, beneath window areas and door jambs—all liminal areas or crossing places that symbolically represent movement from one realm into another. Some deposits were placed near hearths for the proximity to the symbolism of fire; back yards and gardens not only allowed them to supplement their subsistence needs with vegetables and herbs but provided an outlet for cultivating medicinal plants for healing or magic (Covey, 2007; Pinckney, 2007; Savit, 1978). A common garden herb with yellow flowers nicknamed “life everlasting” was dried and used for toothache relief, menstrual cramps, or gastrointestinal problems and smoked like a tobacco to soothe asthma symptoms. Blackberry and myrtle leaves were used to combat dysentery, diarrhea, and malaria. Conversely, the root bark of the “devil’s walking stick” plant, aka Angelica tree (also common in the South), is affective for snakebite but can be considered poisonous in correct doses to induce death (Chireau, 2006; Pollitzer, 2005: 100–106).

It is important to remember that enslaved populations preferred to be treated by their own practitioners rather than European doctors who were mistrusted and who were not typically readily available to attend to everyday ills of the enslaved. Curatives were usually administered by African practitioners with magic utterances to infuse supernatural power into the healing process, intertwining spirituality with medicine. Therefore, *conjurers* or *root workers*, as they were known, were common and did a thriving business among the enslaved population in any given plantation for healing as well as spells of protection and vengeance.

Traditional healers had knowledge of African plants from their homeland and worked hard to find correlates with similar uses in the North American South. Interaction and intermarriage with Native Americans facilitated sharing knowledge about local medicinal plants as well as other spiritual views and symbolisms that could be incorporated in their use.

### *The Hume family and establishment of the Hume Plantation*

It was during the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century that the Hume Plantation was established on Cat Island, though the exact date is unknown amid missing and/or conflicting accounts. The Ford family, to which the Humes

would become related through marriage, moved to South Island and created the Ford Plantation in 1760 after its previous owner, Robert Croft gifted the land to the Fords.

General Isaac Huger owned property on Cat Island until his death, noted as 1797 by some accounts, yet other accounts show Dr Alexander Hume purchased the property in 1827 from General Isaac Huger (who would have been deceased by 30 years if the first account was correct). Perhaps the record was meant to convey the property was purchased from the Huger *estate* rather than General Isaac himself. It is known that the Hume Plantation main house was constructed (or an existing house expanded) in 1810–1812, a good 10 to 15 years before Huger property was acquired. It is possible that the Hume family may have already owned some land and expanded upon it with the additional purchase of Huger property by 1827.

Six years earlier, in May 1821, newspaper accounts in the *Charleston Courier* and *The Charleston City Gazette* quote Alexander Hume speaking in the British House of Commons to protest the amount that had been expended for the detention of Napoleon Bonaparte. Bonaparte had died in exile on Saint Helena Island prison earlier that month. Hume stated that he could have done it “for one tenth of the amount” (referring to his own Cat Island plantation?), which suggests ownership of at least some of what became the Hume Plantation before 1827. By 1 June 1821, both newspapers published accounts of George Ford junior’s murder, which also occurred in May 1821 on adjacent South Island. Escaped slaves or *maroons* were discovered late one evening near the slave quarter attempting to kill some of the livestock and abscond with the meat. A shootout ensued and Ford sustained mortal wounds to his head and chest. In the aftermath, Ford’s nephew, Frederick Ford, inherited the Ford Plantation and married Mary Hume, joining the families together.

Accounts of Hume Plantation management transactions date to the 1820s; this does not necessarily mean the plantation did not exist before the 1820s, only that preserved ledgers record an established and thriving rice plantation during that time. Also in 1827, a hand drawn plat map of the Hume Plantation was commissioned, which coincides with the acquisition of the Huger property. Dr Alexander Hume would likely have wanted a complete accounting of the property and its assets at the time of the purchase.

This plat map is the earliest known documentation of the Hume slave street proper, which reveals a modest grouping of 11 cabins, a communal kitchen, communal well, and various outbuildings for livestock and rice threshing. Given that Alexander purchased this portion of property in 1827 and the slave quarter was already established, this suggests that the small-scale plantation was first in operation under the Hugars. Estimates for an average cabin for the enslaved at this time are 12 by 14 feet, and the number of persons per single family cabin is four to six. Standard cabins could be somewhat larger

(approximately  $15 \times 20$  feet) when designed as one building divided into two units meant to house two families, also known as *saddlebag* cabins. The dimension of the cabins on the 1827 Hume plat map suggests possibly half of the Hume cabins were large enough to have housed two families, but the map does not show the usual dividing wall of a split *saddlebag* cabin. Archaeologically to date, no cabin dividing wall has been encountered in the Hume Plantation Slave Street Project. Cabin 3 is distinguished on the illustrated plat map by an unusual *lengthwise* division that would have been inconsistent with known split cabin construction, but this more likely a demarcation of a feature at the back of the house rather than two units under one roof.

By 1840, half of all the rice produced in the United States was exported from South Carolina's coastal and island plantations, which included the Hume Plantation. By 1850, rice exported from Georgetown County totaled upward of 600,000 pounds and was shipped to Europe as well as within the United States. The Hume Plantation, while apparently modest compared to other plantations in the early nineteenth century, appears to have been a thriving rice producer for at least 39 years and steadily increased its wealth from 1826 until the Civil War ended in 1865.

Archival records maintained by the Historical Society in Charleston and the South Carolina Department of Archives and History hold private documents that provide insights into the Hume family. One letter from Hume to his daughter, Emma, who was staying at the plantation while he was residing at the Humes' Charleston home, stated how he looked forward to seeing her later in the fall. Alexander Hume had eight children, according to his 19 May 1848 Will and its 3 June 1848 codicil (Thomas, John, Edward, Christopher, Robert, Mary, Ellen, and Emma). Emma, who seems to have been something of a naturalist, kept a journal of poetry and botanical drawings and was one of the few who stayed at the plantation in summer months. Adverse conditions such as heat and humidity and the proliferation of insects in the lowcountry would have made it unappealing to most during that time. We are thus aware that the Humes owned two estates by the 1840s. A slave bill of sale dated December 1849 shows Hume paying \$575.00 for "a Negro woman named Amanda" and indicates he continued to add to his slaveholdings over time. The price paid would have been considered average for a healthy Congolese female slave of child bearing years in this region of the South (Figure 4).

Most slave holders averaged 10 slaves, and the Humes were in this category at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth century. Census and tax records over time indicate, however, that the Hume family slave holdings swelled to 102 by 1860. While there are no records that indicate how many slaves resided at their Charleston residence as household servants, it is assumed that the vast majority were kept at the Plantation on Cat Island to tend to the everyday workings of rice production, although we do not have an updated slave street map or its location to account for them. This places the Hume family in the category of the

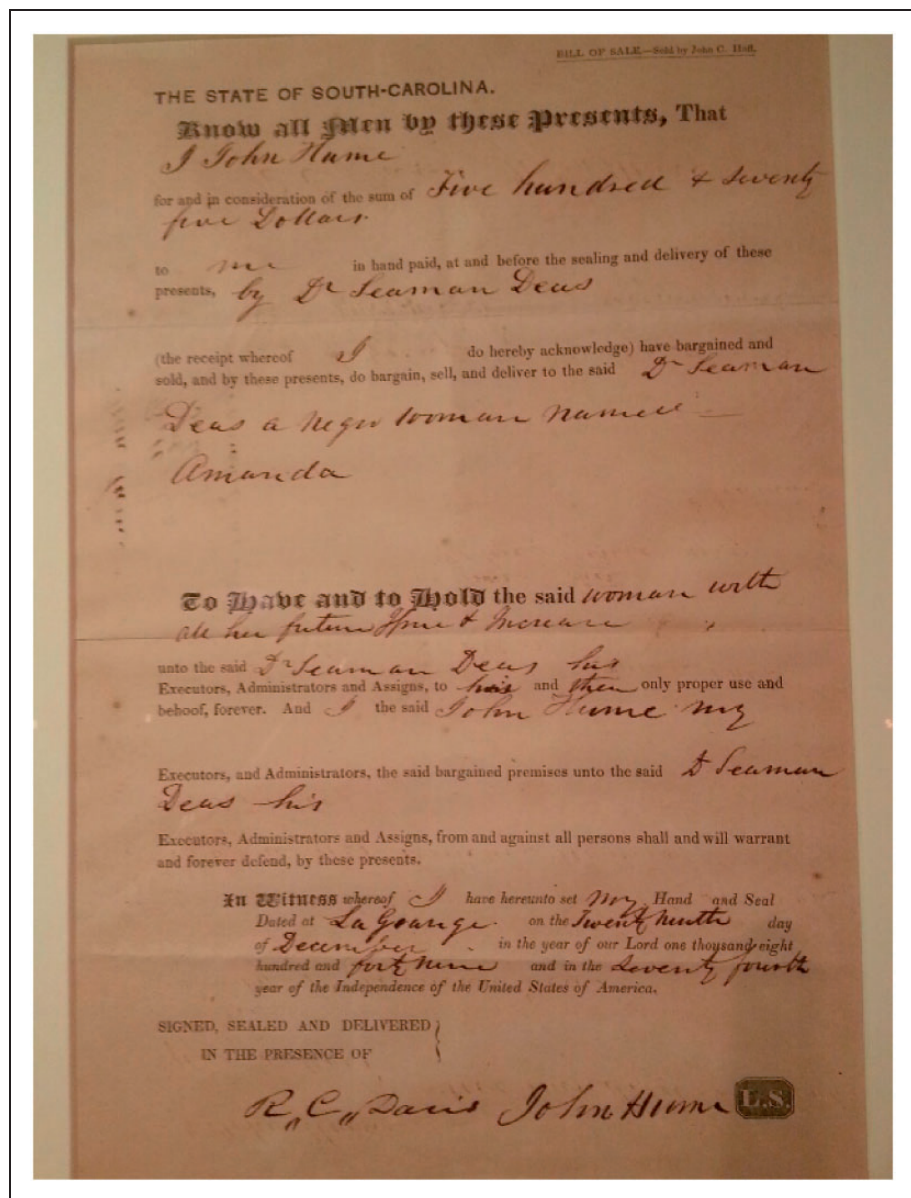


Figure 4. Slave “Amanda” bill of sale.

more prosperous and wealthy of plantation owners by the late antebellum period.

The state of South Carolina maintained its records and/or copies in the city of Charleston where some of the earliest property transactions are recorded; many of those copies survived. But by 1790, the State House location was moved to Columbia, SC because it was deemed more centrally located for state business. At this point, fate intervened. Pre-Civil War land records are challenging to find, and some can still be located in counties through which the Union's General Sherman did not travel, implementing his "scorched earth" policy. Today, Georgetown County Land Records and Deeds department has records dating from approximately 1865 onward but nothing earlier.

In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration created abstracts from surviving record copies, diaries, and other sources to make up for the lost and destroyed original county records. The results were compiled in rare volume collections such as *South Carolina Deed Abstract, Volumes I–V* abstracted by Clara A. Langley (1984). *The History of Georgetown County, South Carolina* (Rogers, 2002) was originally published in 1970 and provides the main resource for the social history of Georgetown County during the time frame upon which the Hume Plantation's history is largely based.

The first official census of 1790 in South Carolina is also a source for property owners' names, locations, household members, and limited information on their slaves. Thus, while property records for the years prior to 1865 suffer from inconsistent preservation, it is possible to piece together a general understanding of the plantations that thrived in South Carolina during the antebellum period.

### *Ritual practices and background of African belief systems*

Ritual deposits and evidence of ritual behavior were defined in the Hume Plantation slave street excavations according to context, choice and combination of certain artifact materials, location, and evidence of purposeful placement. Therefore, a ritual deposit as referenced in this article is defined as follows: An intentional deposit hidden from sight beneath cabin floors, chimney/hearth/fire areas, cabin corners, or back yard constructions and garden areas, suggestive of a nonrandom, patterned interval placement situated along walls, beneath doorways or windows, in proximity of foundation post(s), or at other entrance and exit areas (liminal spaces). The deposits comprised recurring and specific natural and/or man-made objects in specific groupings from repurposed materials drawn from European, Native American, and/or African material culture.

Furthermore, as this article is focused upon the syncretism or hybridization of spiritual ideas, rituals, and symbolism, a definition of syncretism or creolization as opposed to expressions of resistance is also posited for this context: religious and ideological syncretism is the combination of two or more beliefs and their



symbolic systems that create a new tradition, merging select elements from different sources (a creolization). This new tradition, use of new or different resources based upon availability, including the repurposing of material culture borrowed from other cultures, is created to suit changing needs, ideas, and values as the enslaved were confronted with and adapted to changing identity and values. This argument is not to suggest any concept of “purity” of spiritual ideologies from pre-enslavement periods among African peoples, as spirituality is recognized as a constantly evolving process with exchange of ideas occurring among the African continent’s populations long before capture and enslavement. In addition, this article is not arguing that the enslaved did not employ various methods of resistance nor in any way minimizing the value of resistance behaviors. Rather, in this article, the focus is that mixed ethnicities, changing historical contexts from enslavement through emancipation, and struggles in post-Civil War context suggest that changes in society. These include identities and values that influence trajectory of spiritual and ritual ideas. We should seek evidence of those changing perceptions rather than interpreting them all through a lens of resistance.

Many artifacts shared specific color palettes, such as white, blue, black, yellow and red, typically expressed with shells, pieces of painted ceramic, beads, and brick. These colors are consistent with color symbolism found in West and Central African cosmological folklore. White shells and the color blue are the representatives of water and water spirits that offer protection; house charms and dedicatory deposits at the foundation level of a new house was a common practice among the Yoruba of West Africa (Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria) who were among the enslaved population of South Carolina.

Iron was a significant ritual symbol among traditional Yoruba, Ibo, and Congolese who considered this material to be important to facilitate communication with certain deities. It was not unusual for blacksmiths and others, such as the Driver, who worked with iron (horse tack, nails, planting/harvesting/hunting equipment, nails, hinges, stoves, etc.) to be part of the network contributing artifacts to ritual practices.

Earthenware pottery, nut shells, and other botanical items were traditionally used in ancestor worship within the house in their home countries and continued to be so in their plantation cabins. Deposits where traditional shrines were typically located in the homeland context have been found in different corners of a room for each individual ancestor who was worshipped. The corner shrines were believed to be the place from which ancestral spirits could rise up, like a sacred portals when needed (Anderson, 2005; Davidson, 2015; Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011; Pollitzer, 2005; Samford, 1996).

According to CC Jones (1969) in an account about slave folk magic in Georgia in a 1969 reprint of an 1888 collection of African mythology, many conjure bags held nails, pieces of root, and other items and were wrapped in flannel cloth and tied together. White, blue, and black colors hold sacred

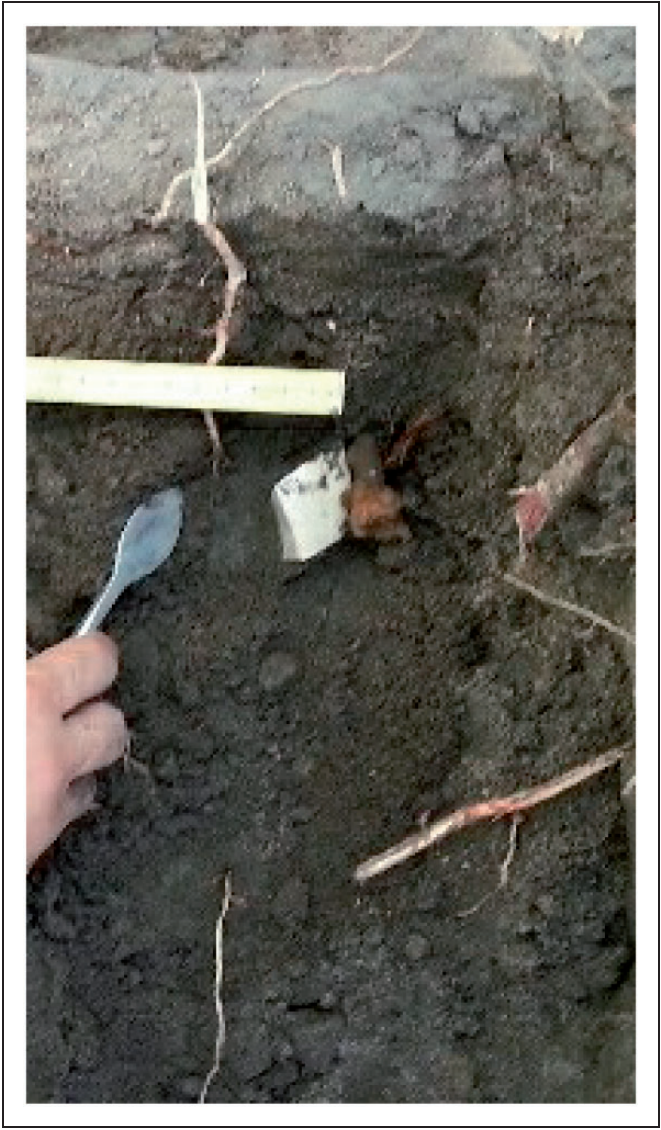
significance among certain African and Native American groups, representing sacred cardinal directions or spirits aligned with those directions. Eleven of the 21 ritual deposits excavated to date on the Hume Plantation contained pieces of white ware or pearl ware, some with colors of blue, white, or black ceramics. Most of these appear to have been bound together at one time with two nails. In one case, the nail was so tightly bound that it corroded onto the white ware ceramic. In one instance, two buttons were also included in the deposit.

Several deposits were found in the northwest wall and corner of the units excavated, which is consistent with similar deposits found in Virginia and North Carolinian plantations (Brown, 1995; Wood, 1974). Some of the deposits were associated with the hearth area, as evidenced by their context with carbon residue. Interestingly, deposits along the south wall or near the hearth area have not yielded shells as part of the bundle. Shells in African sacred mythology is associated with water spirits and found in nearly all deposits elsewhere in the cabin. Apparently, the southwest wall's proximity to the hearth/fireplace prescribed an absence of shell or waterborne symbolism as inappropriate for its spirit inhabitant (Anderson, 2005; Chireau, 2006; Heath and Bennett, 2000; Jones, 2000; Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). The Hume Plantation slave cabins' hearths were located on the south wall of the house. There seems to be a general observance of a north-south orientation for the ritual deposits, as all of them seem to be aligned with either north or south walls.

Water and water spirits have been documented as a component in the Congolese cosmology, and this has also been found in other tribes along the western coast of Africa as well. The Congolese believed that spirits, to whom one might appeal for assistance, resided in water and that salt was a sacred material capable of conferring a blessing on individuals (Ferguson, 1992; Leone and Fry, 1999; Pollitzer, 2005; Singleton, 2009; Young, 2007: 65).

However, the inclusion of one or two oyster shells placed together has been found in 7 of the 21 deposits that have been excavated. These shells were not simply remnants of subsistence and discard activities because the finds were always limited to one shell or two, purposely placed at equidistant intervals along a wall or in a corner indicating a pattern of selectivity and purpose rather than general food preparation and cast off. One aspect of shell use in a context outside of cabins has been historically found in slave graves and cemeteries; in addition to shells, water rounded pebbles from streams are culturally associated with the ancestors and water spirits (Drewal, 1988:160–185; Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011: 420–422; MacGaffey, 1990). In the context of slave cabins, these deposits seem to suggest apotropaic value; perhaps requesting the protection of water spirits for those who occupy the house (Figure 5).

A single blue bead was discovered in Cabin 4, Unit 15, Level 3. Blue was a sacred color among the slaves coming from both the Congo and Gold Coast. The color was associated with the sky and believed to provide protection.



**Figure 5.** Photo of ritual deposit in situ—once bound together, nail has corroded onto white ceramic.

The use of blue beads has been traced to indigenous charms in Africa (Ferguson, 1992: 116). Single blue beads in a slave context could be worn on a string as a necklace under a shirt or sewn inside a child’s clothing for protection as well (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011: 51–54).

As stated previously, *colonoware* was a crude homemade pottery of local clays, which in the past has been labeled rather dismissively as “slave pottery,” but provides valuable insight as to the socioeconomic status of the enslaved in the antebellum period with associated spatial relationships on the slave street. At the Hume Plantation, *colonoware* has been found in greater frequency and amounts from the midpoint of the Hume slave quarter toward the south end, or the cabin sites farthest away from the main house, supporting the notion that the enslaved residing more distantly from the main house held less status or access to finer goods (Ferguson, 1992: 110; Joyner, 1984).

Ferguson (1992: 110–117) discovered an “X” mark on the base of *colonoware* bowls in other South Carolina plantations, such as the Curriboo Plantation on the Santee River (p. 114). Often, pieces of “X” marked *colonoware* were found discarded in water. Other “X” marks were etched into spoons at slave sites in Virginia. Ultimately, the explanation of the “X” was related to Bakongo cosmology. To date, no “X” marked *colonoware* have been found on the Hume slave quarter with the possible exception of one piece. It has a faint marking that could be an “X,” but this is based upon a visual observation only. It is, therefore, inconclusive at this time in the absence of more exacting analysis to determine whether this was purposely marked or the result of wear.

The Native American influence in early level deposits can be seen in the ritual use of projectile points; some of these may have been recovered prehistoric pieces, repurposed. There are also pieces of worked glass (usually a thick green wine bottle glass), though not used ritually but produced with knapping and pressure flaking techniques into scrapers and cutting implements similarly to native working of rhyolite or flint and suggest interaction with Natives or their material objects. Two have been found in ritual deposits. One was a biface included with a piece of European ceramic of white and blue, and the other was found in the foundation at the top of a square poststain of the Overseer’s House on the west side of the slave street.

### *Christianizing the enslaved in Georgetown County, South Carolina*

The ratio of African to European population in Georgetown County changed rapidly and has been estimated at three to one, respectively, by 1720 in the rural areas including Georgetown County. In 1739, African slaves near Charleston, a mere 60 miles south of the location of the Hume Plantation, rebelled in what became known as the Stono Rebellion. They killed their white masters and any whites they encountered as they made their way to Florida where the Spanish had promised them freedom. Nevertheless, many were captured and shot or hanged within a few weeks (Pollitzer, 2005: 54).

The legal response in South Carolina gave full voice to white fear. Whereas before there had been regulations equivalent to animal cruelty laws as applied to the enslaved, laws now removed all limitations on slave owners, allowing them

to punish for any reason and with any degree of severity deemed necessary. The Negro Act of 1740 prohibited slaves from gathering together in numbers over four including worship activities and heavily restricted slave travel while learning to read or write became a capital offence in some areas of the lowcountry (Harris, 2004; Palmer, 2014). Despite these extreme efforts to control slaves, in 1822, a slave named Denmark Vesey who had purchased his own freedom led another slave rebellion in the Charleston area. Vesey's name and his early background as a slave on a sugar plantation before coming to South Carolina has been suggested by some that he was a slave from the Dutch transatlantic slave trade. The Dutch traded in slaves largely from Ghana, which was part of the Gold Coast of Africa (Ross, 1986a, 1986b: 305–360 and 479–506; Wordon, 1985).

By 1850, nearly 90% of the population in Georgetown County was African. Whites were very conscious of being the minority, perhaps more so than in other regions of the South. Despite the popular and common misconception that all slaves were flooded with Christianizing efforts in order to pacify them, in the South Carolina lowcountry, this was not the case during the mid- to late eighteenth century. Whites reasoned that knowing the bible and interpretations of certain passages contributed to rebellion. Traveling ministers had very limited access because plantation owners wanted to limit and control the kinds of messages that were preached to their slaves (Joyner, 1984; Pollitzer, 2005; Young, 2007: 71). While there are no records to attest whether traveling ministers visited Hume Plantation specifically, the activity was common in this region at the time (Joyner, 1984). The majority of Christianized African Americans subscribed to the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church such that the first one of its kind in South Carolina was established in 1815 in Charleston. This church came to be known as the “Mother Emanuel” church, which was, unfortunately, reentered into public discourse through tragedy in 2015 by Dylann Roof's racially motivated mass murder of nine of its parishioners.

In the lowcountry, it was incumbent upon the clergy to convince plantation owners that Christianity would not be used to unify rebellious slaves (Young, 2007). The Methodist church experienced growing tensions over the slavery issue. By 1837, the United Brethren in Christ, a Methodist branch, voted to oust any members who continued to own slaves. By 1844, the Southern faction of the Methodist Episcopal Church separated Methodist groups into antislavery versus proslavery factions. It was the antislavery faction that founded the AME Church in which many African Americans were members by the post-Civil War era. In 1928, Tom Yawkey funded the building of the St. James AME Church on Cat Island for descendants of the plantation era that continued to live there in a village called Maxwell and continued to traditionally host a touring minister on the first and third Sundays of the month at that time (Dozier, 2015, personal communication).

In pre-Civil War years, however, slaves were forbidden to collect or make African objects of worship or engage in activities that might incite or unify them around African belief systems. Southern Baptist and Methodist missionaries attempted to convert slaves throughout the mid-eighteenth century and antebellum period but had difficulty maintaining a consistent effort because funding was minimal, there were so few of their number to proselytize on a regular basis, and because in the lowcountry slave ministry continued to be tightly controlled by plantation owners (Pollitzer, 2005; Wood, 2000; Young, 2007: 71).

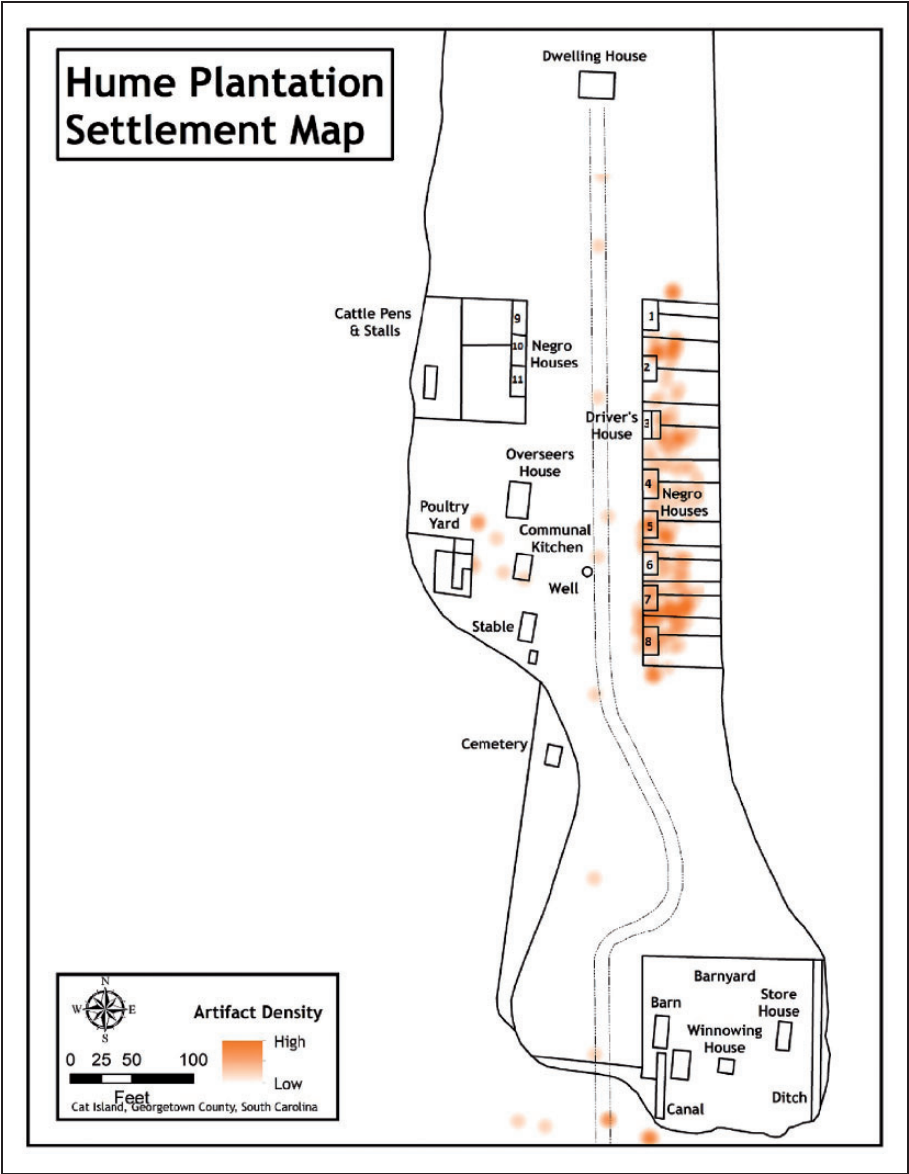
Despite this, enslaved people adopted Christian tenets as shown by the growth of the AME Church but did not discard their indigenous beliefs wholly either. The practice of placing foundation or beneath floor deposits continued at Hume Plantation after emancipation.

### *Archaeological methods*

Preliminary and exploratory excavations from 2011 to 2013 consisted of identifying cabin sites based upon locations indicated on the 1827 hand drawn plat map of the Hume Plantation in possession of the Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center. The plat map was used in combination with surface survey, metal detector readings, and visual indicators to identify the original cabin sites. Sites and surface artifacts were then pin flagged and documented with a total station, generating an artifact point distribution image. The map shows the original slave street with eight slave cabins on the east side and three on the north end of the west side, along with the Overseer's House, communal kitchen, and livestock pens. The redrawn map was digitized and overlain onto the surface survey coordinates to create a comprehensive image showing artifact distribution and clusters in association with the cabins. The term "chain" is referenced on the original plat and is a unit of measurement in nineteenth-century nomenclature indicating 66 feet per unit. Because the original plat map was hand drawn, however, measurement inaccuracies that were discovered were adjusted in the redrawn digital version to correct the scale. A baseline was created using the north-south axis of the existing slave street road and a grid from that baseline was set up to locate and document units excavated on the east-west axis. None of the former slave cabins were extant (Figure 6).

There have been a total of 21 thus identified ritual deposits unearthed from exploratory and preliminary excavations the author conducted. Surface survey and exploratory test pits were initially conducted at the site along a grid to identify likely areas where excavation would be fruitful in the area identified as the enslaved quarter. Two small-scale excavations were conducted in 2012 and 2013. Spring 2015 excavations were conducted by the author with a crew of students from Northern Arizona University as an archaeological field school (Table 1).





**Figure 6.** Plat map overlain with digitized colored areas of artifact distribution.

**Table 1.** Hume slave street—ritual deposits from excavations 2012, 2013, and 2015.

| Deposit # | Unit # | Level | Deposit material   | Location  |
|-----------|--------|-------|--|---|
| #1        | 4      | 3     | Cat tooth w/2 nails; burned  | Northeast corner of Cabin 3   |
| #2        | 8      | 3     | Two square nails w/oyster shell and two metal buttons w/single brass eye loop attachment (1785–1800) | West wall, below window Cabin 4   |
| #3        | 8      | 4     | Mirror pieces w/2 nails  | Southwest corner, Cabin 4   |
| #4        | 10     | 4     | Three-fourth of a medicinal bottle w/2 nails and oyster shell  | Southeast corner, Cabin 3   |
| #5        | 11     | 4     | Native American projectile biface w/blue Euro ceramic piece  | Northwest corner, Cabin 2   |
| #6        | 12     | 4     | Glass, blue and white Euro ceramic w/2 nails   | Southwest wall, Cabin 2   |
| #7        | 12     | 4     | Glass, colonoware and two nails  | Southwest corner, 82 cm south of Deposit #6, Cabin 2                                      |
| #8        | 13     | 2     | Rhyolite projectile point  | Southeast corner of Overseer's House (west side of slave street), top of square poststain |
| #9        | 16A    | 2     | Two nails (one corroded to white ware piece)   | West wall near Cabin 4 doorway  |
| #10       | 16B    | 2     | Oyster shell w/2 nails   | Southwest corner of Cabin 4, 78 cm below Deposit #9, north of doorway                     |
| #11       | 16B    | 2     | Oyster shell w/med. bottle piece   | West wall—75 cm north of Deposit #10, Cabin 4   |
| #12       | 18     | 3     | White Euro ceramic and two nails   | Southwest wall, doorway, Cabin 5  |
| #13       | 18     | 3     | Two white and one blue Euro ceramic w/2 nails  | Southwest wall, 19 cm, south of Deposit #12, Cabin 5                                      |
| #14       | 19     | 2     | Oyster shell w/white Euro ceramic  | Northwest corner, Cabin 4   |
| #15       | 27A    | 3     | White Euro ceramic, Native American pottery and nail   | Southeast wall of shed, backyard of Cabin 3   |
| #16       | 27B    | 3     | Seven white Euro ceramic, two colonoware, three nails  | Southeast wall—32 cm north of Deposit #15, shed, backyard of Cabin 3                      |

(continued)

**Table 1.** Continued.

| Deposit # | Unit # | Level | Deposit material  | Location   |
|-----------|--------|-------|---|--|
| #17       | 27B    | 3     | One nail, one black and one white Euro ceramic                | Southeast unit wall—30 cm west of Deposit #16, shed, backyard of Cabin 3 |
| #18       | 27C    | 3     | Two nails crossed and corroded in “X”; one white Euro ceramic | 92 cm west of Deposit #15, shed, backyard, Cabin 3                       |
| #19       | 27C    | 3     | White Euro ceramic and two nails crossed                      | 34 cm west of Deposit #18, shed, backyard, Cabin 3                       |
| #20       | 27D    | 2     | Coral, colonoware and four oyster shells                      | East wall, possible north east corner of Shed, backyard, Cabin 3         |
| #21       | 28     | 3     | White Euro ceramic, two nails and oyster shell one blue bead  | Southeast corner of Cabin 3  |

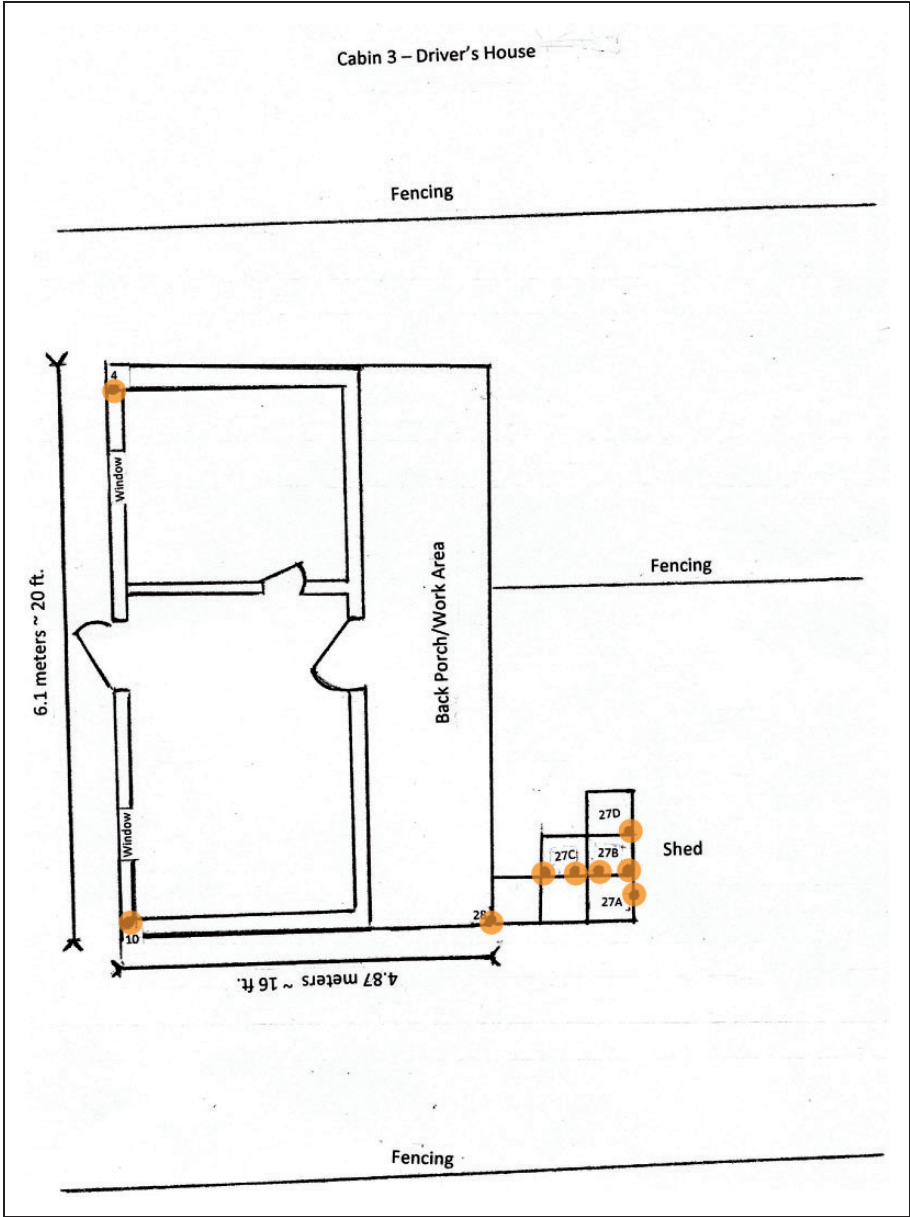
Test pits and excavation that are the subjects of this article were mainly on the east side of the road where the plat map indicated the bulk of the original eight cabins were located. One unit was excavated on the west side and uncovered a large square cut poststain. After comparing the 1827 plat map and its location to known structures, this was determined to be the Overseer’s House.

### *Ritual deposit locations*

The 2015 season uncovered the largest number of ritual deposits (nine) on the east side of the street, most were located in the dirt floors beneath cabin sites and in one case, at Cabin 3 (hereafter referred to as the Driver’s House) a yard area that evidence suggests also contained a shed or outbuilding of some kind. This would have been constructed after 1827, as it is not indicated on the hand drawn map of that date (Figure 7).

The majority of ritual deposits were found in cabins located in the middle area of the cabin row. However, this may be explained in part by the 2015 field season’s concentrated excavations in the midway area of the slave street as compared to the lower half. To date, previous excavation of the lower half has been limited to the vicinity of Cabin 5 and Cabin 8.

Identifying a cabin wall entailed following the alignment of previous poststains that were later replaced with European constructions, namely, rectilinear cabins of 15 feet by 20 feet. Select buildings that may have housed more than one family were somewhat larger (longer), according to the plat map. Thus far, only



**Figure 7.** Plan view of Cabin 3 showing location of ritual deposits. Illustration by author.

the Driver's House qualifies as a unique cabin in its dimensions with an additional structure off the back of the house (east side). Evidence of possibly another outbuilding or shed was also located in association with Cabin 4 or 5. However, the proximity between the two cabins makes it difficult to ascertain to which cabin it was most aligned, as it appears almost centrally located between the two. Further excavation of this area is needed to help clarify the parameters of the back yards and this structure. When cabin floor deposits were uncovered, note was taken of any feature with which it was in contact or in association, and its distance from the corners, relationship to the hearth, or placement on or along the north-south axis of the cabin wall were noted.

Deposits consisted of several objects of symbolic significance which were likely bound together or possibly wrapped in cloth at one time. Cloth and other organic materials would have decomposed due to the high acidity of the soil, which tested at pH 3 and 4. Some artifacts became fused together by mineral content and being in contact with the moist to clayey matrix. Deposits include specific combinations of oyster shell; a piece of coral, nails, and cat teeth; white-, black-, and/or blue-colored European ceramic sherds; colonoware (African made pottery); Native American pottery; mirror pieces; and Native American projectile points. These are usually placed in specific groupings such as two oyster shells, a piece of blue-painted ceramic bound with two to four nails. This comprises a typical beneath floor deposit.

Comparatively and contemporaneously, an article by Davidson (2015) describes very similar deposits found at Kingsley Plantation in Fort George Island, Florida, dating to 1814–1839. Davidson describes white pearl ware or white ware ceramic sherds, blue beads, and other objects placed together at the front door sill and associated with doorways and along walls (2015: 79). Davidson further discusses the inscribed “X” placed on some of the objects. To date, at the Hume Plantation, only one piece of colonoware bears what may be an incised “X,” but it is too faint to tell if it was an intentionally made mark or the result of wear or other factors. The “X” in enslaved Congo communities was a symbol indicating the Bakongo cosmos (Ferguson, 1992: 111; Franklin, 1997).

In 2015 field season, the field school students uncovered a part of a rifle mechanism that had been buried outside the northeast corner of Cabin 3—which has been identified as the Driver's cabin. This individual would have been from among the enslaved population, but given specific responsibilities to care for the horses, tack equipment, and see to the transportation needs of the planter's family. The Driver would have been viewed as occupying a position of status, the proximity of his cabin being in the upper half of the slave street and closer to the main house as a visually symbolic statement reflecting his direct contact with and responsibility to the plantation owner.

At first, it was assumed the rifle mechanism represented a hidden gun placed under the cabin floor, but X-rays and analysis of the mechanism identified it as a

piece from an 1850–1860 Springfield rifle, *likely already broken at the time it was buried*, and would have been useless for “resistance” or hunting activities to supplement subsistence. Furthermore, there is evidence that suggests this deposit was placed in a post-Civil War context, namely, in association with ceramics from the surrounding level that include blue, white, and brown imported European transferware and buttons from the late nineteenth century, indicating that some ritual behaviors were still being practiced even after emancipation and growing Christianization among the African American population (Figure 8).

Davidson’s finds at Kingsley Plantation include a number of metal or iron pieces buried in the backyard of a cabin, in particular a trade musket inscribed with an “X,” and he notes that other iron objects did not appear to be random or throw away pieces that landed in the back yard. These included a hoe, plow blade, axe, and a stove part (Davidson, 2015: 79). In the backyard of Cabin 4 on the Hume slave quarter, a face plate of an iron stove was excavated near a fence line. Since the enslaved did not have cabins equipped with their own cook stoves, this piece either came from the communal kitchen (a broken/replaced oven door) or the main house. In any event, while not labeling these as specifically ritual



**Figure 8.** Corroded rifle mechanism found in association with Cabin 3.



deposits at the time of excavation, research indicates these would not have served a utilitarian purpose, were not cast offs from household use, and inspire revisiting the placement and possible symbolism of these objects.

### *Discussion of evolution of enslaved Africans' ritual practices, material culture, and values*

Ritual deposits and activities in an environment of oppression under imposed foreign cultural and religious ideals would have enslaved Africans responding as best they could to these obstacles while maintaining their own identities and world views. Ideologies are not static and change over time in any culture. Enslaved Africans and those with mixed ethnicities would have been shaped by their new experiences to view the world differently and in turn, reshape their worldview and cosmological truths to understand that new reality. It is a survival strategy of the human psyche that when beliefs no longer make sense of your world, they no longer serve their purpose and are either abandoned or reconfigured. There is much literature to argue for African adaptations, which included a synthesis or creolization combining multiethnic traditions and religious ideas to which they were exposed from European, Native American, and other African tribal groups. Enslaved populations redefined these to fit their own changing value systems and traditions (Anderson, 2005; Gallay, 2002; Groover, 1994; Heath and Bennett, 2000; McDowell, 1955; Orser, 1994; Raboteau, 2004; Wilkie, 1997).

Numbers of European and imported ceramics excavated in two seasons indicate that the majority of sherds were found in Levels 2 and 3 or in a transition period from antebellum to post-Civil War. Level 1 typically had marginally more sherds than Level 4—a prehistoric to contact period—but overall Levels 1 and 4 seemed closely similar in number of remnant European ceramic ware, indicating changing use and prescribed values. It would appear that some enslaved were able to purchase or barter for finer wares from the antebellum period onward. There is an observable gap of certain types of material objects, particularly those that can be labeled “luxury” versus utilitarian items, between the upper to lower half of the slave street.

Specifically, from the first cabin to the fifth, porcelain, frosted glass, and other more costly items have been excavated, including the porcelain arm of a doll in the Driver's backyard. These suggest that in early plantation periods the cabin closest to the main house to the midpoint of the slave street maintained social hierarchy among the enslaved population that matched the built environment initially imposed upon them. However, in the post-Civil War, levels of the Hume Plantation dating to when it changed hands (the Humes sold the plantation, unable to compete in the rice market without slave labor) to the Bennett family in 1868. The majority of ritual deposits have been found in association with Cabins 6, 7, and 8—or those with less access to finer wares and presumably,

lower economic status. Social strategies may include appealing to supernatural forces or ancestors as a way to appeal for equity in a spiritual realm and for hope and security, if not with material possessions.

## Conclusion

The majority of ritual deposits have been found along the west (street-facing) wall near doorways or windows, the northern wall, or in the corners of the cabins, areas that can be considered *liminal spaces* or places of transition, and embracing traditional notions of emergence points for ancestors. Deposits have been found near the fireplace/hearth but rather than protective suggest a tone of justice or vengeance associated with fire symbolism. Cabin construction at that time dictated uniformity in orientation, size, and design, approximately 15 by 20 feet in single dwellings and larger in the double or “saddlebag” style cabins, yet to be excavated on the west side of the slave street, or in cases of special status individuals such as the as the Driver’s House. The 1827 map indicates the Driver’s House had a lengthwise division, (running north/south) which was somewhat unusual; there is no definitive explanation for this alternative space, but artifacts excavated suggest this may have been a back porch/work area that the Driver utilized for working on horse tack and associated equipment.

Most deposits suggest an apotropaic purpose and a clear affinity for water sources and symbolism (oyster shells) in combination with iron (nails) and symbolic colors (blue, white). In one instance near a corner of what appears to have been a shed in the backyard of the Driver’s House, a piece of coral was deposited but was not local to the South Carolina coast. In another instance, a deposit comprised a cat tooth bound with two nails placed under a corner of a cabin is unclear but suggests an aggressive magic deposit designed to wreak vengeance as other cat bone or teeth materials have been documented as associated with “justice” magic. The Overseer’s House yielded a foundation deposit placed with a support beam that included a projectile point. In other plantation ritual deposits, shell/nail/blue ceramic pieces suggest protection as the primary objective (Brown, 1995; Chireau, 2006; Creel, 1988; Davidson, 2015; Ferguson, 1992; Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011; Jacobs, 1987; Wood, 1974; Young, 2007).

The deposits were uncovered in floors dating to the earliest days of intensive slave labor on Cat Island, from approximately mid- to late eighteenth century, a short period before the land belonged to the Hume family, and they continue well into the early to mid-nineteenth century throughout Hume ownership and beyond into the post-Civil War era, through the instability of the Reformation period and in a time when many African Americans had adopted Christianity. In five instances, ritual deposits were clearly associated with the post-Civil War era, while others such as the rifle mechanism or stove door may indicate the possibility of ritual deposits when compared to other slave quarter sites and

postemancipation contexts for new ritual meanings. They are found in the context of buttons produced in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The process of substitution and adaptation can be correlated with spiritual concepts brought with the enslaved from Africa when their religious traditions were already in flux. They repurposed Native and European artifacts for symbolic uses, with more ceramic (white ware and pearl ware, blue patterns) in the midsection of the slave street compared to the colonoware and shells with small pieces of blue found in cabin sites in the lower end of the street. The shift continued as the enslaved responded to European paradigms. Choices made for representation of sacred objects and ideas included color and directionality (corners of the cabins or in liminal places such as doorways or entrances to the garden), while the cabin itself was an agent in the performance of ritual. European construction of space and the slave quarter became more homogenized in appearance. Diversity through marriage, family, and changing identities in their multicultural–multiethnic children likely had an impact on the evolution and variation in ritual practice, such as use of found Native projectile points in earlier foundation deposits and socioeconomic status.

In the earlier levels of the slave street, there are European import ceramics mixed with *colonoware*. Most of the ritual activity and deposits found at the Hume slave quarter seem to be located in the bottom of Level 2 down to roughly mid-Level 3; this is consistent with what would have been the peak period of Africans being imported into the area from 1740 to 1807. Some of these enslaved had been laborers in Jamaica and Barbados but had been exposed to British culture for a longer period than individuals coming in with the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This mixed population, which likely included Native American or mixed ethnicity individuals, utilized native pottery, colonoware, European ceramics, nails, shells, and coral, and animal remains pragmatically to symbolically represent syncretized ideas for emerging new identities in their changing world.

These activities within a time frame of a post-Civil War period suggest that emancipated slaves did not enjoy great relief with the end of the War, which is consistent with many historical and ethnographic accounts. For those that stayed on, belief in the efficacies of folk magic continued to be utilized as the South struggled to reconfigure its cultural paradigms.

While no definitive “Xs” have been found etched onto artifacts, in one cabin, nails were placed in a position forming an “X” as a deposit by themselves along a wall, possibly tied together at one time to maintain the shape but corroded into that position over time. No shells are associated with any deposits from this cabin site, although white ceramic sherds were frequently used. Coral, a very rare find and not of local origin, was used in an elaborate back yard deposit associated with an out building that also included small pieces of colonoware and four oyster shells. These were near the southeast corner of the cabin. The symbolic connection to water spirits is undeniable in this deposit.

One example of possibly more “aggressive” spells was found in the Driver’s House deposit near the northwestern corner of a cat tooth with two nails. These show signs of burning and could possibly have gone through a preparation that included fire, one of the most powerful elements in vengeance spells. A second was the Overseer’s House of a projectile point placed with a foundation beam. Presumably, the enslaved were tasked with building his house and took the opportunity to surreptitiously plant a spell in its construction to work on its occupant to cause harm or pain.

Various ritual practices involving African cosmological symbols and beliefs, impact materials, and textures selected for *conjure* practices. Conjure for protection, medicinal cures, ancestor reverence, and spirit entreaties for justice or vengeance were chosen to fit new circumstances and from resources available that were not “traditional” in the sense historically utilized (Chireau, 2006; Creel, 1988; Davidson, 2004; Joyner, 1984; Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011; Singleton, 2009; Steen, 2011; Stine, 1996).

In conclusion, spiritual and folk magic ideas were constantly in a state of flux, as people were exposed to other cultures and ideas. In the case of enslaved Africans, their exposure to Western Christianity and ideology began while still on the African continent. These individuals were later influenced by Native Americans who were originally among the primary enslaved people in South Carolina until the early eighteenth century. Mixed ethnicity households and changing value systems first imposed, then adopted, and produced the need to change the way ritual ideas were expressed.

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